

Impact of United States Funding Suspension on Ukrainian Women's Organizations

Rapid assessment



March 2025

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Executive Summary

The suspension of United States foreign assistance has created a crisis for women-led and women's rights organizations (WROs) in Ukraine, threatening their ability to sustain operations, protect and aid vulnerable groups and advance gender equality at a time of growing insecurity due to the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. **Seventy-three percent (73%) of the 99 organizations that responded to the survey report significant disruptions, and 93% said they were forced to suspend at least one Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) program.** The effect is likely to be dramatic especially on the women and girls living in the most war-affected regions in east and south of Ukraine.

Critical gender-focused initiatives have been put on hold, weakening efforts in humanitarian response, early recovery, and development. **The impact is far-reaching; survey respondents calculate that at least 109,000 of their beneficiaries will lose access to essential services in the short term, including protection from gender-based violence, mental health support, and economic empowerment programs.** The number of women and girls affected by the United States' funding suspension is likely to be much higher as not all women led and WROs operating in Ukraine responded to the questionnaire. The most affected programs are those **addressing gender-based violence (GBV), with over 60% of organizations forced to reduce or suspend services, leaving survivors without safe spaces or legal and psychological support.** Women's economic empowerment, peace and security, and advocacy for gender equality is also being cut, threatening progress made in recent years to women's access to rights, services, and opportunities.

Financial instability has placed organizations in a precarious position, with many struggling to pay rent, salaries, and service providers. **More than 60% are now facing unpaid invoices, while over half cannot fulfill contractual obligations, leading to reputational risks and strained partnerships.** Ensuing staff reductions are weak-

ening institutional knowledge and limiting organizations' ability to respond to growing needs. **Sixty-seven percent (67%) of organizations have been forced to reduce their work force, and half anticipate further layoffs in the coming 3 months due to the suspension of the United States' financial support.** Furthermore, seventy-three percent (73%) of WROs will have to suspend their operations if there is no change at the current level of their fundings.

The search for alternative funding has become a top priority, yet solutions remain elusive. All of the organizations surveyed are now turning to international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for resources; some are also seeking the support of institutional donors and private foundations; some are pursuing community-based funding models. However, **40% of organizations surveyed have no immediate access to additional financial resources.** While some have funding from other development or humanitarian donors, or rely on membership fees and crowdfunding, these sources are unlikely to compensate due to the scale of the funding shortfall.

Beyond the immediate financial crisis, the broader implications for gender equality and the women's movement in Ukraine are deeply concerning. **WROs fear deteriorating conditions for women and girls, with reduced access to protection services, economic opportunities, and reproductive healthcare.** There is a perception of organizations surveyed that gender equality will be deprioritized at the policy level, and the influence of civil society organizations will be weakened. **Competition for scarce resources is intensifying, making it particularly difficult for grassroots organizations to survive.**

Despite these challenges, WROs are demonstrating resilience by seeking **new funding models, strengthening coalitions, and looking for ways to adapt to the shifting donor landscape.**

1. Objective, Purpose and Methodology



The pause and then suspension of United States foreign assistance in January 2025 has raised concerns about its potential impact on Ukrainian women-led and women's rights organizations operating at a time of growing insecurity and attacks by the Russian Federation. To better understand the extent of this impact, the Apparatus of the Government Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy of Ukraine, UN Women Ukraine Country Office, and the Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group* (GiHA WG) launched a survey for women-led and women's rights organizations operating in the humanitarian, early recovery and development fields. The survey was circulated via the databases of the GiHA WG and the Government Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy for Ukraine. The data was collected between February 14-21, 2025. In total, 99 organizations responded to the survey.

The survey aimed to gather critical initial insights into how the suspension of the United States funding is affecting the operations, sustainability, and effectiveness of WROs working to advance gender equality and women's rights in Ukraine. Data collected will be used to strengthen advocacy efforts, ensure informed decision-making, and mobilize support to mitigate the challenges faced by these organizations. It should be noted the suspension of United States funds is expected to have far-reaching effects, and ongoing studies should be conducted to fully assess its impact over time.

* The Ukraine Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group is co-chaired by UN Women, NGO Girls and CARE Ukraine. The GiHA WG offers interagency and intersectoral technical capacity to the Humanitarian Coordinator, the Humanitarian Country Team and all other stakeholders involved in the humanitarian response in Ukraine to ensure the integration of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

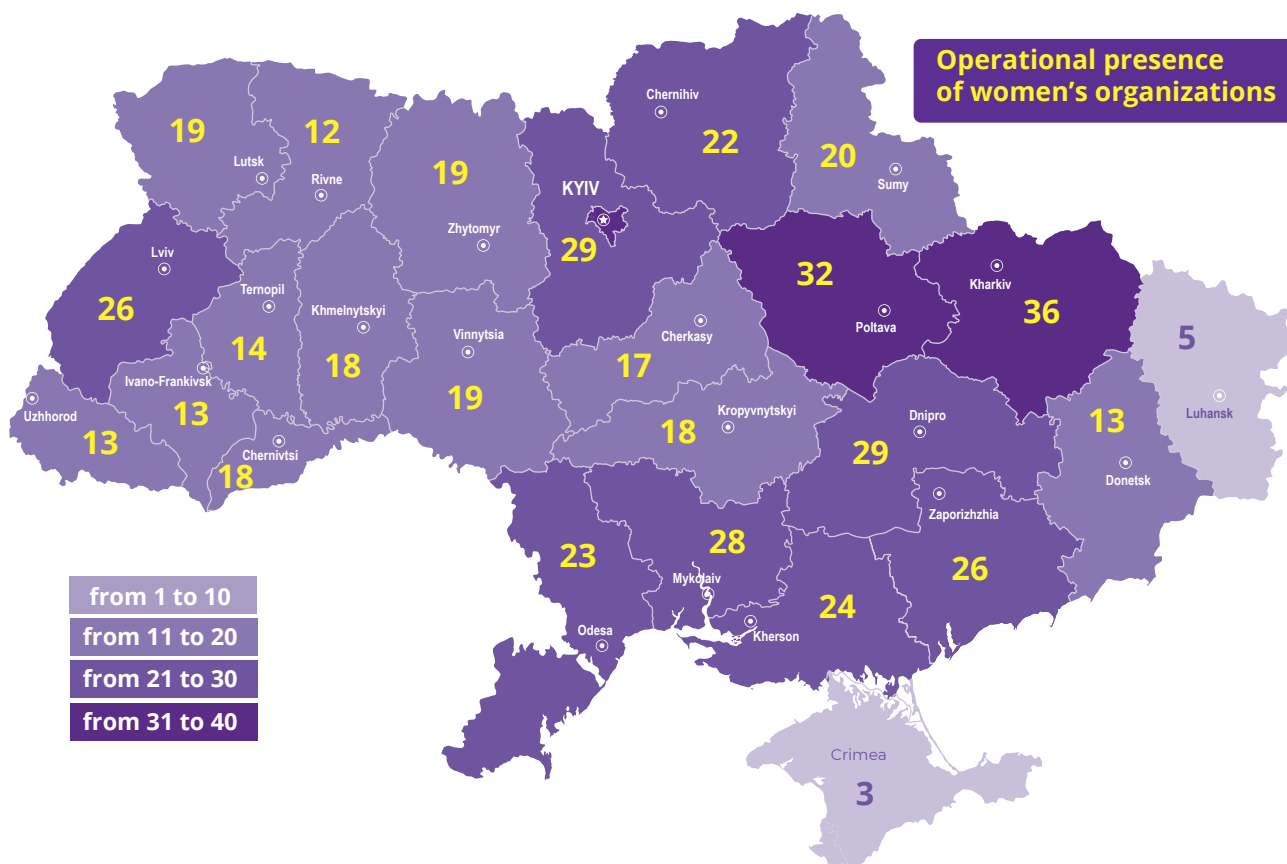
2. Organizational Profiles

The survey responses indicate that **a majority of organizations (52%) operate at the national level**, working across multiple regions in Ukraine. Meanwhile, **41% represent local civil society organizations**, operational in one region of Ukraine. A smaller **6% of organizations work within a single community**, highlighting the presence of grassroots efforts at the local level.

Additionally, **94% of organizations identify as women-led**, and **96% define themselves as women’s rights organizations (WROs) as per the definition of WROs developed by GiHA WG Ukraine**.¹

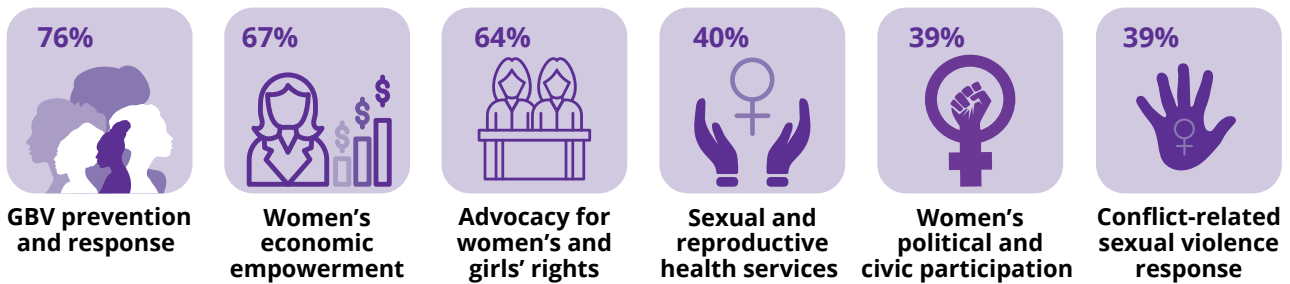
The findings further reveal that **86 % of organizations work in humanitarian response and early recovery**, while **76% focus on development**, highlighting their dual role in both crisis response and long-term resilience-building. A significant **93% of organizations implement DEI programs**, demonstrating a broad commitment to intersectional approaches.

The survey results indicate that **GBV prevention and response** is the most widely implemented DEI program by the respondents; **76% of organizations** implement programming in this thematic area. **Women’s economic empowerment**,



¹ A Women’s Rights Organization (WRO) is: An organization that self-identifies as a women’s rights organization with the primary focus of advancing gender equality, women’s empowerment, and human rights; or An organization that has, as part of its mission statement, the advancement of women’s and girls’ interests and rights (or where ‘women,’ ‘girls,’ ‘gender,’ or local language equivalents are prominent in their mission statement); or An organization that has, as part of its mission statement or objectives, the goal of challenging and transforming gender inequalities, unequal power relations, and promoting positive social norms.

Programmatic Focus of WLO/WRO Respondents

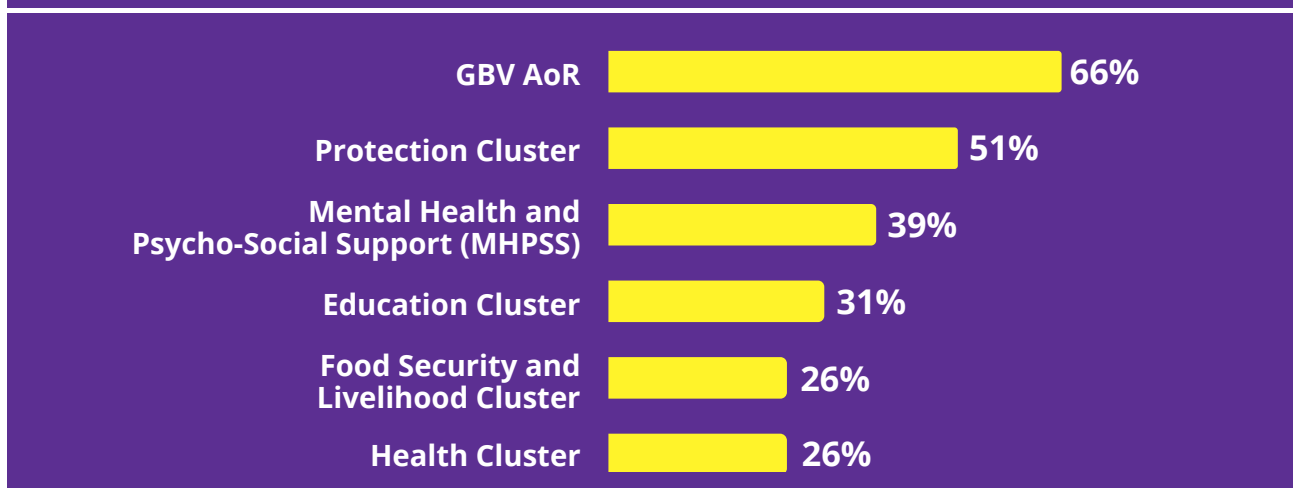


women, peace and security, and gender equality initiatives each have a strong presence, with **67% of organizations** working on these issues. **Advocacy for women's and girls' rights follows closely at 64%**, highlighting the focus on policy and legal frameworks. Other key areas of engagement include **sexual and reproductive health services (40%)**, **conflict-related sexual violence response (39%)**, and **women's political and civic participation (39%)**, showcasing efforts to ensure holistic gender equality. Programs supporting **people with disabilities (38%)**, **gender-responsive recovery (31%)**, and **gender-responsive budgeting (24%)** also indicate the broad scope of DEI programming. However, **less than 20% of organizations focus on LGBTQI+ rights, human trafficking, and national minority inclusion.**

In humanitarian coordination, women's organizations are primarily engaged in protection-related coordination structures. The survey results indicate that **Gender-based Violence Area of Re-**

sponsibility (GBV AoR) is the most engaged humanitarian cluster, with **66% of organizations participating in it**, highlighting a strong focus on protecting and supporting vulnerable populations, particularly women and girls. The **Protection Cluster follows at 51%**, demonstrating WROs' commitment to safeguarding human rights and ensuring access to justice. **Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support Technical Working Group (MHPSS TWG) ranks third with 39% engagement**, reflecting the growing recognition of the psychological impact of crises on affected populations. The **Education Cluster, with 31% participation**, underscores WROs' efforts to ensure continued learning opportunities for children and youth in emergency settings. **Food Security and Livelihoods Cluster, along with the Health Cluster, each at 26%**, highlight the need for both immediate nutritional support and long-term economic recovery.

Participation in Humanitarian Coordination Structures



3. Impact of United States Funding Suspension on Ukrainian Women's Organizations

The suspension of United States funding is rapidly impacting organizations' capacities, forcing them to shift from growth to survival. Training programs and workforce retention initiatives have been halted, leading to knowledge loss and reduced efficiency. Aid cuts have further weakened organizations, limiting their ability to provide essential services such as humanitarian relief, rehabilitation support, and the prevention and response to GBV. Financial instability has increased staff workload pressures, suspended critical development programs, and jeopardized organizational sustainability, with some organizations at risk of closure. Crisis management has replaced long-term planning, weakening institutional resilience and reducing organizations' ability to deliver effective and gender-sensitive/responsive programs.

The suspension of United States financial support has had a major impact **with 73% of organizations reporting that they are significantly impacted and 25% somewhat impacted.** Only 2.1% of organizations stated that they have not been impacted by the suspension of the United States' financial support. This distribution may be influenced by self-selection bias, as civil society organizations (CSOs) that experienced adverse effects from the funding suspension may have been more likely to participate in the survey.²

Furthermore, the suspension of United States financial support has had a significant impact, **with 48% of organizations reporting that they had either received or anticipated United States fi-**

ancial support at the time the suspension was announced in January 2025. Among these organizations, the majority (69%) had allocated United States funding for 2025, while 31% had planned for funding across 2025-2026.

The Impact on Programme Participants

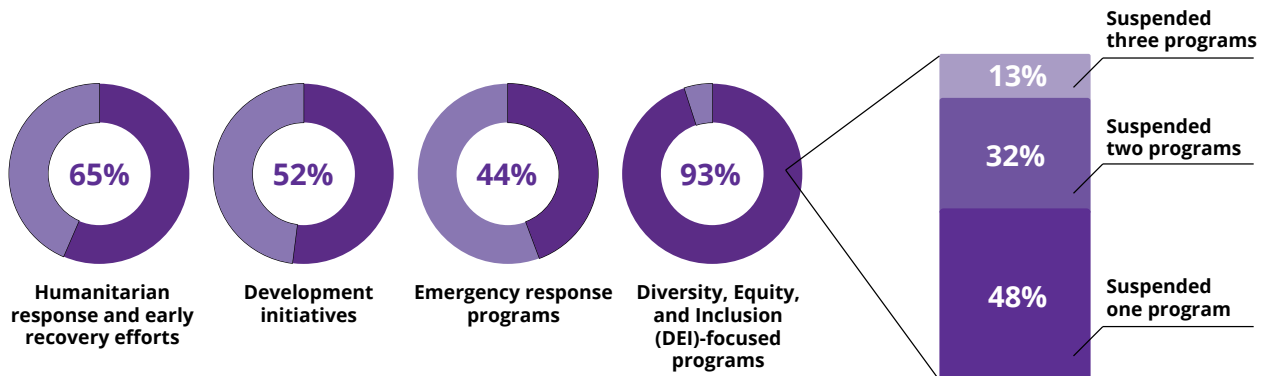
Based on 44 responses, the number of programme participants that may be affected by the suspension of United States financial support is

109,601
affected people



² The survey has been shared with a total of 454 Ukrainian organizations in the database of GiHA WG.

Impact on Thematic Areas



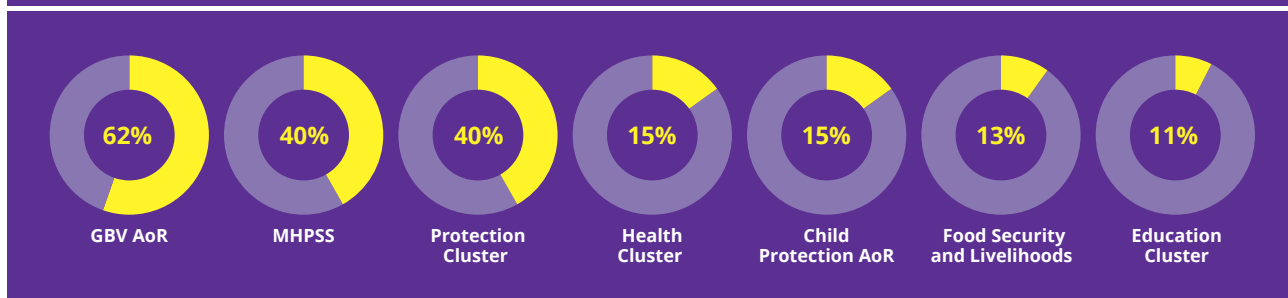
The suspension of United States financial support has had a profound impact on projects/programmes across various sectors, disrupting **humanitarian response and early recovery efforts (65%), development initiatives (52%), and emergency response programs (44%)**. These cuts have not only affected immediate crisis interventions but have also slowed long-term progress on gender equality, reducing support for vulnerable groups. The funding shortfall has been par-

ticularly devastating for **DEI programs**, with **93% of organizations were forced to close at least one DEI program**. Among them, **48% suspended one program, 32% suspended two, and 13% were forced to halt three programs**, significantly weakening gender-sensitive/responsive initiatives. Only a small fraction of organizations (7%) reported no program suspensions, highlighting the widespread consequences of these funding cuts on gender-focused humanitarian and development efforts.

We work in frontline communities within a 30-kilometer zone in the South, where we had numerous requests from local communities that were submitted as project proposals. Now, the project has been halted, and new ones will not be supported. While we have some donors that help reduce risks, some of them might also face cuts, as they were partially funded by USAID.

Organizations expect the suspension of United States funding to have the greatest impact on their programs implemented within the GBV AoR, with **62% of organizations** reporting disruptions, highlighting a critical gap in protection services for vulnerable groups. **Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support (MHPSS) and the Protection Cluster follow, each at 40%**, indicating significant concerns about the availability of essential psychological and legal support. The **Health Cluster and Child Protection AoR, both at 15%**, reflect challenges in maintaining healthcare services and safeguarding children in crisis situations.

The number of suspended DEI programs by cluster



Food Security and Livelihoods (13%) and **Education (11%)** clusters are also affected, raising concerns about long-term economic resilience and access to education for affected populations.

The impact of the United States' funding suspension on humanitarian coordination and development activities appears divided, with **43% of organizations reporting negative effects**, while an equal **43% stated it has had no impact**. Meanwhile, **15% remain uncertain**, indicating that the full consequences of the funding cut may still be unfolding.

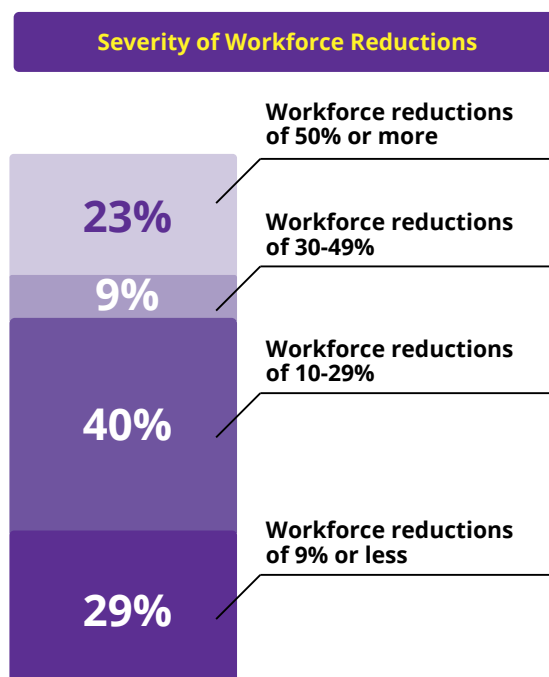
The suspension of United States funding has had the most significant impact on **GBV prevention and response programs**, with **72% of organizations** reporting disruptions, highlighting a critical gap in support for survivors. **Forty percent (40%)** of organizations said that **women's economic empowerment and gender equality initiatives** have also been heavily affected, limiting opportunities for women's financial independence and leadership. **Conflict-related sexual violence response (36%)** and **advocacy for women's and girls' rights (34%)** have suffered setbacks, reducing the capacity to protect and promote gender justice. Additionally, **women's political and civic participation (32%)**, **sexual and reproductive health services (30%)**, and **women, peace, and security programs (30%)** have been impacted. **Gender-responsive recovery (26%)** and **the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities (21%)** have also faced funding challenges, affecting vulnerable populations.

We are a non-profit organization that survives solely on donor funding. We are now in a dire situation. Many of our beneficiaries—women who have survived violence, HIV-positive women, former prisoners, sex workers—urgently need adaptation support and social services, but due to funding cuts, we can only offer phone consultations.

Impact on WROs' Human Resources

The majority of organizations (**67%**) reported that they have been **forced to** reduce staffing levels due to the suspension of United States funding, indicating a significant impact on staffing and operational capacity. The analysis of staff reductions following the suspension of United States funding reveals that 29% of organizations experienced a workforce reduction of up to 9%, while 40% saw reductions between 10% and 29%. Additionally, 9% of organizations reported that they were forced to lose staff ranging from 30% to 49%, and 23% were forced to experience severe layoffs, with workforce reductions of 50% or more. These findings highlight the widespread impact of funding cuts on human capital, with many organizations implementing substantial workforce reductions.

Approximately one-third of organizations (33%) said they had not made any staffing adjustments so far, but half of the respondents (**50%**) anticipate **further reductions** in human resources within the next three months due to the funding suspension. Meanwhile, **15% do not expect any additional layoffs**, while **35% remain uncertain**, indicating a high level of instability and financial insecurity among organizations.

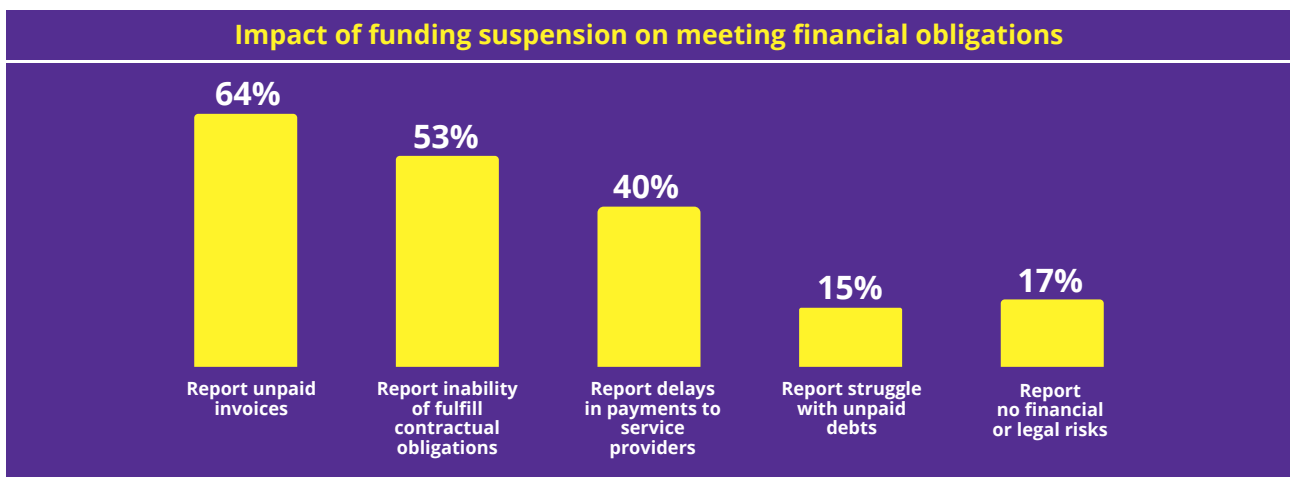


Impact on the Obligations of WROs

The suspension of United States funding has introduced significant **financial and legal risks** for organizations. The majority facing severe challenges in meeting their obligations. **Unpaid invoices, including rent, utilities, and salaries, were reported by 64% of respondents**, underscoring the immediate financial strain. More than half (**53%**)

We will lose three offices and our comprehensive direct service program, which covered three regions. Additionally, we won't be able to pay salaries for our skilled team of 14 professionals. Our established cooperation with local authorities and partner organizations is also at risk.

of organizations surveyed reported that they are unable to fulfill contractual obligations, such as service agreements and partnership contracts, potentially jeopardizing long-term collaborations. **Delays in paying service providers and vendors affect 40% of respondents**, further disrupting operations and service delivery. While **17% of organizations reported no financial or legal risks**, others are already struggling with **unpaid debts (15%)**.



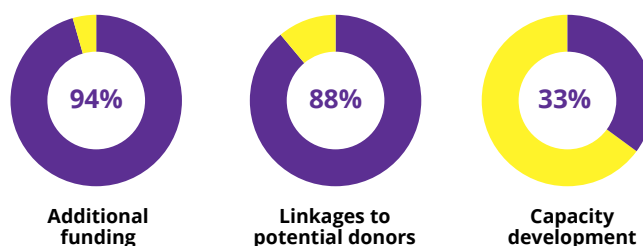
Impact on Financial Sustainability of WROs

The suspension of United States funding has placed organizations in Ukraine under severe financial strain, prompting urgent concerns about sustainability and the need for alternative funding sources. Ninety-four percent (94%) of respondents identified additional funding as the most critical need, while 88% emphasized the importance of establishing connections with potential donors, underscoring the challenge of securing new financial support. Additionally, 33% highlighted the need for capacity development, including training and technical assistance, to help organizations adapt to the shifting funding landscape and enhance their long-term resilience.

The analysis of funding dependency highlights varying levels of reliance on United States financial support among organizations. A total of 28% had a lower dependency where United States funding constituted between 0% and 29% of their budget. Meanwhile, 37% of organizations had a moderate reliance, with United States funding covering between 30% and 50% of their budget. However, 35% of organizations were highly dependent, relying on United States funding for 51% to 100% of their budget. This group was the most vulnerable, facing serious risks of operational disruptions, staff reductions, or program closures due to the funding suspension.

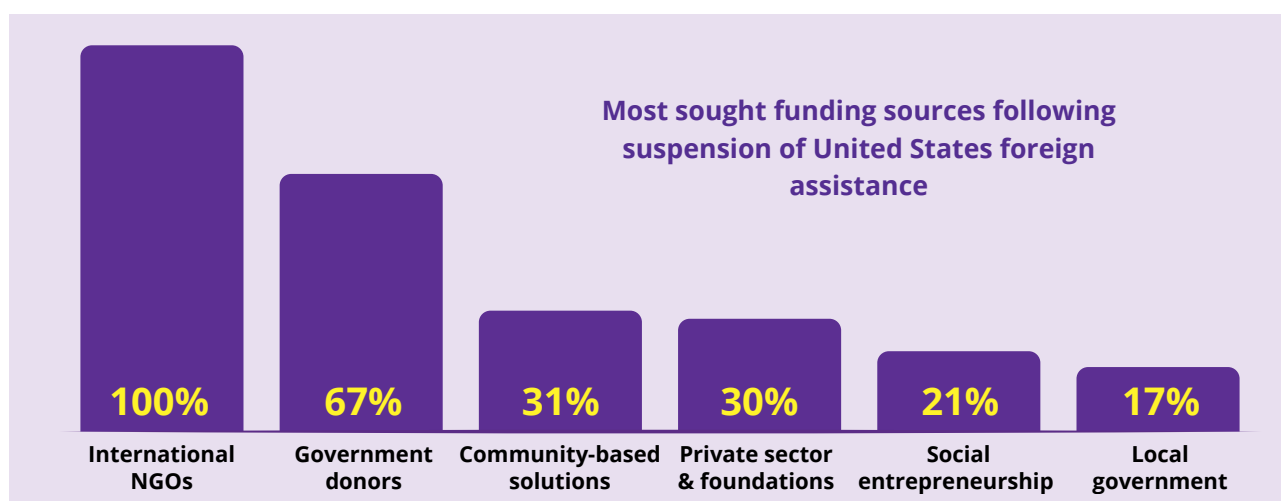
As organizations navigate this financial uncertainty, all respondents indicated they are looking to international non-governmental organizations

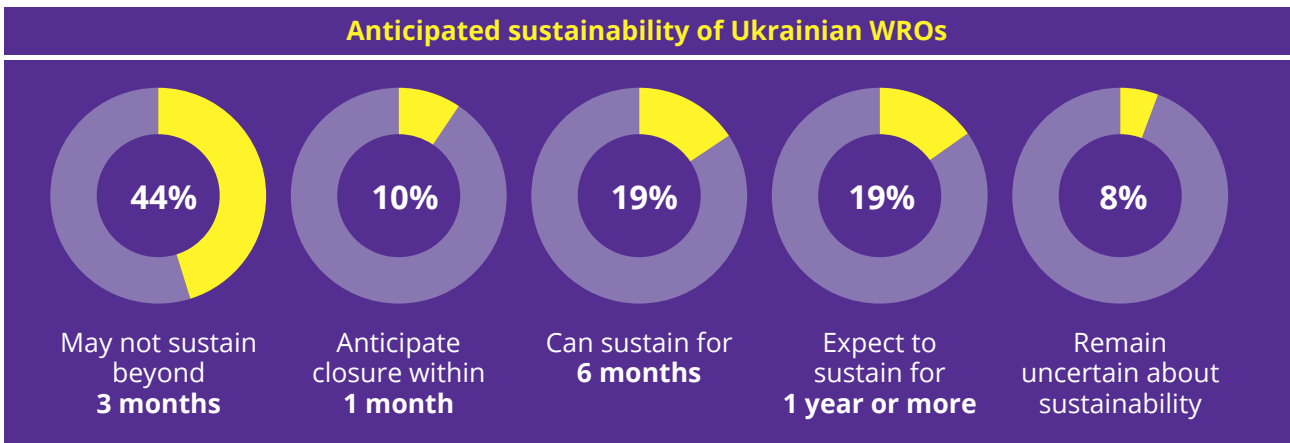
Top three identified needs of Ukrainian WROs



for funding. Furthermore, 67% are considering reaching out to more international governmental donors. Meanwhile, 31% are exploring community-driven solutions such as membership fees and individual donations, and 29% are seeking support from businesses and private foundations. A smaller proportion (21%) view revenue generation through social entrepreneurship as a potential solution, while 17% are looking to government or local self-governance structures for financial backing. These findings reveal a strong push toward funding diversification but also underscore the challenges of replacing lost financial support in a rapidly evolving donor landscape.

The sustainability of these organizations under current funding constraints is highly uncertain, and the overall outlook is precarious. Among 48 respondents, 44% of organizations anticipate not being able to maintain operations beyond the next three months. Another 10% anticipate closure within a month, highlighting extreme financial vulnerability. Meanwhile, 19% foresee sustaining activities for six months, and an equal 19% believe they can continue for a year or more. Additionally, 8% of



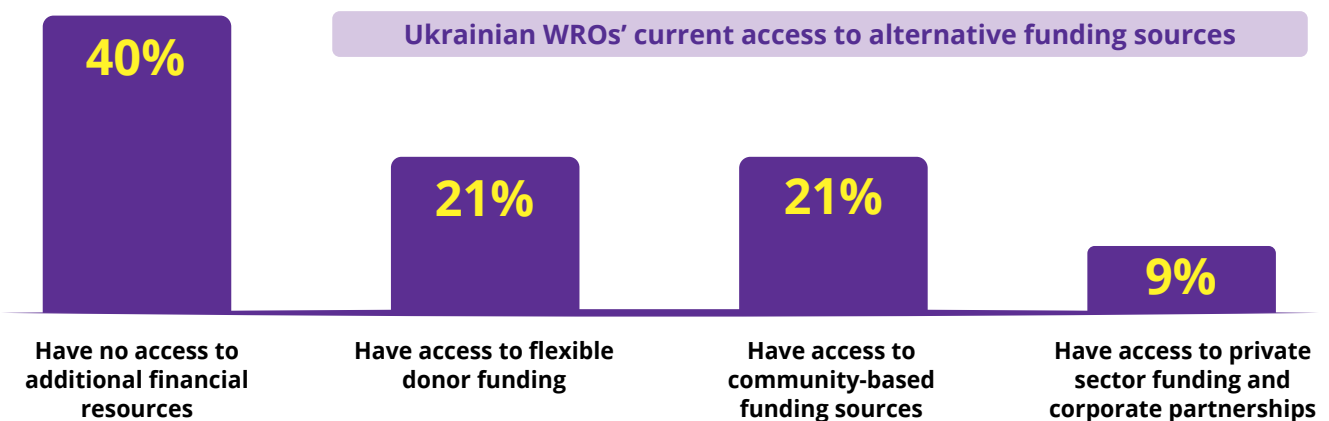


organizations are still uncertain about how long they can sustain operations, further reflecting the unpredictability facing Ukrainian WROs.

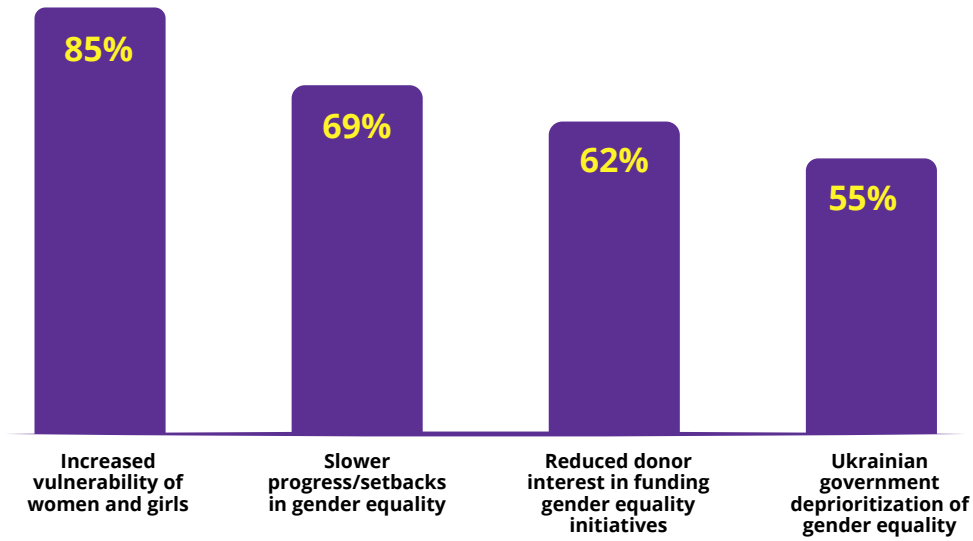
Despite ongoing efforts to identify alternative funding sources, **40% of respondents report having no access to any additional financial resources, signaling a critical gap in long-term sustainability.** While 21% have access to flexible donor funding, and an equal 21% rely on community-based fundraising methods such as crowdfunding and membership fees, these sources are unlikely to fully address organizations’ financial needs. Only 9% have secured funding from the private sector. Additionally, a small portion of organizations are actively seeking funding through grant proposals (2%), negotiating additional funds (2%), or are attempting to attract new donors (2%), but these efforts remain in the early stages.

Impact on Women’s Rights and the Women’s Movement in Ukraine

The suspension of United States funding support has raised serious concerns about its potential consequences for both the status of women and girls in Ukraine and the broader women’s movement. A significant majority of respondents (85%) fear that more women and girls will experience deteriorating conditions, while 69% worry about setbacks in achieving gender equality. Additionally, 55% are concerned that the Ukrainian government may deprioritize gender equality issues, potentially reducing support and resources for the advancement of women’s rights. Moreover, 62% of respondents expressed apprehension that donor interest in funding gender equality initiatives may also decline, further weakening advocacy efforts and undermining the delivery of essential services.



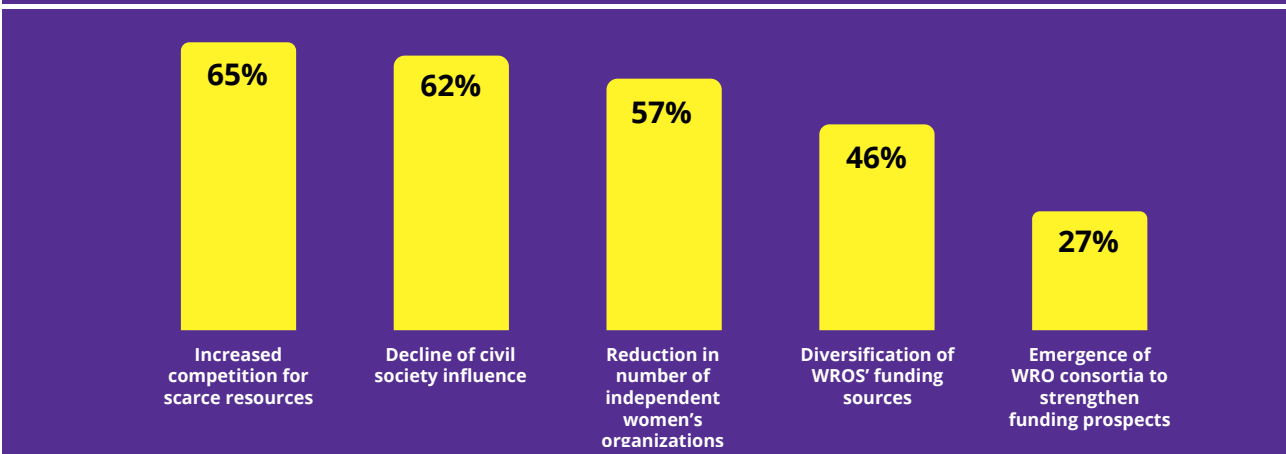
Anticipated impact on Ukrainian women and girls



Beyond its impact on individuals, the women’s movement in Ukraine as a whole faces serious financial and structural challenges. 65% of respondents foresee increased competition among women’s organizations for already scarce resources, making it particularly difficult for smaller or grassroots entities to survive. Meanwhile, 62% worry that the influence of civil society organizations advocating for women’s rights will decline, and 57% fear a reduction in the number of independent women’s organizations, which could significantly weaken the movement’s ability to push for change.

In response to these challenges, 46% of respondents emphasize the need for diversifying funding sources, recognizing the risks of dependency on a single donor. Twenty-seven percent (27%) see coalition-building among women’s organizations as an opportunity to strengthen advocacy and resilience in the face of funding cuts.

Anticipated impact on women’s movement in Ukraine





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