

Data systems under financial strain

Findings from a rapid assessment of 41 food security, nutrition, and health information systems

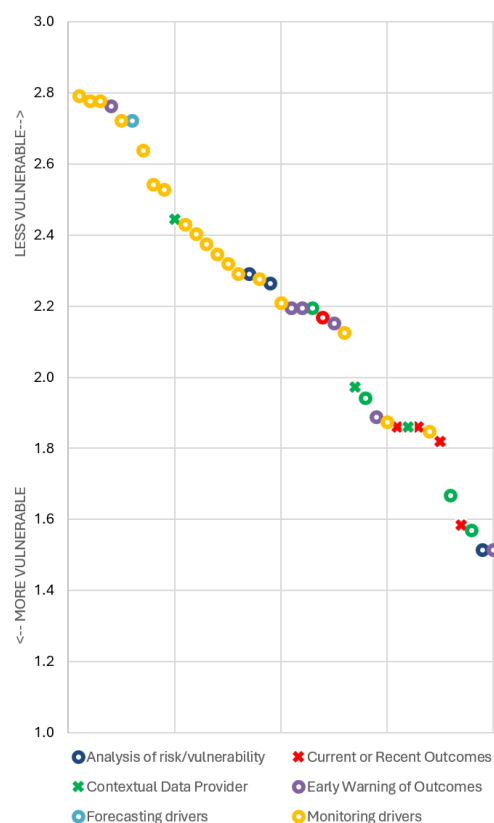
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The 2025 cuts to foreign assistance have weakened the crisis-information infrastructure underpinning humanitarian and development response. An IFPRI assessment, funded by Rockefeller Catalytic Capital (RFCC), examined 41 globally relevant information systems focused on predicting, monitoring, and understanding food and nutrition crises. Among systems reporting funding estimates, funding declined by an average of 31% in 2025, compared with a 23% decline in overall official development assistance (ODA). These funding cuts have sharply reduced data collection, limited analysis, and weakened forecasts. As declining aid flows make effective targeting of assistance even more critical, the information available to decision makers is eroding.

Financial vulnerability across the data ecosystem

The assessment considered both the effects of recent funding cuts and systems' exposure to further financial disruption. Systems were assessed across six areas of financial vulnerability: impact of 2025 cuts, financing structure, funder risk, institutional and governance risk, operational fragility, and demand/political economy risk. Data were collected through a review of publicly available information, key informant interviews, and a short survey of system staff.

Figure 1: Overall system vulnerability score by system type



Note: Each point represents a system, colored by system type. Lower scores indicate greater vulnerability. Extreme below 1.50; high 1.50–1.99; moderate 2.00–2.49; low 2.50–3.00.

Among the 41 assessed systems, 1 was classified as experiencing extreme vulnerability, 14 as high vulnerability, 17 as moderate vulnerability, and 9 as low vulnerability. The most financially vulnerable systems identified by this assessment include the International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI) at Columbia University, FEWS NET's early warning and knowledge-base functions, ND-GAIN, EM-DAT, and FAO DIEM.

Household data collection was cut the most

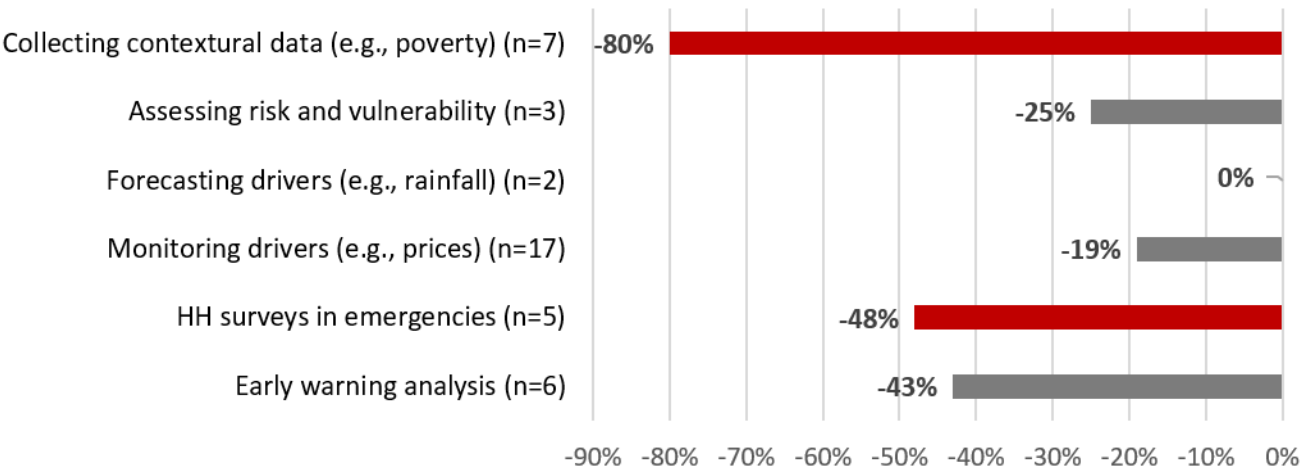
Funding cuts have hit food security and nutrition data systems unevenly. Systems that track the drivers of food insecurity, including weather, conflict, and prices, have fared relatively better, while systems that collect household level information have been severely impacted.

Funding for emergency surveys across four major providers (REACH, WFP, FAO DIEM, SMART Initiative) fell by roughly \$45 million, about half of their combined pre-2025 budgets. These surveys provide ground truth on the location and severity of impacts on people and livelihoods, directly informing early warning, response planning, and assistance delivery.

Across these systems, cuts have reduced country coverage, survey frequency, staffing, technical support, analytical products, and data updates with direct impacts on the availability, timeliness, and quality of crisis-relevant information.

Systems that provide critical contextual information on agriculture, health, poverty, and diets have also been severely affected, including the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) program.

Figure 2: Average funding cuts in 2025 by system type



Note: Includes only cuts for which a specific estimate was available; does not fully reflect new funding that may partially offset losses. The 31% overall average is based on 34 systems reporting estimates and is not a budget-weighted measure. The red bars indicate the categories with household data collection.

Limited capacity to absorb further cuts

Most systems have stable institutional homes and strong user demand. The weaker points are donor concentration, short or uncertain funding horizons, project-based financing, and operational models where funding cuts quickly translate into reduced staffing, coverage, data collection, or update frequency. Eighteen of the assessed systems score as highly vulnerable on operational fragility, reflecting the significant exposure of core functions and staffing to additional funding cuts.

Before 2025, the US government was a major donor to more than half of these systems, while the EU was a major donor to more than one-third. The US retreat from foreign assistance has increased reliance on the EU, and philanthropies such as the Gates Foundation, as major sources of data system funding.

Emerging priorities for action

This assessment was rapid and did not comprehensively cover all relevant data systems. Nonetheless, it highlights areas where action is needed quickly. First, support for household survey data collection is essential both to address immediate data gaps and to build national capacity for emergency data collection and analysis. Second, sustained financing for integrated early warning analysis is critical, alongside investments in the responsible use of technology to lower costs and improve coverage. Third, targeted support could also protect important, low-cost systems, such as FAO locust monitoring and ND-GAIN, whose information or expertise would be difficult to replace. Finally, efforts to diversify data system funding are needed to reduce reliance on a small handful of donors. This will require engagement with a range of traditional and non-traditional donors.

Funding levels are likely to continue evolving in the months ahead. Updating this analysis to cover additional systems and account for new investments would help track remaining vulnerabilities and inform funding priorities.

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