

Introduction

This section illustrates innovative and good practices under each of the six pillars and includes several case studies using a synergistic approach. See the text box for definitions of these key terms. Most pillars have around four to eight good or innovative practices. However, given the greater funding allocated to Pillar 3 on Prevention and Pillar 4 on Services, each of these pillars feature 13 cases. Every case study briefly introduces the context, often including statistics on specific violence rates in a country or region, shares Spotlight Initiative's intervention designed to address the violence issue, highlights the main results and concludes with practices that led to its success, scale-up or sustainability. It is important to note that the context is key in any initiative to end violence against women and girls. A thorough context and power analysis is required to address the ever-shifting landscape in strategic and flexible ways.

Innovative practice

An innovative practice is a new solution (method/idea/product) with the transformative ability to accelerate impact. Innovation can entail improved ways of working with new and diverse partners; can be fuelled by science and technology; or can involve new social and business models, behavioural insights or path-breaking improvements in delivering essential services and products, among other solutions. It does not have to involve technology; most important is that innovation is a break from previous practice with the potential to produce significant positive impact.

Good practice

A good practice is a practice that has been proven to work well and produce good results and is therefore recommended as a model. It is a successful experience that has been tested and validated, in the broad sense, and that has been repeated and deserves to be shared, so that a greater number of people can adopt it.

Lesson Learned

A lesson learned is the knowledge, experience or understanding generated from implementation of Spotlight Initiative that can be used to inform and improve future efforts. It can cover all aspects of the programme, such as quality programming in the Initiative, ways of working in the UN (particularly in terms of interagency coordination, in the spirit of UN reform) or other areas within the field of ending violence against women and girls more broadly. It is often drawn from the actions taken to address a challenge encountered during implementation, which has been properly examined with a critical lens to identify insights and solutions. Capturing lessons learned should be an ongoing process throughout all phases of the Initiative to have a continuous feedback loop.

At the end of each case study, there are successful elements for potential adaptation to other country contexts or thematics and elements that support possibilities towards scale or replication. These, however, should be reflected on with caution because scaling up in this work of transforming norms and cultures of inequalities risks diluting results and impact. As such, there must be mechanisms in place to ensure the integrity and depth of the work. Much of the work related to ending violence against women and girls takes considerable time due to the contextual complexities, histories of violence and the ways in which violence is woven into cultural and normative mechanisms. An essential step is to ensure proper education and awareness of how these patriarchal normative patterns occur and only then can these discriminatory norms be transformed into behaviours, practices and institutions of equality. Efforts that dilute this fundamental and essential principle for the sake of scale should seriously be examined, as the quick win that may transpire may come at the cost of real and deeper sustainable change.

Visual summary of initiatives across pillars



PILLAR 1: LAWS AND POLICIES

- 1 Legal reforms in Mexico safeguard the rights of orphans of femicide
- 2 Femicide Reparation Policy for survivors and their families in Ecuador
- 3 Women with disabilities in Zimbabwe influencing policy decisions and plans
- 4 Regional Action Plan for Africa to eliminate VAWG
- 5 National Strategic Action Plan in Trinidad and Tobago supports interagency coordination



PILLAR 2: INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

- 1 Greater budget allocation in Timor-Leste for women's rights
- 2 Parliamentary Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Papua New Guinea
- 3 Chiefs Forums in Malawi as key allies on ending VAWG
- 4 Revised protocol addressing GBV cases in higher education in Ecuador



PILLAR 3: PREVENTION

- 1 Safe Space Mentorship Programme in Malawi challenges social norms
- 2 Peace Huts in Zimbabwe address GBV locally and collectively
- 3 CHAMP community-based approach in Trinidad and Tobago empowers adolescents
- 4 Parenting for Childhood Development Programme in Papua New Guinea shifts behaviours that perpetuate VAWG
- 5 Comprehensive SGBV complaints mechanism for school children in Tajikistan
- 6 Secondary school curriculum revision in Vanuatu mainstreams SRHR information
- 7 The Council of Traditional Leaders in Africa commits to ending VAWG in their institutions
- 8 Religious leaders as champions of gender equality in Tajikistan
- 9 "Spring in Bishkek" mobile game educates on women's rights in Kyrgyzstan
- 10 #YoMeOcupo campaign in Argentina about men's household responsibilities
- 11 Multi-initiative strategy to prevention in Ecuador
- 12 *Entre Nos* chatbot in El Salvador raises awareness on gender and masculinity
- 13 Cure Violence community mobilisation model in Honduras helps prevent femicide



PILLAR 4: QUALITY ESSENTIAL SERVICES

- 1 Temporary refuge for women survivors and their families in Mexico
- 2 Mobile women's centres in rural Belize bridge the gap in access to basic services
- 3 Bus of Solidarity in Kyrgyzstan delivers gender-sensitive legal services
- 4 Taxi drivers in Niger promote safe public spaces for women and girls
- 5 GBV helplines in Samoa provide services during the COVID-19 pandemic
- 6 Integration of VAWG in emergency response plans promotes access to services and referral in Tajikistan
- 7 Mobile one-stop centre model in Zimbabwe improves access to essential services in hard-to-reach areas
- 8 Decentralised one-stop centres in Mali provide essential services
- 9 Specialised DVICs at police stations in Jamaica improve access to justice
- 10 Community and Survivor Funds in Malawi ensure economic justice for survivors
- 11 Alternative livelihoods for traditional zoes in Liberia reduces the practice of FGM
- 12 Model protocols in Indonesia for handling GBV cases of women migrant workers
- 13 Gender Responsive Policing Training in Trinidad and Tobago



PILLAR 5: DATA

- 1 *InfoViolência* digital database for GBV cases in Mozambique
- 2 PRMIS in Grenada for monitoring crime data
- 3 Primero System in Trinidad and Tobago for case management on violence against children
- 4 *Flores en el Aire*, a qualitative data approach in Ecuador
- 5 Cross-dimensional and cross-national research on femicide in Latin America
- 6 Mobile SAV App in Liberia for reporting cases of rape, physical and domestic violence
- 7 DNA lab in Uganda strengthens prosecution of VAWG cases
- 8 Innovation hacklabs in Africa spark new ideas and technology



PILLAR 6: WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS

- 1 Funding civil society and grassroots communities through the UN Trust Fund to ERAW and WPHF
- 2 Transnational federation of Filipino domestic and care workers unions and associations
- 3 School of Gender Activists in Tajikistan builds a cadre of local experts
- 4 PacFemCOP advances best practices in feminist discourse and movement building
- 5 The Esperanza Protocol for the protection of women HRDs in Latin America
- 6 CSNRG contributes to the success of Spotlight Initiative in Samoa

SYNERGIES ACROSS MULTIPLE PILLARS: A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

1 A comprehensive approach to end violence against women and girls in Malawi

2 The establishment of the Multi-Sectoral Mechanism of Integrated Care for Women Victims of Violence in Mozambique

3 The declaration of rape as a national emergency in Liberia results in a National Anti-Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Roadmap



Pillar 4: Quality essential services

Ensuring access to and provision of high-quality, timely and comprehensive services is essential for addressing the impact of violence and reducing recurring cycles of harm experienced by women and girls. Pillar 4 focuses on the use and availability of quality essential services in inclusive ways, reaching marginalised communities and ensuring no one is left behind. Work in this pillar ensures greater access to and quality of services, expands the one-stop comprehensive care centre model, improves referral pathways to ensure delivery of coordinated essential services, enhances the capabilities of service providers and duty-bearers like government and police, and strengthens the infrastructure that governs and guides the delivery of essential services. Moreover, it emphasises the importance of holding perpetrators accountable in line with international human rights standards and guidelines.

The good and innovative practices below include a wide range of examples from different regions. The first set of case studies highlight the importance of mobile and flexible services offered and delivered in Mexico, Belize, Kyrgyzstan, Niger, Samoa, and Tajikistan. Case studies from Zimbabwe, Mali, and Jamaica explore the results achieved and practices scaled through one-stop centres. The next set of case studies focus on how economic justice initiatives have strengthened service delivery in Malawi and Liberia. Finally, the last set of case studies in this section focus on the various service delivery guidelines developed in Indonesia and Trinidad and Tobago.

Mobile and flexible services to leave no one behind

4.1 Hotels offer temporary refuge and protection for women, girls, and adolescent survivors of violence and their families in Mexico

Overview

On average in Mexico, 10 women are murdered every day, and 7 out of 10 have experienced at least one situation of violence during their lifetime.²³⁰ Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated cases of violence against women and girls across the country, resulting in a 70 percent increase in cases of violence against women over two months of quarantine compared to the same period the year before.²³¹ Furthermore, from 2019 to 2020, calls to emergency responders related to incidences of domestic violence increased by more than 30 percent, and official reports of rape increased 56 percent.²³² Given the increase in violence against women and girls, shelters lacked the capacity to cope with the increased demand for services.

In order to address the shortage of protection centres and services, Spotlight Initiative in Mexico engaged with different stakeholders to ensure services remained available during the pandemic, despite the challenges posed by COVID-19 and the increase in need. Through the creation of a multi-sectoral mechanism, Spotlight Initiative successfully responded to the increased need for shelter for gender-based violence survivors through flexible programming and developing new partnerships.

Results

In line with the principle of leave no one behind, Spotlight Initiative, in collaboration with UNICEF and UNFPA and in alliance with the government and the hospitality sector, launched the Temporary and Free Accommodation in Hotels for Women, Girls, Boys and Adolescents Survivors of Violence (hereafter referred to as the “EAT initiative”) in 2020. This multi-sectoral effort offered temporary refuge for women and their families for seven days. This unique protection model focused on a population rarely considered in other forms of refuge. It included the family members who are dependent on women survivors, such as their adolescent children, mother, father or other older adult relatives.

²³⁰ *La prevención de la violencia contra las mujeres y las niñas es la clave hacia un mundo más igualitario, seguro y próspero* (ONU Mujeres Mexico, 2023). (in Spanish)

²³¹ *Violencia Doméstica Durante la Covid-19: Herramienta de orientación para empleadores, empleadoras y empresas* (ONU Mujeres, 2020). (in Spanish)

²³² *Wilson Memo: Security and Violence Against Women in Mexico* (Wilson Center, 2021).

In addition to temporary refuge, the EAT initiative provided access to psychological support, as well as critical supplies, such as food, clothing and hygiene products. After the seven day stay, the government ensured the survivors' subsequent relocation to public shelters and/or non-governmental organisations, so that they could begin the process of recovery and rebuild their lives. The EAT initiative also trained around 10,000 stakeholders from partner hotels and referral authorities on the EAT implementation manual, offering technical guidelines and a protocol on each stakeholder's role. In addition, the manual included clear instructions for actors in other contexts or countries to replicate this strategy. Since implementation, the EAT initiative has benefited 409 women, 557 girls, children and adolescents, and 67 accompanying people.²³³

The programme was initially implemented through one hotel chain, Grupo Posadas.²³⁴ The EAT initiative's successful approach led to the involvement of another hotel chain, City Express.²³⁵ After one year of implementation, the number of cities covered by the initiative increased from six to nineteen cities, and more hotel chains showed interest in joining, including one chain that offered to extend the initiative to more than 10 countries in Latin America. The EAT initiative will receive continued support by the implementing UN agencies with the aim of expanding to other Mexican cities and countries in the region under this private-public model, where hotels act as pro bono partners together with referral authorities to ensure that women and their families are protected from violence.

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Forge strategic private-public partnerships to maximise resources and offer temporary, safe and free accommodation to women experiencing violence and their dependents.** The strategy is sustainable due to private funding and/or pro bono support and is particularly relevant in contexts with limited public services. In the context of COVID-19 and other crises, the partnerships were an agile and flexible response, which could be adapted in other countries and regions.
- **Develop an implementation manual with guidelines and protocols to outline the actions and roles of different stakeholders.** This good practice not only contributed to the success of EAT in Mexico, but has helped enable the expansion of the initiative in the Latin American region.
- **Allow families of survivors to stay together in order to preserve family unity during times of crisis and hardship.** Providing a safe and secure environment for all family members reduces the risk of harm or exploitation that individuals, especially children, might face if separated from their relatives.
- **Provide holistic services, such as access to psychological services and supplies of food, clothing and hygiene products, to help families transition to more stable living situations.** Access to food and hygiene products addresses immediate and essential needs. Psychological services help survivors cope with their experiences and develop strategies to manage emotional challenges.

²³³ The 2022 Ecuador Annual Programme Report, page 22.

²³⁴ Grupo Posadas, a national leading hotel operator in Mexico with more than 180 hotels in the country.

²³⁵ City Express, owned by Marriott International, consists of 152 hotels across 75 cities in Mexico and three additional countries in Latin America.

4.2 Mobile women's centres in rural Belize bridge the gap in access to basic services

Overview

Access to healthcare services remains a prominent concern in rural communities in Belize.²³⁶ Lack of adequate healthcare facilities, personnel, medicine shortages and financial constraints are among some of the barriers to accessing healthcare.²³⁷ Women, girls and children are especially vulnerable as they lack critical healthcare support for sexual and reproductive health, maternity needs and proper nutrition.²³⁸ The mobile women's centres, led by UNFPA through Spotlight Initiative in Belize, aim to address these issues and more.

The teams providing support for the women centre travelled to remote areas of Corozal, Orange Walk and Toledo Districts²³⁹ and set up their free services in schools and community spaces for a minimum of 2 days per location.²⁴⁰ The mobile women centres were established in partnership with civil society organisations, namely, the Human Rights Commission of Belize, the Belize Family Life Association, the Productive Organization for Women in Action and the Child Development Foundation. It was designed under a mobile brigade approach, whereby civil society led the delivery of services in the centres.²⁴¹ The mobile centres offered legal support service provided by the Human Rights Commission of Belize, sexual reproductive health services through the Belize Family Life Association, and psychosocial support and counselling by the Child Development Foundation. The logistics, as well as information dissemination in communities about the mobile centres, were provided by Productive Organization for Women in Action. The mobile centres were also instrumental in providing critical services during the pandemic.²⁴²

A notable aspect of the mobile women's centre is its "children's safe space," which functions as a daycare facility for the children (aged 5-14 years old) of mothers or caregivers while they access services at the centre. Most of the time, mothers or caregivers are discouraged from going to mobile centres due to their caregiving responsibilities, and the daycare facility eliminates this barrier. It also offered an opportunity for mothers and caregivers to concentrate fully on their own needs in the centre without being encumbered by caregiving responsibilities.²⁴³ Aside from childcare responsibilities, the transportation expense was another barrier for women to access the centre. As a response, the initiative also provided transportation assistance to women to enable them to visit the centres.

Additionally, the mobile women centres adopted a community-based approach. Civil society organisations provided the services to the women and girls, while key members of the community like principals and teachers, community health workers, leaders of women groups, social workers, youth leaders and village council members played an integral role in promoting the centres to their communities.²⁴⁴

Results

Since 2020, the mobile women centres have helped over 1,500 women and girls to access sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence services, as well as legal and psychosocial support and counselling, across 33 communities. Aside from reaching women in remote areas, the mobile women centres also supported migrant and indigenous communities.²⁴⁵ People who went to the centres²⁴⁶ were educated on topics such as sexual and reproductive health, gender-based violence and COVID-19.

"The centre is a great help to women like me. We can get services by visiting the nurse or advice on legal matters, which we often don't get because it comes with a cost."

A 45-year-old woman living in a small village in the Orange Walk district

"My community has many single mothers who are out of work [because of the pandemic]. Many of them face or are at risk of violence... Not having access to information or services makes them even more vulnerable."

Patty Witzil, Village Chairwoman of Trial Farm

²³⁶ Overcoming obstacles to health care (UNICEF Belize, September 2019).

²³⁷ Stakeholders' Perspectives on the Barriers to Accessing Health Care Services in Rural Settings: A Human Capabilities Approach (The Open Public Health Journal, 2021).

²³⁸ Mobile centres are helping women in rural Belize to access healthcare and other essential services (Spotlight Initiative, March 2021).

²³⁹ The 2020 Belize Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 38.

²⁴⁰ The 2021 Belize Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 46-47.

²⁴¹ Mobile Women Centers (UN Belize, video posted to YouTube on February 10, 2022).

²⁴² The 2021 Belize Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 3.

²⁴³ The 2020 Belize Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 98.

²⁴⁴ The 2021 Belize Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 40.

²⁴⁵ Bella Vista, Aguacate, Santa Cruz, August Pine Ridge and San Antonio Rio Hondo, by indigenous Maya (Yucatec, Que'chi, Mopan Maya), indigenous Garifuna and migrant women.

²⁴⁶ Mobile centres are helping women in rural Belize to access healthcare and other essential services (Spotlight Initiative, March 2021).

An important milestone was achieved in 2022 when the government, through the Belize Ministry of Human Development, took a lead role in promoting the mobile centres and sustaining these efforts. With this institutional funding commitment for the mobile centres and the ongoing contribution from civil society organisations in both the running and promotion of the women's centres, the transition was smooth and ensured the continuity of the programme.²⁴⁷

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Reduce barriers to access for remote communities, in line with the leave no one behind principle.** Providing a child-friendly space or transportation assistance not only encouraged rural women to go to mobile centres, it also provided quality services that were tailored to the needs of women, girls and children.
- **Adopt a community-based approach when setting up and running mobile centres.** Involving local stakeholders significantly enhances the project's effectiveness, reach and sustainability. Notably, the mobile women's centres in Belize are both civil society and community-led.
- **Secure government buy-in to foster a project's long-term sustainability.** The Ministry of Human Development in Belize adopted the mobile women's centres to support the continuation of the programme, even beyond Spotlight Initiative's involvement.

4.3 The Bus of Solidarity in Kyrgyzstan delivers gender-sensitive and survivor-centric legal services to hard-to-reach communities

Overview

Women, girls and persons with disabilities, especially in the rural regions of Kyrgyzstan, often have limited awareness of their legal rights and struggle to access legal protections.²⁴⁸ Spotlight Initiative in Kyrgyzstan aimed to address this by providing opportunities for women to access justice through the "Bus of Solidarity" project. The Bus of Solidarity is a mobile legal service programme that transports lawyers to hard-to-reach rural communities across the country.²⁴⁹ Supported by UNDP and implemented by the Ministry of Justice, the project has been operating since 2016. Under the auspices of Spotlight Initiative, which was launched in Kyrgyzstan in 2020, the Bus of Solidarity was reconceptualized to adopt a gender-sensitive and survivor-centric approach to providing legal services.²⁵⁰

Results

The Spotlight Initiative programme held consultative sessions with the Ministry of Justice to understand issues and challenges around the provision of survivor-centric services within the Bus of Solidarity framework. An analysis of 30,000 rural women and men who accessed legal services from the Bus of Solidarity since 2016 revealed that cases related to sexual and gender-based violence were not reported as it did not have protocols for maintaining the confidentiality and safety of women and accessing related legal services.²⁵¹ As a result, a participatory reflection session was conducted to integrate a survivor-centric approach to the Bus of Solidarity programme, and additional multi-stakeholder sessions with 178 representatives from state agencies, local authorities and community members were held, a first in the initiative.

Guidelines were co-developed that contained standards for delivery of sexual and gender-based violence legal services with the Ministry of Justice, women's rights organisations and crisis centres. Using the guideline, a one-day training was conducted around the topic for 120 lawyers and experts who were part of the Bus of Solidarity.²⁵² The programme also trained government representatives from the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Labor, Social Security and Migration, as well lawyers and legal experts that were part of the Bus of Solidarity, to be gender champions in 12 target communities of Chui, Osh, Naryn and Batken.²⁵³ Incorporating the Gender Action Learning System methodology²⁵⁴ into the trainings included experiential learning sessions to better understand uneven power dynamics between men and women²⁵⁵ and practical exercises, such as co-designing gender-based violence screening interviews.

An assessment conducted after the training revealed that 94 percent of the trained lawyers noted a change in their approach to handling sexual and gender-based violence cases. A significant milestone was achieved in 2021 when, for the first time, 10 cases of domestic violence were assisted and referred to proper authorities through the Bus of Solidarity.²⁵⁶ Twenty tablets were also dedicated to the Bus of Solidarity missions and used to gather real-time data and data visualisation during legal consultations. As of 2023, 5,562 individuals (59 percent women) have accessed free legal aid through the Bus of Solidarity.

²⁴⁷ The 2022 Belize Interim Annual Report, page 42. The 2023 Belize Final Report Draft, page 64.

²⁴⁸ *Access to Justice for Vulnerable Groups in the Kyrgyz Republic* (UNDP Kyrgyzstan, 2014).

²⁴⁹ The 2020 Kyrgyz Republic Annual Report, page 23 and 34.

²⁵⁰ *EU-UN Spotlight Initiative shows promising results on ending violence against women and girls and calls for sustained action building on achievements* (UN Kyrgyz Republic, September 2023).

²⁵¹ The 2020 Kyrgyz Republic Annual Report, page 34.

²⁵² *Ibid*, page 26.

²⁵³ The 2021 Kyrgyz Republic Annual Report, page 46.

²⁵⁴ *Manual Gender Action Learning System (GALS) Implementation Toolkit* (International Fund for Agricultural Development and Community Development Alliance, September 2020).

²⁵⁵ The 2020 Kyrgyzstan Annex D.

²⁵⁶ The 2020 Kyrgyz Republic Annual Report, page 32.

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Train duty-bearers, lawyers and other service providers and raise their awareness on key gender concepts and issues related to violence against women and girls.** This ensures delivery of gender-responsive services vital to the needs of women who seek legal advice and justice. This is also an essential method to incorporate gender mainstreaming into legal services.
- **Reconceptualize past initiatives and refine the elements that did work to enhance the effectiveness of a project.** As in the case of the Bus of Solidarity, stakeholders assessed the gaps in their operations and subsequently formulated strategies to be more gender-responsive and survivor-centric in the delivery of legal services.
- **Involve local stakeholders in the development of the project and its implementation.** The training of lawyers and government representatives enhanced their capacity as local gender champions. This contributed to the overall sustainability of the Bus of Solidarity.



4.4 Taxi drivers in Niger promote safe public spaces for women and girls

Overview

In Niger, women and girls experience high rates of gender-based violence, which is exacerbated by the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the country. With more than 76 percent of girls married before the age of 18, Niger has one of the highest rates of child marriage.²⁵⁷ Low school enrollment rates for girls, a high prevalence of polygamy and a 10 percent contraceptive use rate also contribute to the various forms of abuse experienced by women and children, especially girls.²⁵⁸

As part of the “16 days of activism campaign” that launched across multiple Spotlight Initiative regions in 2021,²⁵⁹ the Spotlight Initiative programme in Niger launched an awareness raising campaign in collaboration with taxi drivers in Niamey.²⁶⁰ Taxis are a primary mode of transport in the country, and women often use them to escape abusive situations.²⁶¹ To engage men in gender-based violence prevention and reduction efforts, awareness raising sessions were organised to increase the drivers’ understanding and capacity to better respond to instances of gender-based violence that they may witness.²⁶² The campaign also heavily focused on the positive role these men can play in supporting survivors of violence.²⁶³

Results

The campaign trained 50 taxi drivers to be “ambassadors against violence.” To visibly demonstrate their commitment to the cause and express solidarity with women and girls, the drivers wore orange scarves during the campaign activities. In addition to this, the drivers actively participated in the advocacy campaign by prominently displaying stickers on their cars. The stickers served as a public statement of their stance against gender-based violence. A noteworthy result of the awareness raising sessions was the positive change observed in the attitudes of the trained taxi drivers, particularly in their commitment to promoting gender equality.²⁶⁴

“The other day, a group of young students asked me for more information about the orange scarf I was wearing. I explained that it was the symbol of my engagement to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls.”

A taxi driver that participated in the campaign

The awareness raising efforts provided valuable insights to the drivers on how to support women and girls who have faced violence. It equipped them with a better understanding of the diverse needs of survivors, enabling them to offer support in ways that were more sensitive and tailored to individual circumstances. Drivers demonstrated greater willingness to support and help fight gender-based violence and collaborated to make public spaces safer for women and girls.²⁶⁵ They understood the key role they could play in informing others about why it is necessary to prevent violence against women and girls.

“As a man and as a taxi driver, I would like to draw attention to the issue of violence against women and girls. Everyone, especially men and boys, must [take action to] stop the perpetuation of violence against women and girls... Women are the mothers of humanity. We have to respect them.”

A taxi driver that participated in the campaign

²⁵⁷ Niger Spotlight Initiative Programme: Spotlight Initiative Fund (MPTF).

²⁵⁸ Gender Based Violence Secondary Data Review (Social Development Direct, 2023), page 1.

²⁵⁹ Spotlight Initiative celebrates 16 Days of Activism around the world (Spotlight Initiative, December 2022).

²⁶⁰ In Niger, taxi drivers become activists against gender-based violence (Spotlight Initiative, February 2021).

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Spotlight Initiative celebrates 16 Days of Activism around the world (Spotlight Initiative, December 2022).

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ In Niger, taxi drivers become activists against gender-based violence (Spotlight Initiative, February 2021).

Beyond feeling an enhanced sense of empathy towards survivors, the drivers also felt more confident in taking concrete actions to provide support for those who have faced violence, such as establishing connections or identifying suitable referral channels.²⁶⁶

“As taxi drivers, we hear many personal stories, especially during our night shifts. Now, if I hear somebody in need, I know that I can refer her to the NGO SOS-Femmes et Enfants Victimes de Violence Familiale, or if it is a case of rape, to the police.”

A taxi driver that participated in the campaign

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Proactively search for partners that frequently interact with women, girls and youth as an innovative way to expand reach and impact beyond the usual groups.** The awareness raising campaign in Niger with taxi drivers as agents of change contributed to safeguarding of women and girls. Furthermore, it demonstrated that masculinity goes beyond conventional norms and can be positively expressed through actions that support and protect others.
- **Use visible symbols, such as stickers and scarves, to help build solidarity and a shared understanding of a particular cause.** These serve as a powerful visual representation of the collective commitment to a cause. For women who may have experienced violence and are trying to escape their situation, seeing these symbols can signal a safe space. It also helps identify allies who are aware and empathetic toward their safety. Visual cues and symbols used in the campaign are strong unifying elements that are suitable for replication across many communities, even where diverse languages and cultural norms exist.
- **Scale and replicate across different geographies.** The ubiquity of the taxi profession across different regions provides a consistent and accessible opportunity for implementing the initiative.

4.5 Gender-based violence helplines in Samoa provide services during the COVID-19 pandemic

Overview

The COVID-19 pandemic in Samoa heightened the vulnerability of women to violence and abuse. Data suggests that 20 percent of the female population has experienced rape, and 86 percent of women in relationships have experienced some form of intimate partner violence.²⁶⁷ The repercussions of this situation were exacerbated as victims and survivors found themselves confined at home with their abusers during periods of lockdown.

To support government efforts, UNDP, UN Women, UNICEF and UNFPA under Spotlight Initiative in Samoa worked rapidly to engage with key civil society organisations to leverage existing digital platforms to their full capacity.²⁶⁸ Specifically, UNDP partnered with the Samoa Victim Support Group and Fa’ataua le Ola to ensure that real-time 24/7 response and help would be available. Funding was reallocated and set aside to scale up advocacy and response efforts.²⁶⁹

Results

By the end of March 2020, two helplines operated by Samoa Victim Support Group and Fa’ataua le Ola had responded to 438 calls.²⁷⁰ More than 85 percent of the calls were made by women who were experiencing multiple forms of violence. By June 2020, these helplines had supported over 3,000 family members, including women, men, children, people with disabilities and people of diverse genders in Upolu and Savaii, and connected them to one or more services.²⁷¹ The request for services ranged from counselling, suicide prevention, safe shelter for survivors and dependents, case management and referral, health and legal services and community support.

The two community-based organisations worked tirelessly to manage the calls received. This included engaging in a series of conversations with the survivor, offering information on referral services, such as police and legal action, and providing financial counselling. They also helped the callers to develop contingency plans to ensure the safety and well-being of the caller and their dependents.²⁷² Positive testimonials from survivors indicated that the process of reaching out and using the helpline services ensured the availability of physical, social and emotional support for survivors.²⁷³ Counselling services helped improve family dynamics and shift mindsets.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls (Pacific Partnership): Samoa Country Summary (UN Women), page 1.

²⁶⁸ Spotlight Initiative steps in to help with COVID-19 response (UNDP Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and Tokelau, May 2020).

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Spotlight Initiative Samoa Highlights Q1 2020 (UNDP, 2020).

²⁷¹ The 2020 Samoa Inception Narrative Progress Report, page 23.

²⁷² In Samoa, phone counselling provides support to at-risk women from a distance (Spotlight Initiative, July 2020).

²⁷³ Spotlight Initiative Samoa Highlights Q1 2020 (UNDP, 2020).

For example, Samoa Victim Support Group assisted a 26-year-old single mother and her 10-month-old baby after she had left home to escape her mother's abuse. When she reached out to the helpline, Samoa Victim Support Group took swift action and took both her and her baby to the Campus of Hope, the group's shelter home, where they received counselling and care services.²⁷⁴ In another instance, Rita (name changed) sought refuge at the same shelter after she escaped an abusive marriage. Reflecting on her experience, Rita emphasised, *"Don't be afraid to take that step to seek help. You will take courage when you look into the eyes of your children."* With Samoa Victim Support Group's assistance, she obtained a protection order, and her husband underwent counselling, resulting in positive changes.²⁷⁵

The data collected by both helplines also shed light on COVID-19's impact on interpersonal and community relationships.²⁷⁶ This information was helpful for the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development to prioritise awareness raising on gender-based violence.²⁷⁷

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Promote gender-based violence response and prevention approaches, such as helplines, that provide accessible, quick and quality services to survivors and their dependents.** Helplines are an effective medium for individuals to access information and services and are crucial in reaching those in crisis, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Maintaining round-the-clock availability with trained and empathetic professionals provided immediate and consistent support. Collaborations and coordination with other support services, such as shelters, the police and legal aid, provided comprehensive response and assistance that was tailored to specific needs.
- **Develop contingency-based and flexible funding strategies to repurpose funds in emergency and unprecedented situations.** Reallocating funds, particularly during unexpected crisis events, reflected Spotlight Initiative's commitment to adapting and mobilising resources effectively. Reacting swiftly to the pandemic and the changing situation on the ground ensured that frontline organisations could receive the necessary financial backing to provide vital care and response services.
- **Develop a database of credible and reliable partners and stakeholders to leverage their expertise and geographical reach in times of crisis and emergency.** Redirecting funds to credible and already well-established organisations enables a holistic response to the gender-based violence crisis. In thinking about how to effectively address emerging needs, the strategy of looking where results and networks have already been implemented and directing more resources to support strengthening and scale up is often more effective and efficient than starting from scratch.



²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Spotlight Initiative Compendium Survey. Impact Mapper. (Survey Results)

²⁷⁶ The 2020 Samoa Inception Narrative Progress Report, page 23.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

4.6 Integration of violence against women and girls in emergency response plans promotes access to services and referral in Tajikistan

Overview

Community quarantines that went into effect during the COVID-19 pandemic prohibited people from going to work and generating income. This financial insecurity created stress among households, perpetuating violence within the family. Exacerbated by stay-at-home protocols, women and girls were highly vulnerable to violence at home. As such, Tajikistan saw an increased incidence of domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁷⁸

As part of Spotlight Initiative in Tajikistan's COVID-19 Response Plan, UN Women and the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan²⁷⁹ collaborated to provide emergency support to address the increase in incidences of violence against women and girls in the country. The Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan has an extensive community reach in the country, encompassing 69 branches. This partnership allowed for the integration of a violence against women and girls component to emergency response frameworks, raised awareness of the issue in the country and provided access to services and referral networks, with a special focus on women and adolescent girls and those living with disabilities.

Results

The programme was implemented through volunteers and six crisis centre staff that were trained on ending violence against women and girls and COVID-19 safety across six areas in Tajikistan: Rudaki, Gissar, Yawan, Vose, Bobojon Gafurov and Isfara. The crisis centres were also supported through one-on-one coaching with specialists (e.g. psychologists and medical specialists) from the Ministry of Health. The crisis centres provided psychological, medical and legal assistance and offered 12-hour direct online and/or telephone support to women and girls. The programme aimed to identify households with unhealthy and violent in-house environments, raise awareness of and prevent violence against women and girls, and refer survivors to a range of support services, including psychological, medical and legal aid.²⁸⁰

At the height of the pandemic, many staff and volunteers had contracted the virus and were forced to stay at home. It became clear that volunteer participation in the programme would be affected, which could result in low outreach to households. Additionally, some staff and volunteers located in rural areas did not have the proper equipment (i.e. internet, laptops) for the training. To facilitate remote training of staff and volunteers, the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan recorded video tutorials that could be accessed via phones and computers to share information on how to identify essential services, mobilise resources and support victims.

The key messaging of the campaign revolved around increasing awareness about women's rights and violence against women, girls, children and people with disabilities and what to do if violence was experienced first-hand or witnessed. Awareness campaigns were conducted both in the community and in the crisis centres through brochures and handouts, as well as house-to-house counselling and participation in informal community (*mahalla*) meetings.²⁸¹ Mobile apps (e.g. WhatsApp, Viber, etc.) were also used to disseminate information. To raise awareness around COVID-19, key information was shared on prevention and proper personal hygiene. In total, 120 volunteers were trained on how to identify violence (such as spotting unhealthy habits and aggressive behaviours within the family) and how to facilitate referrals to proper sexual and gender-based violence services (e.g. psychological, medical and legal assistance). Outreach activities were conducted extensively in the six target districts, with over 596,000 people receiving information on COVID-19 prevention and available gender-based violence services, as well as on how to address violence.²⁸² 3,400 gender-based violence survivors were provided with psychological, legal and medical assistance. Further, 200 boxes of medical and hygiene products were distributed to the six crisis centres and four other shelters.

Having had a long history and knowledge of Tajik communities, the volunteers selected by the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan were individuals usually trusted by the community, such as nurses, teachers, elders or religious leaders. This encouraged women survivors to disclose their situation. This has been especially helpful in reaching out to women who suffer from domestic abuse, as most would not speak up due to taboo, shame or fear. The selection of volunteers who are trusted and respected by the community enabled more women and girls to report cases.

²⁷⁸ Standard operating procedures adopted in Tajikistan are being used to better address GBV during the Covid-19 pandemic (UNFPA Tajikistan, May 2020).

²⁷⁹ During the COVID-19 outbreak, Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan was one of the most active organisations providing pandemic response.

²⁸⁰ The 2020 Tajikistan Annual Report, page 32.

²⁸¹ In Tajikistan, there were no strict quarantine measures though the population was encouraged by the government to follow global pandemic protocols.

²⁸² The 2020 Tajikistan Annual Report, page 8.

A woman supported by the project underscored the critical importance of knowing where to access support after experiencing violence.²⁸³

“Through a Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan volunteer, I learned about the Ishtirok crisis center. I did not dare and was afraid to approach anyone, because my husband always threatened to take my life if I approached anyone. One day I called the NGO Ishtirok and asked them to help me get my children back and protect me from my husband. They provided me with psychological support over the phone and referred me to the appropriate law enforcement agencies for legal assistance and further support. NGO staff and government agencies helped return my children and take the case to court. I am proud to have broken my silence and taken immediate action to end my husband's abuse.”

A woman from Yavan area

Ultimately, the collaboration between Spotlight Initiative and the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan demonstrated that a violence against women and girls component can be effectively embedded into emergency response frameworks. Moreover, with the right partners, violence response work can be facilitated quickly and effectively, while making a significant impact on women's and girls' lives and safety.

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **In times of crises, partner with a strongly established organisation that has local connections, deep community ties and the trust of the community.** The Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan's operating history enabled Spotlight Initiative to leverage a strong network of existing connections and volunteers that had been cultivated over the years. This enabled them to work smoothly with the government, expediting processes during emergency response situations, and since volunteer members were trusted by the community, women and girls were encouraged to confide in them and report cases during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Position gender-based violence alongside other public health issues that countries must address.** Integrating information on violence against women and girls into pandemic responses helped to raise its visibility as a health issue at a national level.

One-stop centres



4.7 A mobile one-stop centre model in Zimbabwe improves access to essential services in hard-to-reach areas

Overview

Gender-based violence remains prevalent in Zimbabwe, where an estimated 1 in 3 women aged 15-49 have experienced physical or sexual violence, but only 37 percent of them report seeking help.²⁸⁴ Gender-based violence support services are mainly established at provincial and district levels, while services for survivors living in remote areas remain scarce, due to limited transportation and its high cost.²⁸⁵

UNFPA through Spotlight Initiative supported mobile one-stop centres in Zimbabwe to enhance service uptake among gender-based violence survivors in remote and hard-to-reach areas, in line with the principle of leave no one behind.²⁸⁶ These moveable container clinics were adapted from the traditional one-stop centre model and provide health, legal, police and psychosocial services in one place. Launched in December 2019, the programme saw its relevance increase significantly with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, which brought additional mobility challenges due to lockdowns and reduced means of transport, at a time where gender-based violence cases were on the rise. Cases reported through hotlines increased more than 60 percent during the period of confinement.²⁸⁷

Results

In the first year of operations alone, 5,862 survivors accessed gender-based violence services and sexual and reproductive health supplies through mobile one-stop centres in the 12 Spotlight Initiative target districts. Community volunteers from the “Community-based GBV Surveillance System”²⁸⁸ reported that the availability of mobile services closer to communities increased the reach and number of referrals. The close collaboration between mobile one-stop centre teams and community-based GBV surveillance teams was further enhanced through funding to improve continuous communication between volunteers, survivors and gender-based violence hotlines.

²⁸³ Red Crescent Society Tajikistan, Project on raising awareness about COVID-19 and VAWG, July-December 2020, Powerpoint Presentation, Slide 10.

²⁸⁴ Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey-ZDHS (2015).

²⁸⁵ Mobile One Stop Centres: Taking GBV services to communities (UNFPA Zimbabwe, October 2020).

²⁸⁶ The 2020 Zimbabwe Annual Programme Report, page 95.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ The 2022 Zimbabwe Annual Narrative Programme Report and Fact Sheet Community-Based Gender Based Violence Surveillance System Report (UNFPA Zimbabwe, 2018). The Community-Based GBV Surveillance programme was launched in 2017 to fill gaps in national gender-based violence data. It involves a community cadre trained in integrated gender-based violence, sexual reproductive health and rights awareness, and referrals to provide critical gender-based violence surveillance at the community level.

Call centres and hotlines, including both voice and text options, were also implemented under Spotlight Initiative and provided means through which survivors could access expert psychosocial support and other forms of gender-based violence services. Since 2020, the Gender-Based Violence Call Center has received 20,695 calls. Coordination with private transportation services and fuel support also contributed to uptake of the service. To further reinforce the principle of leave no one behind, specialised gender-based violence support for people with disabilities were included, as well.²⁸⁹

“In addition to the services that we are providing, we have reached out to like-minded organisations like Leonard Cheshire whose focus is on persons with disabilities who assist in ensuring that this group of people also access GBV services.”

Gabriel Jaji, District Development Officer in Chipinge

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Implement mobile centres to bring a range of services to people living in remote communities.** Mobile centres can ensure the continuation of service provision, especially during crises or lockdown periods, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, when survivors may be unable to travel to access services due to movement restrictions or lack of available transport.
- **Replicate the one-stop centre model and integrate different types of services.** Mobile clinics can be adapted to respond to changing contextual needs quickly by modifying service delivery modalities, locations, and frequency, as well as integration with other existing mobile services in both development and humanitarian contexts (e.g. mobile health clinics, food distribution and WASH sensitization points). Replicating the mobile one-stop centres in other countries or regions can help bring services to remote communities.
- **Ensure sustainability through ongoing commitment from government agencies.** The operation of the one-stop centres beyond the Spotlight Initiative programme requires a commitment from the government to ensure ongoing management and financial support.

4.8 Decentralised one-stop centres in Mali provide integrated essential services to women and girls

Overview

Mali has one of the highest rates of gender-based violence in West Africa. Nearly 40 percent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime.²⁹⁰ Additionally, the prevalence of female genital mutilation (FGM) remains high, with 88.6 percent of women in Mali having undergone the practice.²⁹¹ FGM continues to be a common practice amongst several ethnic groups and is predominantly performed by traditional practitioners, with one in ten girls experiencing the most severe form of female genital mutilation.²⁹² This situation is further exacerbated by limited access to essential and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights services that can support both women and girls.

Given this context and the need for holistic care and response strategies, UNICEF through Spotlight Initiative in Mali supported the establishment of one-stop centres across five regions of the country. By the end of 2021, ten one-stop centres were set up to provide care services to gender-based violence survivors. These services included counselling, medical care and referrals to other appropriate support services. Furthermore, they provided a safe space to encourage women and girls to seek and receive the care they needed. The centres were also set up in communities where access and availability of necessary care was limited. Additionally, the initiative complemented these efforts with outreach programmes and awareness raising activities, effectively managed by partnering non-governmental organisations.

Results

In 2021, as a part of the one-stop centre programme, efforts were undertaken to enhance the skills of service providers. A comprehensive training was carried out to bolster the capacity of 171 service providers to improve their knowledge and skills for delivering high-quality services to gender-based violence survivors. Moreover, 185 volunteers from the Red Cross underwent specialised training to support community outreach efforts.²⁹³ The programme provided services to a total of 5,814 survivors, offering them the necessary integrated support and care.²⁹⁴ The decentralisation efforts were essential to securing higher quality care in local communities.

The Spotlight Initiative programme updated and improved the standard operating procedures to better guide and run these

²⁸⁹ Mobile One Stop Centres: Taking GBV services to communities (UNFPA Zimbabwe, October 2020).

²⁹⁰ Global database on Violence against Women (UN Women).

²⁹¹ Female Genital Mutilation in Mali: Insights from a statistical analysis (UNICEF, 2022).

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ The 2021 Mali Annual Narrative Progress Report, page 11. (in French)

²⁹⁴ The 2023 Mali Annual Narrative Progress Report Draft, page 29. (in French)

one-stop centres. Proactive steps were taken to also develop a referral map and actively facilitate the seamless transition of survivors to support units or one-stop centres.²⁹⁵

The outreach efforts led by NGO partners made a direct impact on 217,959 individuals, reaching nearly 360 diverse communities within the targeted regions. Furthermore, 925 community leaders were trained to report on cases of violence, get involved in community activities that prioritise women's equitable rights and condemn violence of all forms.²⁹⁶ Community members were strongly encouraged to refer all gender-based violence cases to the one-stop centres. One of the strategies included developing key messages²⁹⁷ that conveyed solidarity and support for survivors of gender-based violence (e.g. *'Your voice matters, your story matters'*). These messages emphasised the importance of seeking help and affirmed their rights (e.g. *'You have the right to live without violence and rebuild your life'*).

This comprehensive approach led to the establishment of community-level mechanisms and response plans geared towards preventing and combatting gender-based violence, while strengthening citizen accountability. This involved necessary sanctions at the local level to hold perpetrators of violence accountable for their actions.²⁹⁸

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Adopt a comprehensive strategy and holistic support system for the survivors of gender-based violence.** Implementation activities associated with one-stop centres involve professional service providers, volunteers and community members, all working in concordance to meet the multifaceted nature of survivors' needs. This holistic approach ensures that survivors receive expert care and assistance.
- **Build strong partnership and stakeholder engagement approaches to ensure the sustainability of the one-stop centres.** This collaborative effort in Mali extended to district capitals, the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children and Families, the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Health and Social Development and their decentralised support structures.
- **Proactively work with federal, state and local governments to ensure project longevity and uptake.** The active engagement of Spotlight Initiative with the Government of Mali has been integral to the success and sustainability of the one-stop centres. One key milestone achieved has been the organisation of events to officially hand over the one-stop centres to the Government of Mali.²⁹⁹ This strategic handover process ensures that centres are incorporated into the broader national framework for social and health services and receive the required support, resource allocation and policy alignment with the relevant government structures.



4.9 Specialised domestic violence intervention centres at police stations in Jamaica improve access to justice for women and girls

Overview

One in every four women in Jamaica has experienced some form of intimate partner violence, and nearly 63 percent of women who have faced violence have not sought any form of help.³⁰⁰ Low levels of education, early cohabitation and societal expectations associated with performing traditional gender roles have been key factors contributing to high levels of gender-based violence in the country.³⁰¹

Through the support of UNDP and UNFPA under Spotlight Initiative, the Jamaica Constabulary Force, a sub-agency of the Ministry of National Security, established domestic violence intervention centres within police stations across the island.³⁰² Alongside the Ministry and Jamaica Constabulary Force, the Community Safety and Security Branch played a crucial role as a key stakeholder in the consultation and collaboration process during the design phase of these centres.³⁰³ With support and inputs from Woman Inc., Eve for Life, Jamaica Network of Seropositives, We Change and the Southeast Regional Health Authority, the centres were designed to act as a confidential space where survivors of violence could feel safe to share their experiences without any fear of judgement or ridicule.³⁰⁴ They filled the gaps within the Jamaica Constabulary Force by providing tailored response and support services to survivors of family and domestic abuse. Starting in 2020, ten domestic violence intervention centres were established across various police stations³⁰⁵ with six more centres added between 2021 and 2022,³⁰⁶ offering counselling and immediate care and referral services to survivors.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ The 2021 Mali Annual Narrative Progress Report, page 29. (in French)

²⁹⁷ The 2023 Mali Annual Narrative Progress Report Draft, page 44. (in French)

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ The 2021 Mali Annual Narrative Progress Report, page 17. (in French)

³⁰⁰ Brief Country Profile: Gender-based Violence in Jamaica (World Bank, July 2023).

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² The 2022 Jamaica Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 110.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ *The Changing Face of Domestic Violence Intervention in Jamaica* by UNDP Multi Country Office in Jamaica (UNDP Jamaica, December 2022).

³⁰⁵ A locations list of the domestic violence intervention centres established in Jamaica.

³⁰⁶ *EU-UN Spotlight Initiative supports expansion of Domestic Violence Intervention Centres (DVICs) to domestic violence hotspots* (UNDP Jamaica, October 2021).

“The handover of six additional DVICs to the JCF [Jamaica Constabulary Force] sends a strong signal of the repositioning of the police in our society and restores hope to victims of domestic violence. This is a new picture of the new direction of the JCF, a Force for Good.”

Hon. Dr. Horace Chang, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Security

Results

To set up these centres for domestic violence survivors, a set of comprehensive policy documents were developed, improved, and officially validated and institutionalised. This included the “Handbook for the Policy Domestic Violence Intervention Centres for the Policy Sector.”³⁰⁷ These guidelines, which ranged from interagency referral protocols to legal literacy guides, were instrumental in furthering the impact achieved by these centres. They defined key roles and responsibilities and articulated ways to strengthen a coordinated approach across sectors.³⁰⁸

A clear process mechanism to access services was created as a part of this initiative. Accessible channels were outlined, allowing individuals to seek support by visiting a police station and requesting a referral to the nearest centre and/or by navigating governmental resources online on the Jamaica Constabulary Force’s website. This systematic approach was designed to facilitate seamless referrals for individuals experiencing domestic violence to readily access the resources offered by the domestic violence intervention centres.³⁰⁹ This process was bolstered by the dissemination of encouraging social media messages to prompt individuals to visit these centres. Anecdotal feedback from centre officers suggested that the social media campaigns and the communication campaigns run by the Jamaican police force successfully directed traffic to these centres.³¹⁰

To strengthen the capacities of the officials delivering services at the intervention centres, 21 constables underwent training to equip them with the necessary skills to effectively address cases of domestic violence. Additionally, domestic violence intervention centre managers and peer counsellors received training core funds from implementing UN agencies.³¹¹ Supplementary training in sign language for support personnel at intervention centres further ensured an inclusive approach to ensure no victim was turned away.³¹² 19 centre managers underwent training to enhance their abilities in providing initial responses, assessing risks, ensuring the safety of survivors, making appropriate referrals for counselling, conducting thorough investigations and following up on cases. The training sessions were essential for centre managers, as they delivered domestic violence-related services to victims and survivors to administrative divisions (also known as parishes) in Jamaica.³¹³

Domestic violence intervention centres in Jamaica have positively impacted women, especially those in rural areas, by providing access to high-quality recovery services. In 2022, the centres across the island documented a total of 1,720 instances of intimate partner violence and 924 cases of family violence. Interestingly, over 650 reports were filed by children. 2,201 women and 740 men demonstrated the courage to report instances of violence to the domestic violence intervention centres.³¹⁴

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Operationalise and embed domestic violence intervention centres within local institutions and government to guarantee long-term sustainability and credibility.** In Jamaica, the institutionalisation process of these centres implies a formal integration with the systemic processes of the Jamaica Constabulary Force, ensuring standardised practices, protocols and resource allocations that contribute to their sustained functionality.
- **Replicate the initiative across the entire island or country for continued success and impact.** Within the framework of Spotlight Initiative, it is intended that each parish has access to at least one domestic violence intervention centre, demonstrating an extensive and comprehensive implementation plan.³¹⁵ The sustainability and effectiveness of these centres, however, relies on and requires ongoing assessment and continuous capacity building for centre managers.³¹⁶

³⁰⁷ The 2022 Jamaica Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 45.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² EU-UN Spotlight Initiative supports expansion of Domestic Violence Intervention Centres (DVICs) to domestic violence hotspots (UNDP Jamaica, October 2021).

³¹³ The 2022 Jamaica Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 45.

³¹⁴ The Changing Face of Domestic Violence Intervention in Jamaica by UNDP Multi Country Office in Jamaica (UNDP Jamaica, December 2022).

³¹⁵ EU-UN Spotlight Initiative supports expansion of Domestic Violence Intervention Centres (DVICs) to domestic violence hotspots (UNDP Jamaica, October 2021).

³¹⁶ The 2022 Jamaica Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 110.

Supporting economic justice

4.10 Community and Survivor Funds in Malawi ensure support services and economic justice for survivors

Overview

Most gender-based violence survivors cannot pursue justice and access services because of financial barriers and lack of economic power. The financial vulnerability of women, girls and their families also limit their options in escaping violent relationships or fully recovering from their traumatic experiences. To address these challenges, the Malawi Community Fund and the Malawi Survivor Fund (hereafter referred as “the Funds”) were implemented under Spotlight Initiative. These Funds are specifically managed by the community to ensure local ownership and agency to support the long-term recovery of gender-based violence survivors.

Through Spotlight Initiative, UNFPA, the Ministry of Gender, Social Welfare and Community Development and District Councils rolled out the Funds via existing community structures called Community Victim Support Units.³¹⁷ In each Traditional Authority within the six priority districts, a Community Committee was formed to manage the Funds, which included members of the Community Victim Support Units, police, health and education services. Accountability mechanisms and regular reporting was also implemented under the supervision of the Area Development Committee.³¹⁸ After training all members, the programme provided each Community Committee with financial resources.

Results

The Community Fund was created to support gender-based violence survivors’ accessibility to essential services in hard-to-reach areas, including police, legal, health, counselling and other social services. The support was then extended to witnesses of gender-based violence cases in courts to facilitate access to justice, which made it possible to contribute significantly to the prosecution of many cases. The Survivor Fund complements the Community Fund support by offering opportunities for gender-based violence survivors to engage in economic activities towards their long-term recovery and social reintegration in the community. It works as an interest-free loan model, whereby beneficiaries have nine months to return the funds according to a payment plan collectively developed. It also supports obstetric fistula patients to access health services.

The Community Fund has supported 9,156 gender-based violence survivors to access essential services between 2021 and 2022.³¹⁹ One survivors’ story illustrates how this support has been critical for survivors to recover and find justice.³²⁰ After being physically attacked and having her life threatened by her former husband, a woman sought help from the nearest Community Victim Support Unit. Seeing that she was seriously injured and without the means to access essential services, they referred her to the Community Fund. With the right financial support, she was able to access a hospital and later attended the court sessions where her case was being heard, far away from her village. Her husband was convicted and is currently serving 6 years in prison.

“I am thankful for the support. Without it, I couldn’t have made it to the court sessions. As the complainant in the case and the principal witness of the prosecution’s case, I was supposed to attend the court sessions not only as the witness but also as a key stakeholder in the case.”

A 24 year old survivor

Since its implementation in 2021, the Survivor Fund has supported 11,531 gender-based violence survivors to earn additional income to support their economic power. A story shared by one of the Community Committee members showcases how the Survivor Fund is making a difference in survivors’ lives. The family of a young survivor of sexual gender-based violence who received support from the Fund was able to open a small food stand, which provided them with a steady income and allowed their daughter to attend school, taking her out of a vulnerable situation and contributing to her recovery and a brighter future. After nine months, the family was able to pay back the Fund and their business is currently thriving. In addition, the Fund has supported women’s health, with 179 women receiving support for reconstructive surgery for fistulas or other health related services.³²¹

³¹⁷ Community Victim Support Units are one-stop centres that offer assistance to adult and child survivors of crimes, especially gender-based violence and child abuse, exploitation and neglect.

³¹⁸ The Area Development Committees are responsible for identifying development challenges in the community, suggesting solutions and working with the District Council and other stakeholders to implement them.

³¹⁹ The 2022 Malawi Annual Programme Report.

³²⁰ [Bringing hope to gender based violence survivors](#) (UNFPA, November 2022).

³²¹ The 2023 Malawi Final Programme Report Draft.

Another important result was the high level of commitment of the Community Committees to sustaining and growing the Funds to support more survivors. The Community Committee in the Traditional Authority Kawinga had 224 thousand Malawian Kwacha (approximately 133 USD)³²² provided by Spotlight Initiative to their Community Fund. However, the Committee members quickly realised that this amount would not last long. Following other Committee's revenue generating approach, they adopted a revolving fund model through village savings and loans with an annual interest of 20 percent.³²³ They also invested in their economic activity, the corn trade, to ensure the Fund's sustainability. After almost three years they managed to reach over four times the initial amount received (1,16 million Malawian Kwacha, approximately 700 USD) and have found a way to self-sustain the initiative.

Other significant results include increased knowledge and capacity among members to better support gender-based violence survivors. In addition, Community Committees served as incredible resources, fully understanding the referral pathway and responsibilities of the different support services and demanding follow-up and accountability after services or cases were filed. One of the key factors that deepened the impact of the Community Committees was their cross-sector background, whereby members had expertise and were representatives of different services, such as the Community Victim Support Unit, police, health and education services, which meant they had insider knowledge to provide more effective support to survivors. Mentors and mentees from the Safe Space Mentorship Programme also contributed to these initiatives by referring gender-based violence survivors and, in some cases, oversaw their management for increased community accountability.

The successful approach and community ownership of the Community Fund and Survivor Fund has led to their replication in other communities across the country through additional revenue from revolving funds and by civil society organisations, contributing to their sustainability and scalability beyond Spotlight Initiative.

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Train and support community structures and members to manage initiatives to ensure local ownership, agency, continuity and, ultimately, the long-term success of interventions.** Being managed by the community and utilising existing structures that handle gender-based violence cases in Malawi ensured the continuity and growth of the Funds. Moreover, by leveraging and deepening members' knowledge on gender-based violence issues, knowledge and experience became consolidated across the Funds.
- **Implement an intersectoral approach involving representatives from different service providers to foster knowledge sharing and increased effectiveness of service delivery.** By involving the Community Victim Support Units, the police, health and education services as part of the Community Committee, insider knowledge sharing was activated. This also reinforced referral pathways and increased the effectiveness of services delivered.
- **Allow for flexibility so that local actors can adapt and innovate to strengthen and grow initiatives.** The flexibility of the Committees to implement revolving funds and their own solutions to expand the Funds' resources contributed to the Funds' sustainability and scalability. Additional revenue from the revolving funds have supported the replication of the programme in other communities. Civil society organisations are also contributing to its replication across the country.

³²² The exchange rate for this case study is from Google Finance, accessed on November 28, 2023.

³²³ 15 percent is retained with the fund and 5 percent is allocated to Community Victim Support Units to cover administrative costs. It is important to assess and define an appropriate level of interest rate on revolving funds that does not harm survivors but is conducive to supporting them.

4.11 Alternative livelihoods for traditional zoes in Liberia reduces the practice of female genital mutilation

Overview

The occurrence of female genital mutilation (FGM) in Liberia is 38.2 percent among women and girls aged 15-49 years old.³²⁴ It is a deeply entrenched cultural tradition that is practised in 11 out of 15 counties in Liberia³²⁵ and is seen as a rite of passage for a girl into womanhood, preparing them for their roles as wives and mothers in the future. Female genital mutilation is a harmful practice that violates the rights of women and girls. It can lead to serious health complications, such as severe bleeding, urinating problems, cyst infections, childbirth problems and, in severe cases, death.³²⁶

Female genital mutilation is usually performed by traditional birth attendants, midwives or “zoes” who are elderly women believed to have mystical powers and members of the “Sande” secret society.³²⁷ The Sande secret society has been present in Liberia for centuries and its members are considered influential, powerful and trusted custodians of culture.³²⁸

Women and girls undergoing the female genital mutilation initiation process are also trained in “bush schools”³²⁹ to prepare them for their married life. Women and girls are sworn to secrecy by the zoes, preventing them from discussing what they underwent during the initiation process. Because of this, discussions about female genital mutilation are taboo.³³⁰

Beyond female genital mutilation’s cultural significance, the continuous and widespread practice of female genital mutilation is also driven by economic reasons.^{331,332} Zoes are paid by parents who send their daughters to the bush schools.³³³ There has been an increase in abductions, forced female genital mutilation initiations and extortion of parents in recent years³³⁴ as the members of Sande society struggle to preserve their group and practice amid a sharp decline in membership and refusal of parents to send their daughters to the bush schools.³³⁵

“Many people have asked me to leave bush business, but my question has always been, “What will I do next to help my family?”

A traditional practitioner

Through Spotlight Initiative in Liberia, UN Women in collaboration with the National Traditional Council of Chiefs and Elders and key government ministries supported alternative livelihood initiatives for the reduction of FGM.

Results

Through consultation sessions mobilised by the Spotlight Initiative programme with the National Traditional Council of Chiefs and Elders, the Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, a consensus emerged that offering alternative sources of income to traditional zoes would encourage them to abandon the practice of female genital mutilation.³³⁶

A variety of programming was implemented to support zoes in alternative income production. For example, zoes were trained in climate-smart agriculture, which supported their farming/agricultural activities. Twelve village savings and loans associations were also established for the zoes, which allowed them to generate savings and use loans for their personal and/or business needs. A six-month training on entrepreneurship, financial literacy, business development, livestock management, cassava farming and aquafarming was also conducted to strengthen the livelihood skills of the zoes.³³⁷ Additionally, a vocational and heritage centre in Sonkay Town, Montserrado County was completed to serve as a hub to house the training of zoes on livelihood and promote alternative rites of passage for adulthood.³³⁸ The vocational and heritage centres in Sonkay Town were handed over to the Government of Liberia and the National Council of Chiefs and Elders, securing national ownership. The heritage centre in Sonkay town is just one of four centres due to be constructed as the programme expands to other counties.³³⁹

³²⁴ FGM in Liberia (Equality Now).

³²⁵ Sande Society’s Zoes Surrender (Women Voices, January 2023).

³²⁶ Female genital mutilation (FGM) frequently asked questions (UNFPA, February 2024).

³²⁷ The Practice of Female Genital Mutilation in the Paynesville Community, Liberia (Science Journal Publication, 2016).

³²⁸ Liberia: The Sande secret society, its activities, organization, leaders and consequences of refusing the role of leader; Sande’s power, its treatment of those who speak out against or oppose its practices; state protection for individuals threatened by Sande (2012–November 2016) (Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, February 2017).

³²⁹ Bush schools are a place where girls undergo their right of passage to womanhood, which includes the harmful practice female genital mutilation.

³³⁰ The Practice of Female Genital Mutilation in the Paynesville Community, Liberia (Science Journal Publication, 2016).

³³¹ Liberia: Gbarpolu Zoe Denounces Female Genital Cutting; Says It’s Causing Health Issues for Girls (FrontPageAfrica, August 2023).

³³² Practitioners of female genital mutilation become part of the solution in Liberia (Spotlight Initiative, March 2020).

³³³ FGM Bush Schools Still Operational Despite Three-Year Moratorium (New Narrative).

³³⁴ Following a moratorium on FGM in Liberia, victims are still seeking justice (OHCHR, June 2022).

³³⁵ Membership to Sande secret societies witnessed a drop in recent years due to the increasing campaigns and media coverage against the harmful practices of the members of the society. Many parents stopped enrolling their daughters in the Bush schools prompting the members to abduct women and perform forced female genital mutilation initiation.

³³⁶ The 2019 Liberia Annual Narrative Progress Report, page 22.

³³⁷ The 2020 Liberia Annex D.

³³⁸ The 2022 Liberia Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 38.

³³⁹ The 2022 Liberia Interim Annual Report, page 25 and 68. The planned centres will be constructed in Montserrado, Grand Cape Mount, Nimba and Lofa counties.

“The training on agriculture and financial management has helped me to change my life. I can now afford to take my children to school. We realized that FGM is not good for our girl children, and we have stopped it. But we also realised that not all traditional activities are bad. Some are good and the good ones should be upheld.”

One of the zoes who benefited from the alternative livelihood intervention

As a result, 800 traditional zoes were able to access alternative sources of income,³⁴⁰ incentivising them to stop performing female genital mutilation.³⁴¹ These livelihood efforts, along with the closure of bush schools, ultimately made the case for the “Act Prohibiting Female Genital Mutilation 2022” bill, which is currently being reviewed in Liberia’s Congress. (See more in [case study 7.3](#), which details this work across multiple pillars.)

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Provide economic alternatives to stop female genital mutilation.** When economic livelihoods are determined to be part of the reason the harmful practice continues, this strategy can be replicated to effectively combat female genital mutilation in other contexts.
- **Offer a comprehensive livelihoods programme.** Interventions that strengthen entrepreneurship skills and also include culturally appropriate learning opportunities to impart alternative rites of passage support changes in communities.
- **Set up hubs for learning and exchange of zoes to support culture change.** Creating centres for gathering and dedicated spaces for learning and exchange creates momentum for change.
- **Consult key community elders to better understand the roots of the problem before developing potential solutions.** Ensuring elders’ active engagement, leveraging their first-hand insights and influential role in shaping community perspectives can be important to understand more deeply and address long established traditional practices.

Service delivery guidelines



4.12 Model protocols in Indonesia for handling cases of gender-based violence and trafficking of women migrant workers

Overview

In Indonesia, nearly 65 percent of migrant workers are women.³⁴² Women migrant workers play a pivotal role in providing economic stability for their own households and simultaneously impact the economies of countries where they actively work and contribute. 67 percent of the remittances sent into Indonesia come from female migrant workers and are often directed towards essential areas like health, education, family and community development.³⁴³ However, challenges persist in their treatment and recognition as formal workers. Since the majority of migrant workers come from poor rural households, many exit the labour force upon returning home.³⁴⁴ They also face discrimination, exploitation, gender-based violence, and abuse. Though some progress has been made to protect migrant workers with the passage of “Law of Indonesia No. 18 of 2017 on Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers,” more work is required to safeguard their rights and improve coordination and service delivery.³⁴⁵ Moreover, with the lockdowns and travel restrictions in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, women migrant workers became more vulnerable to violence from employers, partners, law enforcement officials or frontline service providers.³⁴⁶

To address the challenges experienced by migrant workers in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Spotlight Initiative implemented the Safe and Fair Programme to improve the status of migrant women.³⁴⁷ Together with the International Labour Organisation and UN Women, the programme aimed to strengthen governance efforts to address the inherent risks within migration systems, including violence and trafficking.

Results

Recognising the increase in gender-based violence as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Indonesian Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection collaborated with Spotlight Initiative to launch the “Guideline on the Protection of Women Migrant Workers during COVID-19” and the “Protocol for Handling Gender-Based Violence and Trafficking during COVID-19.” Utilising a “victim-centric approach,” these guidelines served as a key reference document for the government, service providers, community-based organisations, and consular services for greater coordination and better support for women migrant workers, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁰ The 2021 Liberia Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 98.

³⁴¹ The 2023 Liberia Annual Report Draft, page 37.

³⁴² The 2020 ASEAN Region Annual Narrative Programme Report.

³⁴³ Safe and Fair: Realizing women migrant workers’ rights and opportunities in the ASEAN region - Programme Narrative Indonesia (ILO and UN Women).

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ New Guidelines Launched to Protect Women Migrant Workers’ Rights from Violence during COVID-19 (Delegation of the European Union to Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam, December 2020).

³⁴⁷ Safe and Fair: Realizing women migrant workers’ rights and opportunities in the ASEAN region - Programme Narrative Indonesia (ILO and UN Women).

³⁴⁸ The 2020 ASEAN Region Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 12.

In line with the guidelines and as a first response measure to COVID-19, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection through the Safe and Fair Programme disseminated personal protective equipment kits to returning women migrant workers. The kits also included an information package with details and key contacts of service providers supporting gender-based violence response efforts.³⁴⁹ At a decentralised level, the programme supported the setting up of a referral mechanism in West Java with the articulation of key processes and protocols complementing the efforts. This effort was undertaken in partnership with the Integrated Service Centre for the Empowerment of Women and Children³⁵⁰ and other important stakeholder organisations.³⁵¹

Since the development of the initial set of guidelines and protocols, the programme continued its engagement with the government of Indonesia to improve the guidelines. It built strong governmental relationships so that gender-responsive labour policies would be prioritised and improved. In 2021, the programme collaborated with the Ministry of Manpower and developed a complementary guideline that focused on service providers, which was integrated into the Minister of Manpower "Decree No. 294/2020."³⁵² The Decree sought to ensure that the placement and protection of Indonesian migrant workers was compliant with health protocols and to strengthen coordination between government and private service providers in the implementation and monitoring of the placement of workers, in accordance with these guidelines.

In 2022, the programme, in partnership with Migrant Workers Network, continued its work and launched three additional campaigns as a part of Indonesia's commitment to better protect migrant workers. Spearheaded by the Ministry of Manpower, a set of documents released include the "Technical Guideline on Gender-Responsive Service and Protection for Indonesian Migrant Workers", "the Standard Operational Procedure for Private Placement Agency" and "the Standard Operational Procedure for Technical Education and Vocational Training Centre for Overseas on Services and Protection for Indonesian migrant workers in the New Adaptive."³⁵³ One of the main achievements following the development of the technical guidelines was their successful and formal adoption within the Director-General's Decree on Workforce Placement and Job Opportunity Expansion.

"The Guideline and SOPs can provide protection, need fulfilment and case-handling that are responsive to different needs from various existing gender groups. Women migrant workers have positively contributed to social and economic development, yet they are also very vulnerable to exploitation and harassment as well as labour rights violence."

Ida Fauziyah, Minister of Manpower, Indonesia

The Indonesian protocols were presented at international and regional forums. The programme played a crucial role in supporting the creation of a dedicated protocol website for disseminating information nationally and at decentralised levels among partners. One of the main achievements of the programme was the official request raised by the Government of Vietnam, seeking the Safe and Fair Programme's assistance in adapting the protocol to align with the Vietnamese context.³⁵⁴ Technical inputs were provided on the law governing Vietnamese workers employed abroad under contracts and the "Standard Operating Procedures for Supporting Overseas Vietnamese Women Victims of Violence, Abuse, Sexual Harassment and Trafficking in Persons".³⁵⁵

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Develop and implement frameworks with gender-sensitive measures to safeguard women migrant workers by engaging in regional dialogue and cooperation within the ASEAN and beyond.** The protocols were the first of their kind in the region and motivated other ASEAN countries to systematically think about their labour migration frameworks to improve the conditions of women migrant workers, especially in the context of COVID-19. The launch of the standard operating procedure and guidelines facilitated broader regional dialogue and prioritisation of gender-based violence as an important agenda.
- **Collaborate closely with regional governments and civil society stakeholders to enhance protective measures for migrant workers.** Following the development of the initial protocols, the programme has collaborated with various Indonesian government and civil society stakeholders to improve these measures in the country. By maintaining active participation with key governmental bodies like the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection and the Ministry of Manpower, the Safe and Fair Programme was able to scale and expand its impact. Continuous improvements to build effective response measures help to better serve and protect women migrant workers in Indonesia.

³⁴⁹ Ibid, page 13.

³⁵⁰ Pusat Pelayanan Terpadu Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Anak is the Bahasa Indonesia name for the Integrated Service Centre for the Empowerment of Women and Children.

³⁵¹ The 2020 ASEAN Region Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 13.

³⁵² Ibid, page 12.

³⁵³ [Indonesia supports gender-responsive protection for its migrant workers](#) (ILO, April 2022).

³⁵⁴ The 2020 ASEAN Region Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 56.

³⁵⁵ The 2020 ASEAN Region Annual Narrative Programme Report, page xxii.

4.13 Gender Responsive Policing Training in Trinidad and Tobago strengthens support service for gender-based violence survivors

Overview

In 2022, Trinidad and Tobago had the highest number of lethal femicides across the Caribbean region,³⁵⁶ and nearly 30 percent of ever-partnered women reported having been physically or sexually abused in their life.³⁵⁷ In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a 140 percent increase in cases of abuse of women and girls reported to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, compared with the same period the previous year.³⁵⁸ The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, as the principal law enforcement agency, plays a critical role in maintaining law and order and preventing and investing in gender-based violence-related crimes.³⁵⁹

To address the high rates of violence and support first responders, Spotlight Initiative supported a capacity development programme to build a gender responsive police force in the country. In 2021, the Gender Responsive Policing Training was launched in Trinidad and Tobago to improve and strengthen the capacity of law enforcement officers to better support survivors of gender-based violence. Led and implemented by UNDP, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, the Police Academy and civil society organisations under Spotlight Initiative, the programme was originally designed to train new police officials. Based on input and interest expressed by the Police Service, the scope was expanded to train all current and new police officials.³⁶⁰ Its purpose was to build on the success of existing gender mainstreaming mechanisms to build the capacities of police officers and sensitise them to address gender-based violence. Furthermore, the programme strategically integrated the training of senior police officials based on the feedback provided by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service officials acting as trainers, as their buy-in was considered critical in making the programme more relevant and sustainable.

Results

As of 2023, 400 police officials were trained through two cohorts involving 12 trainers from the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. Trainers' insights on the existing processes, day-to-day challenges and local systems proved to be valuable in developing modules and courses that were contextually applicable and relevant.³⁶¹ The programme built the capacities of the police officials to become trainers through a training of trainers approach. This ensured that the police force was not only receptive to the training but also more likely to internalise and apply the knowledge gained.

"We have a team where we have some civilians and [the rest] of them are police officers. So when you're [introducing] a new concept...it's good to have [people] who actually have policing experience [and can deliver the training using] examples [of how it would] impact them. Officers have been receptive to the training, especially [because they] can share their experiences."

Melissa Moore, Administrator for Advanced Programmes and Services at Trinidad and Tobago Police Service's Police Academy

Some results from the programme included an increase in knowledge and awareness amongst police officials on gender issues, particularly around women's experiences of violence. Furthermore, the programme was successful in integrating the experiences of Trinidad and Tobago's police force into its design and delivery.

Another achievement of the programme has been the strong commitment from the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service to continue and sustain the initiative. Face-to-face trainings contributed to the success of the programme after the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions were relaxed. The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service is now interested in scaling the initiative and training 7,000 of its existing officials, and has included the programme as a part of their onboarding process for new officials. In addition to this, Spotlight Initiative donated equipment, such as laptops, to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service to support their work.

³⁵⁶ At least 4,050 women were victims of femicide in Latin America and the Caribbean In 2022: ECLAC (UN Caribbean, November 2023).

³⁵⁷ National Clinical and Policy Guidelines on Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence: Trinidad and Tobago (Ministry of Health of Trinidad and Tobago and Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization, August 2022).

³⁵⁸ PAHO Trinidad and Tobago builds capacity to respond to gender-based violence under the Spotlight Initiative (Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization, 2021).

³⁵⁹ Gender Responsive Policing Report 2021 (UNDP Trinidad and Tobago, July 2021), page 10.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

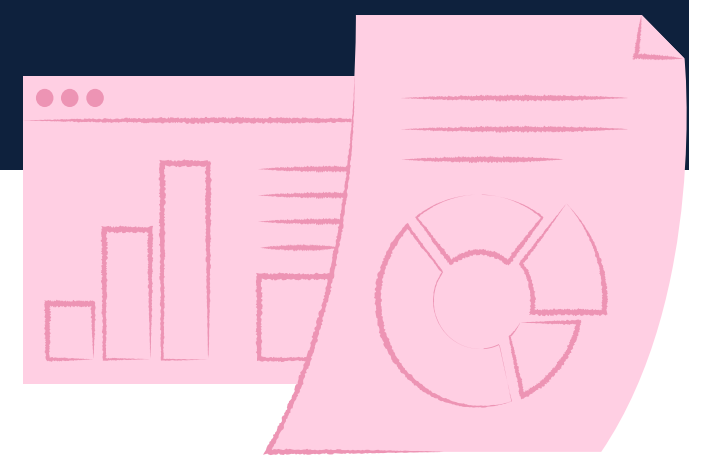
"We felt that we could [embed] the curriculum into the police academy...so we sought permission to do so, and we got an agreement from the government that the curriculum now is going to be a part of the [official] training [programme]. We [have also] provided some equipment to the police academy...and they can now continue to do the training long after the Spotlight Initiative has ended."

Isele Robinson Cooper, UNDP Programme Officer

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Ensure support and commitment from partners to create a gender-responsive environment that responds to the needs of women and girls.** The programme benefited from the involvement of the Police Academy and key Trinidad and Tobago Police Service officials in the curriculum development phase. Senior officials also helped spread the intended message and training content, which ensured that the organisation's leadership was on board with the initiative and signalled to the entire police force that these changes were a priority. This led to national ownership of the programme and the inclusion of a gender training programme within the Police Academy curriculum.
- **Adopt a training of trainers strategy as a cost-effective, consistent and scalable approach to strengthen knowledge and capacity.** Training conducted by fellow police officers proved highly successful as officers were more responsive to training delivered by their peers. Police officers are a tight-knit community based on trust, hence leveraging that trust through peer training offers a strategy that can be adapted to other contexts as well.
- **To the extent possible, conduct face-to-face training with officials to maximise impact and responsiveness of the programme.** The in-person delivery of the Gender Responsive Police Training enhanced the effectiveness of the sessions. It also provided a valuable platform to confront and mitigate the rise of gender-based violence and intimate partner violence, which were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.





Pillar 5: Data

Pillar 5 focuses on ensuring that quality, disaggregated and globally comparable data on different forms of violence against women and girls and harmful practices exists and is consistently collected and analysed. This pillar supported the development of national, regional and community data collection databases to track the prevalence of different forms of violence and harmful practices, supported research on the underlying factors that perpetuate violence against women and girls (inclusive of marginalised groups) and the digitisation of research and monitoring efforts to better disseminate, share and use data through digital apps, coordinated databases and other technological advancements.

The following good and innovative practices illustrate strong contributions to Pillar 5. This includes a focus on national databases that were created in Mozambique, Grenada, Trinidad and Tobago, and Ecuador, cross-national femicide research in Latin America, and new technologies and applications that were created in Liberia, Uganda, and across Africa.

National databases

5.1 The *InfoViolência* digital database for registering gender-based violence cases in Mozambique

Overview

InfoViolência is a web-based application built for the registration and management of gender-based violence cases, with the eventual aim of integrating data collected by all government sectors participating in the response to gender-based violence cases. Prior to the creation and implementation of this system, national data was entered manually in Mozambique, which entailed limitations and led to delays in the systematisation and sharing of data at the Offices for Assistance to Families and Minors Victims of Domestic Violence. This newly designed system is currently utilised by the police sector and has been heralded as a successful example of a national effort to digitise and systematise gender-based violence data.

Through Spotlight Initiative, UNFPA in collaboration with the Mozambique Ministry of Interior began development of the database in 2018. A pre-pilot phase was carried out in 2019,³⁶² with the pilot phase officially beginning in 2021 after user training and equipment were made available.³⁶³ Since this time, more than 400 police officers have been trained to use the platform, and 253 statistical technicians have been trained to better collect data, including qualitative information, on the prevalence of gender-based violence.³⁶⁴

The *InfoViolência* system is installed on the Ministry of the Interior's server. A separate server is installed at the Minister of Gender, Children and Social Action to harmonise the data coming from Integrated Care Centers. Data is collected through a new single digitised form (referred to as *Ficha Única*), which is used to register medical, psychosocial and legal support to gender-based violence cases.

Results

With the new system deployed and operational in five provinces, including the three Spotlight Initiative target provinces and the capital, data has been able to be captured digitally (offline or online), summarised at the central level and shared in a timely manner. The system collects a wide range of information about the survivor's characteristics, type of violence, relationship with the aggressor, history of cases of violence, as well as the actions taken by the justice sector in the follow-up of a case. Moreover, this information can be shared, anonymised or not, with relevant sectors working in gender-based violence response and in compliance with the principles of safeguarding survivors' rights.

³⁶² *InfoViolência in action* (UNFPA, June 2019).

³⁶³ *InfoViolência* initially suffered from a lack of ICT equipment required to use the software. Spotlight Initiative had to make budget provisions to acquire ICT equipment; however, the quantities delivered remain below the needs.

³⁶⁴ The 2019-2023 Mozambique Cumulative Report Draft.

"We were afraid in the beginning because we have heard of many digital platforms that are created and do not work. However, we decided to assume this challenge, and today we are realising that in practice, it is worthwhile because it will improve our work. InfoViolência will facilitate and give credibility to our work, and it will also allow us to carry out more effective follow up of all GBV cases."

Dr. Lurdes Mabunda, Head of the Department of Family Assistance and Minors, Victims of Violence of the Ministry of Interior

Winner of the global Spotlight Initiative Innovation Award, the platform "brings huge benefits, as we will have reliable data on gender-based violence in the shortest possible time," commented Trindade João, Head of the Statistics, Studies and Dissemination Office at the Provincial Command of the Police in Nampula.³⁶⁵

"InfoViolência is a gain not only in terms of the quality of the data collected, but also in reducing the response time for survivors of violence...with a responsive and integrated system, cases will be better attended to, response time will decrease, and women and girls will feel more confident that their cases of GBV will be resolved."

Tonecas Manhiça, Head of the Department of Statistics, Studies and Dissemination in the Ministry of the Interior

Notably, as of 2022, more than 6,000 sexual and gender-based violence cases have been registered in *InfoViolência*, a threefold increase from the amount of new cases registered the previous year.³⁶⁶ This significant increase is an important outcome representing greater uptake of the tool.

Relevant stakeholders have already expressed interest in expanding the initiative and actions are underway to mobilise resources to implement the use of the application across the country. Funding permitted, the application will eventually allow referral of survivors to other institutions participating in the response to gender-based violence, such as health units (Ministry of Health) and justice administration (Prosecutors and Courts). (See more in [case study 7.2](#), which details this work across multiple pillars.)

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Pinpoint gender-based violence incident trends in order to better prioritise interventions, policies and budgets in areas where women and girls need them most.** Building a data management system like *InfoViolência* enables the police in Mozambique to conduct thorough data analysis and enhance the quality and timeliness of services and access to justice for survivors.
- **Create a single form for registering cases to help avoid additional discomfort for survivors who might otherwise be forced to recount their experience multiple times with different services.** Reducing data collection moments supports victims and is more efficient.
- **Aim to streamline the referral process through the gender-based violence information management system to service providers from different sectors (health, police, justice and social).** This ensures safe, ethical and effective sharing of reported incident data, so that survivors can receive integrated care.³⁶⁷
- **Secure further investments to ensure the continuity and maintenance of data management systems.** In order to be sustainable, the Mozambique Ministry of Interior saw the need to secure additional funding sources beyond Spotlight Initiative for *InfoViolência*.

³⁶⁵ Innovative data tool strengthens services for gender-based violence survivors in Mozambique (Spotlight Initiative, April 2023).

³⁶⁶ The 2022 Mozambique Annual Programme Report, page 11.

³⁶⁷ Harnessing the power of data to respond to and end gender-based violence (Spotlight Initiative, March 2021).

5.2 The Police Records Management Information System (PRMIS) in Grenada for monitoring crime data

Overview

Since 2016, various initiatives have been underway to encourage evidence-based decision-making and to champion a reliance on valid, reliable and comparable citizen security data in Grenada. Implemented by UNDP in partnership with USAID, a task force composed of key representatives from the Royal Grenada Police Force, the Prison Department, the Statistical Office and the Ministry of National Security was set up.³⁶⁸ Further synergies were established between the CariSECURE project and the Caribbean Regional Programme of Spotlight Initiative in 2022 to specifically improve the monitoring of crime data through the Police Records Management Information System (PRMIS)³⁶⁹ and link it to the new online Violence Against Women and Girls Data System (VAWG-WebMS).

It was foreseen that this linkage would help mitigate duplication of cases and ensure harmonisation of data on violence against women and girls and family violence. This work brought together stakeholders from the National Data Centre in the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, the Central Statistical Office, the Criminal Records Office of the Royal Grenada Police Force and the Ministry of Social Development and Gender Affairs to support the preparation for the piloting and adoption of the system in 2023.

Results

While results are not readily available yet, the ongoing work to integrate attention to violence against women and girls and family violence into PRMIS is seen as critical to strengthening the nexus between citizen security and violence against women and girls and family violence.³⁷⁰ This data is important to collect because, on average, nearly 1 in 2 women aged 15-64 have reported that they experienced one or more of the four types of intimate partner violence in their lifetime, including physical, sexual, psychological and/or economic violence. Lifetime prevalence rates among these women varied by country, from 55 percent in Guyana, 48 percent in Suriname, 44 percent in Trinidad and Tobago, and 39 percent in Grenada and Jamaica, but all point to the gravity of violence against women and girls in the Caribbean region.³⁷¹ Yet, violence against women, including intra-family or domestic violence, remains greatly overlooked as a public policy issue within the security sector's protection mandate.

"Violence against women and girls is definitely a citizen security issue for the Caribbean region because it is one of the leading causes of violence and it affects the safety of so many people. However, citizen security to date has focused on organised drug and gun violence as though that defines what citizen security is."

A respondent in the stakeholder interviews

As such, training has been carried out in collaboration with the Central Statistical Office in Grenada to improve stakeholders' capacities to gather and enter data on violence against women and girls and to use the data system.³⁷² The training sessions aimed at enhancing participants' knowledge and skills for data management and processing, data safety and security and understanding the layout and functionalities of the web-based data system. The equipment necessary for the operation of the data system, including hardware and software, were also procured and distributed to the Royal Grenada Police Force and the Ministry of Social Development as the two data producing agencies, and to the Central Statistical Office as the central hub.

"There is no success without successful planning. With 104 officers trained, 13 officers trained as trainers, and all the police stations [equipped] where we will roll out, I do believe that I can say we will have success in all our endeavors."

Merina Jessamy, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Public Security and Home Affairs in Grenada

The success of the project resulted in a commitment from the Government of Grenada to expand PRMIS across all police stations. Government officials recognised the value of a digital system that better targets violence hotspots and supports police response efforts. The system also demonstrated the capacity to share best practices across the region and help address transnational crimes.³⁷³

³⁶⁸ Grenada launches task force to drive CariSECURE project (USAID, June 2018).

³⁶⁹ The [developer website](#), Softengi, describes the key features that were built for the PRMIS software

³⁷⁰ [Situation Analysis of Citizen Security in The Caribbean: A Spotlight on Gender Based Violence and Family Violence](#) (UNDP, December 2023).

³⁷¹ [Intimate partner violence in five CARICOM countries: Findings from national prevalence surveys on violence against women](#) (UN Women, May 2020).

³⁷² [Grenada Police Force Goes High Tech With Support From USAID and UNDP](#) (U.S. Embassy Barbados, March 2022).

³⁷³ Ibid.

“This project is arming governments with a digital tool to not only improve the resolution of crimes, but to inform policy and youth interventions that can help at-risk youth choose a different path.”

Ugo Blanco, Deputy Resident Representative UNDP Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean

“Using this approach, Grenada will be in a better position to identify trends, assess crime and violence conditions, evaluate policies and design effective crime prevention strategies targeting youth.”

Christopher Cushing, USAID Mission Director for the Eastern and Southern Caribbean

The task of harmonising the taxonomy and datasets of PRMIS and VAWG-WebMS will ultimately allow for better trend and pattern analysis and improve reporting by victims and survivors. The interoperability of these databases is essential for a more coordinated and effective response to gender-based violence, so that even more targeted and strategic intervention strategies can be developed to prevent and tackle violence issues.

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Link data collection systems to reduce the need for data entry personnel to enter the same or similar data into two different systems.** This is a time-saving and more efficient measure for first responders and the police who are tasked with entering this data. This innovative practice helps reduce potential double counting and duplication across different duty-bearer databases.
- **Harmonise data within a country and cross-regionally if possible.** Designing a police records and information management system within the larger framework of CariSECURE and for multiple Caribbean countries requires streamlining key gender and crime definitions, careful data handling and nuanced access considerations. Integrating it with another database specifically for records related to violence against women and girls requires further planning and interoperability of systems.

5.3 The Primero Child Protection Information Management System in Trinidad and Tobago strengthens case management on violence against children

Overview

Many children in Trinidad and Tobago are subjected to physical, emotional and sexual abuse, a situation exacerbated by the rise in poverty and socio-economic disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In a survey on violence against children, respondents reported that violence against children was widespread and generally accepted (especially in the case of physical and emotional abuse). 70-75 percent stated they had seen a child hit or shoved. 72 percent were aware of cases of sexual abuse against girls and 36 percent against boys.³⁷⁴

In addition to the significant need to address cases of child abuse, the improvement of the internal case management system was considered critical by the Children’s Authority in Trinidad and Tobago³⁷⁵ as it possessed significant gaps. These included a lack of capacity to deal with the high number of registered cases (around 400 per month on average), a high level of manual work and reporting due to system limitations, difficulties in reporting to other agencies when requested, a lack of synergy with other agencies’ systems leading to duplication of data, and limited ability to properly refer cases.

To address the need to improve its child protection system, UNICEF through the Spotlight Initiative supported the Children’s Authority of Trinidad and Tobago to migrate their data to the Primero Child Protection Information Management System³⁷⁶ (hereafter referred to as the “Primero System”). The Primero System is an open source software platform adopted by more than 60 countries which streamlines the processing of child abuse and protection cases. The goals of implementing the Primero System in the country included improving the efficiency of care, linking with key national systems to facilitate coordination with other partners such as the police, judiciary and social service agencies, as well as ensuring better confidentiality, data protection and knowledge sharing.

Results

The migration process to the Primero System engaged diverse representatives of the Children’s Authority to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the user workflow and how to increase process efficiency in line with international standards. In June 2022, the data migration process was completed and the Primero System was launched in the country with approximately 44,000 cases migrated.

³⁷⁴ [New Child Protection System Launched in Trinidad and Tobago](#) (UNICEF Eastern Caribbean, June 2022).

³⁷⁵ The main agency responsible for child protection in the country.

³⁷⁶ The [Primero System](#) website.

After over one year of using the Primero System, Children's Authority members shared that having access to all cases in one place without manual processes and requests from other departments or agencies has led to a reduction in case management time,³⁷⁷ increased data accuracy, as well as strengthened internal accountability and performance management. Another critical benefit has been the faster response time to requests for more information about a case from different stakeholders, including the media. The reliability of statistical reports and their development time has improved. For example, the Children's Authority is now able to quickly assess which areas in Trinidad and Tobago have the highest prevalence of violence by type. They can also promptly submit data to other agencies, such as specific biographic data to the National Child Registry.

The next step of this project was to focus on an integrated approach to allow the case files to be shared between different stakeholders, such as the police and social services, as well as creating interconnectivity between their systems through application programming interfaces (also known as "APIs"). The integration work is under development and being closely followed by the Office of the Prime Minister, Tobago House of Assembly and Regional Health Authority and will operate beyond Spotlight Initiative. Some advancements have already been made on this front, for example, the integration with the National Family Services Division, the Student Support Services Division and Trinidad and Tobago Police Service was concluded by the end of 2023. As an example of how this integration improved processes, the National Family Services Division can now access the Primero System and source all the information on a case without the need to call or email Children's Authority to find out who is managing a specific case. They can also include additional information and requests into the system.

The Primero System streamlined the Children's Authority case management process and is creating a unified system in the country, where there will be only one case file on a child that can be accessed by all stakeholders involved on the referral pathway, bringing significant gains of efficiency to the entire process. Advances on the unified system will also be possible due to the cross-sector collaboration to improve the referral system. This will benefit all children who have experienced violence, abuse or any other type of difficulties, as they will receive faster and better responses. They will also not be retraumatized as they will not need to recount their experiences many times when referred to different service providers.

Going beyond Spotlight Initiative, UNICEF will continue supporting the integration process and expand it to other stakeholders, such as the National Children's Registry and the International Organization for Migration.

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Support systems and processes that respond to stakeholders' needs and pain points and that draw on regional or international standards.** One of the key factors that contributed to the success of this work was drawing on a case management model that had already been developed and was being used in over 60 countries. The country did not need to reinvent the wheel but rather could implement the Primero System in their context efficiently. In addition, establishing a cross-department working group that was responsible for the data migration process was essential. This collective effort made it possible to migrate five years of cases, including those in manual systems, within the project timeline and despite the difficulties imposed by COVID-19.
- **Foster cross-sector collaboration to design integrated and efficient solutions.** The engagement and collaboration of the different service providers involved in protecting children's rights and well-being was key in conceptualising the integration process. Other key stakeholders such as the Office of the Prime Minister, Tobago House of Assembly and Regional Health Authority were also involved in the project to make sure the integration process is fully implemented.
- **Leverage available resources that contribute to programmes' sustainability.** Joining an existing and credible global system brought advantages to Trinidad and Tobago in terms of cost reduction, such as cheaper IT support and data storage. Additionally, the knowledge sharing between countries using the Primero System leads to constant improvements to the system that benefits everyone collectively.

³⁷⁷ The Children's Authority does not publish an average case management time to avoid generating external expectations, as they claim that case management times vary significantly and cannot be compared with average data. Data on the percentage of case management time reduction was not available.

5.4 Flores en el Aire, a qualitative data approach on ending violence against women and girls in Ecuador

Overview

In Ecuador, femicide rates vary between official statistics and civil society organisations due to different definitions of femicide. The official definition tends to underestimate numbers by not including suicide, even when the suicide is the result of constant violence and thus should be counted as a femicide. To address this discrepancy, through Spotlight Initiative in Ecuador, UN Women contributed to improving official statistical data³⁷⁸ and UNDP implemented an innovative, qualitative approach to femicide data to better illuminate the dynamics of femicide, to humanise the numbers behind it and to build momentum for fighting the problem and ending it.

As such, Spotlight Initiative launched *Flores en el Aire*³⁷⁹ (translated as “Flowers in the Air”), a social mapping tool that allows users to digitally explore memory routes of sixteen victims of femicide in eight cantons of Ecuador.³⁸⁰ It collected the experiences and testimonies of family, friends and organisations to honour the memory of these women. The narratives are expressed in the form of stories, photographs, texts and other georeferenced media according to the cities, streets and meaningful places in the lives of the victims. It also shares these families’ routes of (in)justice, reparation initiatives and community responses to violence. The site acts as a source of information on how and from whom to seek support and what the bottlenecks are in the support system.

To design the tool, Spotlight Initiative and its implementing partner³⁸¹ engaged mothers of femicide victims through a participatory process. Each route was carefully planned with the victims’ families and friends with the support of local organisations in each canton. Clinical psychologists provided support to families that were recounting painful situations to avoid re-traumatisation.

Results

Since its launch in 2021, *Flores en el Aire* has been used in awareness campaigns and events, as well as in engagements with various public entities. It has also been used as an advocacy tool for more effective public responses towards femicide and other forms of violence against women and girls and for better reparation policies. It has also been a powerful tool in training programmes across different sectors, such as journalists and prosecutors, to strengthen their awareness, gender perspective and sensitivity, as well as increase their understanding of critical bottlenecks across the entire system that involve femicide, from sociocultural dynamics to public responses.

“Flores en el Aire was in the media and gave journalists another perspective. We managed to present Flores en el Aire in the State Attorney General’s Office, in training sessions for journalists, at the local level, in various events with local governments. At the time of the local elections, the maps were used for dialogues with the candidates. And we continue discussing what is happening in the territories and talk to people in the public service using this tool.”

Nicoletta Marinelli, member of the Aldea Foundation

Flores en el Aire proved to have multiple effects at different levels. On an emotional level, it offered symbolic reparation and contributed to a healing process for the families and friends of these sixteen women and adolescents who were murdered due to their gender. They stated that they felt listened to through this mapping exercise and that Spotlight Initiative’s visibility gave them a form of emotional reparation that has been better than the reparation actions taken by the State to date. Another key result from this process was the supportive networks built between families, organisations and movements.

“[Flores en el Aire] was a balm that allowed me not to disappear in this pain or fight alone for justice. It was a way of channelling my pain and making Camila’s cause visible. I could raise my voice, because I said, my daughter, I will transform every tear into a cry of protest, so that your voice and your name will be synonymous with freedom. Now, people identify me as Camila’s mother. I am also invited to give conferences and lectures at universities. I am also now part of two movements, Madres Coraje [Brave Mothers] y Madres Justicia [Mothers Justice]. I see now that Camila’s case is promoting some changes.”

Mother of Camila, a victim of femicide

³⁷⁸ National Protocol for Investigating Femicides and other Violent Deaths of Women and Girls in Ecuador: A Prosecutor’s Approach (Spotlight Initiative, September 2022).

³⁷⁹ The *Flores en el Aire* website. (in Spanish)

³⁸⁰ Azogues, Cayambe, Cañar, Cuenca, Lago Agrio, Portoviejo, Puyo and Quito.

³⁸¹ Aldea Foundation.

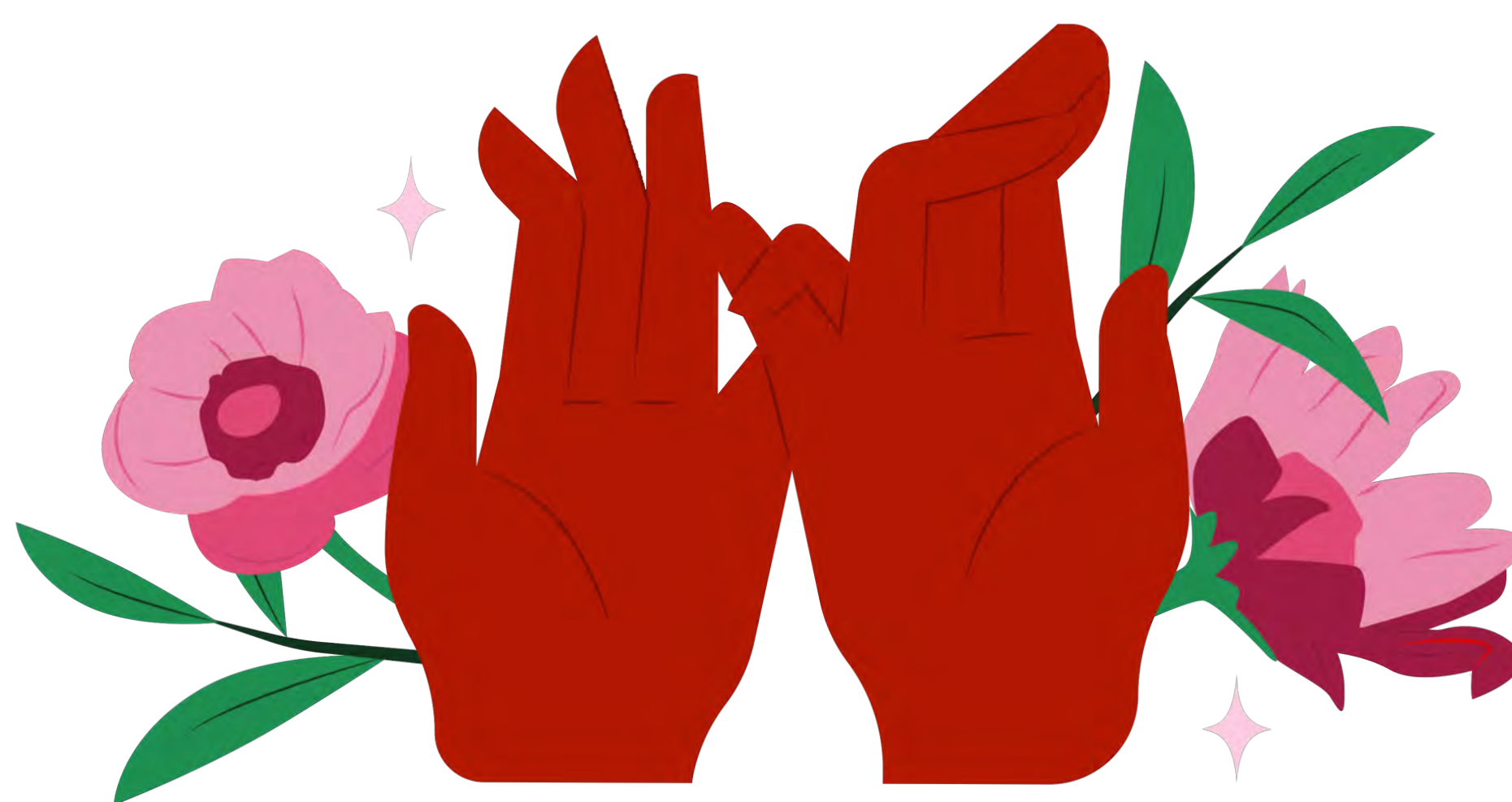
A significant impact arising from this work was that all victims' families that had lost a mother were able to access the orphan's bonus,³⁸² one of the State reparation measures, for which they had been fighting, in some cases for years, without succeeding. Due to continued advocacy work of civil society organisations and contributions from *Flores en el Aire*, changes were finally implemented in the orphans' bonus policy in March 2022. Now all families can access the bonus before final sentences, which can take years to happen.

Using the tool in training programmes also proved to be a successful strategy. As a result of the impact that *Flores en el Aire* had on prosecutors after a specific training was provided in 2021, the National Training Department of the State Attorney General's Office extended the training to other professionals in 2022. In total, 730 professionals were trained, including prosecutors, legal doctors, psychologists and social workers, and there is interest in including the tool as a regular module in their annual training programme.

Spotlight Initiative in Ecuador is opening access to this social mapping tool so that any organisation can use it and develop their own routes autonomously, even for other topics beyond femicide (e.g. routes of (in)justice for homeless people, etc.). Once launched, capacity-building programmes will be carried out to transfer the know-how on how to build social maps with local organisations.

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Engage local organisations as allies to reach multiple cities, villages and hard-to-reach areas, as well as to leverage local knowledge and relationships.** Working with local organisations was key to accompanying the victims' families in the process of building their routes and seeking reparation. Local organisations were already supporting families to demand justice, so the initiative drew on and deepened the relationships of trust between them.
- **Leverage qualitative approaches, including stories from lived experiences, as impactful tools for advocacy.** *Flores en el Aire* created momentum by raising the visibility of the humans behind the numbers and put pressure on the Ecuadorian government to take action. The storytelling project highlighted challenges in families' pursuit of justice. This powerful influencing strategy resulted in concrete shifts from the state, such as changing the orphan's bonus policy.
- **Make sure to provide adequate support to survivors or families of victims involved in initiatives to prevent retraumatization.** The inclusion of a psychologist to support those that participated in *Flores en el Aire* was a good practice to ensure that retraumatization did not occur.
- **Use qualitative data as tools that have greater sustainability over time, unlike numbers that can change from period to period.** To sustain this project, Spotlight Initiative and partners will continue disseminating *Flores en el Aire* at strategic moments and on emblematic days to keep the stories alive and raise public awareness. It will also expand training programmes using the *Flores en el Aire* tool to other sectors, including judges, to deepen awareness across various duty-bearers and institutions.



³⁸² The orphan's bonus consists of financial compensation granted by the State to support children whose mothers were victims of femicide.

5.5 Cross-dimensional and cross-national research on femicide in Latin America

Overview

In 2021, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (hereafter referred to as the “Economic Commission”) estimated that at least 12 women per day died violent, gender-based deaths in the region.³⁸³ In 2022, the numbers remained fairly consistent with one gender-related killing of a woman every two hours in the region.³⁸⁴ Despite these statistics, data remains limited,³⁸⁵ and the Economic Commission qualifies its data by explaining that “*it is not possible to identify an upward or downward trend in the rates of femicide or feminicide in each country, since the variations are small and do not reflect an increase or decrease in the problem.*” They also cautioned that comparable time series for the region’s countries cannot be determined due to limitations in data and methodological adjustments.

Through Spotlight Initiative’s Latin America Regional Programme, UNDP brought together implementing partners and field experts to conduct eight multidimensional studies on femicide/feminicide.³⁸⁶ 14 of the 25 countries with the highest number of femicides in the world are within this region.³⁸⁷

Each study examined intersectional impacts on high-risk and vulnerable populations. This comprehensive framework has provided an in-depth analysis on the relationships between violence against women and girls and femicide with human mobility processes, with social violence and organised crime and with multidimensional inequalities that stem from, for example, poverty in the region. Additional studies examined the role of the justice systems in cases of femicide, explained the relationship between trafficking and the disappearance of women and girls and femicide, and analysed the available data on gender-based violence, including on femicide, and its influence on public policy.³⁸⁸

Results

With the support of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, one of the multidimensional studies within Spotlight Initiative’s framework sought to provide an exhaustive analysis and evaluation of the quality of existing femicide data in Latin American countries. The study, *Calidad de la medición del femicidio/feminicidio y muertes violentas de mujeres por razones de género en América Latina*,³⁸⁹ covered twenty countries, including Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Uruguay and Venezuela.³⁹⁰

Contributors to this study came from 24 public institutions and four UN agencies, including ECLAC, UNDP, UN Women and UNODC. A further 14 interviews were conducted with government officials and technical personnel housed at 23 institutions from 11 countries responding to a self-administered online questionnaire on the characteristics of the administrative records of femicide/feminicide in each country. Their expertise was essential to better understand the processes used to collect, record, validate and disclose information.

As a result of the detailed study, a regional index on the quality of the measurement of femicide/feminicide helps to demonstrate what data exists and what data still needs strengthening. It incorporated seven dimensions and twenty indicators, which were fed with primary and secondary information provided by the key informants of each country, as well as the data obtained during the documentary and bibliographic review phases of the project. Likewise, findings from other studies have revealed significant insights into the contextual factors compounding femicide.

A key finding included the need to improve the interoperability of measurement and operation systems of femicide records. This highlights the importance of a single registry that could allow quick access and traceability of information. Furthermore, the study provided a series of recommendations in four dimensions: statistical system management; management of the institutional environment; management of statistical processes; and management of statistical results both at the national and international level.³⁹¹

³⁸³ Femicidal violence in figures - Latin America and the Caribbean (bulletin no. 1) (ECLAC, November 2022).

³⁸⁴ Femicidal violence in figures - Latin America and the Caribbean (bulletin no. 2) (ECLAC, November 2023).

³⁸⁵ Gambetta, V. (2022). Dificultades y desafíos para investigar el femicidio en Latinoamérica (translated as “Difficulties and challenges for femicide research in Latin America”). *Revista Latinoamericana De Metodología De Las Ciencias Sociales*, 12(2), e115.

³⁸⁶ The terminology of femicide versus feminicide also remains widely disputed. For the purposes of this compendium, the words are used interchangeably to describe this extreme form of gender-based violence. See also *Analysis of Femicide/Feminicide Legislation in Latin America and the Caribbean and a Proposal for a Model Law* (UN Women, 2018).

³⁸⁷ *A Gendered Analysis of Violent Deaths* (Small Arms Survey, November 2016).

³⁸⁸ *A Multidimensional Approach to Address Violence Against Women and Girls and Femicide/Feminicide in Latin America and the Caribbean* (UNDP Latin America and the Caribbean, December 2021).

³⁸⁹ *Estudio sobre la calidad de la medición del femicidio/feminicidio y las muertes violentas de mujeres por razones de género* (Spotlight Initiative, 2022). (in Spanish)

³⁹⁰ Of the twenty countries contacted, sixteen responded to the request for information (80 percent response rate).

³⁹¹ To learn more about this multidimensional study, watch the webinar (in Spanish), “*¿Qué nos cuentan los datos? registros administrativos y estudios de opinión pública sobre VCMN+FF*” (translated as “What does the data tell us? Administrative records and public opinion studies on violence against women and girls, including femicide/feminicide (VAWG+FF)).

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Apply an intersectional approach to research to surface findings that could otherwise be difficult to fully capture or understand in isolation.** Bringing together findings on violence against women and girls across countries offers the benefit of more detailed nuance within countries, as well as higher level cross-cutting trends in the region. Transforming the factors associated with violence against women and girls and femicide requires a multi-pronged strategy like that exemplified by Spotlight Initiative's Latin American Regional Programme, and this approach is adaptable for other regional contexts.
- **Align around a definition of what constitutes femicide and develop common and consistent procedures around registering, integrating and systemising data on femicide.** As more reliable and comparative femicide data becomes evident, it provides the basis for informed policymaking and advocacy.
- **Leverage different stakeholders' expertise to fill critical knowledge gaps on issues related to femicides and violence against women and girls in the region.** In the spirit of UN reform, interagency coordination between UN agencies and regional experts, including former government officials, academics and representatives of civil society and women's and feminist movements from multiple countries, helps to ensure that knowledge gaps are filled.

New technology and apps to track gender-based violence

5.6 The mobile SAV App in Liberia for reporting cases of rape, physical and domestic violence

Overview

Launched in 2020, the Safe Mobile App (also known as the "SAV App")³⁹² aims to swiftly report, respond and fast track cases related to rape, physical violence and domestic violence that have been perpetrated against women and girls in Liberia. Under Spotlight Initiative, and with support from the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, the project initially kicked off in four communities in Montserrado, eight communities in Bomi and eight in Cape Count Counties.³⁹³

The mobile application was primarily built to collect timely information from young women between the ages of 12 and 24 to report incidents of sexual and gender-based violence and other abuses. It also serves as a direct line of contact to social, health and other services by opening a communication channel with a medical doctor, counsellor or the police in case of an emergency.

Results

The SAV App has become an important documentation and outreach tool for school-aged girls in Liberia who face multiple forms of abuse at home, in their communities and at school.³⁹⁴ The data for the SAV App is managed by Girls for Change, a women-led community based organisation focused on advancing the rights of women, youth and children. Their ongoing engagements with Gender Justice Clubs, men champions and stakeholders in other counties has also contributed to widening the application's reach and usage. Between May 2020 and August 2021, 500 members of Gender Justice Clubs were trained in 20 communities in Bomi, Grand Cape Mount and Montserrado Counties.³⁹⁵

"Through Spotlight Initiative, we have seen more women and girls coming up to report cases by themselves. Previously, it would be through other community members who have an understanding of the law and justice processes, but with the awareness created on how to report cases [women and girls] are coming here openly."

Inspector Muna Meah, Commander in the Liberia National Police Force and the county coordinator for the Women and Children's Social Protection Centre in Sanniquille, north-central Liberia

In June 2021, the Foundation for Community Initiatives and Girls for Change convened a National Dialogue on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence,³⁹⁶ highlighting how sexual and gender-based violence cases could be reported using the SAV App. Subsequent to this event, individuals who had received earlier training on the use of the SAV App began monitoring and reporting, as well accompanying survivors of violence to judicial proceedings. Three sub-national GBV Coalitions have since been established in Liberia and also help to track, report and follow up on gender-based violence cases. In total, over 1,200 cases have been reported using SAV App between 2020 and 2023. The SAV App can be downloaded from the Google Play Store³⁹⁷ for Android devices and from the Apple App Store for iPhones.³⁹⁸

³⁹² The [Safe Mobile App](#) website.

³⁹³ [Liberia: 'SAV App' Launched To Track And Report On Sgbv Swiftly](#) (Front Page of Africa, September 2020).

³⁹⁴ The Liberia Results 2019-2021 Newsletter. The following quote encapsulates the impact that the Spotlight Initiative programmes more broadly have had on case reporting. It does not attribute this as a direct result of the Sav App specifically.

³⁹⁵ [The Foundation For Community Initiatives Launched A National Report On Cases Of Gender Based Violence Reported Using A Mobile Application Named "SAVAPP"](#) (Foundation For Community Initiatives, October 2021).

³⁹⁶ A video clip of the [National Dialogue on SGBV](#) in Monrovia, Liberia, 22 June 2021.

³⁹⁷ The app can be downloaded from the [Google Play Store](#) on Android devices.

³⁹⁸ The app can be downloaded from the [Apple App Store](#) on iPhones.

"In the wake of [an] increased wave of sexual and gender-based violence in Liberia, Sav App support[s] the reduction of violence against women and girls."

Lauretta Pope-Kai, Executive Director of Foundation for Community Initiatives and Chairperson of the National Civil Society Council of Liberia

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Capture real-time data through mobile applications to potentially help increase case reporting.** Community stakeholders in Liberia, for example, shared that the SAV App increased their level of trust in reporting cases of sexual and gender-based violence.
- **Build digital solutions to capture interest of particular demographic groups, like girls and young women in the country.** The SAV App offered an easy-to-access solution for this demographic and proved to be a successful strategy to reach those left behind and those living in hard-to-reach areas.

5.7 DNA lab in Uganda strengthens prosecution of violence against women and girls cases

Overview

In Uganda, the prevalence of gender-based violence remains high due to entrenched patriarchal social norms and gender roles. According to recent data, almost all women over the age of 15 had experienced physical or sexual violence, or both, by partners or non-partners.³⁹⁹ Despite the high prevalence of gender based violence, victims and survivors face minimal recourse through formal channels. In 2020, out of 17,664 reported cases, only 1,359 led to prosecution. Out of these, 400 resulted in conviction, maintaining a low conviction rate of 2.2 percent.⁴⁰⁰ Given this context, rigorous evidence collection is critical to support investigations and subsequent prosecutions of sexual and gender-based violence crimes.

Through the support of Spotlight Initiative and the Embassy of Sweden, the Uganda Police Force built a state-of-the-art and rapid analysis DNA lab to maintain the quality of evidence and strengthen prosecution. UN Women facilitated the donation of three Crime Scene Evidence Collection vans, 18 Scenes of Crime Officers (SOCO) kits, 18 scenes of crime cameras, DNA consumables (for the equipment), three pre-configured containers and three audio visual recording devices.⁴⁰¹

Results

Reliable equipment and technology to facilitate forensics and proper DNA collection is a critical element to ensure better investigation of crimes. Crime scene vans, for example, are necessary to transport the DNA samples swiftly and prevent degradation. Through the support of Spotlight Initiative, the new equipment in the lab helped preserve and process the evidence at the highest standard and resulted in greatly reduced turnaround time on case investigations.

Widely recognised as a regional hub of excellence, 40 percent of the cases received at the Forensics Biology Lab in Kampala are related to sexual and gender-based violence.

"DNA capabilities are crucial to support investigations and come in handy for SGBV crimes. We have been able to decrease [the] backlog to 8 months. Further, the cases investigated have seen credible evidence of perpetrators in 70% of cases. That 30% gap would be filled by awareness (of the general public and medical practitioners) of these capabilities and training."

Andrew K. Mubiru, Acting Director of Forensic Services

According to Mubiru, drug-induced rapes have been a worrisome trend that they have witnessed in Kampala. The Forensic Chemistry Section Head provided training for police officers and investigators on the use of the equipment to detect drugs.

These sophisticated techniques are capable of detecting trace amounts of chemical substances through blood, urine and hair samples and provide the evidence necessary to prosecute sexual violence crimes.

"The samples determine alcohol content as well as drugs, the liquid chromatography machine is a game-changer machine. The mass spectrometry machine is a detector, the gas chromatography machine is also a detector."

Doctor Jaffar Kisitu, Head of the Forensic Chemistry Section

³⁹⁹ National Survey on Violence Against Women in Uganda (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, UN Women and Spotlight Initiative, 2021).

⁴⁰⁰ Domestic Violence and the Death Penalty in Uganda (2023).

⁴⁰¹ Spotlight Initiative Supports the Uganda Police Force Forensics Department to Successfully Investigate SGBV Crimes (UN Women Africa, August 2022).

Survivors in Uganda have been less likely to report incidents due to associated stigma, particularly in cases where crimes have been committed by intimate or known partners.

Assistant Inspector of Police Emmanuel Ogwang shared that he had supported a 5-year-old victim to expound on the details of her abuse after her mother reported the case to the police. Once they successfully concluded this case, another victim, a fellow schoolmate who had not previously reported her abuse, came forward and reported a similar case.

"When cases occur in a community and a victim gets justice, they share that feedback with the rest of the community and they are motivated to report similar cases."

Emmanuel Ogwang, Assistant Inspector of Police and Regional Scene of Crime Officer for the Kampala Metropolitan East area

Reporting of sexual and gender-based violence crimes has begun to increase as it is now being taken more seriously by law enforcement agencies and cases are being prosecuted at the judicial level. DNA testing has been a necessary tool for criminal prosecution of sexual violence crimes, and, as such, the new equipment and provisions supplied by Spotlight Initiative has been critical to the fight to end violence against women and girls.

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Facilitate necessary forensics equipment to ensure the proper handling of DNA evidence.** Effective investigations of sexual and gender-based violence crimes require up-to-date equipment, such as rapid analysis and testing facilities in the DNA lab, as well as adequate transportation vehicles to transport evidence in a timely manner. This evidence is critical for criminal punishment and data should be quickly available to ensure timely access to justice for survivors.
- **Provide gender sensitivity training through a trauma-informed and victim-centred lens.** Doing so emboldens those tasked with identifying sexual and gender-based violence crimes to do so with greater care.



5.8 Innovation hacklabs in Africa spark new ideas and technology aimed at ending female genital mutilation

Overview

Female genital mutilation has affected nearly 200 million women and girls across Africa, Asia and the Middle East,⁴⁰² with its prevalence spanning over 28 countries in Africa alone.⁴⁰³ Recognising this challenge, Spotlight Initiative's Africa Regional Programme, in partnership with UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation, launched the Female Genital Mutilation Innovation HackLab Project in 2021. Young people, particularly adolescents and girls, were invited to propose innovative ideas and solutions to combat and prevent female genital mutilation. The initiative sought creative and practical ideas from individuals under the age of 35 years, with the potential to be implemented on a larger scale throughout the continent.⁴⁰⁴ These "innovation hacklabs" have been an important initiative in the Sub-Saharan African context, where only 30 percent of women receive Science, Technology, Engineering and Medical (STEM) training to actively participate in the tech sector.⁴⁰⁵ Its goal was to contribute to creating a future in Africa where every young woman and girl could exercise her right to bodily autonomy, supporting them to make decisions about their own lives and futures.

Results

The first call for innovation opened in the fall of 2021,⁴⁰⁶ with 113 applications received from young people from 18 countries across the continent. Over 60 percent of these submissions came from young women. This list was narrowed down to eighteen ideas for further assessment, ten of which came from Benin, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Gambia, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria and Uganda. These entries were selected to participate in the next phase of the project, called "the boot camp."

The selected participants, all under the age of 35, were invited to an intensive ideas development workshop over a 2-week period to flesh out commercially viable solutions to reach zero female genital mutilation within their communities. Following the boot camp, nine ideas made their final pitches in front of an online audience of over 900 people around the globe and a jury in December 2021, competing for the chance to tap into seed funding and further business support for their idea.

Four ideas benefitted from an initial investment of 70,000 USD and business incubation for an additional 3-6 months. These ideas were all youth-led initiatives (2 led by young women and 2 led by young men). Ideas presented by the winners included the development of a mobile platform in Uganda to support victims and survivors to get help from appropriate service providers; the invention of a mobile application in Nigeria called "Smart Reporting and Referral"⁴⁰⁷ that connects survivors anonymously to female genital mutilation and gender-based violence services; the creation of a website in Burkina Faso sharing written and audio testimonies of victims and providing medical and psychological support for girls; and the acceleration of another mobile application in Uganda to collect and analyse crowdsourced, anonymous reports of female genital mutilation practices, identifying patterns and key insights.

The innovation challenges have continued in 2022 with a focus on strategies to reduce early and unintended pregnancies, and in 2023 with a focus on uplifting an individual's right to make decisions about their own bodies.⁴⁰⁸ With each successive round, there has also been greater interest and participation, increased seed funding and more targeted enterprise growth support available.

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Encourage and engage young innovators to contribute their most creative ideas to identify scalable solutions for ending harmful practices against girls.** While running social innovation challenges such as the Hacklabs requires significant preparation, they are met with a tremendous amount of enthusiasm when launched.
- **Provide financial, technical and professional support to see innovation flourish.** These initiatives have the opportunity to raise awareness and make a large and long-term social impact around the hardest of issues, especially when they are able to stay viable beyond the seed investment.

⁴⁰² [Female genital mutilation](#) (World Health Organization, February 2024).

⁴⁰³ [Female genital mutilation](#) (UNFPA East and Southern Africa).

⁴⁰⁴ [FGM Hacklab](#) (UNFPA, 2021).

⁴⁰⁵ [Women and the Digital Economy in Africa](#) (Harvard University, Center for African Studies, October 2020).

⁴⁰⁶ More on the innovation challenge in [2021](#).

⁴⁰⁷ The [Smart Reporting and Referral \(SMART RR\)](#) application website.

⁴⁰⁸ More on the innovation challenges in [2022](#) and in [2023](#).



Pillar 6: Women's movements

Pillar 6 lies at the heart of Spotlight Initiative's model with its focus on supporting women's movements and local women's rights and feminist organisations. Spotlight Initiative takes an evidence-based approach to prioritising this pillar as research has clearly shown the outsized role that women's movements hold in contributing to national agendas of action and progress on ending violence against women. This pillar focuses on supporting organising, advocacy and the increased influence of civil society organisations and women's rights organisations and movements, increasing the strength and capacity of women's organisations and movements, supporting landscape analysis and mappings to support greater effectiveness of civil society solutions, creating new bodies of feminist knowledge, practice and agenda setting, and strengthening coalitions, networks and advocacy to end violence against women and girls. In addition, a significant focus of this pillar is on the deepened capacity and funding of civil society, especially feminist and women's rights organisations and movements, as key stakeholders to end violence against women and girls.

The following good and innovative practices detail cases contributing to Pillar 6. This includes Spotlight Initiative's work in funding civil society through two UN Funds: the Trust Fund to End Violence against Women and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, as well as network and coalition building happening in the Safe and Fair Programme in the Philippines, Tajikistan, the Pacific Region, and Latin America Region.

Funding mechanisms



6.1 Funding civil society and grassroots communities through the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund

Overview

In order to ensure that a significant proportion of funding reaches grassroots communities, Spotlight Initiative partnered with two global funds, the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UN Trust Fund) and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF).

The UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women provides multi-year grants that prioritise funding to smaller and grassroots organisations to initiatives that address, reduce or eliminate violence against women and girls. The UN Trust Fund also places prioritisation on capacity development. The Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund gives grants to support women and women's rights organisations that work on conflict and crises, support the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and promote peace in their communities. Both of these funds were chosen as Spotlight Initiative partners because of their unique access and networks to grassroots feminist civil society organisations in countries all over the world. There have also been special funding windows rolled out by these two funds, particularly during COVID-19, that facilitated quick access to core resources for civil society organisations.

Results

Since the beginning of Spotlight Initiative in 2017, a total of 36.8 million USD in grants has gone to support women's movements and address violence against women and girls. Remarkably, nearly all of this funding has reached community organisations, with 82 percent of it going to local groups and 94 percent supporting women-led organisations that are working on women's rights and feminism.⁴⁰⁹ This is the power of working through intermediary funds, such as the UN Trust Fund and WPHF. Both already had direct and established access to local organisations, which would otherwise have been challenging to reach due to administrative and logistical barriers.

⁴⁰⁹ The 2022 Global Annual Narrative Progress Report, page 53.

Over the 5 years, these grants have reached over 32 million people, making a significant difference in the lives of women and girls. For example, in Zimbabwe, the UN Trust Fund worked with a women-led group called Family AIDS Caring Trust. The project, “Voices from the Fringes,” focused on increasing sexual and reproductive health knowledge and aimed to reduce violence against girls and young women, including female sex workers. Results from a study showed that 98 percent of the female sex workers who had been involved in this project felt an increase in their sense of safety. WPHF grantees in Uganda supported several civil society organisations that came together to manage cases of violence against women and girls, helping to settle over 2,600 domestic cases through mediation and reconciliation. This collective work helped to move cases forward quicker and supported faster resolutions. These are just two brief examples of success from many grants over the years. Together, these partnerships demonstrate the power of Spotlight Initiative's model of supporting local civil society and women's organisations in order to foster lasting and meaningful change.

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Support intermediary funds as an effective strategy for reach when a funding agency does not have the networks in place or the capacity to reach small or local groups and grassroots organisations, especially those that may be unregistered.** The UN Trust Fund and WPHF, as well as women's funds and other intermediary funders, are key partners in the change process.
- **Move funding to grassroots communities.** Ensuring that funding gets to local communities that are on the frontlines of addressing violence against women and girls in conflict and crisis scenarios is critical. In addition, opening up spaces where frontline communities and activists can have a seat at peacemaking tables and in leadership positions in addressing conflicts and crises has also been found to be key to sustainable peace.
- **Partner with civil society and those closest to the problem to develop solutions for impact.** Spotlight Initiative's model is unique as it prioritises reach, both in terms of country and regional partnerships and implementations with civil society, while simultaneously advancing Pillar 6 on women's movements. This dual strategy enables greater efficiency and on the ground impact. As funding and capital allocations are channelled directly to these initiatives and partnerships, programming to end violence against women and girls in a country deepens and widens its impact.



Network and coalition building



6.2 First-ever transnational federation of Filipino domestic and care workers unions and associations

Overview

Domestic work and care work are sectors dominated by women, and the work done by migrant workers in this sector is often hidden inside the homes of their employers. A recent nationwide survey of over 1,000 Filipino youth revealed that approximately 58 percent felt that they would not be consistently safe working abroad as an Overseas Filipino Worker. 30 percent of respondents reported that they knew of an Overseas Filipino Worker friend or relative who had experienced violence against women, and 24 percent stated that these victims were not able to seek help for the violence they experienced.⁴¹⁰ Workers are particularly vulnerable when they are working outside of their native country, and being part of a union enables them to gain access to important support services and greater opportunities for collective bargaining.

In 2004, the trade union *Sentro ng mga Nagkakaisa at Progresibong Manggagawa* (SENTRO, formerly known as the Alliance of Progressive Labor) partnered with the Asian Migrant Center, the Migrant Forum in Asia and the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions to mainstream and expand social movement trade union work among Filipino and other Asian migrant workers. This organising effort in Hong Kong laid the groundwork for Pinay Careworkers Transnational (PINAY), which was founded in December 2022. PINAY brings together Filipina domestic workers' (migrant and local) and careworkers' unions and associations based in Malaysia, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, Kuwait, Jordan, Bahrain, Qatar and the Philippines. This federation represents, advocates, and advances the rights, welfare, interests and agenda of more than 7,000 domestic and care workers transnationally. PINAY is hailed as an important breakthrough achievement as labour organising efforts across multiple countries are often curtailed and can be extremely challenging to sustain.

Through Spotlight Initiative's Safe and Fair Programme, ILO and UN Women have supported PINAY to advance the rights of women migrant workers (nationals and overseas workers alike). Organising across multiple countries and contexts has improved ways of working with diverse partners and in delivering information and support services to migrant and national domestic and care workers.

Results

Years of organising and past efforts of civil society actors and labour unions within individual countries have led to the eventual success of building a transnational network. Long-standing legal, structural and procedural obstacles initially prevented and hindered the unionisation of migrant, domestic and care workers, but through persistence and grassroots organising, Overseas Filipino Workers built individual and organisational capacity and promoted collective bargaining and representation of domestic and care workers through their trade unions and associations. This organising work and the networking of domestic and care worker groups expanded to other countries and territories thereafter.⁴¹¹

"As migrant domestic workers, many members of PINAY do not yet enjoy even the most fundamental labour rights in the respective countries of destination. Many, for example, are not recognised as workers and therefore fall beyond the scope of local labour laws. As part of informal economies, our organisations do not reflect the traditional relationships with employers and governments as formal trade unions. Nevertheless, we still strive to secure freedom of association and collective bargaining and other basic level rights for our affiliates and Filipino migrant domestic workers and individual care workers."

Ms Shiella Estrada, President of Pinay Careworkers Transnational, Philippines

Creating this network of domestic and care workers' organisations has contributed to further strengthening the technical, logistical, advocacy and/or financial sustainability of unions and associations across the region. PINAY's model of unionism and organising has also managed, in some cases, to sidestep administrative and procedural restrictions, such as migrant workers not being recognised or allowed to register as unions or associations in countries of destination. With PINAY as a registered trade union federation based in the Philippines, the various Filipino domestic worker and care worker organisations can leverage their position by becoming trade union chapters both in and outside the Philippines.

⁴¹⁰ Safe and Fair Programme in the Philippines and Edukasyon.ph Wrap Up International Women's Month Celebration with "Ang Mama Kong BiyaHero" Campaign (Spotlight Initiative, April 2022).

⁴¹¹ Migrant workers' rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining (virtual roundtable) (ILO, November 2023).

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Identify common objectives among care workers.** Organising around shared objectives, such as the payment of regular union dues, in order to build and sustain a collective union consciousness and identity, is critical to the formation of transnational networks.
- **Collaboration and movement building across diverse partner organisations and unions within and across countries leads to stronger labour positioning.** The case of PINAY shows the power in cross-sector and national collaborations, which consolidate the demands and agendas of migrant workers.
- **Recognise that labour organising efforts for federations require perseverance and funds for long-term sustainability.** Working across multiple countries and contexts to convene and spearhead a federation like PINAY requires self-organising and self-reliance, as well as strong solidarity and coordination actions with and between trade unions, international labour and social movements that advance shared advocacy agendas.



6.3 The School of Gender Activists in Tajikistan builds a cadre of local experts

Overview

Civil society organisations have been instrumental in addressing social concerns in Tajikistan, including election monitoring, environmental stewardship, education, economic inclusivity and gender equity. Within the gender space, civil society organisations have been at the forefront of advancing women's education, increasing women's political participation, addressing gender-based violence,⁴¹² and providing services to survivors.⁴¹³

Nevertheless, civil society organisations continue to face a range of challenges that impede their work. The civil society sector is highly fragmented, and multiple barriers continue to hinder information sharing, dialogue and partnership building between organisations and the government. As such, Spotlight Initiative in Tajikistan prioritised the provision of support to and investment in civil society organisations.⁴¹⁴

During the early implementation of Spotlight Initiative, it became apparent that there were few gender experts in the country.⁴¹⁵ To address this challenge, the School of Gender Activists was launched in 2021, led by UN Women under Spotlight Initiative. The first of its kind, the initiative sought to create a roster of local gender experts across different agencies that could be tapped as key resource persons in efforts to address gender-based violence in Tajikistan. The School of Gender Activists has also presented an opportunity to convene and mobilise gender experts, fostering greater collaboration, partnership and knowledge exchange among them.⁴¹⁶

Results

Sixty participants graduated in the first and second phases of the School of Gender Activists initiative.⁴¹⁷ Phase 1 participants included civil society representatives and young professionals, while Phase 2 specifically targeted youth aged 18-35 to nurture emerging gender specialists. Adhering to the principle of leave no one behind, the School of Gender Activists also involved women living with HIV and people with disabilities.

Topics studied under the School of Gender Activists programme include gender rights, gender equality concepts, local and international laws and standards on gender, gender budgeting, feminist history, gender advocacy, gender analysis and tools to identify and prevent gender-based violence. Participants received first-hand exposure to gender-related initiatives through visits to government agencies (including the parliament, ombudsman and the supreme court), and government officials, civil society representatives and women leaders in Tajikistan were invited to training sessions to share insights on gender-centric work practices. Students were also given the opportunity to attend a planning session of the Committee of Women and Family Affairs. During the session, the Committee of Women and Family Affairs representatives co-created a plan together with the School of Gender Activists participants, which was then endorsed by higher officials of the Committee. Engaging in the planning session allowed the participants to apply the theories acquired from the School of Gender Activists training to hands-on practical experience.

The training also made participants reflect on their own gender biases, with one student reflecting that her experience in the training led to household chores being distributed equally between herself and her husband. Another graduate reflected on how his perspective on women's participation in the labour market changed after studying at the School of Gender Activists.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹² The 2019 Tajikistan Country Programme Document.

⁴¹³ *The Role of NGOs in Independent Tajikistan* (International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, March 2013).

⁴¹⁴ The 2019 Tajikistan Country Programme Document.

⁴¹⁵ The 2020 Tajikistan Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 38.

⁴¹⁶ The 2021 Tajikistan Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 29 and 35.

⁴¹⁷ The 2023 Tajikistan Annual Report Draft, page 8.

⁴¹⁸ First-hand success stories of graduates of the School of Gender Activists, page 2-3.

“In our area, stereotypes against women are widespread. I am very glad that I studied at SGA [because] the knowledge I gained changed my whole life. In our family, [my wife and I] developed mutual understanding and support. I allowed my wife to work, despite numerous conversations with relatives. We are grateful to everyone who created SGA.”

A male graduate of the School of Gender Activists programme in Dushanbe

Overall, the training was of great benefit to the graduates’ career progressions. For some, the knowledge gained from the training supported them to produce winning proposals for grants.

“Our organization won a US Embassy grant (\$41,760) to empower women from marginalized groups, low-income and rural communities to participate in the labor market. I believe that success became possible, in many respects, thanks to the knowledge acquired, information about crisis centers and specialists whom I met at the SGA. While filling out the application, reviewing the correct approach to gender issues played a big role for me, and I used in the application those approaches that we were trained for.”

Zebo Bidieva, head of an NGO for the deaf and deaf-blind

Some School of Gender Activists graduates advanced their careers through becoming members of organisational advisory boards of UN agencies or gender specialists in their organisations.⁴¹⁹ Some graduates also began to train others within their work and communities on gender rights and concepts.

“Because of this initiative, we have good specialists...who will advocate [for gender] issues not only at the national level but also [at the] international level. They will be involved in implementing different types of activities...we will involve them in our high-level activities...we will listen to their ideas, [and their] voices will be heard. [We will] promote them up to the highest level of the government to...bring the change in gender-related issues in the country.”

Javohir Akobirova, Head of Gender Development, Committee of Women and Family Affairs

In 2023, graduates of the School of Gender Activists continued to support the advancement of women’s rights. During the development of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, for example, the graduates were invited to lobby for the inclusion of the elimination of gender-based violence.⁴²⁰

Elevated as gender experts, the School of Gender Activists graduates also delivered training within their own communities, which reached 200 men and women community leaders. The School of Gender Activist graduates stayed in touch and continually collaborated and exchanged expertise on gender-related work. The sustained synergy among participants, together with the training of additional leaders by the graduates, signifies a growing and more robust network of local gender experts in Tajikistan. The School of Gender Activists also created a platform to facilitate knowledge exchange and partnership among civil society members working to end gender-based violence.⁴²¹

A notable result of the School of Gender Activists was that it created an increased demand for gender experts. Civil society organisations and government entities expressed interest in replicating the School of Gender Activists programme in other locations in Tajikistan, as well as in other countries in Central Asia.⁴²²

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Ensure that an adequate pool of gender experts exist in a country that can be flexibly deployed across diverse government, service provision, duty-bearers and civil society agencies.** Rolling out the programme was a strategic method to compensate for the lack of local gender experts in Tajikistan. The graduates eventually became experts in gender-related endeavours and also trained other community members, presenting the opportunity to develop further sets of gender experts in Tajikistan.
- **Build networks, linkages and movements out of the collaboration and partnership formed from training programmes.** Training, workshops or any other learning events often convene like-minded individuals, which opens up opportunities to link, collaborate and foster networks or movements.
- **Create training programmes that contain a diverse range of topics, are delivered by experts, and offer experiential learning experiences.** The School of Gender Activists curriculum encompassed a range of gender topics that were presented by subject matter experts and reinforced with practical learning experiences.

⁴¹⁹ The 2022 Tajikistan Interim Annual Report, page 41.

⁴²⁰ The 2023 Tajikistan Annual Report Draft, page 50.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Ibid.

6.4 The Pacific Feminist Community of Practice advances best practices in feminist discourse and movement building

Overview

The Pacific region has some of the world's highest recorded rates of violence against women and girls, with almost 2 out of every 3 women impacted by physical or sexual violence in their lifetime – double the global average.⁴²³ With profound shifts occurring in the current socioeconomic, ecological and climate landscape and a global and local backlash against gender justice and women's human rights, peer-to-peer capacity strengthening with smaller, grassroots organisations is crucially important to bolster the Pacific women's movement.

Through Spotlight Initiative's Pacific Regional Programme, the Pacific Feminist Community of Practice (hereafter referred to as "PacFemCOP") was launched in 2021 and moderated by DIVA for Equality in Fiji. Through a co-creation and co-design approach deeply rooted in feminist values, a variety of best practices in feminist discourse and movement building in the Pacific Island region were documented. In cultivating this community space, Pacific feminists have been able to further assert and amplify their regional solidarity and autonomy.

Results

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, the PacFemCOP platform and its staffed Secretariat created connection and solidarity between 20 civil society organisations and approximately 80 activists and diverse movements from across the Pacific region. These practices have contributed to bridging the divide within and between Pacific island countries.⁴²⁴

"As south feminists, we navigate both our individual contexts in Fiji and the Pacific regional context. So in order for us to be able to do feminist work effectively, core collaborations have to be clear and strong from within the Pacific region, founded and facilitated within small island societies, States and territories."

Diva for Equality

The community's lived understanding that the "personal is political" underscored and affirmed the importance of alignment in structure, content and processes to ensure effective sustainable work.

The Community of Practice has been led by Diva for Equality and included networking and thought partnerships around six *freeskools*, which are a series of teachings, dialogues, thought analysis and practice around various topics. These topics include: an introduction to feminism, including movement definitions and concepts; feminist approaches to gender, ecological and climate justice; elimination of violence against women and girls; how to mobilise, organise and action for change; poverty to power, examining feminist approaches to economic justice and human rights in the Pacific and globally; and sexual and reproductive health and rights, SOGIESC, bodily autonomy and integrity.⁴²⁵ These intersectional and intergenerational sessions were designed to follow on a body of praxis from feminist social movements. More than 35 resources and videos are freely available online.

"The movement can disrupt, clarify, critique and re-negotiate over time without destroying good, solid feminist social movement work, whether inside or outside and beyond national States, and societal norms and practices. Feminists believe in material and structural change to build socio-economic, ecological and climate justice, beyond that, we negotiate on how, why, with whom and when it happens. This Pacific feminist community of practice will support Pacific collective and individual work, for just, ethical, safe and inclusive realities and futures, for all."

Diva for Equality

Pacific voices and peoples have gathered together around key issues such as violence against women and girls, climate crisis, economic insecurity and other issues. Dialogues happening in relation to the Community of Practice in these spaces have had some results, such as deepened community-based organising. For example, Pacific feminist activists informed inputs into the 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women and the 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference.

⁴²³ Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls (UN Women Asia and the Pacific).

⁴²⁴ Text from the Diva for Equality website.

⁴²⁵ The entire *freeskools* video series can be found on the [PacFEMCOP webpage](#), as well as on [YouTube](#).

By the end of the first stage of the programme in December 2022, Diva for Equality had engaged 95 participants from 45 groups across 14 island States and territories. This example underscores the importance of knowledge sharing and strategy reflections across the Pacific, as it provides the access to knowledge needed to strengthen diverse activists and movements in the region, as well as helps to support the alignment of joint action.

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Cultivate communities of practice as a way to educate and galvanise around shared and country-specific feminist advocacy asks and strategies.** Regional knowledge centres such as PacFemCOP offer unique opportunities for activists in different countries to learn what strategies are being used in other contexts, offering inspiration for adoption in their own contexts, potential for connecting with similar actors across regions and creating opportunities for shared collective actions across the region and even internationally.
- **Provide free online resources to increase the visibility and accessibility of feminist analysis.** When gender analysis tools like the educational series of *freeskool* videos are made available online, the general public have an opportunity to access the praxis and better understand the context in the region.
- **Build partnerships that truly demonstrate the power of UN reform and joint action through co-design, equal partnership and transparent communication.** The UN team and DIVA for Equality were able to navigate the procurement process together to implement their vision of a regional movement-building hybrid platform that brought together civil society organisations and diverse activists across the region.

6.5 The Esperanza Protocol for the protection of women human rights defenders in Latin America

Overview

According to Front Line Defenders' Global Analysis 2019, Latin America is the most dangerous region in the world for human rights defenders.⁴²⁶ This alarming and lamentable statistic remained the same in 2022.⁴²⁷ Women human rights defenders in Latin American countries have long played a central role in the fight against violence against women and girls, such as the Mesoamerican Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders, a collective founded in 2010 of nearly 3,000 activists and 300 organisations across El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico and Nicaragua.⁴²⁸ As human rights defenders, women defenders are disproportionately exposed to sexual and other forms of gender-based violence, and their safety, as well as that of their families, is often jeopardised as a consequence of their work and advocacy.

Despite the prevalence and gravity of threats, 67 percent of human rights defenders reported that they would still persevere with their work.⁴²⁹ Recognising that women human rights defenders face particular risks in calling for change and accountability in their communities, Spotlight Initiative's Latin America Regional Programme supported the work of human rights defenders across the region and supported the finalisation of the Esperanza Protocol (hereafter referred to as "PLE").⁴³⁰ This work was coordinated by UN Women, UNDP and UNFPA, with active participation of intergovernmental mechanisms, civil society organisations, and other UN agencies.

The Protocol invokes hope (*esperanza* in Spanish) for two reasons:⁴³¹ first, because its primary aim is to ensure a hopeful future for human rights defenders. The second is in honour of La Esperanza, a town in western Honduras that is the hometown of Berta Cáceres, indigenous-rights activist, feminist, and environmentalist who was murdered in 2016 after 33 uninvestigated threats.

Ms. Cáceres' murder is unfortunately not an isolated case. 75 percent of documented cases in the region involve a murder that followed a series of repeated extreme threats or security incidents. The Esperanza Protocol honours her memory and is designed to support states and civil society to demand measures that protect human rights defenders and ensure justice for the victims.

Results

The Esperanza Protocol took 5 years to develop and publish in December 2021, but it is now hailed as the first international standard for the investigation of and response to threats and attacks against rights defenders, where few concrete guidelines existed before this time beyond general standards of due diligence.

⁴²⁶ Global Analysis 2019 (Front Line Defenders).

⁴²⁷ Global Analysis 2022 (Front Line Defenders).

⁴²⁸ The Mesoamerican Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders website.

⁴²⁹ Survey findings: Towards an Effective Investigation of Threats against Human Rights Defenders (CEJIL and UN Women, 2022), page 22.

⁴³⁰ Better protection for women human rights defenders in Latin America (Spotlight Initiative, November 2020).

⁴³¹ Text from the Esperanza Protocol website.

In order to develop the PLE, various broad consultations were held with more than 100 women human rights defenders in different countries and regions to ensure that their experiences were included in the working drafts of the Protocol. A coalition of more than 20 civil society organisations, women's and feminist organisations, spearheaded by the Center for Justice and International Law, worked diligently towards developing public policy guidelines for a systematic and diligent criminal investigation. A specific focus on the security needs of WHRDs was included, highlighting their vital contribution to strengthening democracy.

"Human rights defenders are a network, and each one of us is a knot within that network. Our protection must be seen as a collective responsibility."

Jéssica Isla, Honduran human rights defender

"With the protocol, we want to change how threats are treated, they are a key weapon in intimidating women human rights defenders. We must improve the response of institutions [to women's complaints] to be able to stop the cycle of pain and silence."

Viviana Krsticevic, Executive Director of CEJIL

The protocol is a critical step forward. Next, state protection and justice for women human rights defenders requires attention, as the report from the PLE survey findings underscores: *"States need to do more to protect the lives and integrity of human rights defenders around the world. States must recognize the importance of the work of HRDs and must take action to eliminate threats against HRDs from State actors. States must set forth policies that would improve trust in their institutions and conduct full investigations into all threats against HRDs. HRDs should be able to feel confident in reporting threats to authorities and be assured that the State will do everything within its power to protect them."*⁴³²

While the first step of developing the protocol is in place, the next step that needs considerable attention and support is on ensuring the implementation of the protocol and on eliminating high levels of state impunity that exist now.

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Develop international standards as a first step toward combating impunity.** Protocols such as PLE help create the framework to encourage state institutions to take a comprehensive approach to combating impunity for sexual and gender-based violence crimes and enable duty-bearers to handle cases more appropriately in the future.
- **Use international and national protocols as a monitoring tool domestically to hold governments to account.** International protocols like this set the standard for ensuring the state's commitment to protecting women human rights defenders. Any country that is facing issues with violence against a women human rights defender can benefit from the guidelines for a diligent and full criminal investigation.
- **Contribute funds for the development or completion of a guideline and protocol like PLE for far reaching impact.** The Esperanza Protocol is referenced and used globally and sets an international standard for these types of criminal investigations. It must be fully implemented to save lives and ensure the safety of human rights defenders and their critical work.

⁴³² Survey findings: *Towards an Effective Investigation of Threats against Human Rights Defenders* (CEJIL and UN Women, 2022), page 38.

6.6 A Civil Society National Reference Group contributes to the success of Spotlight Initiative in Samoa

Overview

Gender-based violence is a significant issue in Samoa, where 38 percent of women aged 15-49 have experienced physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime.⁴³³ 35 percent of women and 26 percent of men stated that they believed a husband was justified in beating his wife in at least one circumstance.⁴³⁴ Furthermore, 78 percent of married women reported that their husband had displayed controlling behaviours.⁴³⁵ The acceptance and normalisation of violence against women and girls can lead to increased shame and stigma and discourage survivors from reporting their experience and seeking safety and support.

Despite ongoing efforts, violence against women and girls remains a complex and persistent issue in Samoa, requiring continued commitment from government, civil society and the community to effectively address it. Spotlight Initiative has led prevention efforts in Samoa, addressing the need to transform the root causes that lead to violence against women and girls. A Civil Society National Reference Group (CSNRG) was formed to ensure representation from civil society and other stakeholders in decision-making related to Spotlight Initiative programming, as well as to advise and advocate for the realisation of programme objectives and hold the programme accountable for its commitments. In Samoa, Spotlight Initiative focused on preventing violence through evidence-based programmes and strengthening essential services for survivors of domestic violence. The formation of the CSNRG was one of the key elements of the programme's success.

Results

To amplify the voice and ownership of civil society in the programme, a diverse CSNRG was formed and trained in order to increase the capacity of the CSNRG. This careful planning and engagement has led to international recognition for Spotlight Initiative in Samoa.

In order to put together an effective CSNRG, the Samoa team reached out to teams in Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea for their guidance and to share information, especially on Pacific specific contexts. An interim CSNRG in Samoa was first established to provide inputs on the Country Programme Document, ensuring civil society organisations were reflected as partners in the design and implementation of the initiative.⁴³⁶ The interim CSNRG commented on the gaps not captured or addressed in existing violence interventions and suggested effective strategies to approach and engage traditional leaders and village councils to facilitate behavioural change and attitudes towards violence against women and girls. The group also promoted the meaningful engagement of civil society and government stakeholders to foster greater ownership and encouraged Spotlight Initiative to invest in local interventions. In addition, strong communication was prioritised to ensure that key messages and information on ending violence against women and girls reached a broad audience.

After the design phase, ten individuals with different professional capacities and varying age, gender and disability were selected to form the CSNRG.⁴³⁷ The group provided a fair and balanced perspective and ensured the leave no one behind principle was carried out in the planning and implementation of the Spotlight Initiative programme in Samoa.

"The programme continues to achieve results because the Spotlight Initiative team listened and designed interventions to suit the context of our communities, their level of knowledge, and their capacities to deliver."

Fagalima Tuatagaloa, Co-Chair CSNRG, Samoa

In order to prepare the members of the CSNRG for their responsibilities, an induction training was jointly coordinated and facilitated by the UN Resident Coordinator's Office, together with UN Women and supported by UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNESCO.⁴³⁸ The training aimed to familiarise the CSNRG members with Spotlight Initiative, the expectations of their roles as members of the CSNRG, and to facilitate meaningful collaborations with the UN, partners and stakeholders in the implementation of all interventions and activities.⁴³⁹ The training also provided the opportunity to develop a work plan, which guided the delivery of their functions. One of the key outputs of the work plan was that the CSNRG led the 16 Days of Healing Campaign in Samoa, a national campaign that demonstrated the leading and important role of civil society organisations and communities in ending violence against women and girls.⁴⁴⁰ These preparatory activities ensured that the CSNRG was a critical function in the governing architecture of Spotlight Initiative's programme in Samoa.

⁴³³ Gender Equality Brief for Samoa (UN Women, 2022).

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ The process for the permanent CSNRG commenced after the design phase, therefore the interim CSNRG was set-up to ensure input from all stakeholders.

⁴³⁷ CSNRG ready to progress its role in the Spotlight Initiative Samoa programme (UN Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and Tokelau, 2020).

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ National Reference Group, a strong force behind the Spotlight Initiative (UN Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and Tokelau, 2021).

⁴⁴⁰ Samoa launches 16 Days of Healing campaign (Spotlight Initiative, December 2020).

After the CSNRG was formalised, quarterly meetings with UN agencies were held to understand how the programme was progressing. These meetings were an essential platform that allowed the CSNRG to be the voice of civil society and advise the UN on gaps in programming and services, as well as opportunities, to advance the programme.

In recognition of the excellent design of the programme, Spotlight Initiative in Samoa won the Leave No One Behind Award in 2022.⁴⁴¹ The programme, in coordination with UNDP, UNESCO, UN Women, UNICEF, UNFPA and the UN Resident Coordinator's Office, worked closely with the CSNRG to ensure that in ending domestic and intimate partner violence in Samoa, the dignity of victims was protected, while root causes of violence were also identified and addressed.

"Finally, Samoa and our efforts towards ending violence against women have been recognized."

Fagalima Tuatagaloa, Co-Chair CSNRG, when receiving the award

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Include individuals and organisations in CSNRGs that represent and reflect the diversity of civil society.** Engaging citizens who work and represent civil society at the national and local level and understand the cultural and religious principles of the country is important to get a wide range of inputs and perspectives. Forging a qualified and diverse membership, the group was well positioned to oversee and contribute meaningfully to various stages of Spotlight Initiative programming.
- **Engage CSNRG members from the inception and design of the programme through to its implementation and delivery.** The CSNRG in Samoa provided valuable inputs that ensured that interventions were responsive to the needs and realities of the communities affected, which contributed to the programme's success.
- **Organise and facilitate a training of the CSNRG to familiarise the members with Spotlight Initiative and the expectations of their roles.** The training allowed the CSNRG to orient themselves around their duties, as well as provided an opportunity to develop a work plan. This initial groundwork helped the CSNRG remain engaged throughout the programme, bringing the voice of civil society and contributing to the effective design and implementation of the programme.
- **Integrate regular meetings with the CSNRG into the work plan.** Regularly scheduled meetings provide an opportunity to engage with UN agencies and understand how the programme is progressing. These meetings were an essential platform that allowed the CSNRG to provide valuable advice to advance the Spotlight Initiative programme in Samoa.



⁴⁴¹ [Samoa Spotlight Initiative programme wins Leave No One Behind Award](#) (Government of Samoa, September 2022).

Synergies across multiple pillars: a systematic approach to EVAWG

Spotlight Initiative's mission to end violence against women and girls requires synergistically working across multiple pillars, wherein impacts in one pillar can affect the effectiveness and results achieved in other pillars. Ensuring that no one is left behind, Spotlight Initiative utilises mutually reinforcing entry points to tackle the root causes of violence at every level.⁴⁴² By taking a "whole-of-government" approach to institutional coordination and a "whole-of-society" approach to meaningful stakeholder engagement, Spotlight Initiative's diverse interagency and partnership model demonstrates the "One UN" model in practice.

The following in-depth case studies in Malawi, Mozambique, and Liberia highlight the impacts that occur when creating and connecting cross-programme synergies. This integrated programming work sits at the heart of the approach and innovations that Spotlight Initiative led.

New national and subnational laws and policies



7.1 A comprehensive approach to end violence against women and girls in Malawi

Overview

The high prevalence of different forms of violence against women and girls is one of Malawi's biggest challenges. Over one third of women (37.5 percent) will experience physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence in their lifetime, and one in five girls have been sexually abused before the age of 18.⁴⁴³ In addition, early marriage (a harmful practice) is rampant, with nearly half of girls in Malawi having been married before the age of 18.⁴⁴⁴

Although important steps have been taken in the country,⁴⁴⁵ there is still a long way to go. One promising indicator is that the government has demonstrated a strong commitment to advancing the gender equality agenda and ending violence against women and girls through its ownership of and participation in Spotlight Initiative. Country ownership, together with strong UN interagency collaboration and coordination and the active participation of the Civil Society National Reference Group in the National Steering Committee,⁴⁴⁶ were all critical elements that ensured the comprehensive approach to ending violence against women and girls was adopted. Examples of key Spotlight Initiative interventions and holistic results are detailed below.

Results

By leveraging existing government and community structures and resources,⁴⁴⁷ Spotlight Initiative was able to implement interconnected interventions and programmes that advanced multiple pillars and fostered changes at the individual, family, community and societal levels. Some of the most strategic and impactful allies were the traditional leaders. Incredible results under Pillar 1 (Laws and Policies) occurred due to their engagement, including the passing and finalizing of 52 by-laws that focused on ending sexual and gender-based violence and child marriage.⁴⁴⁸ Their engagement under Pillar 2 (Institutional Strengthening) through the Chiefs Forum complemented this work by monitoring the implementation of by-laws and policies on sexual and gender-based violence, as outlined by the Chief's Policy Guide.⁴⁴⁹ The work of the Chiefs Forum also influenced efforts under Pillars 3 (Prevention) and 4 (Quality Essential Services), as traditional leaders began to engage in awareness raising activities in their communities to identify and refer child marriage and harmful practices cases more

⁴⁴² Spotlight Initiative named a UN High-Impact Initiative ahead of Sustainable Development Goal Summit (Spotlight Initiative, 2023).

⁴⁴³ EVAWG global database (UN Women).

⁴⁴⁴ Child Marriage Factsheet (UNICEF Malawi, July 2018).

⁴⁴⁵ Malawi is party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and has a set of laws and policies aimed at fighting gender-based violence, including the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (2014), the Gender Equality Act (2014), the National Gender Policy (2013) and the National Action Plan to Combat Gender-Based Violence in Malawi 2014-2020.

⁴⁴⁶ The Civil Society Reference Group had at least 20 percent representation.

⁴⁴⁷ Such as the implementation of the Community Fund and Survivor Fund initiatives under the Community Victim Support Units and the implementation of the Safe Space Mentorship Programme through community leaders and groups (for example, the mother groups).

⁴⁴⁸ The 2023 Malawi Final Programme Report Draft, page 23.

⁴⁴⁹ The Chief's Policy Guide is a national-level ministerial document that formalised the involvement of traditional leaders in handling sexual and gender violence matters. It is pending tabling in parliament.

effectively. This included chiefs making referrals to mobile courts, another Spotlight Initiative intervention implemented under Pillar 4 to bring justice to the most marginalised women and girls, upholding the principle of leave no one behind. Additionally, Spotlight Initiative leveraged the influence of wives of traditional leaders and engaged them to develop action plans and alliances with other wives of the village heads. This work supported women and girls to demand their rights and report gender-based violence incidents, with the support of women police volunteers involved in the Malawi Police Service Women's Network. (See more in [case study 2.3](#) under Pillar 2.)

In line with the comprehensive approach, the Malawi Police Service collaborated with traditional chiefs and other community structures⁴⁵⁰ in order to track child marriage and gender-based violence cases through the Safe Schools Mentorship Programme and the One School One Police Officer Initiative. Both Spotlight Initiative interventions facilitated police investigations and prosecutions and linked the mobile courts to schools. Over 750 police officers, 13,253 members of school-based structures (i.e. PTAs and mother groups), and 601,504 students were trained on how to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls in schools.⁴⁵¹ As a result, 52 child marriage or violence cases were reported through school complaints boxes placed in 135 schools by adolescent girls and boys: of these, 25 were concluded, 17 resulted in convictions, 8 in acquittals and the remaining 12 are still being handled in court.⁴⁵²

The Safe Space Mentorship Programme, conceptualised under Pillar 3 on Prevention, was also interconnected with other interventions and contributed to multiple pillars, driving impressive results as described in the earlier case study. (See more in [case study 3.1](#) under Pillar 3.) The Safe Space Mentorship Programme supported young women and girls' access to services and resources (Pillar 4), built joint actions (Pillar 6) to demand cultures of justice, equality and accountability, and worked side-by-side in gender-based violence patrols with traditional chiefs from the Chiefs Forum to contribute to community reporting of child marriage and gender-based violence cases. Overall, 17 percent of all gender-based violence cases in Malawi were reported by the 37,727 mentor and mentees involved in the programme between 2019 and 2023, which is an incredible result.⁴⁵³ Safe Space Mentorship Programme mentors and mentees were also involved in the Community Fund and Survivor Fund initiatives to ensure greater transparency and accountability of these initiatives to the community. These Funds were critical to support gender-based violence survivors in accessing services and recovering from their experiences. (See more in [case study 4.10](#) under Pillar 4.) Finally, the Safe Space Mentorship Programme also promoted leadership, with 1,455 of young women assuming community leadership roles during the programme implementation, contributing to the sustainability of Spotlight Initiative's work.⁴⁵⁴

Recognising the critical role that men play in ending violence against women and girls, Spotlight Initiative in Malawi also leveraged existing informal men groups by developing, with their participation, a toolkit with a training methodology called the Barbershop Toolkit Programme. This programme, which mobilised over 3,800 men across all six Spotlight Initiative districts,⁴⁵⁵ fostered mindset and behavioural shifts at the individual, family and community levels (Pillar 3). Connected with the gender-based violence patrols, participants started to monitor gender-based violence cases in their villages, backed up by their by-laws and traditional chiefs.

"We sit together to discuss what is happening in our villages and when we find out a violent situation has occurred, we call this man, husband and try to solve the problem by talking to this person and showing what our by-laws state. If the situation continues, we then take the matter to Traditional Chiefs."

A member of the Barbershop Toolkit Programme

This work also started to shift the acceptability of violence in the community, offering a powerful transformation towards ending violence and more gender equitable norms (Pillar 3) and contributed to the development of a Male Engagement National Strategy, which harmonised approaches across the country.

Movement building and civil society engagement (Pillar 6) were cross-cutting strategies to advance several initiatives under other pillars. One example was how traditional leaders, a network of male allies, mentors and mentees, mother groups, Parent Teacher Associations and several other community structures came together to jointly drive change in their communities. These community networks prevented cases of gender-based violence (Pillar 3) and improved women and girls' access to essential services (Pillar 4).

⁴⁵⁰ Community structures, such as Parent Teacher Associations, mother groups, and District Education Managers.

⁴⁵¹ The 2023 Malawi Final Programme Report Draft.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ Ibid. Out of a total of 78,765 gender-based violence cases that have been followed up, 13,564 gender-based violence cases were referred by Safe Space Mentorship Programme mentors and mentees.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

Programme governance and coordination played a crucial role in ensuring the successful implementation of this comprehensive approach, aligning diverse stakeholders' actions and monitoring progress towards achieving the desired outcomes. The creation of the National Steering Committee,⁴⁵⁶ the Inter-Ministerial Taskforce,⁴⁵⁷ and Spotlight Initiative Communities of Practice (at district level),⁴⁵⁸ as well as the revitalization of Gender Technical Working Groups,⁴⁵⁹ strengthened coordination at the national and district levels and ensured the multidimensional nature of Spotlight Initiative, while enhancing national and local ownership in an efficient manner.

Additionally, the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Local Government, as well as UN agencies' staff under Spotlight Initiative, were co-located and sat together at both the capital and district levels, which ensured systematic inclusion of the issue of violence against women and girls in regional development plans, along with corresponding budget lines, as well as engaged district councils to effectively implement interventions. This strengthened collaboration contributed to interagency coherence, stronger working relationships with government officials, national and local buy-in and the adoption of a coordinated, comprehensive approach to ending violence against women and girls.

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Adopt a UN interagency approach aligned with UN reform with clear coordination mechanisms to facilitate connectivity across different interventions and pillars and create greater impact.** For example, the Safe Space Mentorship Programme and the Community Fund and Survival Fund initiatives under UNFPA were linked with the UNDP-led Chiefs' Forum, increasing the impact at the community level across different pillars.
- **Adopt a multi-stakeholder approach to both the design and the implementation phase of initiatives to ensure increased national and local ownership and the adoption of bottom-up approaches.** In Malawi, the involvement of two key ministries, diverse departments and levels of government and other community structures from the beginning of Spotlight Initiative ensured a holistic understanding of how social norms perpetuated gender-based violence and allowed programmes to be built on community needs, insights and existing structures, while also ensuring ownership contributing to its sustainability.
- **Push for the systematic inclusion of violence against women and girls interventions in countries' regional development plans with concrete budget lines.** Ensuring that regional development plans are budgeted and have monitoring and evaluation built in promotes their sustainability and can support more coordinated community-based interventions.
- **Embed sexual and reproductive health and rights within policies and legislative frameworks and train decision-makers on the topic.** These efforts can help move forward lobbying efforts for more inclusive policies and can promote greater sustainability and lasting impact of interventions to end violence against women and girls.



⁴⁵⁶ Co-chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator and the Minister of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare to discuss implementation as well as Spotlight Initiative progress, challenges and the way forward with key stakeholders, also deciding on the recommendations made by the technical team.

⁴⁵⁷ The Inter-Ministerial Taskforce was implemented as a national coordination mechanism. Membership included several ministries, quasi-governmental entities, local authorities, the EU, UN, and representatives of the civil society national reference group.

⁴⁵⁸ Spotlight Initiative Communities of Practice were implemented at district level, chaired by District Directors of Planning and Development to ensure local ownership. Communities of Practice engaged marginalised and rural communities aligned with the principle of leave no one behind.

⁴⁵⁹ Gender Technical Working Groups were existing national and district mechanisms that were revitalised by Spotlight Initiative and were instrumental in generating reports and influencing district and national level decisions related to the ending violence against women and girls.

7.2 The establishment of the Multi-Sectoral Mechanism of Integrated Care for Women Victims of Violence in Mozambique

Overview

In Mozambique, 16 percent of women aged 15–49 report that they have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner, and the country has the tenth highest rate of early marriage in the world, a form of gender-based violence and a harmful practice.⁴⁶⁰ Formal justice structures are inaccessible, especially in remote areas, and informal procedures are often rooted in attitudes and practices that discriminate against women and girls. Survivors of gender-based violence in Mozambique often face challenges in accessing legal justice and support.

Given the range of barriers faced by women in Mozambique, Spotlight Initiative in coordination with UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF implemented a comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach that improved coordination of interventions across government ministries, the police and court system, as well as non-governmental and civil society organisations to address violence against women and girls and sexual and reproductive health and rights.⁴⁶¹

Results

Spotlight Initiative in Mozambique supported the introduction of a strong coordination system under the leadership of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Action, which improved efficiency in both prevention and response and resulted in increased engagement with the education sector, the development of technical innovations, the integration of essential services and new service provisions for remote areas.⁴⁶² This approach has led to results across six pillars and reached a total of 4.63 million beneficiaries. These results were achieved through several interventions described below.

The multi-sectoral and comprehensive approach to domestic violence care in Mozambique resulted in the establishment of Integrated Service Centres, which served as a one-stop centre for gender-based violence survivors, contributing to Pillar 4. In addition, Integrated Service Centres functioned as a space for training and awareness raising on gender-based violence, as well as engagement with communities and civil society organisations, focused on shifting norms (Pillar 3).⁴⁶³ The Spotlight Initiative programme provided ten vehicles and fifty motorbikes to the member institutions of the Multi-Sectoral Mechanism.⁴⁶⁴ Through supporting mobility, the programme ensures that teams can respond to gender-based violence even in the most distant communities, leaving no one behind.⁴⁶⁵

"We can now act by the law for cases classified as crimes in the most distant communities. We act fast and collectively and fulfil the principle of leaving no girl and woman behind."

Judite Nota, Head of the Department of Women Affairs and Social Action in Mossurize district, Manica province

Spotlight Initiative support for a coordinated approach resulted in mobile clinics and brigades for gender-based violence prevention and care. The mobile clinics served communities and ensured that health services were more widely available to the public, including those living in hard-to-reach areas. The clinics provided a multi-sectoral approach to services and brought medical and drug assistance, sexual and reproductive health services and gender-based violence case management to remote communities. In 2022, clinics were operated in eleven districts and more than 99,000 women and girls were reached.

Spotlight Initiative also supported the development of an innovative digital platform called *InfoViolência*, in an effort to make it easier to gather, organise and manage data linked to cases of gender-based violence.⁴⁶⁶ Managed by the Ministry of the Interior, through the Police, the platform improved coordination and speed in managing violence cases across the health, justice and social sectors. (See more in [case study 5.1](#) under Pillar 5.)

⁴⁶⁰ MOÇAMBIQUE Inquérito Demográfico e de Saúde 2011 (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, Ministério da Saúde, 2011) and [Spotlight Initiative launches in Mozambique](#) (Spotlight Initiative, March 2019).

⁴⁶¹ These include: Government Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Action, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Constitutional and Religious Affairs, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Ministry of Education and Human Development, Ministry of State Administration; Secretary of State for Youth and Employment. State Institutions Parliament, Ombudsman, National Human Rights Commission, Attorney General's Office, Professional Council of the Magistracy, Family and Juvenile Courts, Supreme Court and non-governmental organisations. [Innovative data tool strengthens services for gender-based violence survivors in Mozambique](#) (Spotlight Initiative, 2023), [Spotlight Initiative launches in Mozambique](#) (Spotlight Initiative, 2019), and [The Mozambique Cumulative Draft Report Draft 2019-2023](#).

⁴⁶² At the district level, the various essential services sectors came together such as coordination, data harmonisation and validation of GBV cases. At the provincial level, coordination meetings played a significant role in both prevention efforts and community sensitization, which resulted in increased demand generation for GBV response services and response and referral. The 2019–2023 Mozambique Cumulative Report Draft.

⁴⁶³ [A traditional leader's quest to end gender-based violence in Mozambique](#) (Spotlight Initiative, 2021).

⁴⁶⁴ ["We can eliminate violence if we work together" - multi-sectoral teams are eliminating gender-based violence in Mozambique](#) (Spotlight Initiative, 2022).

⁴⁶⁵ [Multi-sectoral teams are eliminating gender-based violence in Mozambique](#) (Spotlight Initiative, 2022).

⁴⁶⁶ [Innovative data tool strengthens services for gender-based violence survivors in Mozambique](#) (Spotlight Initiative, April 2023).

In terms of country coordination, technical focal points from the implementing agencies, as well as representatives from the central and provincial levels, met regularly to exchange information, promote synergies and improve technical coherence.⁴⁶⁷ A communications group, led by a communications specialist, proved instrumental in engaging all agencies in planning, implementing, reviewing and reporting on programme communications. Together with the Government and the European Union delegation, they organised joint events and visibility activities. In addition, a monitoring and evaluation reference group was formed to closely monitor the progress and strengthen documentation of best practices and lessons learned.

“Before, there was no coordination of the multisectoral group. But with Spotlight Initiative, in fact, the coordination has improved, and our work is going on in a good and healthy way.”

Otilia Filipe, Head of the Department of Assistance to Family and Minors Victims of Violence, Manica

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Establish multi-sectoral coordination and response to improve essential services, data harmonisation and validation of gender-based violence cases.** In addition, prevention efforts and community sensitisation resulted in increased demand for gender-based violence response services and referrals. The coordination across different agencies maximises resources and promotes synergies, ensuring a greater number of beneficiaries and impact across pillars is reached.
- **Set up integrated and one-stop service centres to facilitate a better experience for survivors, greater access and more comprehensive information and help.** The provision of services in one space means survivors are not required to report violence to different institutions and/or organisations. In addition, these centres provide an important community space to raise awareness and conduct training sessions. Scaling up access to Integrated Service Centres that link multiple sectors such as the police, health care and judicial sectors, among others, can streamline services and increase access to justice. Mobile clinics bring these services to remote and hard-to-reach areas, leaving no one behind.
- **Provide vehicles and motorbikes to reach distant communities that might otherwise have no access to services.** Supporting organisations with access to mobility allows them to engage with communities they otherwise would not and is critical to including all communities in the effort to end violence against women and girls. Replicating this tactic in other contexts would help extend services to remote communities around the world.
- **Introduce digital platforms to improve coordination and speed in managing violence cases across different sectors and reduce duplication.** Coupled with training, digital platforms, such as *InfoViolência*, that link multiple sectors together can make reporting violence less cumbersome.



⁴⁶⁷ The 2019-2023 Mozambique Cumulative Report Draft.

7.3 The declaration of rape as a national emergency in Liberia results in a National Anti-Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Roadmap

Overview

Sexual violence against women is a prominent challenge in Liberia. The war that ravaged the country from 1989 to 2003 subjected women to sexual brutality, with 61 to 77 percent of women having reported being raped.⁴⁶⁸ While the war has long ended, Liberian women continue to face sexual violence. According to the 2019-2020 Demographic and Health Survey of Liberia, 9 percent of women and girls aged 15-49 had experienced sexual violence, and 5 percent of them had experienced sexual violence before reaching the age of 18.⁴⁶⁹ Sexual and gender-based violence cases were reported to hit a record high of 2,708 in 2019. At the height of the pandemic in 2020, 2,240 rape incidents were registered.⁴⁷⁰

In August 2020, Liberian society reached a boiling point following the news of the rape of a 3-year-old girl.⁴⁷¹ This drove thousands of Liberians to hold a peaceful march across the country to call for an end to sexual and gender-based violence.⁴⁷² The social movement prompted the President of Liberia to declare rape a national emergency and carry out other measures to end sexual and gender-based violence, such as appointing a special prosecutor for rape, setting up a national sex offender registry, establishing a national security task force on sexual and gender-based violence and dedicating an initial amount of 200,000 USD to roll out the National Anti-Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Roadmap (hereafter referred to as the “Anti-SGBV Roadmap”).⁴⁷³

Amid the national awakening to end sexual and gender-based violence, Spotlight Initiative has been working to combat violence against women and children since its launch in Liberia in 2019.

Results

Through Spotlight Initiative, OHCHR collaborated with civil society organisations and engaged with the government and legislature,⁴⁷⁴ which led to the passage of the landmark legislation, “Domestic Violence Law” and the drafting of the “Female Genital Mutilation Bill in 2019,” contributing to Pillar 1.⁴⁷⁵ Various training and awareness raising sessions with government officials were conducted both at the national and local levels on the Domestic Violence Law. The programme also trained key ministries on gender-responsive planning and budgeting. Further, Spotlight Initiative established collaborations with the government, leveraging the key role of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection as its lead partner agency to coordinate work with other ministries. This paved the way for establishing close ties with the Office of the President.

The Anti-SGBV Roadmap was designed and developed by civil society organisations and the government and detailed specific measures to address gender-based violence in Liberia such as sexual violence and other harmful practices (i.e. female genital mutilation and child marriage).⁴⁷⁶ The Spotlight Initiative programme provided technical guidance in the development of the roadmap and also facilitated consultative discussions and validation sessions among civil society, the government and traditional leaders which fed into the roadmap.⁴⁷⁷

Ending female genital mutilation was one of the key aims stipulated in the Anti-SGBV Roadmap.⁴⁷⁸ A remarkable result occurred in February 2023 when the chairperson of the National Council of Chiefs and Elders of Liberia publicly declared a full ban on female genital mutilation. The public statement prompted the introduction of the concept, “Initiation Without Mutilation,” which will allow girls to go through the cultural rite of passage into womanhood without being subjected to the harms of female genital mutilation. The declaration led to the closure of two more bush schools⁴⁷⁹ in two counties, a public renouncement of female genital mutilation in a local area (Monrovia) through their head zoe⁴⁸⁰ and a stronger call to pass the anti-FGM bill.⁴⁸¹ While efforts were already made in the past to combat female genital mutilation (such as banning female genital mutilation for girls under the age of 18 in 2018, suspending female genital mutilation practice in 2019 and 2022 and the closure of bush schools),⁴⁸² the Anti-SGBV Roadmap intensified the call for ending female genital mutilation, consequently leading to the full ban on the harmful practice. (See more in [case study 4.11](#) under Pillar 4.)

⁴⁶⁸ [Sexual Violence in Liberia: End the Silent Epidemic](#) (UNDP Liberia, June 2023).

⁴⁶⁹ [Liberia Demographic and Health Survey 2019-20](#) (Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services, Ministry of Health Liberia and ICF (originally, “Inner City Fund”), 2021).

⁴⁷⁰ [Sexual Violence in Liberia: End the Silent Epidemic](#) (UNDP Liberia, June 2023).

⁴⁷¹ [Liberia police tear-gas anti-rape protesters on third day of Monrovia march](#) (RFI, August 2020).

⁴⁷² [Liberia declares national emergency as the country records spike in rape cases](#) (Native, October 2020).

⁴⁷³ [The 2020 Liberia Annual Report](#), page 16.

⁴⁷⁴ Among the partners were the Law Reform Commission, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, the Independent Human Rights Commission, Women Solidarity Inc. and local stakeholders in Lofa, Nimba, Montserrado, and Grand Cape Mount Counties.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, page 5.

⁴⁷⁶ [Government of Liberia & Partners' ANTI-SGBV Roadmap \(2020-2022\)](#), page 17.

⁴⁷⁷ [The 2020 Liberia Annual Report](#), page 12.

⁴⁷⁸ [Government of Liberia & Partners' ANTI-SGBV Roadmap \(2020-2022\)](#), page 22.

⁴⁷⁹ Bush schools are a place where girls undergo their rite of passage to womanhood, which includes the harmful practice female genital mutilation.

⁴⁸⁰ Zoes are female traditional practitioners in bush schools who perform the rite of passage, which includes female genital mutilation.

⁴⁸¹ [The 2023 Liberia Draft Annual Report](#), page 4.

⁴⁸² [Following a moratorium on FGM in Liberia, victims are still seeking justice](#) (OHCHR, June 2022).

The Anti-SGBV Roadmap also contained provisions to procure materials⁴⁸³ for Liberia’s forensic laboratory that will improve sexual and gender-based violence-related investigations (contributing to Pillar 5), and enabled the government of Liberia to purchase DNA machines.⁴⁸⁴ The roadmap also stipulated strengthening the capacities of law enforcement officers such as the Women and Children Protection Section and the Liberia National Police officers, supporting Pillar 2.⁴⁸⁵ With the support of Spotlight Initiative, 121 law enforcement officers were trained on investigation and handling of sexual and gender-based violence cases.⁴⁸⁶ Additionally, 10 Women and Children Protection Section’s facilities were renovated⁴⁸⁷ to be able to service and accommodate 967 children who were sexual and gender-based violence survivors or missing children. Through the services of these facilities, 424 children were reunited with their parents/caregivers, while 543 were referred to other services, strengthening Pillar 4.⁴⁸⁸

Finally, the Anti-SGBV Roadmap authorised and increased budget allocation on sexual and gender-based violence by key ministries.⁴⁸⁹ The ministries were equipped to carry this out through the gender-responsive planning and budgeting training conducted by Spotlight Initiative, as well as the establishment of Gender-Responsive Planning and Budgeting units in key ministries. National budget allocation for gender issues increased from zero in 2020 to 380,000 USD in 2021 and 500,000 USD in 2022. It is expected that there will be more ministries adopting gender-responsive budgeting and more funding will be allocated to sexual and gender-based violence in the next budget years, strengthening Pillar 2.⁴⁹⁰

To reinforce the Anti-SGBV Roadmap, Spotlight Initiative supported advocacy efforts for the “Act Prohibiting Female Genital Mutilation 2022” bill, which was submitted in July 2022 to Liberia’s Congress. As of 2023, the bill is being reviewed at the joint committee level. The Spotlight Initiative programme played a role in engaging key government officials (i.e. upper and lower chambers of the legislature, executive branch of the government and key government ministries) for the passing of the bill.⁴⁹¹

While the public outcry was a potent force that urged the President to declare a national emergency on rape, the work of Spotlight Initiative on capacity-building, advocacy, dialogues and fostering close relationships with key government decision-makers enabled the programme to reinforce the political positioning of ending violence against women and children in Liberia. The work of Spotlight Initiative, bolstered by the social outrage, was instrumental to the President’s declaration of rape as a national emergency and its subsequent measure, the development of the Anti-SGBV Roadmap.

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Establish strong ties and continually engage key government decision-makers to effectively achieve programme goals.** Spotlight Initiative strategically partnered with Liberia’s President to get high level political buy-in and support for prioritising the ending of sexual and gender-based violence in the country. Securing government commitment and partnership also helped move forward the development and implementation of the Anti-SGBV Roadmap.
- **Create roadmaps that detail strategies for ending gender-based violence with adequate budgets and capacity support for duty-bearers.** Roadmaps not only outline strategies for addressing a particular issue, they also hold the government accountable to deliver on its commitments.
- **Leverage the power of public protest and outcry to push for policies and implementation frameworks that protect women and children.** The peaceful demonstration in the streets by the local community prompted the Liberian President to declare rape as a national emergency. This set a stage for further policy reform and Spotlight Initiative leveraged the moment to promote the Anti-SGBV Roadmap by providing strategic guidance and facilitating consultative sessions.

⁴⁸³ Government of Liberia & Partners’ ANTI-SGBV Roadmap (2020-2022), page 27.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid, page 31.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid, page 22.

⁴⁸⁶ The 2023 Liberia Annual Report Draft, page 30.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid, page 2.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid, page 27.

⁴⁸⁹ Government of Liberia & Partners’ ANTI-SGBV Roadmap (2020-2022), page 18.

⁴⁹⁰ The 2023 Liberia Draft Annual Report, page 18.

⁴⁹¹ The 2023 Liberia Draft Annual Report, page 16.