



Guidance Note: Sustainability of the Spotlight Initiative¹

This knowledge product on the sustainability of Spotlight Initiative and its results comes at an important moment of transition as the EU's initial 500 million Euro investment will be fully programmed in 2023. As countries look toward the future of the Initiative, reflections are taking place on how to sustain the momentum, partnerships, resourcing, and impact to continue this critical work. This notes synthesises current thinking from Spotlight Initiative exchanges on sustainability and aims to provide guidance on definition, key principles, lessons, and promising practices.

What is sustainability and why does it matter?

A sustainability strategy is ***a collaborative effort that outlines the key steps and conditions required by all stakeholders involved to move from where the programme currently stands, towards a locally informed vision for consolidating, maintaining, and scaling efforts to end violence against women and girls.*** This includes ensuring that the achievement of programme goals is not jeopardized, and that progress continues by local, national and/or regional stakeholders. A planned sustainability strategy is essential for the ethical transition of ending violence against women and girls programming. It is important that work does not prematurely end due to lack of follow-on resources particularly if significant progress has been made or rights holders, specifically survivors as well as those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, could be exposed to further risk or actual harm as a consequence of the transition.

As such, the Spotlight Initiative aims to ensure that all countries have sustainability plans with the **following elements:**

- An explanation of how progress towards program goals will continue and, ideally, be locally owned and carried out by local, national and/or regional stakeholders.
- Information on how the inter-institutional and inter-sectoral coordination promoted by the Spotlight Initiative model will be sustained, how stakeholders will be supported in the lead up to the transition, and the mechanisms put in place to minimize possible risks.
- A plan for ensuring that rights holders, particularly survivors, are not exposed to further risk or actual harm as a consequence of the transition of activities. This plan must include feedback and inputs from rights holders.
- Considerations for how resources will be allocated and/or mobilized to sustain interventions that either cannot be handed over to local stakeholders or cannot be ethically closed without risk of harm to rights holders. Hence, the plan should feed into

¹ This guidance is a living document and will be continuously updated with additional case studies, tools, and resources.

the resource mobilization efforts for each programme as well as in the design of other relevant programmes in the pipeline.

- The plan should define the roles of each stakeholder and ensure a clear division of labour and accountability with the required resource for implementation. Furthermore, there should be an internal review mechanism to monitor sustainability measures and allow the programme to adjust accordingly

Key principles of sustainability include:

- Informed by affected communities, rights holders, and civil society organizations (CSOs) including in defining what constitutes a "sustainability strategy" and to clarify their roles in this process. Women and girls should be consulted as a priority.
- Key stakeholders such as government, women's rights groups, community and religious leaders, civil society reference groups, private sector, and development partners, should also be involved in the definition, design, and the implementation of the sustainability strategy.
- Sustainability plans should be context specific, nationally owned, resourced and focused on partnership and capacity development.
- Embed key principles such as **survivor-centered approach**, **do no harm** and **leave no-one behind** in sustainability plans



Proposed Activities for Spotlight Initiative Programmes for ensuring Sustainability Across Spotlight Initiative Pillars

Pillar 1: Laws and Policy

- Secure buy-in and long-term (political and financial) commitments in local/national government and regional initiatives for continued investment in implementing relevant laws and policies.
- Invest in local and regional capacities including CSOs to ensure legislative and policy reforms are enacted.

- Conduct final assessments of EVAWG legislations and policies to identify progress made and areas to be addressed.
- Establish committees to oversee laws and policies on EVAWG and be responsible for monitoring.

Pillar 2: Institutions

- Secure high level political commitment on EVAWG to ensure sustained efforts.
- Anchor ongoing plans, strategies, and policies with commitments, accountability mechanisms and resources/financing on EVAWG that can be tracked publicly.
- Continue to invest in national and local capacity building of government key sectors and civil society.
- Compile training packages to ensure continued capacity development and develop a roster of trained experts.
- Focus on mainstreaming efforts to end VAWG across national and local plans.

Pillar 3: Social Norms

- Continue to partner and scale up work with influencers and leaders, artists, religious and traditional leaders, and men and boys.
- Continue to strengthen collaboration with the Ministry of Education to embed comprehensive sexuality education
- Leverage the media, social and behavior change communications and creative tools to scale and amplify gender equity and ending VAWG messages and support journalists' capacity development for gender responsive reporting.
- Engage the private sector, leveraging corporate social responsibility opportunities and business case to meaningfully address GBV in the workforce.
- Amplify and strengthen community-based interventions.
- Identify groups, community members, volunteers, local organizations that would be willing and capable of ensuring the continuation of community-based prevention activities.

Pillar 4: Services

- Institutionalize capacity development of service providers including service models towards transitioning to complete local ownership
- Build integrated systems and standardized processes that are owned by national stakeholders, including governments and CSOs for coordinated services, safe reporting, referral pathways and ensure wide dissemination

Pillar 5: Data

- Continue to leverage other data initiatives in country and advocate for investment in quality prevalence data for baselines
- Focus on tracking trends in VAWG and norms and attitudes over time
- Embed SGBV, SRHR, HP indicators in ongoing population-based surveys or censuses.



- Support the scale up of EAWG information management systems, existing data collection tools and community-based surveillance systems.
- Support capacity development of civil society on generation and use of VAWG data for accountability

Pillar 6: Civil Society and Women's Movements

- Ensure political buy-in and commitments at all levels including advocating with donors for sustainable investment (including in core funding) in women and youth movements to sustain and deepen progress made.
- Build and strengthen the capacity of grassroots' actors and women's rights and feminist movements, including networks to continue their critical work.
- Support the capacity of feminist/women's rights advocates, groups and movements focused on EAWG as certified gender trainers of trainers and peer educators to be called upon as experts in capacity building for government, service providers, and duty-bearers.
- Embed civil society knowledge hubs, coalition building and joint advocacy activities in local and independent structures or platforms
- Sustain the Civil Society Reference Group mechanism in broader UN programmes as relevant in the local context.
- Institutionalize the leadership and meaningful participation of women and girls in funding decision making process

Cross-cutting and process related

- Support platforms for dialogue and continued learning from the Spotlight Initiative
- Making accessible capacity development materials, roster of experts, knowledge products across pillars, and on the reform for uptake of knowledge from the Initiative and to strengthen sustainability efforts
- Supporting costing gaps on EAWG (across pillars) and diversify funding sources
- Undertake compendium of lessons and good practices for the programme (across Pillars and on the UN reform) to support scaling of efforts and contribute to the evidence-base

Promising Practices

- **Developing detailed sustainability plans with identified financing yields concrete and actionable insights to take forward the most important outcomes from the Spotlight Initiative.** Some Spotlight Initiative programmes, such as **those in Zimbabwe and Malawi**, have taken the lead in conducting an in-depth programme and financial sustainability analysis, identifying which activities should be continued, discontinued, or adapted (adding some elements/dropping some others). In **Zimbabwe**, this analysis was followed up with the amount of capital needed to continue to implement desired selected activities in the future and identifying responsible parties and next steps. According to their analysis, the Zimbabwe programme plans to continue 43%, end 35% and continue



Spotlight Initiative
To eliminate violence
against women and girls



some elements of 22% of activities. Engaging in such a strategic analysis helps the team plan and systematically identify and address gaps in budgets, staff, and resources. **In Mali**, Spotlight Initiative launched ten one-stop centers in 2021, supporting 896 GBV survivors. All ten centers have been transferred to government ownership to ensure sustainability of services, highlighting the importance of sustainability strategies.

- **Work to instill gender equitable policies, including laws to end VAWG, gender mainstreaming policies, new gender bodies and mechanisms, and comprehensive sexuality education in the national curriculum, supports the continuity of a base level of rights protections.** For example, in **Ecuador**, the strengthening of institutional gender units, in the Ministry of Education, the Legislative Assembly, and other government departments fostered a focus on gender issues in the government and ministries that will last years beyond the Spotlight Initiative. Similarly, in **Zimbabwe**, the mainstreaming of gender, disability and VAWG in district and village development plans resulted in the inclusion of VAWG in local development plans with gender budgets attached, underscoring the longer-term sustainability and financial stability of these efforts.
- **Capacity development of key stakeholders in the government, health, police, justice, and social service sectors, educators, private sector partners, and civil society, to embed EVAWG knowledge, attitudes, and practices in people's personal and professional lives.** For example, in **Malawi**, gender sensitive trainings on survivor-centered reporting for Police Public Relations Officers and the media continue to yield results beyond the initial training sessions. In **El Salvador**, CSOs contributed to new areas of research on justice, social auditing for women's organisations and special care services. This work led to the increased capacity to monitor the services of the institutional units of special care for women and through the Violence Observatory. In **Liberia**, national institutions, stakeholders, and CSOs strengthened their technical capacity to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and harmful practices (HPs) at the national, sub-national and community levels. In **Guyana**, the Initiative is proposing to train approximately 6,000 officers (the entire police service) to ensure continuity and sustainability of access to justice.
- **The creation, resourcing, and support of women's rights networks and partnerships to collectively advocate for VAWG eradication creates a sustainable advocacy base.** In **Nigeria**, a coalition of CSOs was created - the Network Against Gender-Based Violence Against Women and Girls (NGBWG) - to advocate for and educate the public on the harmful nature of SGBV. The coalition continues to strengthen and amplify the voice of women's movements in addressing SGBV beyond the Initiative's support. In **Niger**, the "Platform of Women Leaders of Niger" (PFLN) was established to support the ongoing networking and advocacy of women's rights organisations and to offer regional coordination around GBV.



- **Influencing high level political leaders and local governments to support EVAWG initiatives helps build momentum and political support.** For example, in **Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Kyrgyzstan**, the President or Prime Minister has officially expressed their strong support for the elimination of violence against women and girls lending longer term priority and political commitment to this issue.

Recommendations

- Continue to develop, scale up, and implement a comprehensive approach to EVAWG across the socio-ecological model, from individual shifts norms, stereotypes, and mindsets to societal wide changes in attitudes.
- Develop partnerships to support other actors to continue to carry the work forward to help sustain the results of the Spotlight Initiative, including coordination with other UN programmes across the SDGs, by integrating GBV lens into other portfolios.
- Produce position papers and manuals to identify gaps and guide activists, CSOs, government stakeholders, and other partners on how to ensure sustainability in EVAWG programming and share strategies and cases that are working widely.
- Support a human-rights-based approach and identify the leadership and ownership of local organizations, and feminist, women’s rights and progressive movements, and governments required to ensure sustainability.
- Center community-driven approaches. Community leaders provide important insights to local realities and can often identify the most effective solutions to challenges
- Streamline development and implementation of sustainability strategy through the final and closure period of the programme implementation.

Key Resources

- [Sustainability Guidance Note for Civil Society](#)
- [Spotlight Initiative promising approaches and lessons on sustaining the gains of ending Violence against Women and Girls](#)
- [Spotlight Initiative SHINE Discussion Summary: Sustaining our Gains for the Future of Ending Violence against Women and Girls](#)
- [Spotlight Initiative Sustainability Plans Malawi, El Salvador, Zimbabwe, Argentina](#)
- [Sustainability Strategies for Women and Girls Safe Space – GBV AOR](#)
- [Guidance Note on Ethical Closure of GBV Programmes - GBV AOR](#)
- [Practical Guidance For Developing Exit Strategies in the Field](#)
- [SASA! Approach](#)
- [CREA “All About Movements”](#)
- [From Commitment to Action on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. Lessons from the Second Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review](#)