

## Guidance Note on the compensation of Civil Society Reference Group members

### 1. Background

Civil Society National, Regional and Global Reference Groups (CSRGs) are an institutional mechanism established to facilitate systematic and meaningful civil society engagement throughout the Spotlight Initiative programme cycle. CSRGs serve a triple function: to **advise** the Initiative, to **advocate** and partner for the realization of its objectives and to hold the Initiative **accountable** for its commitments.

In 2019, CSRG members expressed concerns regarding their engagement and a need for clearer roles, better defined activities and resources. In response, the Spotlight Secretariat engaged a wide consultation with reference group members at various levels, Spotlight coordinators, representatives of Recipient UN Organizations and Agency Focal Points at Headquarters level. As the CSRGs became more operational, it was clear that members needed – and wanted – to allocate significant time to make their membership impactful. As a consequence, CSRG members as well as both UN and EU colleagues have called on the Secretariat to permit financial stipends to compensate CSRG members for their time and work. Further to these consultations, a presentation was made to the Deputy Secretary General, who shared an urgent demand to Resident Coordinators to improve their engagement with the CSRGs and suggested that modalities be developed for CSRG Members engagement to be appropriately compensated.

#### 1. Rationale for remuneration

To ensure meaningful engagement, CSRGs have been asked to develop a costed workplan that resources participation and execution of activities that support the mandate of the groups. The level of engagement or type of activity the CSRG wants to undertake is left to the discretion of the CSRG members, in coordination with the UN team implementing Spotlight. The current guidance allows workplan budgets to cover costs that support members' participation (e.g. mobile data and transportation costs) and to hire consultants for activities that require significant time or expertise to complete (e.g. monitoring). Amongst other things, CSRG-members attend meetings, represent the CSRG on the Steering Committees, conduct community outreach, advocate, review documents, attend monitoring visits, and connect with other CSRGs. This work is done on top of their day job(s), activism and household/care work.

Women's organizations' scarce resources (time and money) have for decades been channeled to support volunteer work. As a feminist fund, the Initiative must strive to end the tradition of women's non-paid work in the private sphere, in the public sphere and in women's movements. In times of COVID-19 and a period when misogyny, hate speech and GBV rates are increasing, women's organizations and activists are facing further threats to their survival and lack of resources.

A small financial contribution to the CSRG members will compensate for their time investment and also support their ongoing activism and work. This approach aligns with the Initiative's objective to shift the power paradigm (including financial and decision-making



power), embody decolonial and feminist principles, and recognize the leadership and expertise of civil society as a key and equal partner.

**This guidance note provides the overarching parameters and framework of the compensation whilst leaving significant room for country and regional programmes to operationalize the compensation scheme in their specific national context and United Nations Country Teams (UNCT) implantation context. Regional or sub-regional alignment of the operationalization practices should be sought after to ensure coherence between the different schemes. As such, it is highly recommended that coordinators from each region convene a meeting to make sure their compensation schemes are aligned.**

## **2. Process for Country Teams, under the authority of the Resident Coordinator**

**The decision on whether to remunerate the CSRG and how much the CSRG can be remunerated lies with the Resident Coordinator in consultation with the UNCT, considering the specific local context and risks associated with remunerating the CSRG.** The compensation of CSRG members cannot be retroactive.

Depending on the Recipient UN Organization (RUNO) selected to execute the payments for the CSRG, agency specific policies/procedures will apply, taking into consideration an assessment of the main risks involved. The RUNO should also adopt and enforce appropriate risk mitigation measures and consider how CSRG member compensations will impact the work of the UNCT as a whole. A balance needs to be struck between leading the way into new ways of working and "doing no harm" to expectations set for other ongoing UNCT programmes.

Under the oversight of the Resident Coordinator, the Spotlight Team will need to consider several principles before selecting a process and identifying the details of the remuneration scheme. To simplify this process, **it is recommended that the Resident Coordinator identify a specific RUNO, which will be further responsible to facilitate and implement the process, and that these costs are allocated under Pillar 6 of the Spotlight Programme**

Once the RUNO has been identified, the Spotlight Coordinator and the designated RUNO will need to determine if remuneration of the CSRG in the local context is appropriate and feasible through an analysis of the local context and in consultation with the UNCT and CSRG members. If that is the case, the Spotlight Coordinator and the designated RUNO should also determine the remuneration modality, including potential fee levels and which types of deliverables will potentially be remunerated, in consultation first with the UNCT and then with the CSRG members.

Upon completion of the previous steps, **it is crucial that the selected remuneration modality be formally endorsed by the CSRG, the RUNO responsible to process it and the UNCT under the overall coordination of the Resident Coordinator.** No formal approval by the National Steering Committee is required, but the remuneration modality needs to be reflected in the Annual Workplan and any adjustment to the previously approved budget needs to follow the budget revision guidance issued by the Spotlight Secretariat.



### 3. Consideration on what could be included as part of the remuneration

The exact composition of the remuneration will defer from country to country and depending on the local context. However, you will see below some considerations to take into account.

Please note this list is guidance on what **could** be remunerated. It is not implying that all CSRGs should be remunerated for these activities. This will depend on the local context and specific risks considered at country and/or regional level, and the implementation context and practice of the UNCT.

Items which could be included as part of the CSRG remunerated<sup>1</sup>:

- Remuneration for specific concrete and time-bound deliverables/activities that are included in the workplan of the CSRG (e.g. provision of technical review and feedback on X; the production of a shadow report, peer review of a knowledge product, the development and execution of an advocacy campaign etc.)<sup>2</sup>
- Covering costs directly linked to the activities in the workplan (e.g. carrying out procurement related to the rollout of a campaign as part of the CSRG workplan)
- Covering costs to enable CSRG members to engage in dialogues/meetings related to the workplan of the CSRG.
- Travel cost / local DSA/Internet connectivity to ensure participation of all CSRG members, especially for those that may face particular access difficulties or costs, in the activities of the CSRG.

Items which should **not** be included as part of the CSRG remuneration:

- Regular staff salaries of CSRG members
- Regular overhead costs of CSRG member organizations (e.g. rent, electricity etc.)
- Purchase of equipment, vehicles for the CSRG member or the organization they are representing etc. (please see the [Guidance Note on Meaningful Reference Group Engagement](#) for purchase of small IT-equipment to ensure members can meaningfully participate and implement work plan activities)
- Implementation of programme activities covered under the Spotlight Pillar

Some activities could still be labeled as **voluntary contributions** by the CSNRG members considering their nature and the practice in the country office more broadly such as participation in the NSC (travel, data etc. expenses aside).

In addition, some members, on a discretionary basis, may decide not to be remunerated for types of activities that could warrant compensation.

- For example, in order to preserve and maintain the integrity of the equal membership to the Spotlight Initiative National Steering Committee, the participation of the CSRG representatives may remain a voluntary contribution.

<sup>1</sup> Importantly, it should not be expected from members to have high-level expertise to contribute to a deliverable. Rather, the lived experiences of members should suffice. The distribution of deliverables should be made based on the conjunction of both their willingness and self-declared capacities on the subject.

<sup>2</sup> Remuneration for attending working meetings, as set in the CSRG's workplan, may also be compensated for. This will allow for all **active** members to be compensated for their time.



## 5. Considerations for maintaining independence

The fact that CSRG members will be remunerated for their time and work dedicated to the Spotlight Initiative should not jeopardize nor supersede their independence, neutrality, and ability to put forward criticisms of the Initiative. This principle should lie at the core of the remuneration's operationalization.

