



## THE SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE: AN SDG MODEL FUND

Before the COVID-19 crisis, it was estimated that **1 in 3 women globally experience physical or sexual abuse in their lifetime. Since the pandemic, violence against women and girls has skyrocketed**, a terrifying trend that affects individuals, families and communities, as well as international peace, security and development.

**Violence threatens rights to which every woman is entitled. The right to education. The right to work. The right to physical and mental well-being. The right to equality. In other words, rights and justice cannot be advanced while violence against women and girls persists.**

As a fund for action on the **sustainable development goals** (SDGs), the Spotlight Initiative is demonstrating that a significant, concerted and comprehensive investment in gender equality and ending violence can make a **transformative difference in the lives of women and girls and contribute to the realization of the 2030 Agenda as a whole.**

**The Spotlight Initiative's work on gender-based violence lies at the intersection of all SDGs. Eliminating violence against women and girls is a precondition to achieve gender equality (SDG 5). In turn, all other goals cannot be reached unless women and men are genuinely treated as equals. With its comprehensive theory of change, the Spotlight Initiative contributes, directly and indirectly, to all 17 SDGs.**

At the global level, **the cost of violence against women (public, private and social) has been estimated at approximately US\$1.5 trillion**; this is about the size of the Canadian

economy (UN Women, 2016). Violence against women, in some countries, is estimated to cost up to **3.7% of their gross domestic product**, more than double what a majority of governments spend on education (World Bank, 2018). Violence against women and girls also has negatively impacts women and girls' safety, health, wellbeing and, ultimately, their participation in the labour market. **GBV is an accelerator of poverty and furthers women and girls' marginalization (SDG1).** Women and girls who face discrimination and violence are also more likely to report food insecurity (**SDG 2**). Evidence shows that prevention is still the most cost-effective, long-term way to stop violence. This is why Spotlight invests the largest share of its resources in tackling the root causes of GBV: discriminatory and patriarchal gender norms, harmful stereotypes and behaviors (**SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities**).

Through its comprehensive and evidence-based approach to violence, the Spotlight Initiative aims at preventing and responding to all forms of violence against women and girls. As such, the initiative contributes to creating a world where women and girls live free of threats to their security in cities (SDG11) and at work (SDG 8), where they can safely and equally access key resources such as water and energy (SDG 6 and 7) and where they can live a healthy life. Violence is an attack to the very dignity of women and girls and has devastating health consequences (**SDG3**). **By tackling the root causes of women's health and human rights violations and by providing quality multi-sectoral services to survivors, the Spotlight Initiative contributes to the greater**



health and well-being of women and girls, and society at large.

**Nexus with climate change (SDG 13- Climate action)**

**The impacts of climate change are not gender neutral.** This can be explained both because of the roles they play in growing food and providing for the energy and water needs of their families and because they comprise a large number of the communities that depend on natural resources for their livelihood. **As climate change will worsen, women and girls fundamental human rights will be increasingly threatened.** After two tropical cyclones in Vanuatu, there was a 300% increase in new cases of domestic violence (UN Women, 2014). This is not anecdotal. In fact, climate-induced migration or displacement due to resource scarcity can be highly dangerous, increasing exposure of women, children and other marginalised people to gender-based violence, including human trafficking and disrupting lives and livelihoods. In addition, in an attempt to cope with compounding climate impacts, families may increase harmful gender-based violence practices, such as child marriage. Climate change consequences can also augment unequal household gender dynamics and contribute to resource grabbing and violence as a means to maintain control.

The Spotlight Initiative supports governments and partners' work to develop and implement measures that protect women and girls in emergency situations, including natural disasters. The Initiative also ensures that decision makers design inclusive economic, environmental and mitigation policies and take the issue of violence against women and girls into account in all resource management strategies (SDG 14)

**Ending school-related gender-based violence (SDG 4 - Ensuring quality education for all)**

Spotlight recognizes that gender-based violence is a barrier to equal access to inclusive quality education for all (SDG 4). Gender discrimination and harmful practices such as child marriage prevent girls from completing their education, reproducing adverse social standards. Each year that girls remain in school after the primary level reduces their chance for marrying too young. By fighting gender-based inequalities and harmful practices, the Spotlight Initiative contributes to increase girls' educational prospects. The Initiative also promotes positive social norms through comprehensive sexuality education, revision of school curricula and violence prevention policies in school settings.

In fact, comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) – in both in- and out-of-school settings – has been shown to address the root causes of violence against women and girls. By supporting critical reflection and dialogue, comprehensive sexuality education can positively impact social norms and contribute to preventing violence against women and girls. In 2019, with Spotlight Initiative support, 695,406 young people were reached through in- and out-of-school programmes

**Access to Justice (SDG 16 - Promoting peace, justice and strong institutions)**

**Gender-based violence is a barrier to sustainable peace and achieving SDG 16, Peace, justice and strong institutions.** Access to justice for all is a critical litmus test of peaceful and inclusive societies, and an essential condition for substantive equality, human rights, and sustainable development. Globally, women face barriers to obtaining justice in their capacities as claimants, victims, witnesses, or offenders, often driven by institutional, policy, and legislative failure to remove discrimination, gender bias, stereotyping, stigma, indifference, corruption, and impunity. Women who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, as well as those affected by conflict and/or survivors of violence, are often at the back end of justice service delivery. In fact, more than one billion women lack legal protection from sexual violence by an intimate partner. Even where legislation exists, enforcement may be weak, due to serious gaps in those laws, or inadequate police and judicial responses. Justice outcomes are rarely in line with international standards or guarantees of equality. Seeking justice may even put survivors of GBV at risk.





To tackle these gaps, Spotlight contributes to developing and strengthening policies and legislation on violence against women and girls – ensuring alignment with international standards – and establishing mechanisms for implementation, including through national and subnational action plans.

