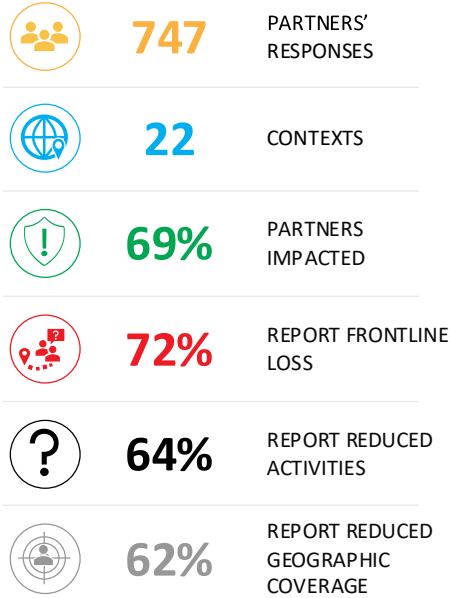


Protection capacities are under extreme pressure

What is at stake is the system's ability to help keep people safe

KEY FIGURES AT A GLANCE



WHERE WE LOOKED: 22 CONTEXTS



The survey was conducted with 747 partners across 22 active Protection Cluster operations. Local and national NGOs account for 478 responses (64%), INGOs for 197 (26%), and the remaining 72 (10%) come from UN and other actor categories.

The timing of this analysis is critical. Protection capacity reductions are taking place within a broader structural shift in humanitarian financing, marked by smaller funding envelopes, sharper prioritization and greater pressure to focus on what is most immediate, visible and countable. This is consistent with the broader Humanitarian Reset agenda, but it creates a specific risk for protection: **the functions most needed to keep a leaner response effective and targeted in addressing violence and supporting the most vulnerable people are not being funded.**

Protection depends on continuity, trust, proximity, analysis and follow-up. Monitoring, community engagement, programming & services, referrals, case management, protection analysis and advocacy are the functions that help identify who is most at risk, where harm is increasing, and how limited resources can be prioritized to reduce it. The report shows that these functions are being reduced as protection faces sustained funding pressure.

1. A system-wide capacity loss

7 in 10 partners impacted on MHPSS, community-based protection, monitoring and case management, while around **6 in 10** impacted on individual protection assistance, referrals, safe spaces and protection analysis. Reductions are happening **at the same time**, disrupting direct support to people at risk and the functions used to identify, refer, follow up and respond to protection risks, and resulting urgent needs.

2. Why protection is especially exposed

Three funding-modality pressures affect protection capacity: **shorter timeframes, pressure on immediate "outputs", and disruption to localization.** Reported alongside reductions in staff, service delivery and coverage, they mean less time to follow up, build trust and maintain presence; pressure to prioritize countable results; and services being cut before or despite local and national ownership.


3. Why this matters beyond protection

The most affected functions are those that keep protection actors close to affected people: identifying evolving risks, sustaining trust and translating field evidence into response and advocacy. This means not only reduced delivery, but **reduced visibility over people, protection risks and service functionality**, weakening the wider humanitarian system's ability to target support safely and prevent needs from escalating.


PROTECTION CAPACITY CHAIN




WHAT IS BEING LOST

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1. Frontline workforce is being reduced.

7 out of 10 partners report reductions in frontline staff, the most frequently cited impact, directly affecting case identification, follow-up, and sustained presence in communities. This is accompanied by parallel reductions in support, technical, and coordination roles (4 out of 10), indicating that the contraction extends beyond delivery to the functions that ensure quality, oversight, and coherence of protection response.
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2. The services package is narrowing.

6 out of 10 partners report a reduction in the range of services delivered, with 8 out of 10 reporting impact across core protection services such as case management, MHPSS, monitoring, and community-based activities. This reflects fewer services and a thinning of how activities are delivered, where key components, modalities, and quality mechanisms are reduced, weakening the continuity and effectiveness of protection.
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3. Geographic reach is shrinking.

6 out of 10 partners report reduced geographic coverage, pointing to a shrinking operational footprint. This translates into reduced proximity to affected populations, weaker visibility over evolving protection risks, and loss of continuity in high-risk or hard-to-reach areas, amplifying the impact of staffing and service reductions.
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4. The community interface is weakening.

While 4 out of 10 partners report reduced engagement, over 7 out of 10, report impacts on community-based, monitoring, and awareness activities—the core functions that sustain continuous interaction with communities. This indicates that engagement is not disappearing entirely, but is being maintained unevenly, often at reduced scale, quality, or frequency, weakening trust, early detection, and responsiveness.
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5. System-enabling capacities are being eroded.

Around 7 out of 10 partners report impacts on system-enabling functions, including capacity strengthening, protection analysis, early warning, and advocacy. This points to a disproportionate erosion of the capacities that enable protection to adapt, coordinate, and operate strategically over time, undermining not only delivery, but the ability to anticipate and respond effectively to evolving protection risks.

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR PEOPLE

For a woman or girl at risk of violence



Fewer safe places remain where they can talk confidentially, ask for help, or be referred to support.

For a child at risk



Fewer trained people are available to notice warning signs, follow up, and act before the situation becomes more serious.

For people living near mines or explosive ordnance



There is less information on where it is dangerous to go, and slower action to make roads, schools, farmland or water points safer.

For older people and persons with disabilities



Less frequent visits, harder-to-access information, reduced transport support and less adapted assistance increase the risk of being left behind.

In simple terms: people have fewer chances to be seen, fewer chances to speak safely, and fewer chances to receive support before harm becomes more serious.

URGENT ACTION NEEDED

- 1** Preserve the capacities needed for the continuity of protection.
- 2** Ensure a leaner response remains targeted to address critical protection risks.
- 3** Ensure the humanitarian system remains protective, addressing threats and driving targeted response.