



WOMEN'S  
REFUGEE  
COMMISSION

FINDINGS FROM

## A Year of Harms:

The Impact of US Foreign Aid Cuts on  
Women and Girls in Humanitarian Crises



On January 20, 2025, President Trump issued an executive order instituting a 90-day pause on United States foreign aid, ultimately cutting over \$40 billion in official development assistance, including more than \$10 billion in humanitarian assistance. When the pause was enacted, an estimated 305 million people across 72 countries required humanitarian assistance—the highest numbers in recorded history. The abrupt and unprecedented withdrawal of US foreign aid threw an already overstretched humanitarian system into chaos.

*A Year of Harms: The Impact of US Foreign Aid Cuts on Women and Girls in Humanitarian Crises* is the **most comprehensive synthesis of evidence to date on the gendered impacts of recent US foreign aid cuts**. Using a scoping review methodology, the report draws from 105 sources with evidence from humanitarian crises in 32 countries. This brief presents an overview of one of five key findings: *women and girls have lost dedicated civic spaces*.

Read the full report here: [womensrefugeecommission.org/research-resources/year-of-harms/](https://womensrefugeecommission.org/research-resources/year-of-harms/)

## Women and girls have lost dedicated civic spaces

The report's fourth finding establishes that **US foreign aid cuts have uniquely impacted women-led organizations (WLOs)** with an extremely limited ability to continue operating in humanitarian crises.

- Approximately **99% of US foreign aid for civil society was cut**, totaling more than **\$264.7 million**.
- Among 400 WLOs and women's rights organizations (WROs) across 44 humanitarian and crisis settings, 90 percent were financially impacted by US foreign aid cuts and **nearly half expected to shut down in 2025**.
- WLOs are first responders for women and girls in humanitarian crises, and funding cuts to WLOs have translated directly into reduced access to essential programs and services.
- Loss of funding to WLOs compounds harm for women and girls by shrinking access to civil space and encroaching on gender equality efforts.
- As indirect recipients of US funding, many WLOs learned of cuts through project intermediaries and face continued uncertainty about future funding, leading to reputational strain and loss of community trust.

The review found evidence of the impact on WLOs in Afghanistan, DRC, Ethiopia, Honduras, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Uganda, Ukraine, and Yemen.