

CASE FOR PARTNERSHIP

Spotlight Initiative — an innovative model delivering results on ending violence against women and girls and accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals



Version 2.0

Overview

Investing in women and girls and gender equality is our greatest and most underused path to accelerate the full implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We will only achieve the Goals if every woman and girl, everywhere, can live a life of dignity and security free from violence.

Spotlight Initiative is the United Nations high-impact initiative to end violence against women and girls. Launched globally in 2017, it has radically changed existing efforts to end gender-based violence. From piecemeal, disconnected and small-scale projects, Spotlight Initiative pioneered a unique and comprehensive model that addresses all key drivers of violence against women and girls.

Unique to the Initiative is a whole-of-society approach that places ending gender-based violence at the heart of national development priorities and gives local communities the tools they need to address violence in their specific context. The model simultaneously works to address laws and policies, strengthen institutions and data collection, promote gender-equitable attitudes and provide quality services for survivors of violence and their families. Perhaps most critically, Spotlight Initiative invests deeply in a new way of partnering with civil society and women's movements at every level, strengthening transformative results, sustainability and civic space.

Through reducing violence, we improve girls' education, advance sexual and reproductive health and rights, and enable women's economic power.

By strengthening institutions, civic space and localization of solutions, Spotlight Initiative is creating the conditions for acceleration across the SDGs, including in some of the most complex humanitarian contexts.

Since our inception, we have seen our holistic model deliver unprecedented results across more than 25 countries and five regions in which Spotlight Initiative programmed. For example, since 2019, the overall conviction rate for gender-based violence has doubled across 13 Spotlight Initiative countries.

This is a result not just of strengthened laws and policies, but equally of institutional reforms, public sector capacity-building, increased awareness by communities on reporting options, support structures for survivors and political pressure from women's rights organizations. This model has been reaffirmed by external assessments, including a 2022 independent impact modelling study which found that Spotlight Initiative was up to 90 per cent more effective than traditional "siloes" programming. This means we are able deliver high-impact results, even within a short period of time.

With years of evidence and learning behind us, we know what works. And we have the results to prove it. What is needed is scale to effect real change, and to place women's security, dignity and influence at the heart of global solutions.



In Mozambique, Spotlight Initiative widely shared information on laws and policies that protect women and girls.

- Awareness campaigns in and out of schools reached more than two million people with messaging about ending gender-based violence and child marriage.
- An increased number of gender-based violence cases were reported to authorities and more survivors accessed services.

In Liberia, Spotlight Initiative engaged traditional leaders, young men and boys' clubs to shift community beliefs on female genital mutilation (FGM).

- 800 traditional practitioners from 11 (of 15) counties committed to ending FGM.
- A policy statement suspending FGM was adopted by 150 leaders, leading to the closure of 65 bush schools which performed FGM.
- A bill to unambiguously address FGM is before the Liberia legislature.

Our results

Since 2019, Spotlight Initiative's investments ensured that:

- The overall conviction rate for gender-based violence doubled across 13 countries.
- 548 laws or policies were signed or strengthened to end violence against women and girls.
- USD 195 million was delivered to civil society organizations (49 per cent of activity funds).
- National budgets to address gender-based violence increased nearly 13-fold across 13 countries.
- More than 5,000 local and grassroots women's rights organizations reported having greater influence and agency.
- Close to 3 million women and girls accessed gender-based violence services, including long-term recovery services.
- Nearly 8 million young people participated in in- and out-of-school programmes promoting gender-equitable attitudes and behaviours.
- Close to 6 million men and boys were educated on positive masculinity, respectful family relationships and non-violent conflict resolution.
- Campaigns to prevent violence against women and girls reached an audience of nearly 384 million.
- 50 countries strengthened their National Action Plans to eliminate violence against women and girls.

Our next five years

What we will achieve

Our work has prevented violence for 21 million women across 26 countries – two women every day. By becoming a \$1 billion fund, we project we'll prevent violence for more than 70 million women across 60 countries.

Our work could further reduce the prevalence of violence in target communities from 1 in 3, to 1 in 5 women and girls within a decade. And by preventing violence against pregnant women, we expect to prevent 1.5 million people from experiencing miscarriage, as well as reduce newborn and infant mortality.

In addition, by 2030, our work is expected to help almost five million girls stay in schools and enrol a projected additional 14 million girls. By addressing inequitable gendered norms, Spotlight Initiative could shift attitudes in favour of equity and equality for almost 200 million children.

How we will achieve it

Spotlight Initiative acts as a unique convener for diverse partners, is rooted in local needs and context, and in support of national development priorities led and owned by the highest levels of government. By partnering locally with actors at every level - from governments to grassroots organizations - we give communities the tools they need to get results while using the UN's unique convening power to bridge donors, experts, all levels of government, UN actors and civil society. Not only are these actors best placed to address violence in their specific context, but their leadership is key to sustainability. For example, since 2019, Spotlight Initiative's work has resulted in national budgets to address gender-based violence increasing nearly 13-fold across 13 countries, showing ongoing commitment to ending gender-based violence at the highest level.

Programmes will be broadly oriented around four outcome areas: (1) **Laws, Policies, and Institutions**, (2) **Prevention**, (3) **Response**, (4) **Supporting Local Civil Society and Women's Movements**.

Country-identified issues such as women's economic justice, gender-responsive education, tech-facilitated violence, mental health, and sexual and reproductive health and rights will be given special attention, especially in relation to the most structurally marginalized groups.

Programmes will be rooted in Spotlight Initiative's core approaches, including:

- A whole of society approach that engages all actors, and considers all elements of a given context, rooted in a philosophy of localization
- National government engagement at the highest levels
- Deep and meaningful engagement and investment in civil society as experts and thought leaders at national, local and grassroots levels
- Community coordination and accountability mechanisms with meaningful authority and voice
- Monitoring, evaluating and investing in research that increases community knowledge and evidence base
- Whole of UN approach leveraging the comparative expertise of the various UN entities

Spotlight Initiative aimed to invest at least 30 per cent of all activity funds into national, local and grassroots civil society partners. We've far exceeded that target, with an average of 49 per cent of activity funds invested in civil society partners - USD 195 million in total. More than 5000 civil society organizations report having greater influence and agency thanks to our work. In our next phase, we will continue to centre civil society leadership at all levels and develop new civil society investment benchmarks with our partners.

Our strong partnership with civil society and women's rights organizations increases the sustainability of progress, advances women's rights more broadly, and strengthens civic space in a context of threats to democratic engagement. It is also part of our commitment to "doing development differently", by placing communities at the heart of the response, removing barriers to critical funding, and centring local knowledge and expertise.

Spotlight's success provides an opportunity for others to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals more broadly. It has showcased a new, more collaborative, inclusive and innovative way of working that maximizes the benefits of our collective capacities.

- United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed
16 September 2022



Where we will work

Spotlight Initiative deployed targeted investments in over 25 countries and five regions. We plan to scale up as well as roll out comprehensive programming in an additional 35 countries. We will also build on and add to our programmes that span the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, and purposefully connect the dots between prevention of violence against women and girls and climate change response. Our Global Platform will continue to provide knowledge, good practice and expertise on quality programmes to another 60 countries.

What we need

The continued success of Spotlight Initiative is critical not only to sustain the progress that has been made toward ending violence against women and girls, but in the fight for gender equality overall. Never has the need for an integrated, impactful effort been more pressing.

We invite others to join the Initiative as we scale up to a \$1 billion fund, supporting catalytic programming in 60 countries and technical support to every interested partner, in line with the universal challenge of ending gender-based violence.