



Global impact of funding cuts on children and their protection in humanitarian contexts

Executive Summary

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Advocacy Working Group

Assessment, Measurement, and Evidence Working Group

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In March and April 2025, the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action conducted a data gathering exercise to understand the impact of global humanitarian funding cuts on children and their protection in humanitarian crises. Over 250 child protection practitioners from across 55 countries responded to a survey, with additional insights gathered through interviews and data shared by five leading child protection agencies. The findings are stark: funding cuts are having devastating and far-reaching consequences for children across humanitarian contexts.

Children are directly impacted by the funding cuts

Funding cuts have resulted in the suspension of critical child protection interventions for children. The five agencies that participated in the interviews report 1.1 million children across more than 23 countries are directly impacted by cuts - with evidence of the true extent of the compounding impacts on children likely to take time to emerge. In the most severe cases, children are being left without care, in detention without protection and legal support, subjected to child marriage or sexual exploitation, and even face the risk of death—such as children experiencing suicidal ideation or those threatened by so-called honour killings.

Child protection interventions have been hit hard across the globe at all levels of humanitarian response

Eighty percent of survey respondents report that funding cuts have significantly or very significantly affected children's protection, with the most serious consequences felt at the sub-national and national level. Local and national NGOs are being hit the hardest—over half of respondents from these organisations report losing more than 40% of their child protection budgets. International actors are also seeing major reductions: one INGO reported losing 36% of its direct and pipeline child protection portfolio across 20 humanitarian responses, while another cited a 25% loss in its global child protection portfolio.

Child protection staffing and capacity are rapidly shrinking, with severe impacts on agencies' ability to meet the Child Protection Minimum Standards

Seventy percent of organisations have reduced frontline staff; 62% have cut capacity-strengthening; and 52% have lost technical advisors. One INGO terminated 233 staff globally, while another cut its team by 79% in one context. This is leading to the collapse of case management services, interruptions in support for survivors of abuse, and halted outreach to vulnerable communities. In Ukraine, caseworkers can no longer visit families. In Ethiopia, entire districts have lost child protection coverage. In Colombia, cuts come amid surging child recruitment and armed violence. These staffing reductions also severely weaken the monitoring of grave violations of children in armed conflict and accountability mechanisms.

Budget cuts across sectors are compounding risks to children's protection and well-being

Cuts across all sectors are reducing access to basic needs and essential services, and compounding children's exposure to protection risks. The most significant knock-on effects are reported in protection, education, GBV and health. Cuts across multiple sectoral programmes, many of which previously included specific child protection elements, are no longer operating, leaving children vulnerable to harm such as exploitation, trafficking, and child recruitment. The loss of these services and support across sectors compounds the challenges families face in crisis settings, further diminishing their capacity to cope.