



BEYOND THE BREAKING POINT

THE CONTINUING IMPACT OF FUNDING CUTS ON
WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS IN HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS



Acknowledgements: This research was possible thanks to frontline women's organizations who generously shared their time and perspectives to inform this report, whilst navigating the urgent demands of crisis response.

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Cover: Women displaced by the war in Sudan meet with UN Women staff at the Al-Zaeem Al-Azhari School in Port Sudan. Al-Azhari is sheltering displaced families who have fled their homes due to escalating violence. April 2025. Photo: UN Women/Ekram Hamad Fadlalla

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WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS IN HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS

Humanitarian Section

UN Women

Geneva, 2026



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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AAP	Accountability to affected populations
DRC	The Democratic Republic of the Congo
GBV	Gender-based violence
GiHA	Gender in Humanitarian Action
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
MEAL	Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning
PSEA	Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WLOs	Women-led organizations
WROs	Women's rights organizations



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The continued contraction in international humanitarian funding is worsening an already critical situation for women and girls in crisis settings. Across humanitarian contexts, women-led and women's rights organizations are being forced to cut services despite rising needs.

Because these organizations are best-placed – and sometimes the only actors able – to reach women and girls who face the greatest barriers to accessing humanitarian assistance, the reduction in support is creating critical gaps in humanitarian coverage. As their capacity shrinks, the humanitarian response becomes less able to identify and respond to the needs and priorities of women and girls. Meanwhile, organizations are increasingly forced to scale back work that advances gender equality, women's rights, and women's leadership and participation – including before, during and after crises.

More than a year after significant reductions in bilateral and multilateral humanitarian funding, what began as an acute funding shock has become an entrenched operating reality. Building on UN Women's 2025 assessment of the early impacts of funding reductions, this 2026 report draws on a survey of 855 primarily national and local women-led and women's rights organizations across 52 countries and contexts, complemented by qualitative interviews with women civil society leaders and community members, to examine how funding reductions are reshaping organizations, reducing services and affecting women and girls.

Respondents report declining access to critical services for women and girls

Humanitarian needs continue to rise while the capacity of women-led and women's rights organizations to respond continues to decline. Eighty-four per cent of respondents report increasing numbers of women and girls requiring support, yet 88 per cent say their organizations can no longer meet current levels of need. Nearly 6 in 10 organizations report reaching fewer women and girls than they did before January 2025, having reduced their services by anywhere from less than 30 per cent to a complete cessation. As a result, nearly one million women and girls who once received support are no longer being reached. Almost half of respondents have introduced waiting lists or been forced to turn women and girls away.

The services being reduced are among those most critical to women's safety, protection and recovery. Livelihoods and economic empowerment programmes (72 per cent), safe spaces and women's centres (62 per cent), and gender-based violence case management services (61 per cent) are among those most frequently reported as unavailable or significantly reduced. These cuts fall hardest on those already facing the greatest barriers, including adolescent girls, women and girls with disabilities, displaced women and girls, female-headed households and those in remote and conflict-affected areas.

Photo (left): Régine Zéphirin Diègue, founder of the Movement for the Integration and Emancipation of Disabled Women (MIEFH), Haiti's first organization dedicated to women and girls with disabilities, located in Cap-Haitien. Since founding MIEFH in 2009, Régine has led more than 15 years of work to uphold the dignity, rights, and empowerment of women and girls with disabilities. UN Women supports women-led organizations like MIEFH all over Haiti, delivering critical services to women and girls. 2 June 2026. Photo: UN Women/Jess DiPierro Obert



Photo: Roselene Pierre, President of Rassemblement des Femmes Engagées de Ouanaminthe (RFE0) – an organization in north-east Haiti supported by UN Women – walks to the border to meet women and girls deported from the Dominican Republic. 1 June 2026. Photo: UN Women/Jess DiPierro Obert

Organizations report worsening protection risks affecting women and girls as support systems contract

Even as protective services contract, respondents report a worsening protection environment for the women and girls they serve. Nearly all respondents (92 per cent) observe increases in economic vulnerability, while 88 per cent observe worsening mental health distress, 86 per cent observe increases in gender-based violence and 82 per cent observe increasing school dropout rates.

Seventy-two per cent of respondents also report observing increases in early and forced marriage, while 61 per cent report increases in survival or transactional sex.

Women's organizations are under severe financial and operational strain

Funding reductions are placing organizations under severe financial and operational strain. Eighty-eight per cent report moderate or severe impacts, 61 per cent say their financial situation has deteriorated over the past year, and nearly half have six months or less of operational funding remaining. Two in five consider suspension or closure likely within the next year.

To continue operating, organizations have reduced staffing, cut salaries and increasingly relied on unpaid or volunteer labour. More than three quarters (77 per cent) report staff losses and nearly two thirds (65 per cent) rely on unpaid work. Almost half report salary reductions, burnout and financial hardship among remaining staff.

Staff are overwhelmingly women from crisis-affected communities themselves, providing essential services despite increasing personal and financial insecurity. While many organizations are strengthening partnerships and coalitions to sustain services, respondents consistently emphasize that collaboration cannot substitute for predictable funding.

Core organizational systems are being eroded, threatening long-term resilience

Funding reductions are eroding the institutional foundations that underpin safe, accountable humanitarian action. Organizations report reducing monitoring and accountability systems, safeguarding functions including prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and financial management capacity, while struggling to cover core operating costs.

As these capacities weaken, organizations become less able to meet donor requirements and secure future funding, creating a self-reinforcing cycle that threatens locally led humanitarian action well beyond the current funding crisis.

As resources diminish, organizations risk losing not only specialist expertise, but also institutional knowledge, trusted community relationships and integrated ways of working that have been built over years and, in many cases, decades. These assets cannot be rebuilt quickly once lost. The consequences therefore extend beyond individual organizations to the effectiveness, accountability and gender responsiveness of humanitarian action itself.

Progress on gender equality and locally led humanitarian action is being weakened

Funding constraints also are shifting organizations away from longer-term investments in gender equality, women's leadership and social change. One in five organizations suspended gender equality programming, nearly one third report reduced advocacy capacity and more than half observe declining participation of women in community decision-making. Respondents also describe their own reduced

direct funding and shrinking participation as organizations in humanitarian coordination, suggesting current financing trends are moving further away from long-standing localization commitments.

Women's organizations are calling for a different way of financing humanitarian action

Organizations consistently call for a change in how financing is structured, not simply an increase in amount. Nearly nine in ten (89 per cent) prioritize flexible, multi-year funding, 86 per cent seek greater direct donor access, and two thirds (66 per cent) call for fewer intermediary funding layers. Respondents emphasize financing that covers core organizational costs, supports equitable partnerships and better connects humanitarian, development and peace-building efforts.

The evidence presented in this report is clear: women and girls in crisis are losing access to the organizations best placed to reach them, precisely as needs continue to grow. This is the result of financing choices that have consistently under-invested in local women-led and women's rights organizations. These organizations are calling to be recognized as the essential humanitarian actors they are, and financed accordingly.

The choice is whether to preserve the foundations of locally led, gender-responsive humanitarian action, or allow them to erode past the point of repair, with consequences that will fall hardest on the women and girls who can least afford to wait.

KEY FINDINGS AT A GLANCE

Key findings are based on survey responses from representatives of 855 predominantly local and national women-led organizations and women's rights organizations operating across 52 countries and contexts. More than two thirds of these organizations operate in 20 countries with significant humanitarian needs.

1. Women and girls are losing access to critical services and support

- 84 per cent of respondents report increasing numbers of crisis-affected women and girls requiring support.
- 88 per cent say their organizational capacity falls below current levels of need.
- 84 per cent report that women and girls in the communities they serve have reduced access to essential services.
- 59 per cent are reaching fewer women and girls than before January 2025, with reductions ranging from under 30 per cent to complete cessation of services.
- 50 per cent of operational organizations have implemented waiting lists or been forced to turn away women and girls.
- Livelihoods and economic empowerment support (72 per cent), safe spaces and women's centres (62 per cent) and gender-based violence case management services (61 per cent) are among the services most frequently reported as unavailable or significantly reduced.
- 63 per cent of organizations report reduced ability to reach women and girls in remote or hard-to-reach areas, followed by women and girls with disabilities (61 per cent) and single mothers and female-headed households (59 per cent).

2. Protection risks are increasing as support systems contract¹

- 92 per cent of respondents report observing increasing economic vulnerability among women and girls in the communities they serve.
- 88 per cent report observing increasing mental health distress and psychological harm.
- 86 per cent report observing increasing gender-based violence.
- 82 per cent report observing increasing school dropout among girls.
- 72 per cent report observing increasing early or forced marriage.
- 61 per cent report observing increasing survival or transactional sex.

3. Women's organizations are under severe financial and operational strain

Financial sustainability

- 88 per cent describe the impact of funding reductions on their organizations as moderate or severe.
- 61 per cent say their organization's financial situation is worse than in 2025.

- 45 per cent have six months or less of operational funding remaining.
- 41 per cent consider suspension or closure likely within the next year.
- 40 per cent say their organization has declining access to direct funding.

The workforce sustaining women's organizations

- 77 per cent have lost staff due to funding cuts.
- 65 per cent report staff working unpaid or contributing substantial additional voluntary time.
- 48 per cent report growing burnout among remaining staff.
- 47 per cent report salary reductions.
- 45 per cent report losing specialist expertise that cannot easily be replaced.

4. Core organizational capacity is being eroded, threatening long-term resilience

- 68 per cent report difficulties covering core operational costs, including office rent, utilities and administration.
- 41 per cent report reductions in monitoring, evaluation and accountability functions.
- 38 per cent report reductions in financial management and compliance functions.
- 34 per cent report reductions in information technology, data systems and digital tools.
- 19 per cent report reductions in safeguarding, including prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) functions.
- 27 per cent of organizations report replacing trained staff with volunteers and reducing core organizational systems to sustain front-line services.

5. The foundations of gender equality and locally led humanitarian action are being weakened

Progress on gender equality

- 58 per cent observe reduced participation of women and girls in community decision-making.
- 31 per cent report their own diminished capacity to influence humanitarian decision-making.
- 31 per cent report a reduced capacity to advocate for women's rights.
- 21 per cent report pausing or abandoning longer-term gender equality initiatives.

Locally led humanitarian action

- 43 per cent identify donor preference for larger international organizations as a significant barrier.
- 67 per cent say funding cuts have reduced their participation in humanitarian coordination mechanisms and other decision-making forums.

6. Women's organizations are calling for a different way of financing humanitarian action

- 89 per cent prioritize flexible, multi-year funding.
- 86 per cent prioritize greater direct access to donors.
- 66 per cent call for funding to reach local organizations without multiple intermediary layers.
- Respondents also emphasize equitable partnerships, stronger consortium approaches, solidarity networks and funding models that bridge humanitarian, development and peace-building efforts.

I. INTRODUCTION

Around the world, women and girls in crisis settings face heightened risks, discrimination and barriers to exercising their rights and living safely and with dignity. These challenges are intensifying as humanitarian needs continue to rise, while the services and support they rely upon are contracting due to funding cuts that have swept through the sector.

Women-led and women's rights organizations² are among the first responders in crises and are uniquely positioned to reach women and girls who are least likely to access mainstream humanitarian assistance. This includes populations living in remote areas, informal displacement settings and locations affected by conflict or insecurity that larger international humanitarian organizations often cannot reach. Working across humanitarian, development and peacebuilding contexts, they provide essential services, strengthen accountability and advocate for the rights of the most marginalized. Their proximity to and understanding of local contexts, power dynamics and structural barriers helps ensure that humanitarian responses are grounded in local realities and responsive to the distinct needs and priorities of crisis-affected women and girls.

In early 2025, the humanitarian sector experienced record levels of reductions in financial support, reflecting significant shifts in donor policies and funding priorities. The withdrawal and suspension of funding by several major donors, together with policy changes affecting how humanitarian assistance is financed and delivered, had major consequences for humanitarian response systems worldwide.³ These reductions are occurring at a time of immense humanitarian need, with more than 239 million people worldwide requiring humanitarian assistance and protection in 2026.⁴ These needs are not gender neutral: women and girls face overlapping and distinct risks in every crisis-affected setting.⁵

Local and national women-led and women's rights organizations, which were chronically underfunded even before the recent wave of funding cuts began,

have been among those most severely affected. As organizations that are often best placed to reach women and girls facing the greatest risks and barriers, reductions in their capacity have implications far beyond organizational sustainability, affecting the availability, accessibility and quality of essential services and support.

This report builds on UN Women's 2025 analysis of the immediate impacts of funding reductions on women-led and women's rights organizations working in humanitarian settings.⁶ It examines how these impacts have evolved since early 2025 – and what they mean for women and girls, the organizations that serve them and the effectiveness of humanitarian action more broadly.⁷

At a time when humanitarian actors are implementing the Humanitarian Reset⁸ and pursuing reforms to humanitarian financing and localization, the findings provide timely evidence on the implications of these changes for women-led and women's rights organizations and the women and girls they serve. The current analysis traces the widening gap between humanitarian needs and available support, the deterioration of protection outcomes for women and girls, the financial and operational pressures facing the organizations that serve them, the erosion of core organizational systems, and the implications for longer-term progress on gender equality and locally led humanitarian action. The report concludes with a series of recommendations informed directly by the priorities of participating organizations.



Photo: A woman consults with a doctor and pharmacist at a women-led organization in central Afghanistan which also provides mental health counselling, psychosocial support, and livelihoods training. The organization, which is supported by UN Women, was forced to reduce staff in 2025 as a result of aid cuts. Further reductions in funding will force it to scale back its medical services.
Photo: UN Women/Sayed Habib Bidell

From funding shock to entrenched crisis: How the situation has evolved

<i>At a Breaking Point 2025</i> UN Women report: Early warning	<i>Beyond the Breaking Point 2026</i> UN Women report: Current reality
Sudden funding cuts triggered widespread uncertainty and emergency measures to keep organizations operating.	Funding constraints have become an entrenched operating reality, with many organizations adapting to survive at permanently reduced levels of capacity.
Organizations warned that continued funding reductions could lead to programme closures, workforce losses and organizational collapse.	Many of these risks have materialized via sustained service reductions, shrinking geographic reach, workforce attrition and erosion of core organizational systems.
Immediate consequences of funding cuts for women and girls were documented, as experienced through the organizations serving them.	These impacts have deepened, with growing evidence that women and girls are losing access to essential services while protection risks continue to increase.
Risks to localization and gender-responsive humanitarian action were emerging.	Declining investment in women-led organizations is now eroding the infrastructure needed for effective, locally led humanitarian action.

II. METHODOLOGY

Research for this report was carried out from April to June 2026 using a mixed-methods approach that combined a global survey of women-led and women's rights organizations, semi-structured key informant interviews, and a review of relevant policy and research literature. The analysis draws primarily on survey responses from 855 women-led and women's rights organizations operating across 52 countries and contexts characterized by humanitarian crises, displacement and various dimensions of fragility. More than two thirds of these organizations (73%) operate in countries with significant humanitarian needs and have humanitarian response plans or refugee response plans in place.

To complement the survey findings, 20 semi-structured interviews were conducted, including 12 interviews with leaders of women-led and women's rights organizations and 8 interviews with women receiving support from those organizations. A desk review of relevant literature, policy documents and recent analyses was undertaken to contextualize the findings within a broader evidence base.

The respondent sample was composed predominantly of local and national women-led and women's rights organizations. Unless otherwise indicated, statistics throughout the report reflect survey responses from participating organizations, including their reported operational data, observations and experiences – including findings on impacts to women and girls which reflect their observations of the populations they serve, rather than direct reporting by women and girls themselves. As participation was voluntary and self-selected, findings should be interpreted as indicative of broader trends rather than statistically representative of all women-led and women's rights organizations in humanitarian settings. Nevertheless, the large and geographically diverse sample provides a robust snapshot of how funding reductions are affecting women-led and women's rights organizations across a wide range of humanitarian contexts.

Full details on the methodology, sampling approach, profile of respondents, limitations and ethical considerations are provided in Annex A.



Photo: Staff members of the Rassemblement des Femmes Engagées de Ouanaminthe (RFE0) display dresses made by women supported by the organization in Ouanaminthe, in northeastern Haiti. 1 June 2026. Photo: UN Women/Jess DiPiero Obert

III. FINDINGS

“With the [conflict] crisis and funding reductions, our organization – which provides psychological care and legal accompaniment for gender-based violence survivors – can no longer accompany these women and girls.”

—Survey respondent, women-led organization, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), translated from French

1. Women and girls are losing access to critical services and support

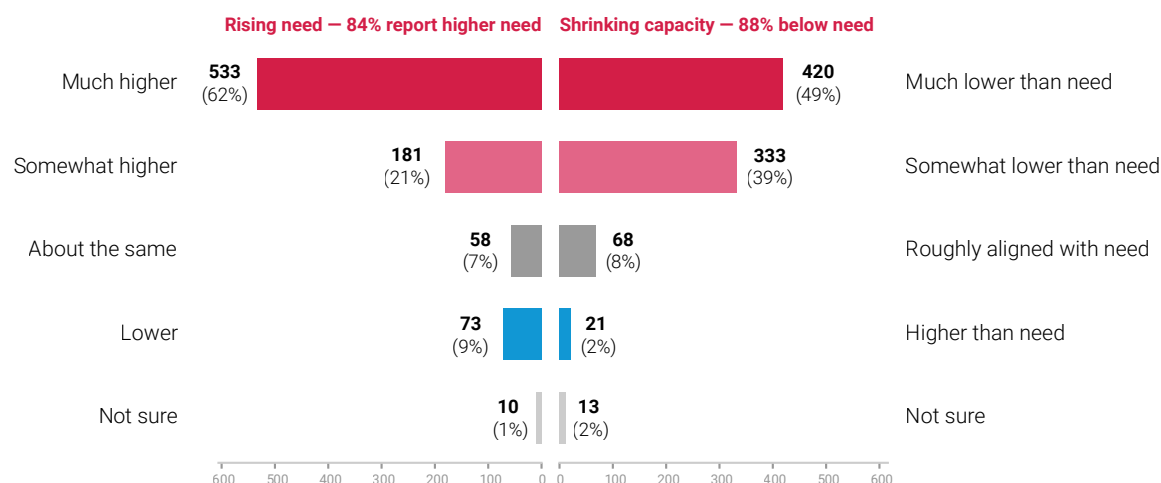
Across the countries and contexts covered by this research, a widening gap has opened between what women and girls need and what the organizations best placed to support them can provide. Most respondents (84 per cent) report that the number of women and girls in their communities requiring

support has increased since January 2025, with nearly two thirds (62 per cent) describing needs as much higher than before.

At the same time, 88 per cent report that their organization’s capacity falls below current levels of need, including nearly half (49 per cent) who describe the gap as substantial.

FIGURE 1
RISING NEED, FALLING CAPACITY

Compared to before the funding cuts, the number of women and girls needing support in your area is: | Q16d. Compared to the current level of need, your organization’s capacity to provide services is:

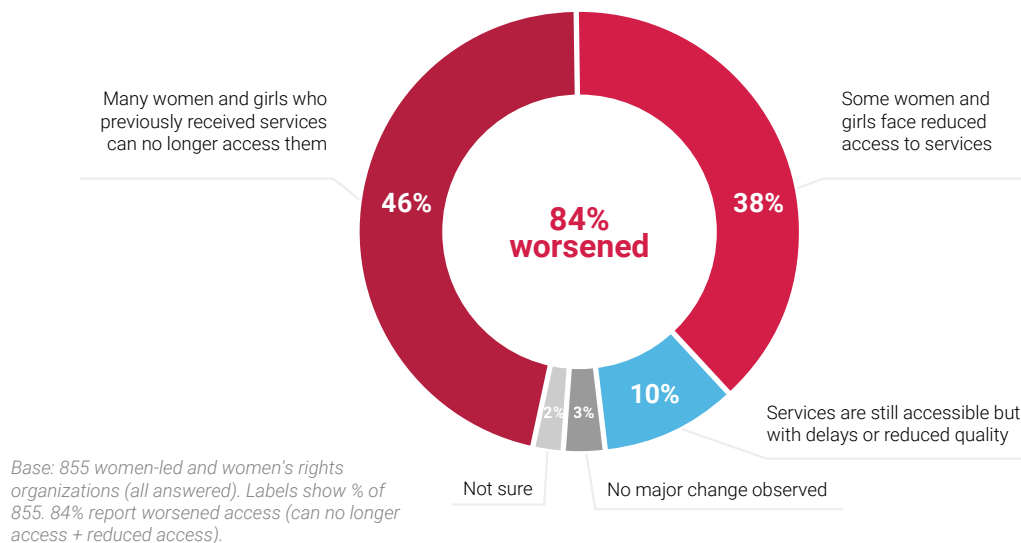


“Since January 2025 until now, food assistance has considerably decreased and, paradoxically, the number of internally displaced people in our area of operation has considerably increased. Many of them struggle to find food, and many children no longer have access to education, as schools have closed in the areas they fled.”

—Survey respondent, women-led organization, Mali, translated from French

FIGURE 2
CHANGE IN ACCESS TO SERVICES

Since January 2025, how has access to essential services for women and girls changed due to funding cuts?



Even as needs increase, organizations report that access to services for women and girls has significantly worsened. Eighty-four per cent of respondents report a decline since January 2025, including 46 per cent who say that many women and girls who were previously supported can no longer access services at all.

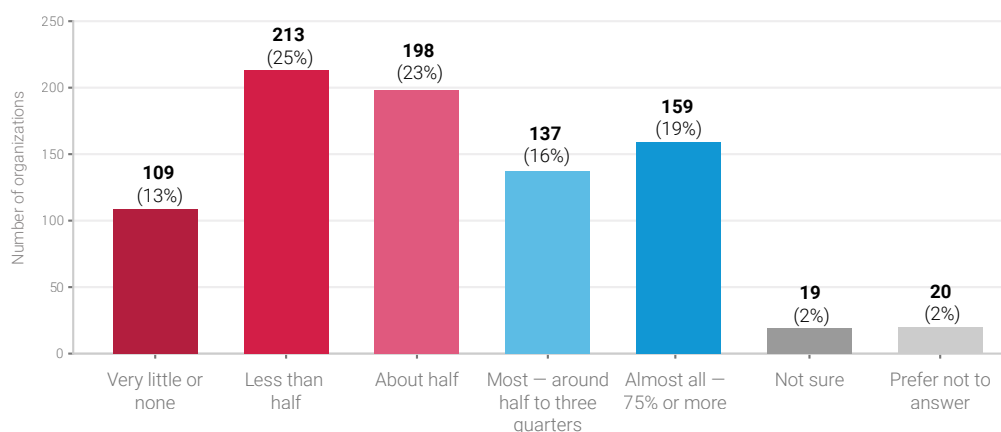
The widening gap between population needs and capacity is increasingly affecting service delivery. More than one third of respondents (38 per cent) report delivering less than half of their planned programming during 2025–2026 despite remaining operational, including 13 per cent who delivered very little or none at all.

“We currently reach around 300 women and girls annually, compared to around 500 previously. This has reduced access to community accompaniment, safe discussion spaces, women’s leadership support, protection outreach, and livelihood and food resilience activities.”

—Survey respondent, women-led organization, Indonesia

FIGURE 3
SHARE OF PLANNED PROGRAMME DELIVERED

How much of your planned 2025–2026 programming has your organization been able to deliver?



Base: 855 women-led and women's rights organizations (all answered). Counts shown with % of 855. 38% delivered less than half (very little or none + less than half).

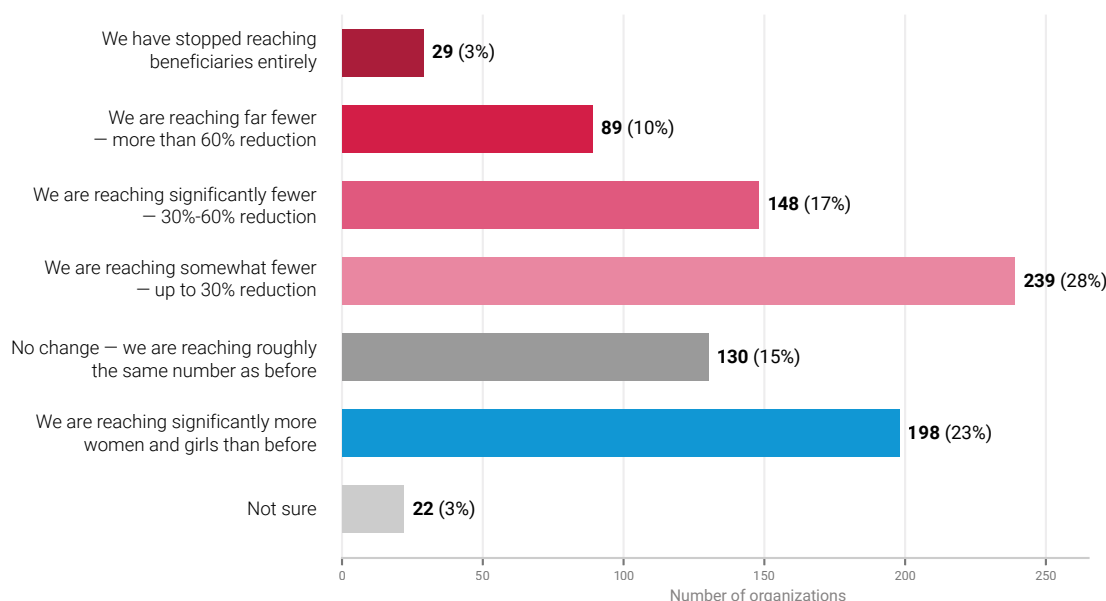
“Due to the enormous increase in needs, we were forced to put more than 1,500 female-headed households on a waiting list. The most affected groups are single mothers and their children, for whom postponing support has worsened food insecurity and malnutrition.”

—Survey respondent, women-led organization, Democratic Republic of the Congo, translated from French

FIGURE 4

CHANGE IN NUMBERS REACHED

How has the number of women and girls your organization reaches changed since January 2025?



Base: 855 women-led and women's rights organizations (all answered). Counts shown with % of 855. 59% are reaching fewer women and girls (any reduction or stopped); 23% reaching significantly more.

As programmes contract, more than half of responding organizations (59 per cent) report reaching fewer women and girls than before January 2025. For many, the reductions are severe. Half of service-providing organizations (50 per cent) have been forced to implement waiting lists or turn women and girls away because resources can no longer meet demand.

Based on self-reported estimates, nearly 6 in 10 organizations are reaching fewer women and girls than before January 2025, having reduced their services by anywhere from less than 30 per cent to

a complete cessation. As a result, nearly one million women and girls who once received support are no longer being reached.⁹ Almost half of operational agencies have introduced waiting lists or been forced to turn women and girls away.

While indicative rather than representative, the finding points to the potentially significant scale of unmet needs emerging across crisis-affected settings. For women and girls who rely on these services, the impacts on their safety, livelihoods and dignity are immediate and long-lasting.

“We had insufficient funds to better support refugee families with several children. Some beneficiaries were left without necessary medication. Recently, the suspension of funding for oncology medical services created multiple difficulties and distress for our beneficiaries and other organizations.”

— Survey respondent, women-led organization, Moldova, translated from Romanian

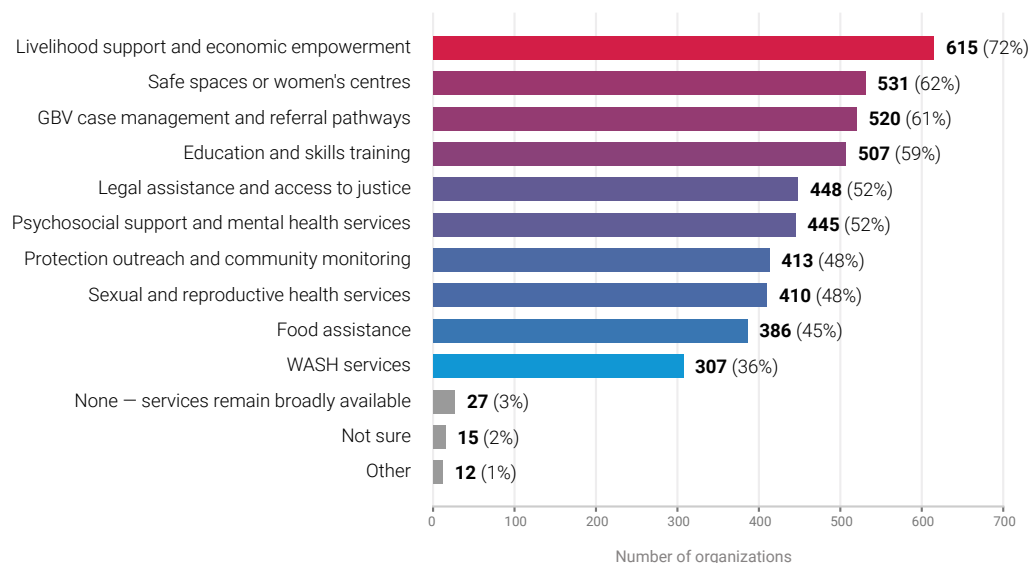
“Cuts have affected pregnant women who cannot take vitamins because we no longer have them at our organization. Girls who self-harm do not receive proper care due to the lack of support staff, since the relevant services are now far from our communities.”

—Survey respondent, women-led organization, Venezuela, translated from Spanish

FIGURE 5

SERVICES UNAVAILABLE OR SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED

Which services for women and girls are now unavailable or significantly reduced in your area? (Select all that apply)



Base: 855 women-led and women's rights organizations (all answered). Multiple responses allowed, so percentages sum to more than 100%. Colour intensity reflects how often each service was reported; grey = summary responses. Counts shown with % of 855.

Service disruptions span the full range of gender-responsive programming. The most frequently reported reductions are in livelihoods and economic empowerment support (72 per cent), safe spaces and women's centres (62 per cent) and gender-based violence case management and referral services (61 per cent). Disruptions have also been reported to education and legal assistance, psychosocial support, sexual and reproductive health and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). This leaves women and girls who rely on these interconnected services without access. In many communities, few or no alternative service providers are available.

Organizations report reductions in their ability to reach groups already facing the greatest barriers, including adolescent girls, women and girls living in remote or hard-to-reach areas, women and girls with disabilities, female-headed households and displaced women and girls. As organizational capacity contracts, existing inequalities deepen, with the most excluded bearing a disproportionate share of the consequences.



Photo: Democratic Republic of Congo, August 2023. Women leaders in North Kivu convened in Bukavu to share experiences and ambitions in a roundtable discussion with UN Women and the DRC Ministry of Gender. Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown

BURUNDI

When survivors are left to find their own way

For more than two decades, a local women-led organization has supported survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in Burundi. In 2024, it reached more than 1,100 women offering an integrated model combining healthcare, HIV prevention, psychosocial support and legal assistance.

The model's success hinged on the organization's outreach abilities. Staff transported women to services, provided home-based psychosocial support, and visited communities to find the most vulnerable survivors – the ones least able to come to them.

In 2025, that changed.

"Now, because we no longer have the resources, we have had to shift to a system where survivors must come to the organization by themselves," said the organization's representative. *"Many of the most vulnerable women cannot afford to travel."*

The losses compound each other. Food support, temporary accommodation, and long-term follow-up care – which help survivors rebuild, not just survive – can no longer be reliably provided. Staff now travel by public transport carrying sensitive case materials. Many are working without pay to keep services running.

The organization is fighting to protect not just its existence, but the integrated approach that made it so effective.

"Without sustainable funding, it becomes impossible to provide the level of care that survivors truly need."

—Interview, Representative of a women-led organization, Burundi

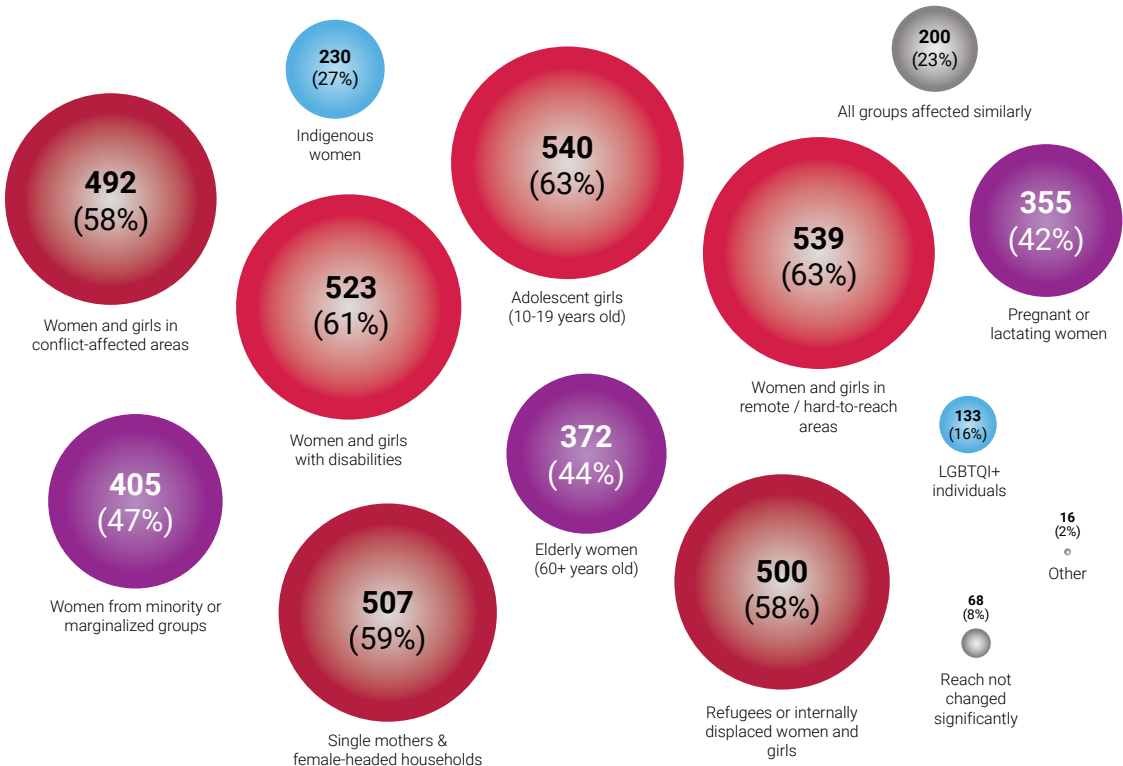
The contraction in organizational capacity has also reduced the geographic reach of services, leaving some communities – particularly those located in remote areas, informal displacement settings and conflict-affected zones – with fewer sources of support and, in many cases, no alternatives at all. Women-led and women’s rights organizations often operate precisely in these locations where access to humanitarian services is already limited.

“A 15-year-old girl with a physical disability was regularly attending school and receiving assistive support, including mobility aids and educational materials, through our organization’s disability inclusion programme. Due to reduced donor funding, we had to scale back these services, including transportation support and follow-up visits.”

—Survey respondent, women-led organization, Bangladesh

FIGURE 6
GROUPS WITH REDUCED ACCESS

Have funding cuts affected your ability to reach specific vulnerable groups among your beneficiaries? (Select all that apply)



Base: 855 women-led and women’s rights organizations (all answered). Circle size = number of organizations; multiple responses allowed, so percentages sum to more than 100%. All 14 response options shown, including ‘All groups affected similarly’ (23%) and reach ‘not changed significantly’ (8%). Counts shown with % of 855.

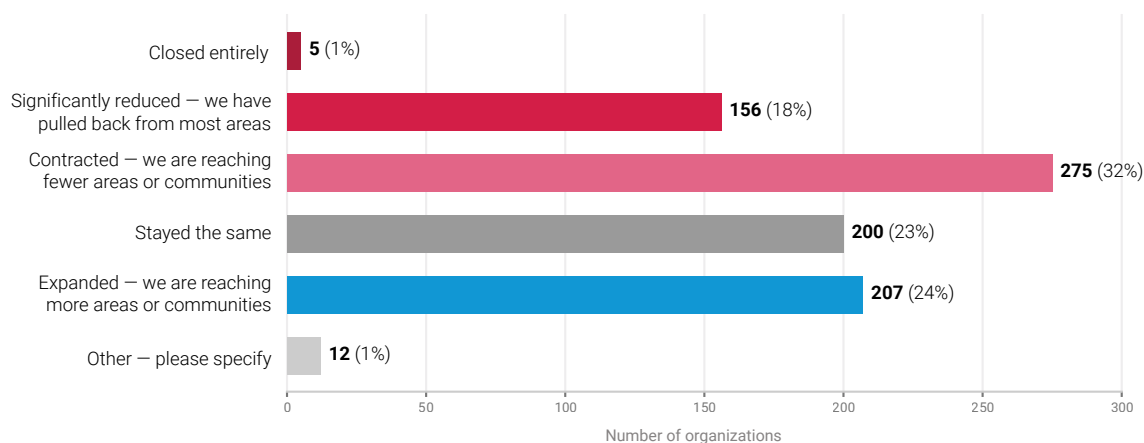
“We were operating in five or six refugee settlements. Now we work in three.”

—Survey respondent, women-led organization, Uganda

FIGURE 7

CHANGES IN GEOGRAPHIC REACH

Compared to before January 2025, has your organization's geographic reach changed?



Base: 855 women-led and women's rights organizations (all answered). Counts shown with % of 855. 51% contracted (contracted + significantly reduced + closed); 24% expanded.

More than half of respondents (51 per cent) report that their geographic reach has reduced since January 2025, with almost one in five (18 per cent) having pulled back from most areas they previously served. Five organizations among survey respondents report having closed entirely. Actual closures are likely much higher, as organizations that have suspended or shut down are less likely to have participated in the survey.

These contractions sit alongside a more complex picture: while nearly one quarter of organizations report expanded geographic coverage, this should

not be read as a sign of organizational growth or increased capacity. In many cases, expansion reflects the withdrawal of other service providers from those areas, leaving organizations as the last – and often under-resourced – point of contact for women and girls with nowhere else to turn. Others may have extended their geographic reach by reducing the depth or frequency of services in areas they already served, reaching more places, but serving each one less well.

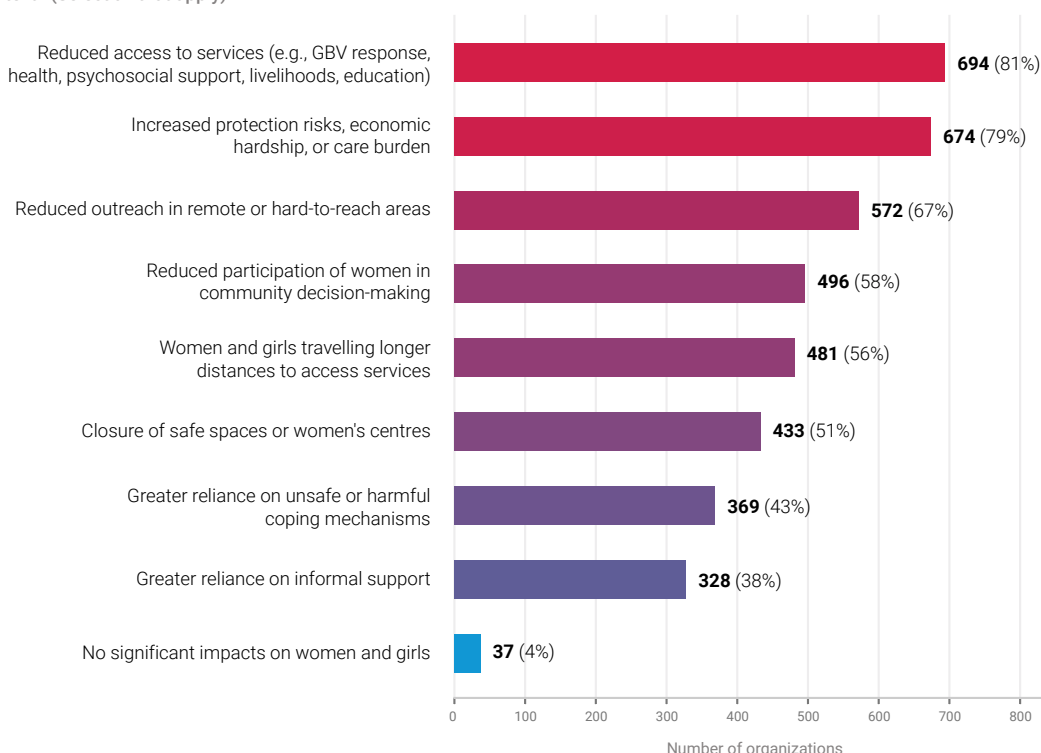
“We have now shrunk our geographical footprint from 12 to 8 provinces. That’s how bad it looks.”

—Interview, Representative of a women-led organization, Afghanistan

FIGURE 8

IMPACT OF FUNDING CUTS ON WOMEN AND GIRLS

Based on direct observation or documented evidence, how have funding reductions affected crisis-affected women and girls in your context? (Select all that apply)



Base: 855 women-led and women's rights organizations (all answered). Multiple responses allowed, so percentages sum to more than 100%. Colour intensity reflects how often each effect was reported. Counts shown with % of 855.

As formal services become less available, women and girls are increasingly relying on alternative sources of support. More than one third of respondents (38 per cent) report observing greater reliance on informal support networks among the women and girls they serve, reflecting an increasing dependence on family members, neighbors and

community-based support. While these networks can provide an important source of solidarity and resilience, they are often unable to replace the specialized services, referral pathways and sustained support provided by women-led and women's rights organizations.

There have been instances where needs expanded into new locations affected by displacement or economic hardship, but available resources were insufficient to expand programming accordingly. This creates situations where vulnerable women in one area may receive comprehensive support while equally vulnerable women elsewhere remain underserved."

—Interview, Representative of a women-led organization, Lebanon, translated from Arabic

2. Protection risks are increasing as support systems contract

“Due to a lack of outreach workers in one neighbourhood, within a few months we observed a sharp rise in adolescent pregnancies.”

—Survey respondent, women-led organization, Democratic Republic of the Congo, translated from French

The findings suggest a deteriorating protection environment that extends well beyond the loss of individual services. Respondents were asked to rate whether each of seven specific protection risks had increased, stayed the same or decreased over the past year, based on direct observation or community feedback.¹⁰ Across every indicator, the balance of observed change is strongly negative, pointing to a concerning pattern of worsening risks alongside the reduction of services intended to prevent and respond to them.¹¹

Women’s economic vulnerability and poverty is the most widely observed deterioration, with 92 per cent of respondents observing an increase, followed by rising mental health distress and psychological

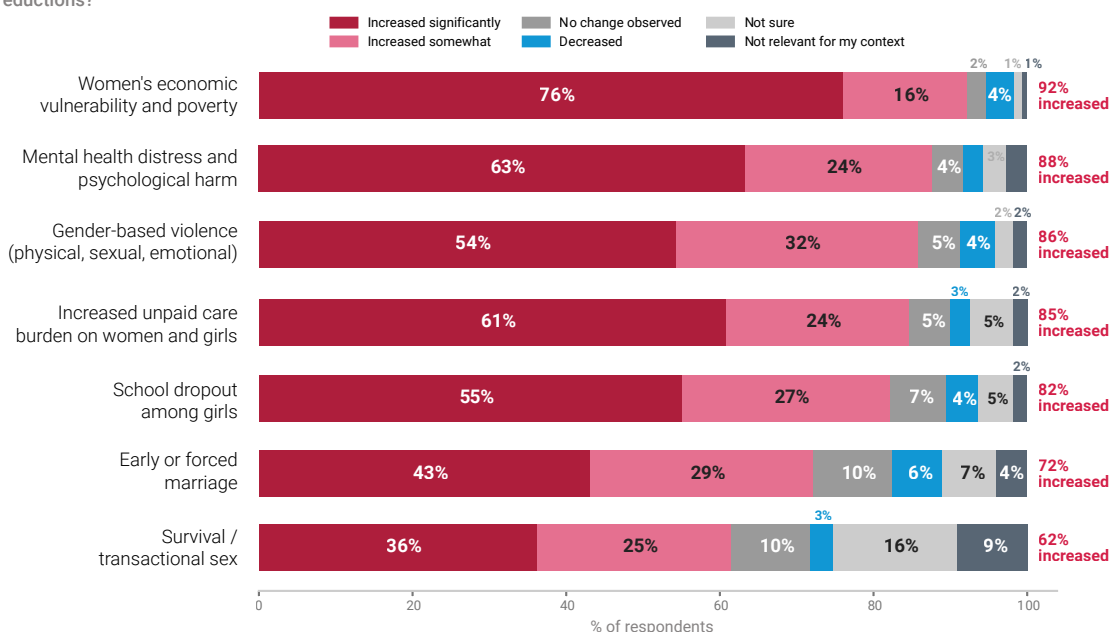
harm (88 per cent), gender-based violence (86 per cent) and school dropout rates among girls (82 per cent).

The reported increase in the risk of gender-based violence (GBV) is particularly alarming given simultaneous reductions in services critical to GBV prevention and response, including case management, safe spaces and protection outreach. Respondents also observe an increasing reliance by women and girls on harmful coping strategies as economic pressures intensify and access to support declines. Nearly three quarters (72 per cent) observe increases in early or forced marriage, while three in five (61 per cent) report increases in survival or transactional sex.

FIGURE 9

INCREASES IN PROTECTION RISKS SINCE FUNDING REDUCTIONS

Based on your observations, have the following protection risks increased among women and girls in your area since the funding reductions?



Base: 855 women-led and women's rights organizations (all answered). All six survey response options shown; every segment labelled with its % of 855. 'Not relevant for my context' reflects respondents who did not rate the risk on the increase/decrease scale.

“It is important to underline that funding reductions translate not only into a reduction of services but into a rapid worsening of already existing vulnerabilities. Negative coping mechanisms are increasing – child marriage, child labour and risky migration. The lack of project continuity also undermines community trust in humanitarian actors.”

—Survey respondent, women-led organization, Niger, translated from French

Qualitative interviews reinforce these findings. Respondents describe women remaining in abusive relationships because of economic dependency, girls leaving school as households struggle to cope with declining incomes, and families resorting to increasingly desperate strategies to meet basic needs as livelihood opportunities and essential services diminish.

As services contract, women and girls are also facing increasing barriers to accessing what support remains available. More than half of respondents

(56 per cent) report that many women and girls are traveling longer distances to access assistance, creating additional barriers and exposing them to greater security risks. These burdens fall particularly heavily on those already facing constraints on mobility including women with disabilities, pregnant women, older women and those caring for young children.

“Most of the women-related projects are funded by international donors. Their closure has not only shrunk the space and scope of our work – the abrupt closure of many of these projects has left initiatives half-finished and had a negative impact on the community. We are witnessing an overall increase in violence against women.”

—Survey respondent, women-led organization, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), translated from French



Photo: Internally displaced women supported by UN Women gather in a room at a collective site in Kharkiv to take part in a social sewing workshop under a project implemented by UN Women Ukraine in partnership with NGO “Unity Platform”. The project is financially supported by the Governments of Sweden and Latvia, as well as by the UN Women National Committees.

Photo: UN Women/Denys Kryvopyslyn

HAITI

When a shelter cannot say yes

A women-led shelter in Haiti has spent years sheltering displaced women and survivors of gang violence, offering food, hygiene support, psychosocial care and a temporary place to stay while families rebuild their lives. By 2025, funding cuts had reduced the organization's staff from 14 to as few as 4, forcing several projects to end.

Among the families relying on the shelter was a mother of four children, one of whom had ongoing health needs. For months, staff stretched what little they had to keep the family fed. Eventually, they could not.

"We struggled for months to provide food for everyone. Eventually, we could no longer meet the family's needs," said the organization's leader.

"We asked them to leave even though we knew they had nowhere else to go."

Around two months later, one of the daughters was raped.

"If we had had sufficient resources to keep the family at the shelter, this tragedy might have been avoided," the leader said.

The organization later welcomed the mother and her children back, arranging psychosocial support and follow-up care for the girl. The decision to ask them to leave in the first place remains, in the leader's words, one of the most painful the organization has ever made.

—Interview, Representative of a women-led organization, Haiti, translated from Haitian Creole

"A survivor of domestic violence in Mardan was receiving regular legal aid and psychosocial counselling through our projects. Since our funding was cut and the projects were suspended in early 2025, we were forced to stop sessions for multiple women. Without this support, several survivors were unable to continue their legal cases for protection and had to return to abusive households."

—Survey respondent, women-led organization, Pakistan



Photo: The manager at a women-led organization in central Afghanistan supported by UN Women speaks with women seeking access to primary healthcare, mental health counselling and psychosocial support. Up to 400 women benefit from the centre's services every week, many of whom would be unable to afford this support elsewhere. Photo: UN Women/Sayed Habib Bidell

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

When a safe space closes, the risks do not wait

In Northern Kivu, a women-led organization runs a programme for displaced adolescent girls that includes psychosocial support for survivors of violence, dignity kits, support to stay in school, and free referral to medical care when needed. In 2024, the programme was supporting Amina (name changed), a 16-year-old, internally displaced girl living with her mother and three younger brothers in an informal site near Goma.

In February 2025, funding reductions forced the organization to suspend several of these activities at once. The girls' safe space closed. Dignity kit distribution stopped. Psychosocial follow-up was scaled back to a fraction of what it had been.

A few weeks later, a man approached Amina and offered to pay her school fees in exchange for sex, an attempted act of sexual exploitation. Without the programme's safe space, or the regular psychosocial check-ins that had once given her somewhere to turn, she did not report the incident right away.

Her mother, already struggling, could no longer cover school costs once the education support programme ended. By March 2025, Amina had dropped out of school entirely.

The organization described how the funding cuts affected Amina: she dropped out of school, faced an increased risk of sexual exploitation as she sought ways to meet her basic needs, and experienced worsening anxiety and isolation. With regular psychosocial support discontinued, she no longer had access to free medical or legal services.

—Survey respondent, women-led organization, Democratic Republic of the Congo, translated from French

3. Women's organizations are under severe financial and operational strain

[Our organization] is currently at a critical stage: all our active projects have been suspended due to the conclusion of funding and recent global funding shifts. As a local women-led organization, we have the trust of the community and the expertise to handle complex protection issues, but we lack the core funding to keep our office open and our specialized staff in place.”

—Survey respondent, women-led organization, Pakistan

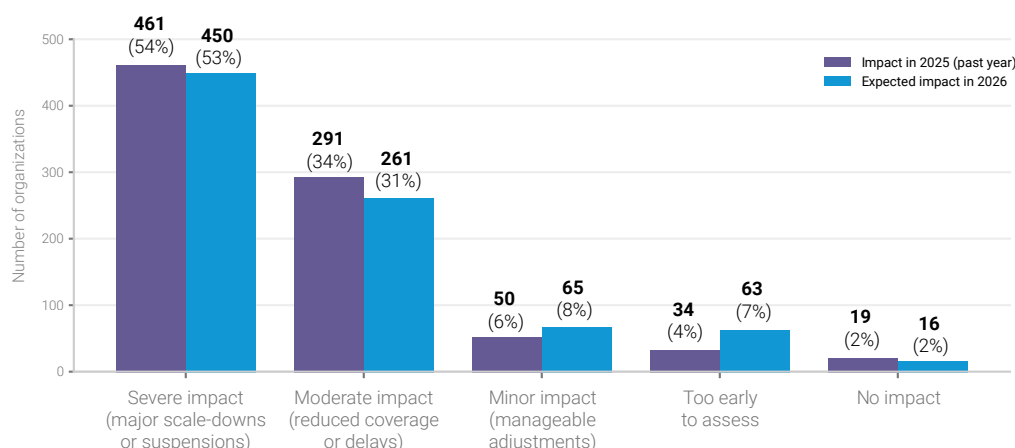
3.1. Financial sustainability

More than a year and a half into a period of severe and ongoing financial cuts, funding shortages have become entrenched. Most organizations surveyed report significant financial and operational impacts, with nearly 9 in 10 (88 per cent) describing the impact on their organization in 2025 as moderate or severe. Fewer than 1 in 10 (8 per cent) report only minor or no impact.

Organizations expect little improvement in 2026. More than 8 in 10 (83 per cent) anticipate moderate or severe impacts over the coming year, indicating that most are planning for continued financial strain rather than recovery.

FIGURE 10
SEVERITY OF FUNDING CRISIS (2025 ACTUAL VS 2026 EXPECTED)

Severity of funding cuts on your organization: impact in 2025 (past year) versus expected impact in 2026.



Base: 855 women-led and women's rights organizations (all answered). Counts shown with % of 855. 88% report severe or moderate impact in 2025 and 83% expect the same in 2026.

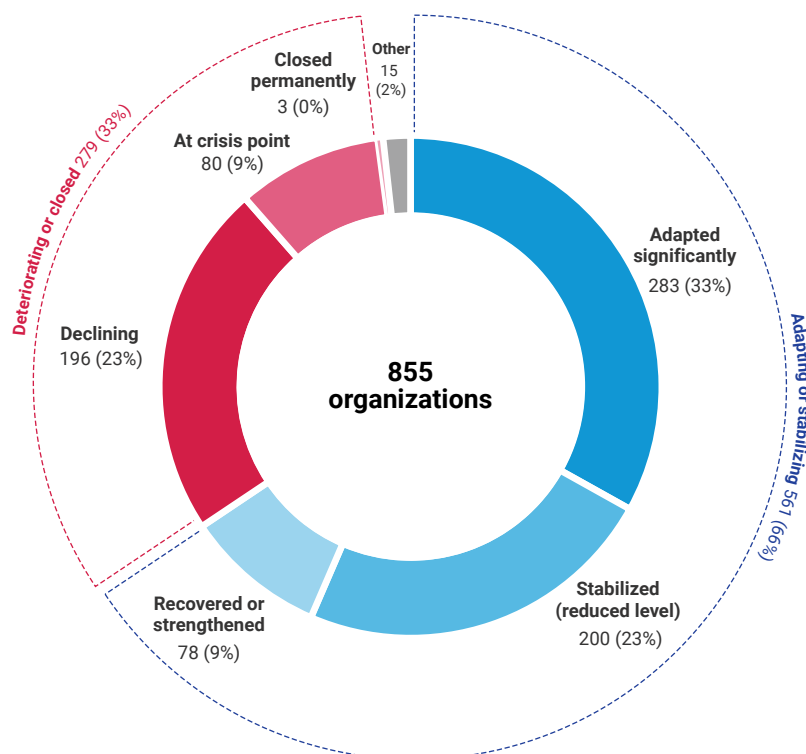
Organizations have not recovered from the initial funding shock. Instead, many have adapted by operating at a significantly reduced level. More than half of respondents (56 per cent) report that their organizations have either adapted significantly (33 per cent) or stabilized at a reduced level (23 per cent), maintaining operations by restructuring programmes, reducing activities and operating with fewer resources. At the same time, nearly one third (32 per cent) report continued deterioration, with their organizations either declining (23 per cent) or at a crisis point (9 per cent). By contrast, only 9 per cent report having recovered or strengthened.

“The state allocates very little funding to the programmes we implement. Therefore, our main activities are carried out with funding from international donors, which is extremely important, especially in the regions and rural areas.”

—Survey respondent, women-led organization, Armenia

FIGURE 11
CURRENT ORGANIZATIONAL STATUS

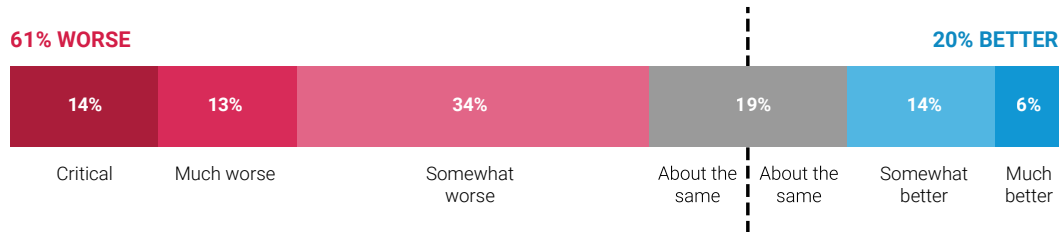
Which best describes the current state of your organization? (Select one)



Base: 855 women-led and women's rights organizations (all answered). Outer ring = grouping (adapting/stabilizing, deteriorating/closed, other); inner ring = each status. Counts shown with % of 855.

FIGURE 12
FINANCIAL SITUATION IN 2026 COMPARED WITH 2025

Compared to 2025, how would you describe your organization's overall financial situation in 2026?



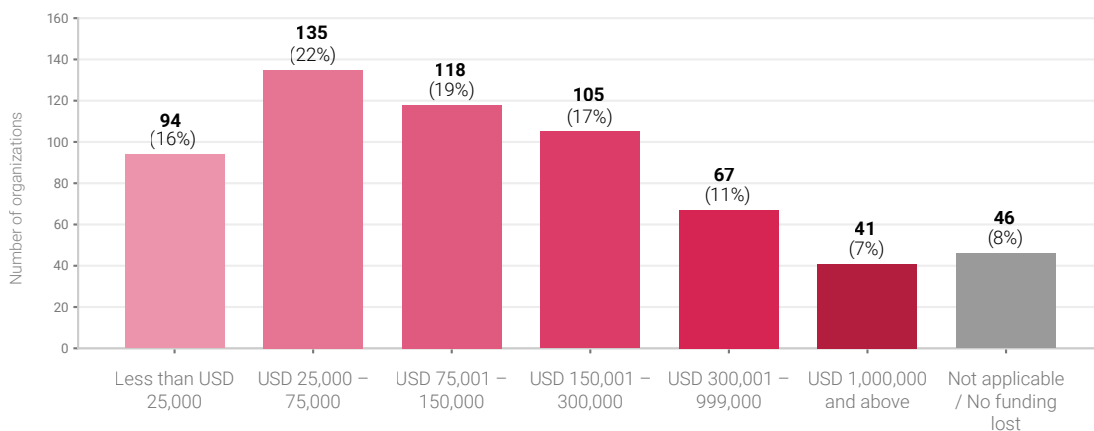
Base: 855 women-led and women's rights organizations (all answered). Bars left of centre = worse, right = better. Labels show % of 855. 61% report a worse situation (including 14% critical); 20% report a better one.

Despite widespread efforts to adapt, the financial position of many organizations continues to deteriorate. More than three in five respondents (61 per cent) report that their organization's financial situation is worse than in 2025, including 14 per cent who describe it as critical, with immediate funding shortfalls threatening ongoing operations. By contrast, 14 per cent note that funding pressures have eased somewhat, while 6 per cent report a much better situation due to securing additional funding.

Among the 560 organizations able to estimate their funding losses, respondents collectively reported losing approximately \$170 million in international assistance during 2025.¹² While reported losses varied considerably among organizations, the estimated median loss was approximately \$112,500 per organization, and 41 organizations reported losing more than \$1 million.

FIGURE 13
FUNDING LOSSES 2025

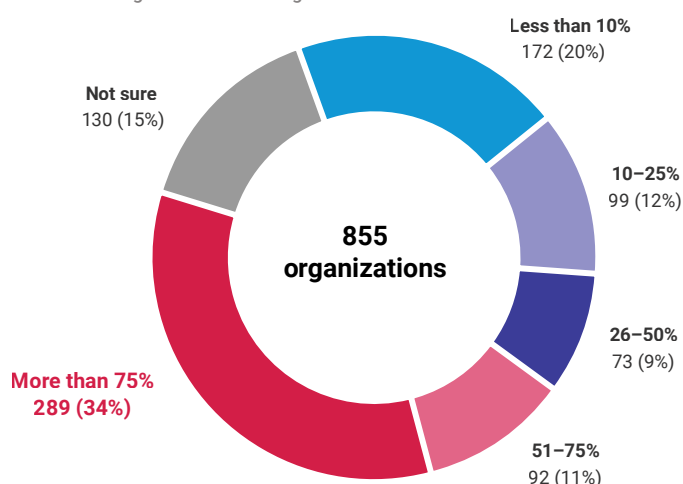
Approximately how much funding did your organization lose in 2025 due to foreign assistance reductions?



Base: 606 organizations that reported funding reductions (of 855). Counts shown with % of 606. 560 quantified a loss; 41 lost USD 1 million or more.

FIGURE 14
SHARE OF FUNDING FROM FOREIGN AID

What proportion of your current funding comes from foreign assistance?



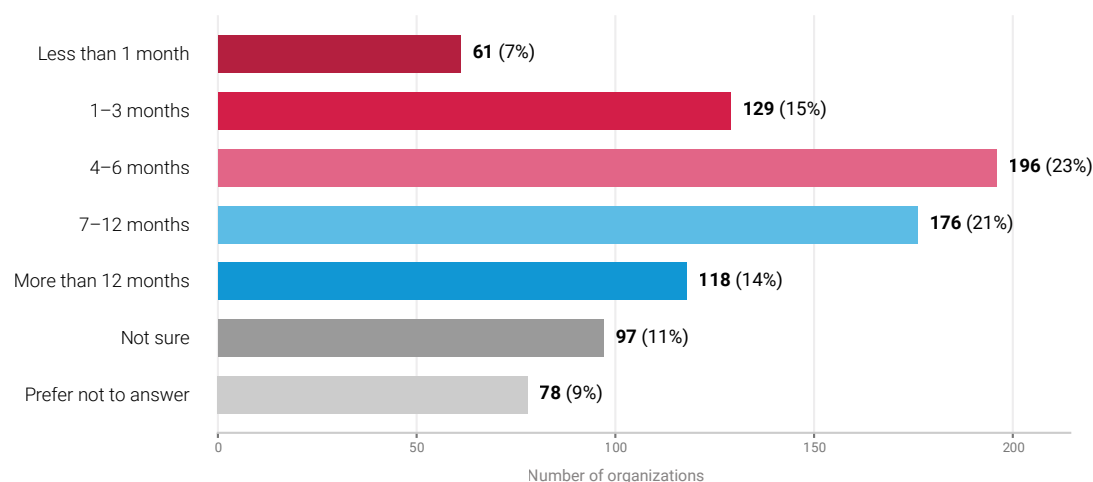
Base: 855 women-led and women's rights organizations (all answered). Counts shown with % of 855.

For organizations operating on relatively modest annual budgets, losses of this magnitude have major implications for organizational viability and continuity of operations. More than one third (34 per cent) report that over three quarters of their current funding comes from international assistance, leaving them highly vulnerable when funding is reduced or suspended. With limited financial buffers and few resources sufficient to offset sudden shortfalls, funding losses rapidly translate into staffing reductions, programme contraction and broader financial strain.

The financial pressures described above are increasingly reflected in organizations' assessments of their ability to continue operating. Nearly half of respondents (45 per cent) report having six months or less of remaining operational runway, including more than one in five with three months or less. Approximately 60 organizations report having less than one month before they will be forced to suspend operations in the absence of additional funding. Only 14 per cent report having more than one year of financial security.

FIGURE 15
OPERATIONAL RUNWAY

At your current funding level, how long can your organization sustain operations?



Base: 855 women-led and women's rights organizations (all answered). All seven response options shown. Counts shown with % of 855. 45% have 6 months or less; 14% have more than 12 months.

The risk of organizational suspension or permanent closure remains similarly high. Forty-one per cent of respondents assess that suspension or permanent closure is likely within the next 12 months, including 13 per cent who consider it very likely.

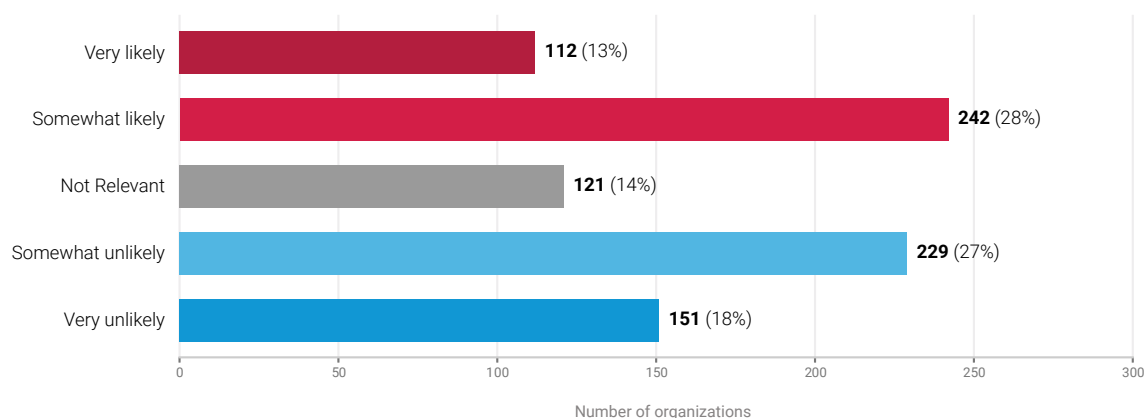
These projections carry implications beyond future planning. When organizations are uncertain whether they can continue operating beyond a few months, retaining staff, maintaining their morale, sustaining services and investing in organizational capacity all become increasingly difficult. Short planning horizons also discourage longer-term partnerships and investments that are essential for organizational resilience.

3.2. The workforce sustaining women's organizations

The financial pressures described above are inseparable from their human consequences for the staff who sustain these organizations and their work. For many organizations, maintaining operations has depended on substantial workforce reductions. More than three quarters of respondents (77 per cent) report having laid off staff since January 2025. Among these, nearly two in five (39 per cent) reduced their workforce by more than 30 per cent, including one in five that reported staff losses of 60 per cent or more.

FIGURE 16
RISK OF CLOSURE

How likely is your organization to suspend or permanently close operations in the next 12 months due to funding cuts?



Base: 855 women-led and women's rights organizations (all answered). Counts shown with % of 855. 41% consider closure likely (very + somewhat likely), including 13% very likely.

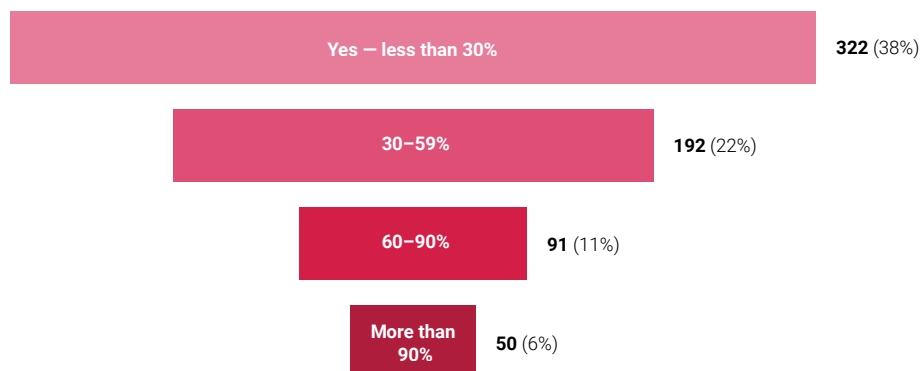
"I had to let staff go, because there was no certainty about future funding. I kept them for three months, as long as I could. It was a very difficult decision."

—Interview, Representative of a women-led organization, Uganda

FIGURE 17
WORKFORCE REDUCTION

Have you experienced staff losses due to funding cuts? (depth of workforce loss)

Of 855 organizations, 655 (77%) lost staff. No staff losses: 200 (23%).



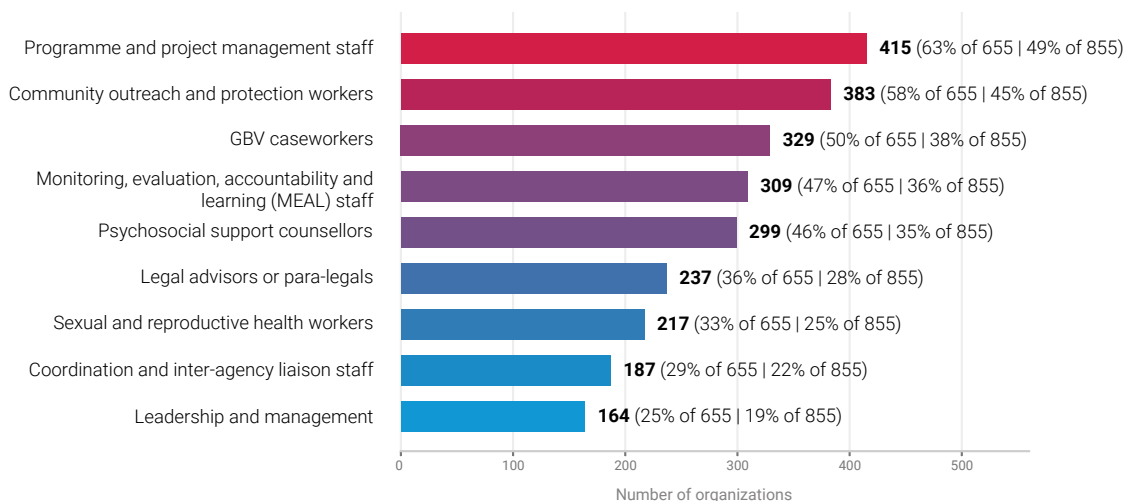
Base: 855 women-led and women's rights organizations (all answered). Counts shown with % of 855. Funnel shows the four loss bands; 'No' (200; 23%) not shown in the funnel.

Among organizations that report workforce reductions, staff losses span both frontline and management functions. Among frontline roles, respondents most frequently report losses of community outreach and protection workers (58 per cent), gender-based violence case workers (50 per cent), psychosocial staff (35 per cent) and sexual and reproductive health workers (25 per cent). Programme and project management (63 per cent) and organizational leadership (25 per cent) were also affected.

Nearly half of respondents (45 per cent) report losing staff with specialized skills, while one third (33 per cent) report the loss of institutional knowledge, community relationships and coordination functions built over many years.

FIGURE 18
TYPE OF STAFF LOST AMONG ORGANIZATIONS THAT EXPERIENCED STAFF LOSSES

Which types of staff has your organization lost? (among organizations that experienced staff losses)

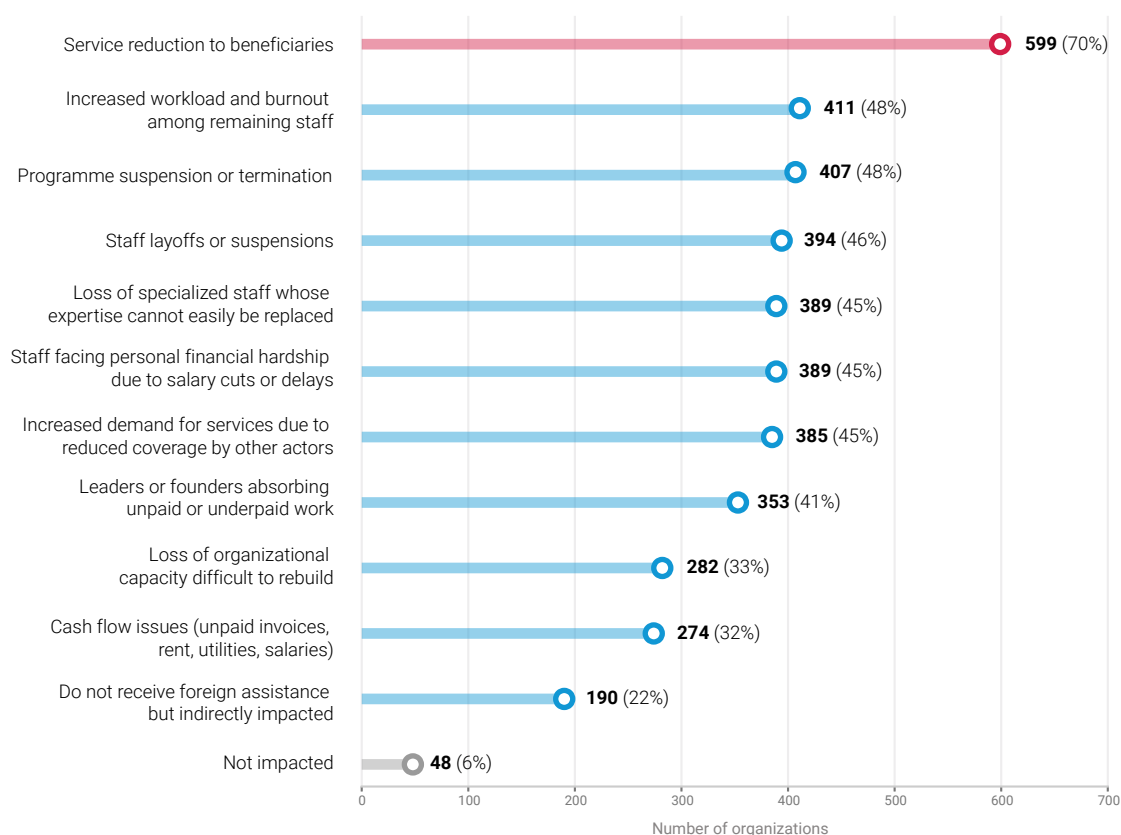


Base: 655 organizations that reported staff losses (of 855). Correct denominator is 655; the dashboard used 855. Both shown per bar. Multiple responses allowed, so percentages sum to more than 100%.

FIGURE 19

CONSEQUENCES OF FUNDING REDUCTIONS INCLUDING LOSS OF STAFF

How has your organization been impacted by funding reductions in 2025? (Select all that apply)



Base: 855 women-led and women's rights organizations (all answered). Multiple responses allowed, so percentages sum to more than 100%. All response options shown, including 'indirectly impacted' (22%) and 'not impacted' (6%). Counts shown with % of 855.

“Several of our core staff agreed to work intermittently without pay for the entire period, prioritizing the allocation of scarce resources to field logistics.”

—Survey respondent, women-led organization, DRC, translated from French

“Some staff have gone three or four months without receiving salaries. This creates enormous hardship. In community-based work, commitment and goodwill are important, but goodwill alone cannot meet daily needs.”

—Interview, Representative of a women-led organization, Haiti, translated from Haitian Creole

“Our counsellors continue working without pay because they cannot abandon the women they support.”

—Interview, Representative of a women-led organization, Sudan, translated from Arabic

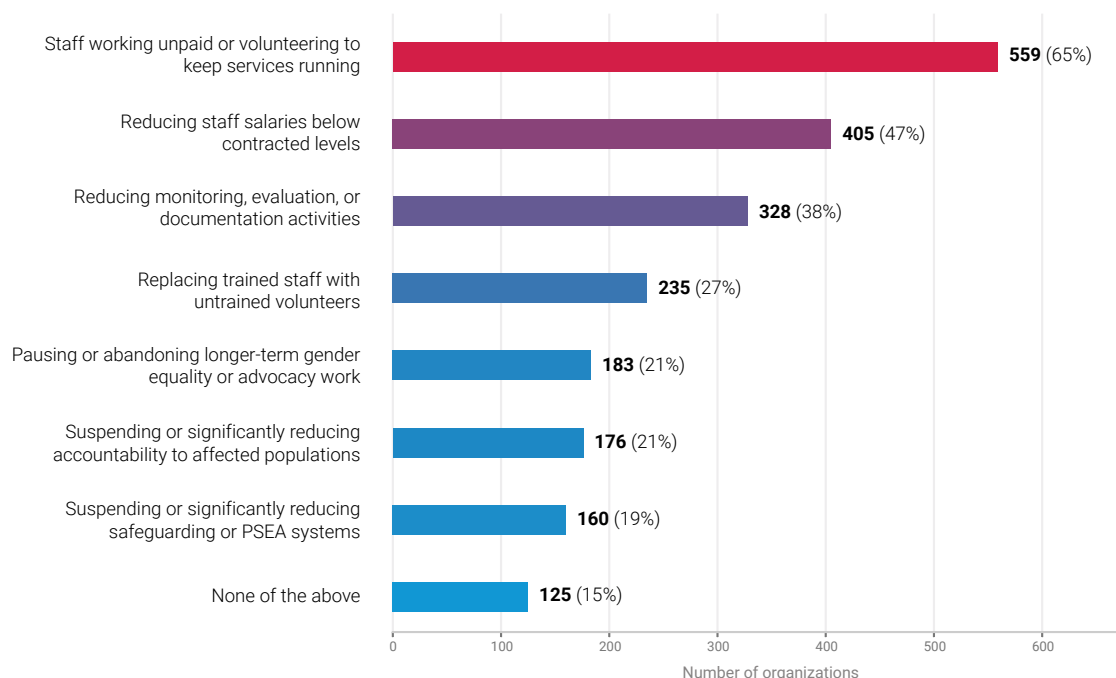
Against a backdrop of persistent and growing humanitarian needs, organizations are increasingly relying on the unpaid labour, goodwill and the personal sacrifices of remaining staff to sustain operations. Nearly two thirds of respondents (65 per cent) report that staff are working unpaid or contributing additional voluntary time to keep programmes running. Interviews with directors of some women-led organizations reveal a strong commitment among staff to continue working despite receiving

reduced or no pay, so as not to abandon women and girls who depend on their organizations for protection, essential services and the realization of their rights. Organizational leaders are also increasingly drawing on personal savings and taking on debt to sustain operations.¹³ Nearly half of respondents report implementing salary reductions as an additional measure.

FIGURE 20

DIFFICULT MEASURES ADOPTED TO SUSTAIN OPERATIONS

What difficult measures has your organization adopted to continue operating? (Select all that apply)



Base: 855 women-led and women's rights organizations (all answered). Multiple responses allowed, so percentages sum to more than 100%. Counts shown with % of 855.

SUDAN

Women sustaining services through personal sacrifice

Since the war broke out in Sudan in April 2023, women-led organizations have been on the frontlines of the response. For one women's organization, the funding cuts created a second emergency. As external support declined, staff numbers fell by half, salaries became irregular, and the organization suspended operations entirely for a six-month period. Its leader borrowed money from relatives to reopen, and she and her colleagues volunteered their time, in some cases taking on work elsewhere to afford internet access and transportation for the organization while continuing to seek funding.

"The women and girls were waiting for us, so we had to keep going," said the organization's representative.

The consequences of operating without adequate resources have been felt directly by the women they serve. Without funding for

transport, referrals and emergency assistance, responses were delayed. A 17-year-old survivor of sexual violence went untreated for four days. With no resources available, the organization's leader could offer only her presence. The girl became pregnant, later attempted suicide, and died after six months.

"If I had funding, I would have supported her... helped her heal and rebuild her life."

The organization continues to operate, sustained by community trust and staff commitment that no funding model has yet found a way to replace.

"Women-led organizations are small in number but play a huge role... even without funding we continue. Imagine what we could do with direct support."

—Interview, Representative of a women-led organization, Sudan, translated from Arabic

While this commitment has enabled many organizations to continue operating, it is coming at a significant and growing personal cost. High levels of dedication and volunteerism have long been central to many women's organizations, often relying on substantial voluntary contributions of time and expertise from their leaders and members. However, respondents report that increasing demand, shrinking organizational resources, and reduced staffing are placing additional physical, psychological and

economic pressure on those sustaining these efforts. These are overwhelmingly women who are part of the affected communities themselves, and work in dangerous and difficult conditions as community leaders, service providers, advocates, peacebuilders and human rights defenders. They are experiencing increasing burnout and growing financial hardship with consequences to their health, economic security and well-being.

"Staff members who provide psychosocial support to survivors of violence were simultaneously facing anxiety about their own livelihoods. Managers were expected to provide reassurance while navigating their own uncertainty. These are not merely operational decisions; they affect people's sense of security, purpose and wellbeing."

—Interview, director, women-led organization, Lebanon, translated from Arabic

AFGHANISTAN

Persisting without an office, without pay, without certainty

For one women-led organization in Afghanistan, when the funding ran out, the office closed. Only three staff members remained out of the original twelve. But the organization did not stop. Leadership and remaining staff continued working from home, using personal funds, with no donor in sight.

"There was no donor, and we could not continue our volunteer activities because we had only a small amount of personal funds available," said the organization's representative. "We wanted to continue providing services because we saw the needs in the community and did not want activities to stop."

They were not only navigating a financial crisis. As a women-led organization in Afghanistan, they faced an additional barrier that compounded the others.

"It was difficult for organizations led by women to receive funding because donors and organizations were concerned that [they] might not receive approval from the authorities."

As resources dwindled, the organization had less reach into communities, with consequences that extended beyond service delivery.

"When funding for protection activities decreased or stopped, the distance between us and the communities became greater. Some believe that organizations will support them for only a short period and then stop their activities, leaving them again in difficult situations."

Staff kept going anyway, doing whatever they could to update systems, maintain donor contacts and hold the organization together until something shifted.

"Our reputation, our continued presence in communities, and our persistence helped us survive this period and eventually secure new opportunities to continue serving women and girls."

— Interview, Representative of a women-led organization, Afghanistan

3.3. How organizations are adapting to a changing financing landscape

Despite the constricted funding environment, women-led and women's rights organizations continue to show resilience and adaptability. Organizations report responding to the new funding reality through internal cost-cutting, intensive efforts to identify alternative funding sources, and greater collaboration and pooling of capacities with peers.

More than 7 in 10 respondents (71 per cent) report approaching new donors, while nearly two thirds report seeking additional support from existing donors or reduced operating costs.

Despite these efforts, two in five (40 per cent) secured no new funding in either 2025 or 2026. Among organizations that did obtain new funding (42 per cent), UN agencies and country-based pooled funds were the most common source, while only 8 per cent accessed new bilateral funding directly. Despite considerable efforts to diversify

their funding base, these alternative sources have not been sufficient to offset the scale of funding reductions. Few organizations identified alternative funding sources capable of replacing lost international assistance.

Organizations also are increasingly responding collectively. More than half (54 per cent) report forming new partnerships, coalitions or collaborative arrangements to sustain services, share expertise and adapt to resource constraints. Respondents describe pooling staff, technical knowledge and operational resources in order to continue supporting crisis-affected women and girls.

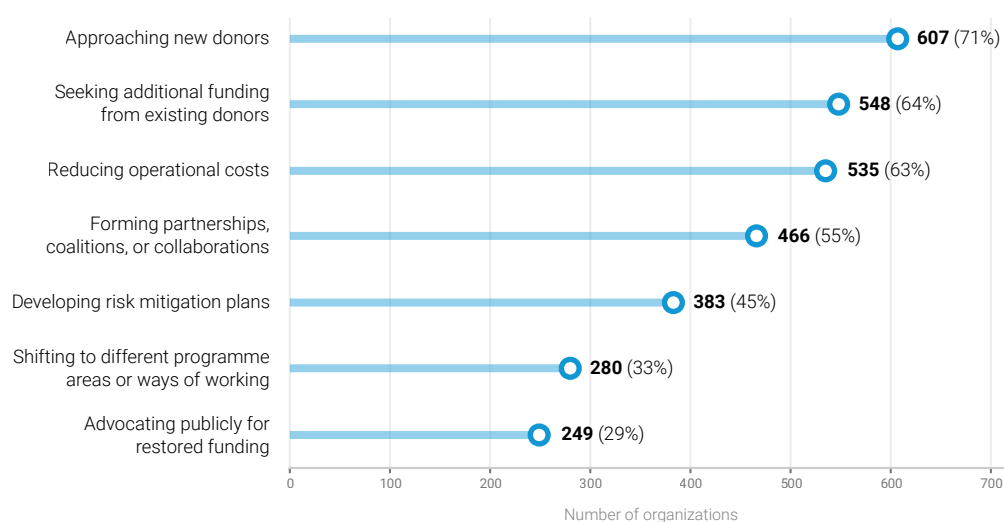
“We share our organization’s vehicle with other partners to cover essential operational costs including office rent and key personnel salaries, as a necessary alternative to total closure. This ensures our doors remain open to serve women and girls during these critical circumstances.”

—Survey respondent, women-led organization, Sudan, translated from Arabic

FIGURE 21

COLLABORATIVE OR PARTNERSHIP STRATEGIES

What strategies has your organization used to cope with funding reductions? (Select all that apply)



Base: 855 women-led and women's rights organizations (all answered). Multiple responses allowed, so percentages sum to more than 100%. Counts shown with % of 855.

4. Core organizational systems are being eroded, threatening long-term resilience

“Every decision has consequences. If resources are directed toward lifesaving response, prevention activities may be reduced. If a shelter remains operational, another intervention may need to be postponed. If a specialized staff position cannot be retained, institutional knowledge may be lost.”

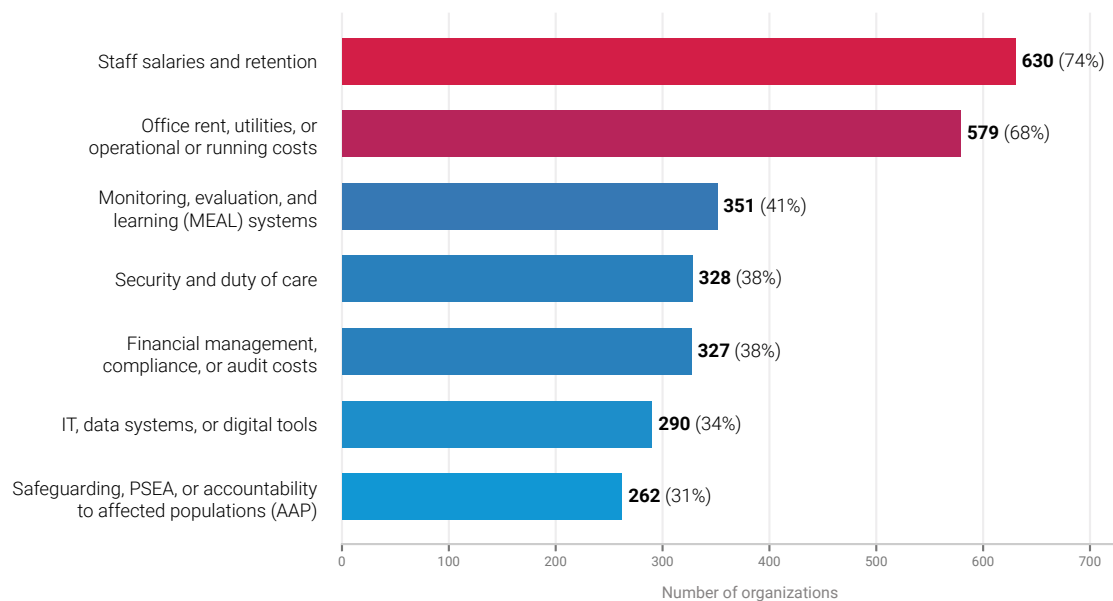
—Interview, Representative of a women-led organization, Lebanon, translated from Arabic

The pressures documented in this report are not confined to staffing and finances. Funding cuts are also hollowing out the core organizational systems that underpin safe, accountable and effective humanitarian action. More than two thirds (68 per cent) of respondents report difficulties covering basic operating costs, such as office rent, utilities and administration.

Reductions are also documented across safeguarding, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), accountability to affected populations, monitoring and evaluation, financial management and compliance, and security. These functions underpin the quality, safety and effectiveness of programme delivery, but are often the first casualties when resources contract.

FIGURE 22
ORGANIZATIONAL FUNCTIONS MOST AFFECTED

Which core organizational functions have been most affected by reduced overhead or core funding? (Select all that apply)



Base: 855 women-led and women’s rights organizations (all answered). Multiple responses allowed, so percentages sum to more than 100%. Colour intensity reflects how often each function was affected. Counts shown with % of 855.

The erosion of safeguarding and accountability systems is particularly concerning. Nearly one in three organizations (31 per cent) report being forced to suspend or significantly reduce safeguarding, PSEA or accountability to affected populations (AAP) functions. A further 27 per cent report having to replace trained staff with volunteers or less specialized personnel, not by choice, but as a last resort to keep frontline services running at all.

The weakening of core functions risks a self-reinforcing cycle: as these capacities decline, organizations become less able to meet donor compliance requirements, making it harder to secure the very funding needed to recover. Without sustained investment

in organizational recovery, the quality, reach and accountability of the humanitarian response for women and girls will suffer lasting damage.

These findings point to an erosion that extends well beyond individual programmes. As organizations scale back operations and cut core systems, they risk losing critical assets built over many years, including trusted community relationships, specialized technical expertise, institutional knowledge, and integrated cross-sectoral approaches to supporting women and girls. These capacities take years to develop and may take considerably longer to rebuild, even if funding recovers.

5. The foundations of gender equality and locally led humanitarian action are being weakened

“I personally am slowly losing my hope after so many years of thinking that we are not alone. But I am getting the feeling that we are alone... the street is getting narrow and darker.”

—Survey respondent, women-led organization, Afghanistan

Women-led and women’s rights organizations play multiple roles across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus – as service providers, advocates, human rights defenders and conveners of women’s participation in decision-making. In crisis and conflict-affected settings, they also contribute to accountability, conflict prevention, peacebuilding, social cohesion, preparedness and recovery. The impacts of funding therefore have implications for the humanitarian response and for longer-term progress towards gender equality, localization, peacebuilding and sustainable development.

5.1. Progress on gender equality

As funding has declined, many organizations report being forced to narrow their focus to the provision of urgent life-saving services, while scaling back work on advocacy, leadership, participation and longer-term gender equality objectives.

Nearly one third of respondents (31 per cent) report reduced capacity to advocate for women’s rights, while a similar proportion report diminished ability to influence humanitarian coordination and decision-making processes.¹⁴ Nearly 6 in 10 respondents (58 per cent) also observe reduced participation by women in community decision-making.¹⁵

“If I do not have the means to cover basic needs, I cannot move. I become focused on surviving myself. I begin worrying about how to provide for my children, how to pay rent and how to meet daily needs. When programmes are funded and supported, women can advocate more freely and confidently. They can raise their voices and defend the rights of women. But when women are struggling economically, psychologically and socially, it becomes very difficult for them to speak on behalf of others. They first need a degree of stability and security.”

—Interview, female head of household and former participant of a women-led organization, Libya, translated from Arabic

While the drivers vary across contexts, respondents frequently link declining participation to reductions in programmes and spaces that support women’s engagement and leadership. One in five organizations (21 per cent) reports pausing or abandoning longer-term gender equality initiatives to preserve immediate service delivery, a trade-off that may help sustain essential services in the short term but reduces the foundations of longer-term change.¹⁶

“Prevention is precisely what helps reduce future risks of violence and strengthens community resilience... As resources became more limited, we increasingly found ourselves prioritizing crisis response over longer-term prevention. This meant fewer opportunities for awareness raising, community mobilization, engagement of men and boys, leadership development for women and institutional capacity strengthening.”

—Interview, Representative of a women-led organization, Lebanon, translated from Arabic



Photo: Women displaced by the war in Sudan meet with UN Women staff at a displacement site in Port Sudan. April 2025.
Photo: UN Women/Ekram Hamad Fadlalla

5.2. Locally led humanitarian action

A gap persists between the commitments made to provide more direct, quality (flexible, multi-year, minimally earmarked) funding to local organizations, and the realities experienced by women-led and women's rights organizations on the ground.¹⁷ Almost three in five (57 per cent) respondents report receiving less direct funding since 2025, including 17 per cent who no longer receive direct funding at all. An additional 18 per cent reported never having received direct funding.

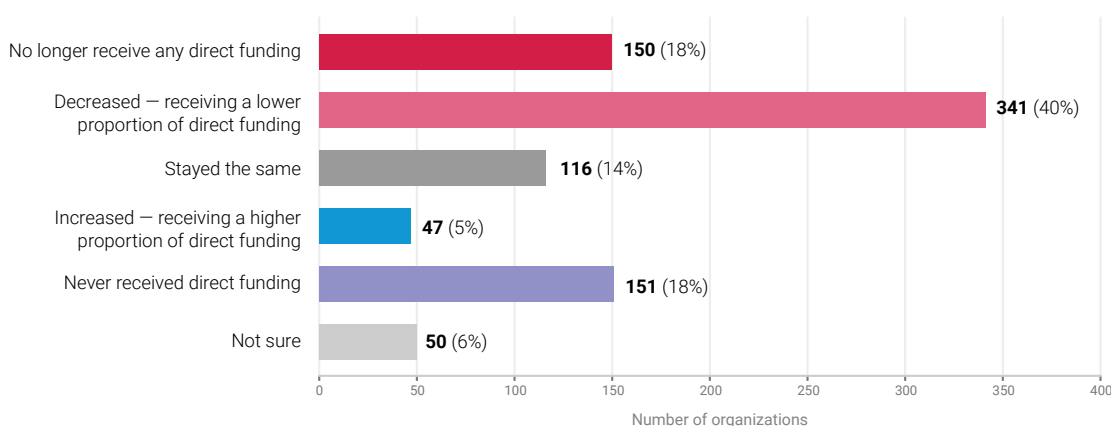
“The continued reduction in aid does not only threaten the existence of organizations as legal entities – it threatens the social fabric and safety networks that we have built with women and girls over years. Reliance on short-term grants prevents us from achieving sustainable structural change and keeps us in a permanent state of emergency response.”

—Interview, Representative of a women-led organization, Lebanon, translated from Arabic

FIGURE 23

PROPORTION OF DIRECT FUNDING

Has the proportion of funding received directly (not through an intermediary) changed since 2025?



Base: 855 women-led and women's rights organizations (all answered). Single-choice; counts shown with % of 855. 40% report a lower proportion and a further 18% no longer receive any direct funding.

Respondents also identify a continued donor preference for larger international organizations over local and national actors as a significant obstacle to more equitable financing (reported by 43 per cent). The survey results cannot determine whether these patterns reflect a reversal of previous progress, or the continuation of longstanding structural barriers. Grand Bargain¹⁸ tracking data, however, suggests the latter. A decade after the Grand Bargain's 25 per cent target was set, direct funding to local and national actors reached just 4.3 per cent in 2025 and

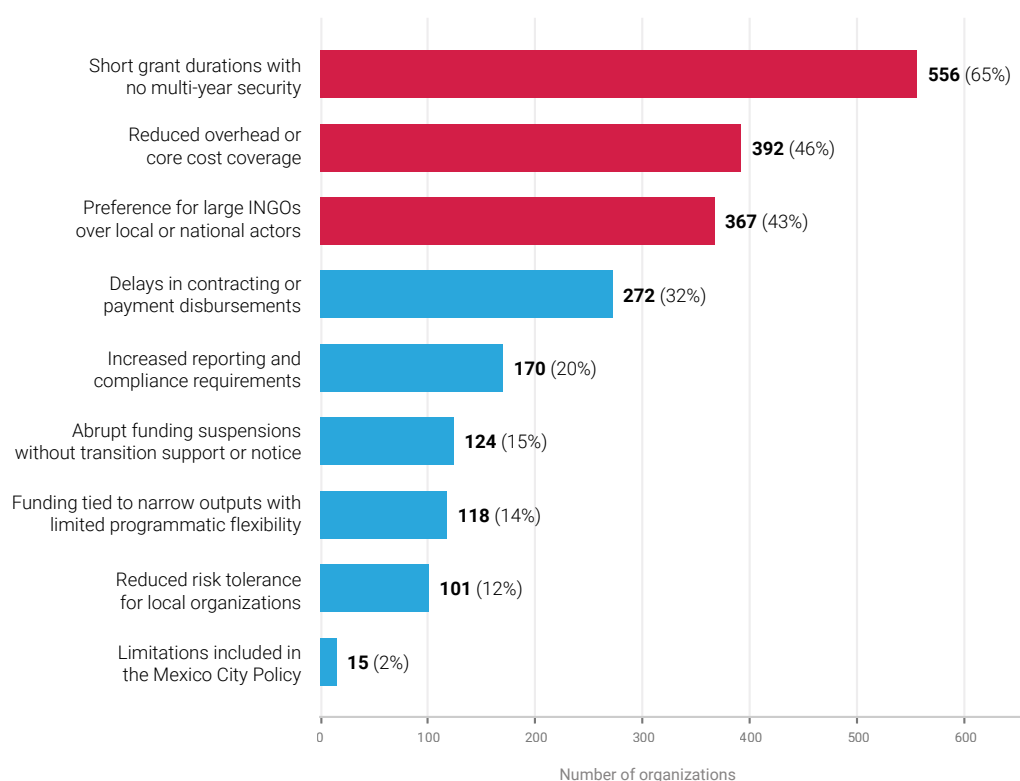
combined direct and indirect funding to these actors fell from 9.5 to 8.7 per cent of the total between 2024 and 2025.¹⁹

These findings reinforce broader evidence that while some funding mechanisms, including Country-Based Pooled Funds, have increased direct support to local actors in recent years, progress towards Grand Bargain localization commitments remains limited and uneven across context.²⁰

FIGURE 24

DONOR PRACTICES WITH NEGATIVE IMPACT

Which donor practices have most negatively affected your organization during funding reductions? (Select up to 3)

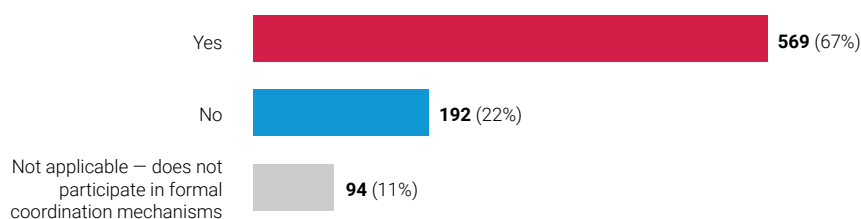


Base: 855 women-led and women's rights organizations (all answered). Respondents could select up to 3, so percentages sum to more than 100%. Counts shown with % of 855. (This is the single question behind report Figures 29 and 31.)

FIGURE 25

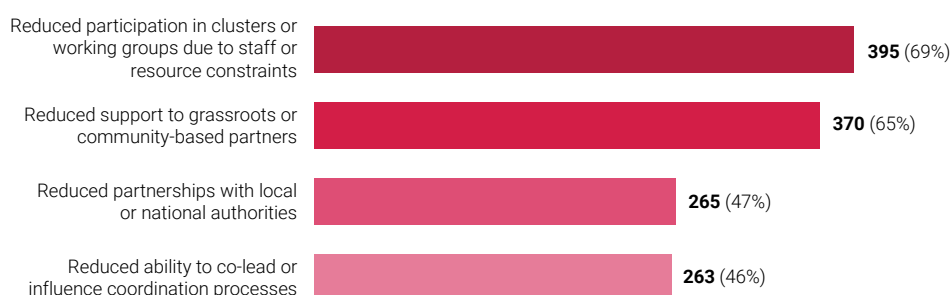
IMPACT OF FUNDING CUTS ON PARTICIPATION IN HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION MECHANISMS

Have funding cuts negatively affected your participation in humanitarian or development coordination mechanisms?



Base: 855 women-led and women's rights organizations.

In what ways has your coordination participation been affected?



Base: 569 respondents who answered 'Yes'. Multiple responses permitted.

Nearly 7 in 10 respondents (67 per cent) report that funding cuts have reduced their participation in humanitarian coordination mechanisms and other decision-making forums, a finding that raises

serious concerns about whether women's organizations and the communities they represent are being heard in the decisions that affect them most.



Photo: Angel Musiime (pictured left), is a local parish chief and peace mediator in Kyegegwa Town Council. Angel received peace mediators training with the Coalition for Action on 1325 (CoACT), supported by UN Women. CoACT is an Alliance of 45 member organizations of which 27 are local women's community-based organizations. Uganda, Kyegegwa District. August 2025.

Photo: UN Women/Solomon Tumwesigye

Beyond their own organizational experience, respondents expressed concern about the health of the wider women's rights ecosystem. They described many of the same trends identified throughout this report: increasing risks of organizational closure, declining levels of direct funding, continued dependence on short-term project funding, growing reliance on volunteers and unpaid staff, increasing competition for limited resources, and fewer active women-led and women's rights organizations operating in their contexts.

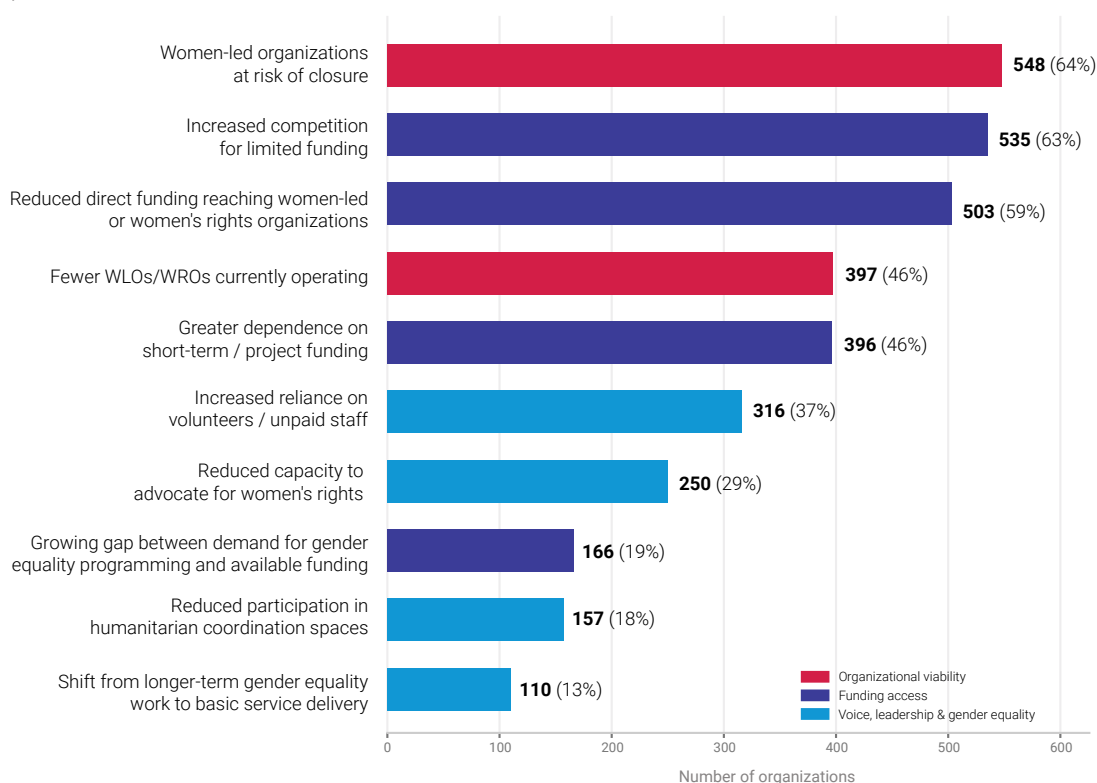
These findings suggest that the consequences of the current funding crisis extend well beyond individual organizations. They point to a gradual weakening of the broader ecosystem of women's leadership, advocacy, collective action and accountability that underpins progress towards gender equality, localization, peacebuilding and sustainable development in crisis-affected settings.

If sustained, these trends risk reversing hard-won gains towards Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality and weakening the foundations for more inclusive, resilient and accountable humanitarian responses.

FIGURE 26

REPORTED CHANGES IN WIDER WOMEN-LED ORGANIZATION ECOSYSTEM

Based on your observations, how have recent funding reductions affected the wider ecosystem of WLOs/WROs in your context? (Select up to 5)



Base: 855 women-led and women's rights organizations (all answered). Respondents could select up to 5, so percentages sum to more than 100%. Bars coloured by theme. Counts shown with % of 855.



Photo: A staff member at the Movement for the Integration and Emancipation of Disabled Women (MIEFH) in Cap-Haitien. Founded in 2009 by Régine Zéphirin Diègue, MIEFH is Haiti's first organization dedicated to women and girls with disabilities and has spent more than 15 years advancing their dignity, rights, and empowerment. When aid cuts struck in early 2025, the organization lost three quarters of its paid staff, yet many returned the following week as volunteers – a testament to their commitment and to the life-saving impact of MIEFH's work. UN Women supports women-led organizations like MIEFH all over Haiti, delivering critical services to women and girls. 2 June 2026. Photo: UN Women/Jess DiPierro Obert

UGANDA

Sustaining locally-led action when funding disappears

For years, a women-led organization in Uganda provided something that cannot easily rebuilt: local committees, women's groups, peer networks and community volunteers who could identify risks, support vulnerable households and connect women and girls to services, without waiting for an international organization to arrive. Then funding contracted. Training activities were cut. Follow-up visits became less frequent. The resources that kept local groups functioning grew harder to secure. And staff were left with a question for which there is no easy answer.

"We spent years building these structures. Now the question is: how do I make them continue instead of them collapsing?" said the organization's representative.

Community trust, local leadership and peer networks take years to build and cannot be quickly reconstituted once they unravel. The volunteers remain, but with less support, less training and growing uncertainty.

—Interview, Representative of a women-led organization, Uganda

IV. WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS ARE CALLING FOR A DIFFERENT WAY OF FINANCING HUMANITARIAN ACTION

“For organizations like ours to stop merely surviving and start durably transforming systems, partners must prioritize genuine localization through direct and flexible funding that covers the full cost of delivery – including overhead, security, and institutional capacity.”

—Survey respondent, women-led organization, Niger, translated from French

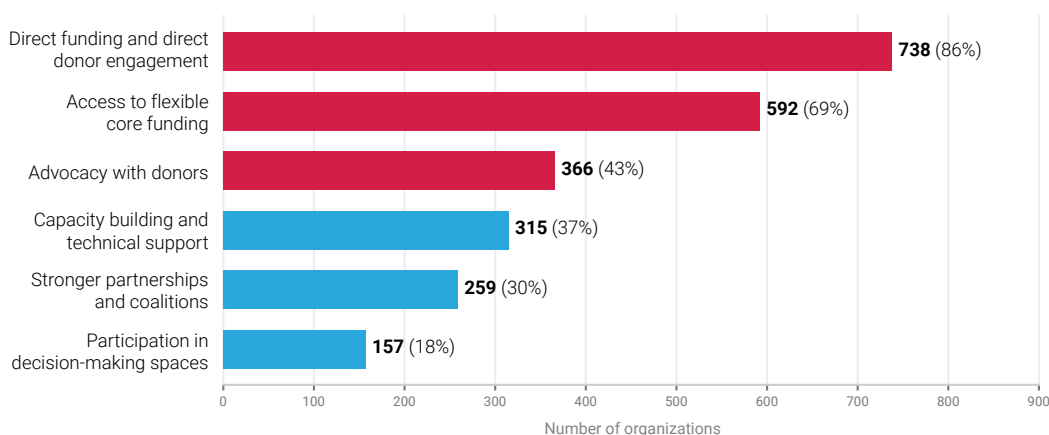
Women-led and women's rights organizations are calling not only for greater levels of financial support, but for a fundamentally different relationship with the humanitarian financing system. Their responses point to broad consensus around three priorities: removing structural barriers in current donor practices, strengthening direct and flexible support to local organizations, and adopting financing approaches that better reflect the realities of working in protracted crises.

Respondents identify short grant durations without multi-year security (65 per cent), inadequate coverage of core and overhead costs (46 per cent), and donor preference for larger international organizations over local actors (43 per cent) as the donor practices that undermine their work the most.²¹ This finding echoes the direct-funding gap documented in Section 5.2, where more than half of respondents reported receiving less direct funding since 2025 and nearly one in five had never received it at all. These are longstanding challenges, but organizations report that they have become even more damaging in the current funding environment.

FIGURE 27

PRIORITY SUPPORT NEEDS IDENTIFIED BY RESPONDENTS

In your view, what should be prioritized to better support women-led organizations and WROs? (Select up to 3)



Base: 855 women-led and women's rights organizations (all answered). Respondents could select up to 3, so percentages sum to more than 100%. Top three priorities highlighted. Counts shown with % of 855.

“Local organizations led by young people and committed to women’s rights play an essential role in fragile contexts like Mali. Despite limited resources, they often remain the first to respond to the needs of affected communities. More flexible, direct and sustainable support is essential to preserve protection, social cohesion and women’s and girls’ empowerment services.”

—Survey respondent, women-led organization, Mali, translated from French

Asked what support would make the greatest difference under current conditions, respondents overwhelmingly prioritize direct funding and engagement with donors (86 per cent) together with increased access to flexible core funding (69 per cent). Many also highlight the importance of advocacy with donors, technical support and stronger partnerships.

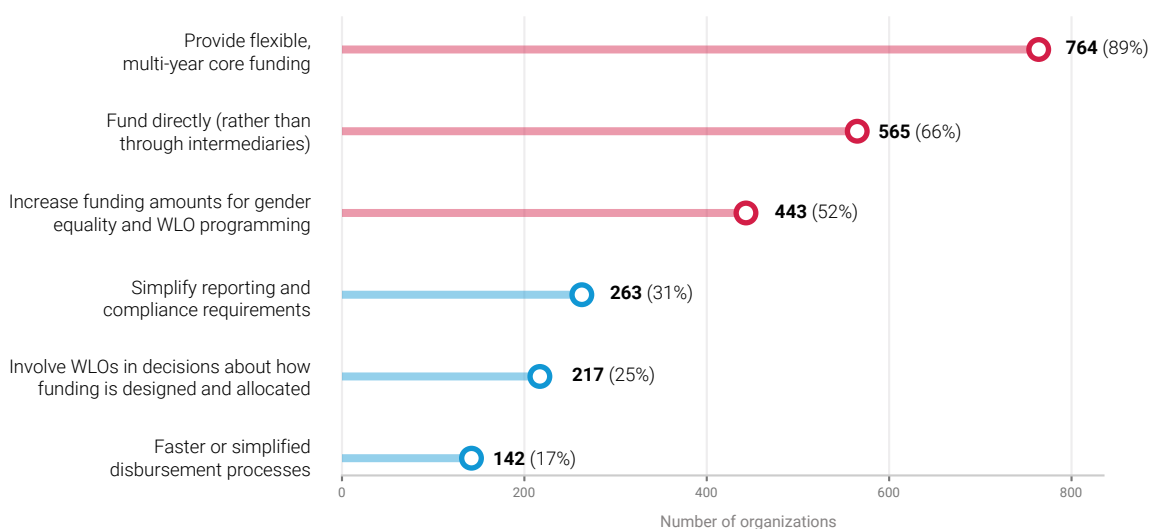
“For humanitarian and development financing to be truly transformative, donors must move from a transactional relationship to one based on trust and political equity.”

—Survey respondent, women-led organization, Venezuela, translated from Spanish

FIGURE 28

RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO HUMANITARIAN FINANCING

What should donors do differently to better support women-led and women’s rights organizations? (Select up to 3)



Base: 855 women-led and women’s rights organizations (all answered). Respondents could select up to 3, so percentages sum to more than 100%. Top three recommendations highlighted. Counts shown with % of 855.

“Donors should, above all: provide longer and more flexible funding to ensure continuity of action; reduce complex procedures that hold back small organizations; fund local women’s organizations directly, without too many intermediaries; support operating costs, not just projects; involve women’s organizations in funding decisions. In short: simpler, more direct, more sustainable funding would enable much better outcomes.”

—Survey respondent, women-led organization, Democratic Republic of the Congo, translated from French



Photo: Guidile Joseph, regional coordinator for the Rassemblement des Forces Féminines Solides (RAFFAS) and former deputy mayor of Torbeck stands in front of the organization's offices in southern Haiti. The organization focuses on women's economic empowerment, offering land and training to women to grow produce to eat and sell including corn, rice, papaya, peppers and almonds. UN Women works with organizations like RAFFAS to provide critical support and services to women and girls impacted by the humanitarian crisis following escalating armed gang violence in Haiti. 4 June 2026. Photo: UN Women/Jess DiPierro Obert

Looking beyond immediate needs, respondents call for structural reforms to humanitarian financing. Nearly 9 in 10 (89 per cent) recommend flexible, multi-year core funding, while two thirds (66 per cent) call for funding to reach local organizations directly rather than through multiple intermediary layers. Respondents also emphasize the need for greater investment in gender equality and women-led organizations, simpler reporting requirements and more meaningful involvement of local organizations in funding decisions.

Women's organizations are calling for financing that is more direct, flexible, predictable and equitable. The recommendations below build directly on these priorities. Rather than presenting a new set of demands, these reinforce the priorities that women-led and women's rights organizations have advanced for many years. What this research adds is systematic evidence of the consequences of failing to act, and the growing urgency of reform.



Photo: During an initiative to map the women's movement in DRC, UN Women convened a meeting of women-led civil society groups in Goma. Participants interacted with the DRC Minister of Gender Masangu Bibi Muloko, government officials, and UN Women representative Adama Moussa. Democratic Republic of Congo, August 2023. Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown

Corroborating evidence from Ukraine (2026)²²

The findings presented in this report are reinforced by a 2026 companion study conducted by the Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) Working Group in Ukraine under the co-leadership of UN Women. Based on a survey of 108 women-led and women's rights organizations, the GiHA study documents many of the same patterns identified globally – including severe operational impacts, major funding losses, workforce reductions, increasing waiting lists for services, and growing reliance on coalition approaches to sustain operations – suggesting that the trends documented in this report are not unique to this sample, but are emerging across diverse humanitarian contexts. Of respondents in the GiHA study:

- 79 per cent reported moderate or severe operational impacts in 2025, rising to 85 per cent expected in 2026.
- An estimated \$27.4 million was lost in 2025, with a further \$25.5 million loss projected for 2026.
- 68 per cent introduced waiting lists or turned away beneficiaries.
- Approximately 570 staff positions were lost.
- The groups most affected – refugee and displaced women, women in remote areas, elderly women, single mothers and women with disabilities – mirror those identified globally.
- Coalition-building rose from 27 per cent (2025) to 46 per cent (2026) as organizations adapted to funding cuts.

V. CONCLUSION

“If international organizations do not strengthen women’s organizations, gradually – due to existing problems and absence of financial support – women’s support organizations will disappear.”

—Survey respondent, women-led organization, Afghanistan, translated from Pashto

“Completing this survey has been emotionally difficult for us, because these are not only organizational data points. They represent real people, staff livelihoods, community relationships, and years of grassroots women’s movement-building that are now at risk.”

— Survey respondent, women-led organization, Indonesia

“What is being lost is not only funding. What is lost is accumulated expertise. It is trust built between organizations and communities over years. It is relationships with survivors who finally found the confidence to seek support... It is institutional memory that cannot be recreated quickly once it disappears. If women’s organizations disappear, rebuilding them will take years. The damage extends far beyond a single project cycle. It affects entire protection ecosystems and generations of women and girls who rely on these institutions... This is why investments in women’s organizations should not be viewed as short-term humanitarian expenditures. They are investments in social infrastructure, community resilience and the long-term protection of rights.”

—Interview, Representative of a women-led organization, Lebanon, translated from Arabic

The severe reduction in funding affecting women-led and women’s rights organizations has become increasingly entrenched. Across multiple conflict- and crisis-affected countries, organizations report growing demand for support, shrinking organizational capacity, inability to sustain services and programmes, and deterioration in the lived reality of women and girls.

Organizations have been adapting through cost reductions, programme restructuring, fundraising efforts, partnerships and other measures designed to sustain operations. However, these strategies have not been sufficient to offset the scale of

funding losses. Many organizations continue to operate under significant financial pressure, with implications for staffing, geographic reach, service delivery, core organizational systems, established relationships and organizational sustainability.

The consequences have been immediate and severe: closed safe spaces, waiting lists and millions of women and girls with nowhere to turn for life-saving support. As organizations redirect resources toward urgent needs, longer-term investments in gender equality, community engagement and social change are increasingly being reduced or put on hold.

Supporting women-led and women's rights organizations is an investment in the safety, rights, and wellbeing of crisis-affected women and girls, and in the leadership, accountability, resilience and locally led systems that enable communities to respond to, and recover from, crisis. As the humanitarian sector undergoes profound transformation through the Humanitarian Reset and broader humanitarian financing reforms, the findings of this report demonstrate that sustained investment in local women-led and women's rights organizations is not peripheral to these efforts but central to preserving effective, accountable and locally led humanitarian action.

The current moment presents an opportunity to translate long-standing commitments on localization and gender equality into practice and strengthen equitable partnerships with local women-led and women's rights organizations. These are not new demands. What this report provides is evidence of the devastating cost of the failure to meet them.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Priority Area 1: Protect and fund essential services for women and girls

Funding reductions are contributing to gaps in services and interventions across multiple sectors: protection, gender-based violence (GBV) response, psychosocial support, legal assistance, sexual and reproductive health, livelihoods and safe spaces. In many contexts, no alternative provider exists. Participating organizations report that service reductions are disproportionately affecting those who already face the greatest barriers to support, including adolescent girls, displaced women and girls, women and girls with disabilities, female-headed households and those living in remote and conflict-affected areas.

To address these gaps, donors and humanitarian actors should:

- Protect and prioritize funding for services, programmes and initiatives that advance gender-responsive humanitarian action and life-saving results for women and girls. This includes GBV prevention and response, safe

spaces, women's centres, and integrated referral pathways linking protection, health, legal and social services.

- Protect livelihoods and economic empowerment programming that reduces vulnerability and harmful coping strategies.
- Prioritize funding for services and programmes targeting women and girls at greatest risk of exclusion and in underserved groups such as adolescent girls, women and girls with disabilities, elderly women and female-headed households.
- Make funding decisions based on gender analysis and disaggregated data, including on gaps in response coverage and reach across different sectors, population groups and locations wherever feasible.
- Ensure that funding decisions enable flexible, needs-based and gender responsive programming and do not impose conditionalities that may make this challenging (short duration, restrictions to specific types of interventions, etc.).

Priority Area 2: Prevent irreversible organizational loss and retain critical capacity

Many women-led and women's rights organizations are approaching a critical threshold. Preventing organizational closure is essential to preserving specialist expertise, community trust, critical services and locally-rooted response capacity. At the same time, the workforce sustaining support for women and girls faces growing financial hardship, burnout, and attrition. These twin risks – organizational and human – are inseparable and must be addressed together.

Donors and humanitarian actors should:

- Establish stabilization and bridge-funding mechanisms for women-led and women's rights organizations facing acute financial distress.
- Prioritize retention of specialist personnel, including GBV caseworkers, psychosocial counsellors, legal advisors, sexual and reproductive health workers and community outreach staff.
- Monitor organizational closures and capacity loss as indicators of humanitarian system performance.
- Ensure grants adequately cover salaries, supervision, and leadership functions and staff retention, recognizing these costs as essential investments to respond to humanitarian needs and prevent their further escalation, rather than administrative overhead.
- Invest in staff wellbeing, duty of care and burnout prevention, including by drawing on and scaling up good practices, by select UN agencies and specialized women-focused pooled funds.

Priority Area 3: Reform funding systems towards accessible, predictable and transformative financing

For years, women's organizations and movements have been calling for structural reforms of the prevailing funding architecture to be more effective and accessible and enable them to deliver meaningful outcomes. Long-standing commitments are in place by Member States, donors and the UN system to support localization, simplification and increased direct and quality support to local women-led, women's rights and other organizations. This research confirms and validates the importance and relevance of implementing these principles with a sense of urgency and ambition.

Donors, humanitarian actors, development partners and the UN system should:

- Increase the availability of flexible core funding and multi-year financing, ensuring indirect cost recovery reflects the real costs of delivering quality humanitarian programming.
- Fund safeguarding, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, accountability, monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL), compliance, security, and financial management as essential operational functions, not administrative extras.
- Protect and expand direct financing to women-led and women's rights organizations, including through feminist pooled funds and country-based pooled funds, reducing reliance on intermediary layers and diversifying beyond a small number of bilateral donors.
- Sustain funding for women's leadership, participation, advocacy and community mobilization during periods of funding contraction, when these functions are most at risk.
- Ensure meaningful participation of women-led organizations in coordination, governance and resource allocation processes.
- Expand support for consortium models, solidarity networks, peer learning and equitable partnerships.

- Bridge humanitarian, development and peace-building funding streams to better support organizations operating across multiple and overlapping crises.
- Ensure all financing arrangements are transparent, predictable and accountable, and designed to strengthen the long-term sustainability of women-led and women's rights organizations rather than only short-term project delivery.
- Publicly track and report funding flows to women-led and women's rights organizations, including both direct and intermediary channels.
- Monitor localization and participation indicators during periods of funding contraction, when reversals are most likely to occur.
- Integrate support for women-led organizations into humanitarian financing, localization and reform agendas, including the Humanitarian Reset.

Priority Area 4: Invest in women-led organizations as essential humanitarian infrastructure

Women-led and women's rights organizations are not peripheral actors. They are leaders and agents of change in crisis response systems, providing services, strengthening accountability, supporting women's participation, and maintaining trusted community relationships that no international organization can quickly replicate. Supporting and enabling their work should be perceived as a strategic imperative to effective humanitarian action.

Humanitarian actors and donors should:

- Recognize women-led and women's rights organizations as strategic partners in crisis response and recovery, and structure financing and partnerships accordingly.
- Ensure meaningful participation of women-led organizations in humanitarian coordination, governance, and resource allocation processes.
- Support organizations to adapt their operating models for a resource-constrained environment – including community-led approaches, consortium arrangements, shared services and strengthened referral networks – not as substitutes for adequate funding, but as complements to it.
- Develop dedicated long-term investment strategies that support organizational sustainability, stability and resilience.

ANNEX 1: METHODOLOGY

1. Research approach

Research for this report was carried out from April to June 2026 using a mixed-methods approach combining an online survey of women-led and women's rights organizations, key informant interviews, and a review of relevant policy and research literature. The study builds on UN Women's *At a Breaking Point* (2025) global survey and subsequent country-level research, including the 2026 Ukraine study which informed the overall research framework.

2. Survey design and administration

The survey instrument was developed by UN Women building on the 2025 *At a Breaking Point* survey and refined through lessons from subsequent country-level research, including the 2026 Ukraine study. New questions were added to assess longer-term organizational adaptation, impacts on women and girls and evolving donor practices.

The survey comprised 39 questions across eight thematic areas: organizational profile; programme and service delivery; impacts on women and girls; financial status; staffing and organizational capacity; adaptation strategies; the wider WLO/WRO landscape; and support needs and donor practices.

The survey was translated into Arabic, Burmese, Dari, English, French, Pashto, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish and Turkish and administered online through KoboToolbox between 15 April and 8 May 2026. It was distributed through UN Women country offices, partner networks and direct outreach, including to organizations that participated in UN Women's 2025 funding cuts survey.

Eligibility was based on the definitions of women-led organizations and women's rights organizations contained in the 2024 Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Gender Policy (see definitions below).

3. Respondent profile

Respondent Profile At a Glance

Survey respondents (n = 855)

- **Countries and contexts:** 52
- **Organization identity:** 87% WLO & WRO; 7% WLO only; 6% WRO only
- **Organization type:** 59% national CSOs; 26% local organizations; 5% community-based organizations; 4% international CSOs
- **Operating contexts:** humanitarian, development and peacebuilding settings, many spanning multiple contexts
- **Humanitarian severity:** 58% operate in ten contexts classified as High or Very High severity (INFORM Severity Index)
- **Programme areas:** protection, gender-based violence, livelihoods, education, health, sexual and reproductive health, mental health and psychosocial support, food security, WASH, legal assistance, women's leadership and advocacy

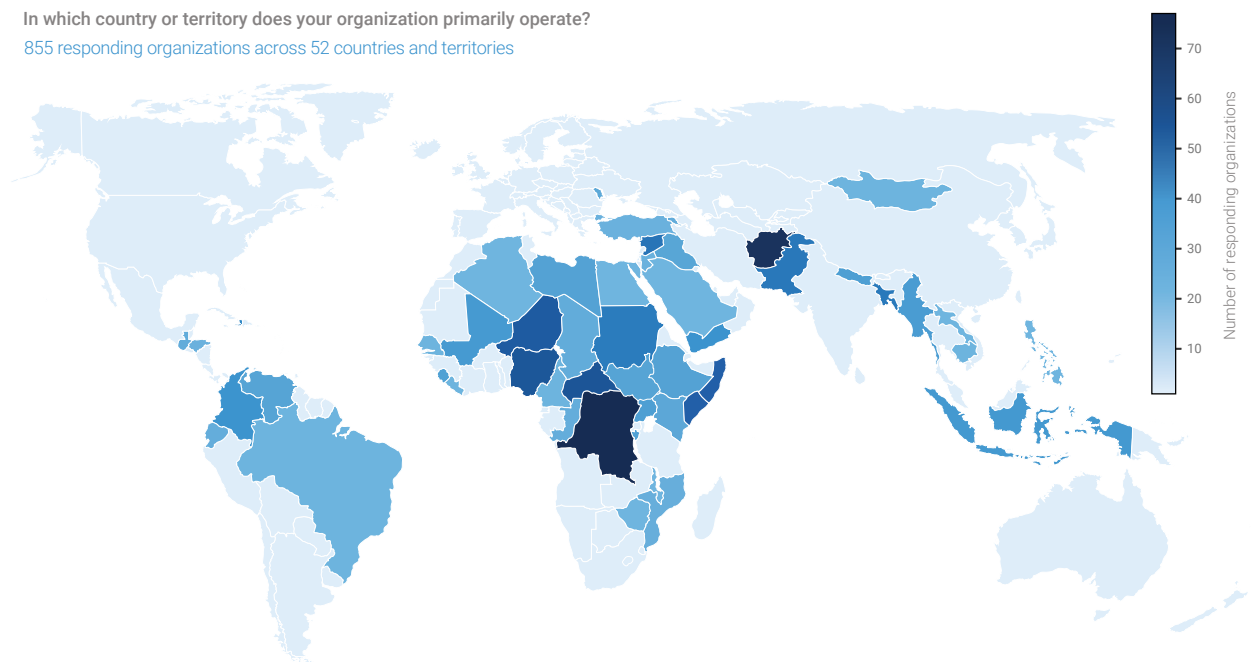
Countries and contexts represented

Afghanistan, Algeria, Armenia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Mali, Mongolia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Pakistan, Philippines, Republic of Moldova, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Timor-Leste, Türkiye, Uganda, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Yemen, and Zimbabwe.

The survey received responses from 855 women-led and women's rights organizations operating across 52 countries and contexts.

In which country or territory does your organization primarily operate?

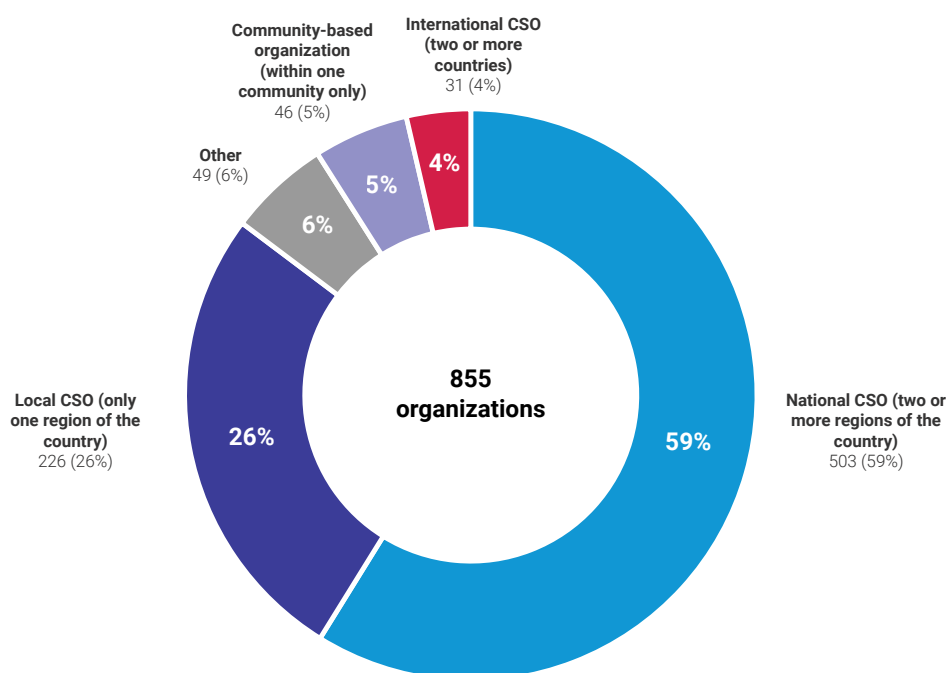
855 responding organizations across 52 countries and territories



Countries with responses shaded in UN Women blue (darker = more responding organizations); all other countries in light blue.

The respondent sample was composed predominantly of local and national organizations, with national civil society organizations accounting for 59 per cent of respondents, local organizations 26 per cent, community-based organizations 5 per cent, and international civil society organizations 4 per cent.

What type of organization do you represent? (Select one)

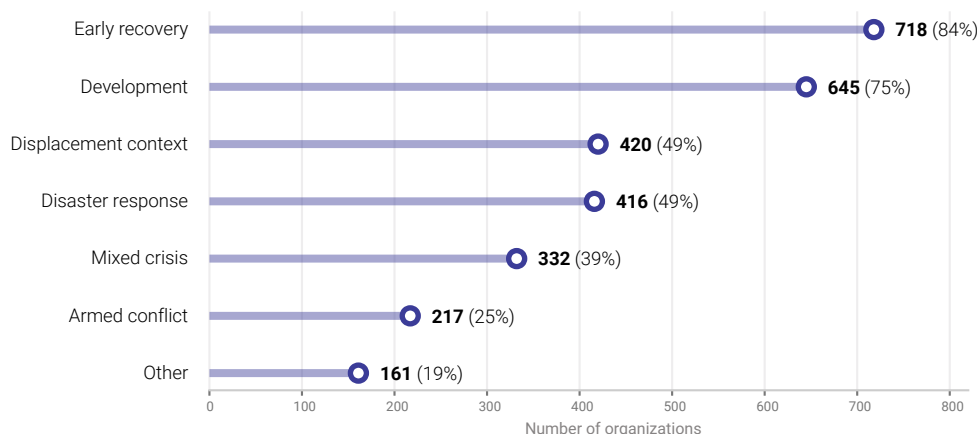


Base: 855 women-led and women's rights organizations (all answered). CSO = civil society organization. Counts shown with % of 855.

Respondent organizations self-identified as women-led organizations (WLOs), women's rights organizations (WROs), or both based on the definitions in the 2024 IASC Gender Policy. Thirty-seven organizations that did not identify as either were excluded from the sample. Of the 855 eligible respondent organizations, 745 (87 per cent) identified as both a WLO and a WRO, 56 (7 per cent) identified as a WLO only and 54 (6 per cent) identified as a WRO only.

More than two thirds of these organizations (73 per cent) operate in countries with significant humanitarian needs and have humanitarian response plans or refugee response plans in place. Collectively, respondents represented organizations working across humanitarian, development and peacebuilding settings affected by conflict, displacement and climate-related crises, with many operating across multiple overlapping contexts.

In which contexts does your organization primarily operate? (Select all that apply)

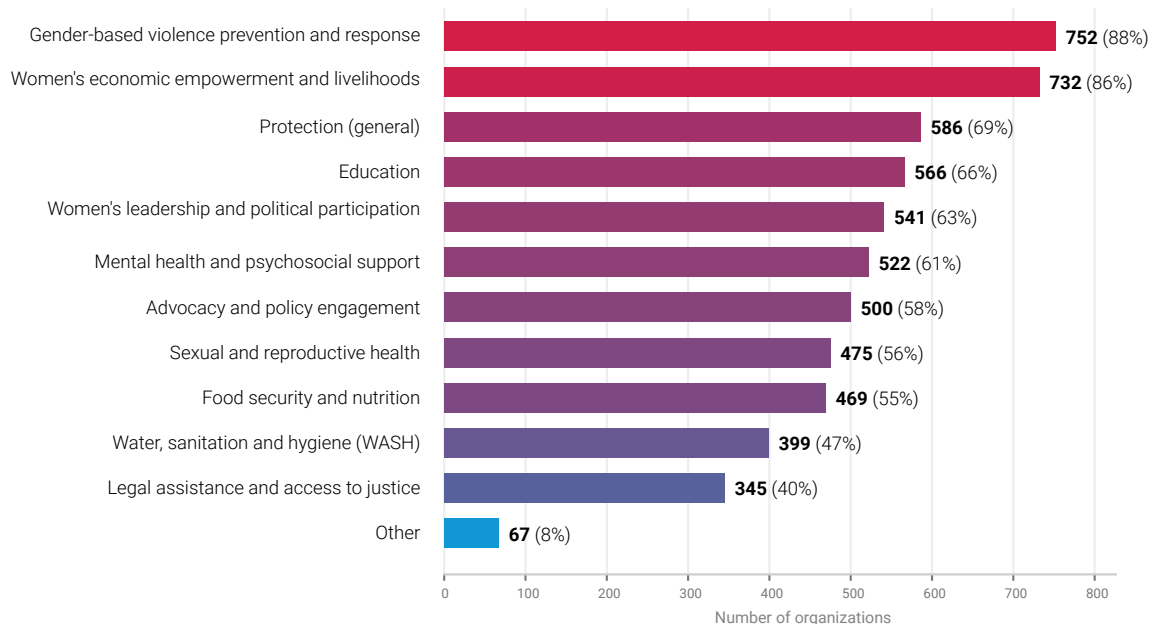


Base: 855 women-led and women's rights organizations (all answered). Multiple responses allowed, so percentages sum to more than 100%. Counts shown with % of 855.

Respondents also reported working across a broad range of humanitarian sectors, including protection, gender-based violence, livelihoods, education, health (including sexual reproductive health and

mental and psychosocial support), food security, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and legal assistance, along with women's leadership, policy and advocacy.

In which sectors does your organization primarily work? (Select all that apply)



Base: 855 women-led and women's rights organizations (all answered). Multiple responses allowed, so percentages sum to more than 100%. Counts shown with % of 855.

4. Key informant interviews

To complement the survey findings, 20 semi-structured interviews were conducted with women civil society leaders (12) and women receiving support from women-led organizations (8) in Afghanistan, Armenia, Burundi, Haiti, Lebanon, Libya, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Sudan, Uganda and Ukraine.

Interviews were conducted in person by UN Women staff using a common semi-structured interview guide. Participants were purposively selected to reflect diverse humanitarian contexts, organizational profiles and reported levels of funding impact.

Interview findings were used to contextualize quantitative findings, provide illustrative examples and deepen understanding of emerging themes. They are presented as explanatory evidence and are not intended to be representative.

5. Ethical considerations

The research followed UN Women's ethical and safety guidelines for research on sensitive topics. Participation in the survey and interviews was voluntary; participants gave informed consent and could withdraw at any time. Interviews were conducted by trained UN Women staff using a survivor-centred, do-no-harm approach, with referrals to support services where needed.

All survey responses and interview transcripts were anonymized prior to analysis. Identifying details, including names, affiliations and locations, have been withheld or altered throughout the report where disclosure could pose protection or security risks. Data were stored securely, with access limited to the research team.

6. Secondary literature review

A desk review of policy documents, humanitarian guidance, donor analyses, UN publications and academic and grey literature was undertaken to situate the findings within broader evidence on humanitarian financing, localization, gender equality and women's leadership in crisis settings.

7. Data analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics following data cleaning and verification. Percentages throughout the report are based on valid responses to individual questions and may not total 100 per cent because of rounding or because respondents could select multiple responses. Where figures required additional estimation – such as the report's reach-loss calculations – the underlying assumptions, exclusions and methodology are disclosed in the relevant footnotes. Qualitative survey responses and interview data were analysed thematically.

All statistical outputs, interpretations and narrative content were reviewed and verified by the lead researcher against the underlying dataset.

8. Case studies and quotations

Case studies draw on key informant interviews and, where indicated, survey responses. Narrative passages were developed by UN Women from interview transcripts. Text presented in quotation marks reflects the respondent's own words, lightly edited for clarity and brevity. Names and identifying details have been changed or omitted to protect confidentiality. Some quotations combine statements made at different points in the same interview; ellipses indicate condensed text.

9. Limitations

Participation in the survey was voluntary, and respondents were self-selected. Findings should therefore be interpreted as indicative of broader trends rather than statistically representative of all women-led and women's rights organizations operating in humanitarian settings.

Findings relating to women and girls reflect respondents' observations of changes in the communities where they work rather than direct measurements of population-level outcomes. Questions examining changes since the funding reductions capture reported trends and perceptions over time and should not be interpreted as establishing direct causal relationships, recognizing that multiple factors may contribute to observed changes.

Financial loss estimates are based on organizations able to quantify their losses, while estimates of women and girls no longer being reached are based on conservative assumptions. Both should be interpreted as indicative rather than precise estimates.

10. Definitions

The survey adopted the definitions of women-led organizations (WLOs) and women's rights organizations (WROs) contained in the 2024 IASC Gender Policy, which were used as eligibility criteria for participation.

- **Women-led organization (WLO):** An organization with a humanitarian mandate or mission that is governed or directed by women, or whose senior leadership is composed of at least 50 per cent women.
- **Women's rights organization (WRO):** An organization whose primary purpose is advancing gender equality and the rights of women and girls, or whose mission explicitly seeks to challenge gender inequalities and unequal power relations.

ANNEX 2: REGIONAL COMPARISON TABLE

Key indicators by region. All figures are percentages of valid responses. Europe and Central Asia (n=18) is excluded due to small sample size.

Indicator	West & Central Africa (n=291)	East & South Africa (n=152)	Arab States (n=107)	Asia-Pacific (n=204)	Americas (n=77)
Severe or moderate impact	86 per cent	93 per cent	90 per cent	87 per cent	86 per cent
Financial situation worse 2026	60 per cent	63 per cent	64 per cent	62 per cent	56 per cent
Financial situation critical	20 per cent	14 per cent	8 per cent	12 per cent	6 per cent
Runway 6 months or less	45 per cent	53 per cent	30 per cent	45 per cent	51 per cent
Likely/very likely to close	30 per cent	48 per cent	50 per cent	51 per cent	34 per cent
Delivered less than half of programming	47 per cent	45 per cent	29 per cent	30 per cent	25 per cent
Any staff losses	76 per cent	78 per cent	73 per cent	79 per cent	73 per cent
Staff working unpaid	74 per cent	68 per cent	67 per cent	51 per cent	61 per cent
Need higher than before	89 per cent	82 per cent	76 per cent	80 per cent	84 per cent
Capacity below need	92 per cent	91 per cent	83 per cent	82 per cent	91 per cent
Service access declined	82 per cent	89 per cent	87 per cent	84 per cent	79 per cent
Waiting lists or turned away beneficiaries	38 per cent	53 per cent	50 per cent	44 per cent	57 per cent
GBV increased (any)	88 per cent	87 per cent	87 per cent	84 per cent	84 per cent
Early/forced marriage increased (any)	75 per cent	86 per cent	67 per cent	76 per cent	35 per cent
Economic vulnerability increased (any)	91 per cent	93 per cent	95 per cent	92 per cent	92 per cent

Note: All figures are percentages of valid (non-null) responses. Financial loss and beneficiary reach figures in the main text are based on midpoint estimates from banded response options.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Questions relating to protection risks asked respondents whether, based on their observations, these risks had increased among women and girls since the funding reductions. The survey captures perceived changes over time and does not attribute observed trends solely to funding reductions, recognizing that multiple factors may contribute.
- 2 This report applies the definitions of women-led organizations (WLOs) and women's rights organizations (WROs) contained in the 2024 IASC Gender Policy:
 - Women-led organization (WLO): An organization with a humanitarian mandate or mission that is governed or directed by women, or whose senior leadership is composed of at least 50 per cent women.
 - Women's rights organization (WRO): An organization whose primary purpose is advancing gender equality and the rights of women and girls, or whose mission explicitly seeks to challenge gender inequalities and unequal power relations.

Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). 2024. *IASC Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action*. Geneva: IASC.
- 3 OECD. 2026. "A Historic Decline in Foreign Aid: Preliminary 2025 ODA Data." 9 April. Accessed 6 July 2026. <https://www.oecd.org/en/data/insights/data-explainers/2026/04/a-historic-decline-in-foreign-aid-preliminary-2025-oda-data.html>.
- 4 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). 2025. *Global Humanitarian Overview 2026*. Accessed 6 July 2026. <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/world/global-humanitarian-overview-2026-enesfr>.

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). "Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls." Accessed 6 July 2026. <https://www.unocha.org/gender-equality-and-empowerment-women-and-girls>.
- 5 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). 2025. *Global Humanitarian Overview 2025: The Cruel Math of Aid Cuts*. June. Accessed 6 July 2026. <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/world/global-humanitarian-overview-2025-cruel-math-aid-cuts-hyper-prioritized-report-june-2025>.
- 6 UN Women. 2025. *At a Breaking Point: The Impact of Foreign Aid Cuts on Women's Organizations in Humanitarian Crises*. Accessed 6 July 2026. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2025/05/at-a-breaking-point-the-impact-of-foreign-aid-cuts-on-womens-organizations-in-humanitarian-crises-worldwide>.
- 7 The findings of this report are consistent with a growing body of evidence on the impacts of humanitarian funding cuts on local organizations and gender-responsive programming. See, e.g.: Women's Refugee Commission. 2026. *A Year of Harms: The Impact of US Foreign Aid Cuts on Women and Girls in Humanitarian Crises*. Accessed 6 July 2026. https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/YearofHarms_Report.pdf; UN Women, NGO Girls and CARE Ukraine (Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group). 2026. *The Impact of Foreign Assistance Cuts on Women's Rights and Women-Led Organizations in Ukraine*. Accessed 6 July 2026. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2026/02/the-impact-of-foreign-assistance-cuts-on-womens-rights-and-women-led-organizations-in-ukraine>; Veerapen, N., C. Mazzilli and M. Daigle. 2026. *Pathways to Better Funding for Women-Led Organizations*. HPG report. London: ODI Global. Accessed 6 July 2026. www.odi.org/en/publications/pathways-to-better-funding-for-women-led-organizations.
- 8 Launched by the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator in March 2025, the Humanitarian Reset is a reform process aimed at making the humanitarian system more efficient, including through prioritizing life-saving actions, simplifying coordination structures, and advancing localization.
- 9 Of the 59 per cent reporting reduced reach, 28 per cent report a reduction of up to 30 per cent, 17 per cent report 30–60 per cent, 10 per cent report more than 60 per cent, and 3 per cent report a complete cessation. This produces an estimated

- 980,000 women and girls no longer reached annually — reported as “nearly one million” — equivalent to a 27 per cent decline in collective reach among affected organizations. As with all figures in this report, this is based on self-reported data and should be read as indicative.
- 10 These ratings reflect direct observation and community feedback rather than measured incidence data, and capture perceived directional change rather than absolute levels. The consistency of the pattern across all seven indicators and across diverse crisis contexts nonetheless points to a broad and multi-dimensional worsening of the protection environment for women and girls.
 - 11 Questions relating to protection risks asked respondents to report whether, based on their observations, these risks had increased among women and girls since the funding reductions. The survey captures perceived changes over time and does not attribute observed trends solely to funding reductions, recognizing that multiple factors may contribute.
 - 12 Based on self-reported estimates from the organizations able to quantify losses. See Annex A.
 - 13 Refer to Figure 20 – Measures adopted to sustain operations.
 - 14 Refer to Figure 28 – Recommended changes to humanitarian financing.
 - 15 Refer to Figure 20 – Measures adopted to sustain operations.
 - 16 The data presented in Section 3.3 on advocacy capacity and decision-making influence points in the same direction, refer to Figure 20.
 - 17 Independent analyses, including the OECD Development Co-operation Report and the ODI assessment of international humanitarian funding to local and national actors, have found that while some funding channels, including country-based pooled funds (CBPFs), have shown a rising trend of direct financing to local organizations in recent years, overall progress toward Grand Bargain targets remains limited and highly uneven across contexts. The concentration of resources among larger international organizations has remained a structural feature of the system.
 - 18 The Grand Bargain is a 2016 agreement between major donors and humanitarian organizations to make humanitarian financing more efficient and effective, including a commitment to channel at least 25 per cent of humanitarian funding “as directly as possible” to local and national actors, originally targeted for 2020.
 - 19 Donor preference for international intermediaries over local and national actors is a longstanding structural feature of the humanitarian system, documented well before the current funding crisis. See: Bennett, C., M. Foley and S. Pantuliano. 2016. *Time to Let Go: Remaking Humanitarian Action for the Modern Era*. London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI). Sector-wide data confirms this pattern has persisted rather than reversed: a decade after the Grand Bargain set its 25 per cent target for direct funding to local and national actors, only 4.3 per cent was reached directly in 2025, while combined direct and indirect funding to these actors fell from 9.5 per cent of total humanitarian funding in 2024 to 8.7 per cent in 2025. See: ALNAP. 2026. *Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2026*. Accessed 6 July 2026. <https://alnapp.org/help-library/resources/global-humanitarian-assistance-gha-report-2026>, drawing on: Pearson, M. and N. Rieger. 2026. *The State of International Humanitarian Funding to Local and National Actors*. ODI Global, Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG). Accessed 6 July 2026. <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/state-international-humanitarian-funding-local-and-national-actors-may-2026>.
 - 20 Ibid.
 - 21 Refer to Figure 25 – Donor practices with negative effects.
 - 22 Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) Working Group in Ukraine (co-chaired by UN Women, NGO Girls and CARE Ukraine). 2026. *The Impact of Foreign Assistance Cuts on Women’s Rights and Women-Led Organizations in Ukraine*. February. Accessed 6 July 2026.

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