



**Spotlight
Initiative**

*To eliminate violence
against women and girls*

Africa Regional Programme:

Final Narrative Programme Report

July 2020 - December 2023

Initiated by the European Union and the United Nations:



THE SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE UNITED CRUCIAL STAKEHOLDERS IN AFRICA TO COMBAT GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV), FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM), AND CHILD MARRIAGE. THROUGH COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS, THEY EMPOWERED AND PROTECTED WOMEN AND GIRLS, CONTRIBUTING TO A MORE EQUITABLE AND SAFE FUTURE FOR THE CONTINENT. HOWEVER, CHALLENGES REMAIN IN FULLY ERADICATING THESE HARMFUL PRACTICES.



Programme Title and Programme Number

Programme Title: Africa's Response to Addressing VAWG, sexual and gender-based violence, harmful practices, sexual and reproductive health and rights including FGM and Child Marriage

MPTF Office Project Reference Number:¹ 0119124

Priority regions/areas/localities for the programme

N/A

Recipient Organization(s)

- UN Women
- UNDP
- UNFPA
- UNICEF

Key Partners

- 1) African Union
- 2) UNECA
- 3) UNDCO
- 3) Academia
- 4) Regional intergovernmental entities/Regional Economic Communities
- 5) Regional NGOs, National civil society organizations

Programme Cost (\$)

Total Phase I budget, and (where OSC approved) Phase II budget as per the Spotlight CPD/RPD: \$26,982,281

Phase I and (where OSC approved) Phase II Spotlight funding:² \$25,620,000

Agency Contribution: \$1,362,281

Spotlight Funding and Agency Contribution by Agency:

Programme Start and End Dates

Start Date:

13.07.2020

End Date:

31.12.2023

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Name of RUNO	Spotlight Phase I (+ II, where OSC approved) (US\$)	United Nations Agency Contributions (US\$)
UN Women	3,454,656.00	253,352.00
UNFPA	10,625,993.00	525,119.00
UNDP	2,134,478.00	196,000.00
UNICEF	9,404,872.00	387,810.00
TOTAL	25,620,000.00	1,362,281.00

- ¹ The Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) Office Project Reference Number is the same number as the one on the Notification message. It is also referred to as 'Project ID' on the project's factsheet page the MPTF Office GATEWAY.
- ² The Spotlight Contribution refers to the amount transferred to the Recipient United Nations Organizations (RUNOs), which is available on the MPTF Office GATEWAY.

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Acronym List ●

AIDOS	Associazione Italiana Donne per lo Sviluppo (Italian Association for Women in Development)
APHRC	African Population and Health Research Center
AUC	African Union Commission
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CISP	International Committee for the Development of Peoples (INGO)
COP	Community of Practice
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CRANK	Child marriage Research to Action Network
CSRRG	Civil Society Regional Reference Group
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DHS	Demographic Health Survey
EAC	East African Community
EU	European Union
EVAWG	Ending Violence Against Women and Girls
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women Empowerment
HQ	Head Quarters
HHSD	Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development
IMAGES	International Men and Gender Equality Survey
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MTA	Mid-Term Assessment
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NHRI	National Human Rights Institution
RAP	Regional Action Plan

RECs	Regional Economic Communities
RUNO	Recipient United Nations Organization
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SBC	Social and Behavioural Change
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIARP	Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme
SOAWR	Solidarity for African Women's Rights
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
ToT	Training of Trainers
UN	United Nations
UNDCO	United Nations Development Coordination Office
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
WGYD	Women, Gender and Youth Directorate
WLSA	Women and Law in Southern Africa



Executive Summary ●

This consolidated and final Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme (SIARP) Report 1.0 documented the achievements, challenges and lessons of SIARP for the entire implementation duration from its commencement in July 2020 to December 2023. The report provides a broader scope of efforts to eliminate gender-based violence, address gender inequalities, end FGM and child marriage and empower women and girls as an urgent priority for Africa.

SIARP has two streams of work (Stream I and Stream II) contributing to achieving outcomes related to policies, legislation, data, women's movement, and civil society. Stream I focus on supporting the regional response to addressing SGBV HP and SRHR, working with the African Union Commission and regional women's rights organizations. Stream II addresses ending child marriage and FGM, aligning with the African Union's efforts. UN Women, UNFPA, UNDP, and UNICEF oversee programme implementation, promoting United Nations reform for inter-agency coordination and joint programming on gender equality, and works closely with

the African Union Commission and civil society partners in coordination with the European Union. The United Nations Development Coordination Office Africa (UNDCO) provides the overall political leadership overseeing stakeholder relationships that ensures programme coordination and coherence across both streams of the programme. The programme leverages partnerships for transformative change, guided by the principle of "leaving no one behind".

Over its three years of implementation, SIARP, in collaboration with key partners, including the European Union, African Union Commission, and civil society organizations, has achieved significant results in the elimination of violence against women and girls (EVAWG) in the region. The programme has spearheaded a comprehensive effort to strengthen national and regional legal frameworks to address and combat violence against women and girls (VAWG) and harmful practices in Africa, strengthened capacities in data collection and provision of tools.

Results Across Pillars



Pillar 1: Policy and legislation

SIARP has spearheaded a comprehensive effort to strengthen the adoption and implementation of national and regional legal frameworks to address and combat VAWG and harmful practices in Africa. Specifically, the programme has:

1. **Strengthened advocacy and capacity** on the implementation of human rights instruments and national action plans and accountability frameworks. Firstly, this was achieved through the launch of a **comprehensive regional report on the status of human**

rights instruments and national action plans, crucial in addressing obstacles to ratification, domestication, and enforcement of laws and policies against VAWG. This report served as a foundational resource for subsequent regional capacity building and advocacy efforts at both regional and national levels, offering a wealth of data and recommendations. SIARP also contributed to the development and endorsement of the **first Regional Action Plan for Africa (RAP) on EVAWG** inclusive of a robust monitoring and evaluation framework by the 8th Specialized Technical Committee on gender equality and women empowerment (GEWE). Additionally, SIARP actively engaged in high-level events, developed accountability frameworks, and supported the development of various training and guidelines to strengthen regional partners and civil society organizations. And, finally SIARP has enhanced the capacity of legislative reforms in the region through Training of Trainers (ToT) sessions leading to significant legislative reforms in human rights codes and improved the understanding among local government staff regarding EVAWG as a human rights issue. Additionally, SIARP facilitated the operationalization of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Gender Observatory.

2. **Strengthened the enforcement, ratification, domestication, and implementation of regional human rights instruments and harmful practices initiatives.** Specifically, SIARP supported high-level and participatory enforcement missions of the African Union Special Rapporteur on the Maputo Protocol and ending child marriage across 22 Member States, which garnered commitments from governments, civil society, and the media to accelerate the ratification process and national plan implementation. This resulted in the ratification of the Maputo Protocol in June 2023 by South Sudan. The missions to Egypt and Morocco have resulted in increased commitment and mobilization of respective civil society organizations and governments to work together to ratify the protocol and the country missions in the other 18 countries resulted in the reviewed status of the child marriage initiative in line with the general guidance from the African Union Commission. In collaboration with the Africa Union Commission, SIARP's collaborative efforts with the African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage have also resulted in legal amendments in several countries and the development of national action plans to combat child marriage, including in Burkina Faso, Tanzania and Zimbabwe amending laws to restrict child marriages (with the Zambian Cabinet recently introducing the amendment bill to Parliament). Likewise, six countries (Niger, Ghana, Uganda, Zambia, Mozambique, Nigeria) have developed or renewed their costed national action plans to end child marriage. Similar efforts targeting FGM elimination have witnessed notable

progress, supported by accountability frameworks and FGM continental reports developed in collaboration with African Union bodies.

3. **Enhanced the capacity of stakeholders** through ToT sessions, leading to significant legislative reforms in human rights codes and improved understanding among local government staff regarding VAWG as a human rights issue. Additionally, SIARP facilitated the operationalization of the ECOWAS Gender Observatory.
4. **Contributed, in partnership with the African Union Commission, to the development and endorsement of the first RAP for Africa on EVAWG**, inclusive of a robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework by the African Union Commission 8th Specialized Technical Committee on GEWE. Additionally, SIARP actively engaged in high-level events, developed accountability frameworks, and supported the development of various training programmes and guidelines to strengthen regional partners and civil society organizations.
5. **Facilitated the capacity enhancement of 56 civil society organizations in drafting shadow/alternative reports on women's rights issues**, providing technical support and practical skills in writing alternative reports. Additionally, SIARP contributed to the development and dissemination of monitoring frameworks to track progress in addressing harmful practices. SIARP collaborated with regional partners and academia to facilitate gender-transformative programming across 11 targeted countries, embedding participatory strategies for positive social and gender change particularly in combatting child marriage.
6. **Strengthened accountability to promote and protect the work of women human rights defenders:** SIARP provided support to strengthen women human rights defenders voices and amplify their impact. Enhanced the capacity of 75 regional partners (African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities, regional Parliamentarians) and civil society organizations on drafting and reviewing laws and policies to promote and protect the work of women's rights groups, civil society organizations and human rights defenders. This initiative further cascaded at national level and empowered 120 women human rights defenders to advocate for their rights using international and regional frameworks.



Pillar 5: Data

The following sections capture the multifaceted initiatives undertaken to combat gender-based violence, child marriage, and FGM, emphasizing the importance of data-driven decision-making and the collaborative efforts made to strengthen capacities, share knowledge, and advocate for critical policy changes.

- 1. Strengthened capacities:** SIARP facilitated the development and implementation of methodologies, standards, and tools for collating comprehensive prevalence and incidence data on VAWG/harmful practices and sexual and reproductive health and rights. The initiative supported the development of three online courses and a comprehensive standardized toolkit, strengthening the abilities of 111 government personnel, 52 civil society organizations, and 62 statistical offices to collect, manage, and utilize data effectively. Trained experts, according to the post-training assessment, explained the significant changes in their data and evidence utilization capacity to inform organizational and national programmes.
- 2. Regional toolkits and scorecards:** Partnerships with the African Union Commission and other entities led to the rollout of regional standardized toolkits and the development of scorecards, such as the African Union Gender Scorecard, providing a comprehensive assessment of progress in securing women's rights. These initiatives aimed to support evidence-based decision-making and policy formulation. The scorecard has supported African countries in their efforts to secure and protect women's human rights by providing a comprehensive assessment of the progress made and the range of measures needed to achieve greater equality.
- 3. Knowledge management and sharing:** A robust knowledge management strategy was implemented, promoting South-to-South exchanges and creating platforms for sharing best practices. Annual forums and coordination platforms facilitated cross-country learning, leading to the publication of reports documenting lessons learned and promising practices among Spotlight countries.
- 4. Gender data review and transformative approaches:** Engagements focused on reviewing gender data on vulnerable groups and implementing gender-transformative programming. Grassroots organizations were assessed in terms of their capacity to ensure support and engagement in ending harmful practices.
- 5. Cost modeling and evidence building:** A critical cost and impact modeling exercise estimated investment needs to eliminate FGM by 2030, highlighting resource gaps and advocating for increased funding. Initiatives like the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System, International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) study and ongoing research collaborations aimed to generate evidence guiding policy formulation and programme implementation.
- 6. Strengthening capacity for research and surveys:** Efforts to bolster research capacities, especially in regions like South Sudan and Malawi, were notable. Technical assistance for gender-based violence prevalence surveys in South Sudan and research on positive masculinities and male engagement underscored the commitment to generating comprehensive data.



Pillar 6: The women's movement and civil society

SIARP has demonstrated significant strides in ending VAWG and promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. Through partnerships with 32 regional and national civil society organizations, SIARP supported the women's movement, aiming at eliminating VAWG and harmful practices resulting in the following key achievements:

- 1. Enforce joint advocacy and regional recommendations:** SIARP facilitated multi-stakeholder dialogues resulting in six jointly agreed regional recommendations adopted by various stakeholders, including women's rights groups, civil society organizations, and regional authorities. These efforts bolstered the capacity of these organizations to effectively advocate for gender equality, women's empowerment, and EAWG.
- 2. Capacity enhancement:** SIARP empowered 111 regional and national civil society representatives representing 30 countries by supporting assessments of social norms related to harmful practices and creating platforms for knowledge sharing and advocacy on GEWE and EAWG.
- 3. Engagement and support:** SIARP and United Nations agencies supported grassroots youth- and women-led organizations with funding, engagement opportunities, and capacity building. Initiatives included the formation of consortia against FGM, media grants for activists, and advocacy events at international forums.

- 4. Behavioural change and innovation:** Efforts focused on transforming social norms through training, behaviour change toolkits, and innovative approaches. Training programmes addressed biases among implementers and empowered communities to identify and address drivers of harmful practices. HackLabs and the African Union have empowered young people to develop 23 innovative community solutions to combat FGM and child marriage. The innovation solutions have transitioned into business models and social enterprises which are undergoing further market access support to enhance opportunities for adoption by UNFPA and UNICEF country offices.

With the operationalization of the “leave no one behind” principle, and in line with the 2030 Agenda and the protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights, SIARP has strengthened the capacity of regional institutions, including traditional religious entities, civil society organizations and vulnerable groups such as adolescent girls and young women, boys, men and persons with disabilities.

Throughout the programme implementation, the European Union has remained a committed partner of SIARP by continuously participating in core management and decision-making platforms, such as the Regional Steering Committee meetings, the establishment of the Civil Society Regional Reference Group (CSRRG) and many other high-level programmatic engagements. SIARP has further built extensive strategic partnerships with the African Union Commission Women, Gender and Youth Directorate (WGYD) and the Health, Humanitarian Affairs, and Social Development Department as key primary partners. This strategic partnership has been extended to grassroots feminist and women’s rights organizations with a focus on strengthening the women’s movement in the region.

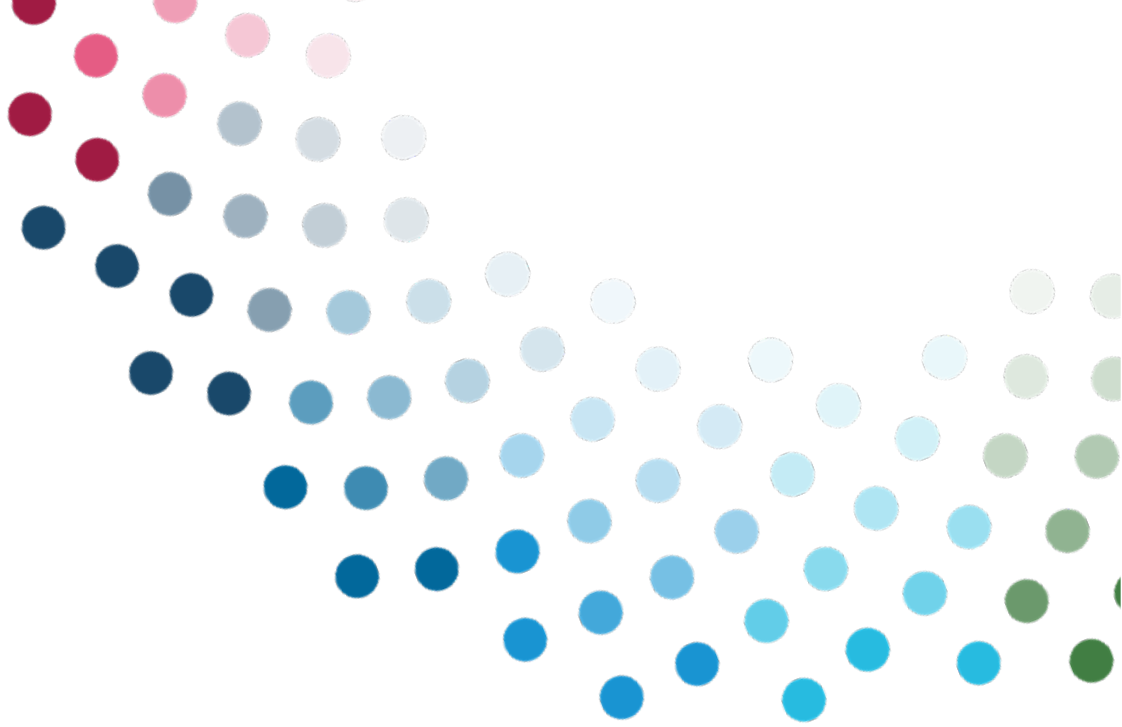
The regional programme maintained robust governance structures and mechanisms, conducting regular steering committee meetings at both regional and stream levels to oversee and guide the programme’s implementation. These meetings ensured timely review of programme progress, enabling informed decision-making and course correction as needed.

In addition to regular monitoring, the programme proactively addressed areas for improvement identified in the Mid-Term Assessment (MTA). The MTA highlighted the positive status of the programme while also suggesting enhancements in coordination, synergy, regional result indicator alignment, and engagement of local civil society organizations. The programme team effectively translated these recommendations into concrete actions, demonstrating the commitment to continuous improvement.

Financially, SIARP achieved an impressive utilization rate of 97 per cent by the end of November 2023. This achievement underscores the programme’s efficient management of resources and its dedication to achieving its stated objectives.

As SIARP comes to a conclusion, the programme has been commended for providing a platform with investment and partnerships that have advanced the agenda on girls, women, with focus on gender equality, EVAWG, and all forms of harmful practices in Africa. This engagement has facilitated efforts that have witnessed renewed commitment and action on continental gender outcomes, including the elimination of harmful practices. Results have included stronger continental legal, policy, and accountability frameworks, greater strategic coordination, support to Member States and stakeholders, and platforms that share learnings, experiences, data, and evidence.

Moving forward beyond 2023 and as highlighted in the Sustainability Strategy, SIARP has outlined opportunities to engage political leadership through continued investments in respective African Union-led initiatives including advancing the rollout of the regional EVAWG action, the development of the EVAWG convention, strengthening positive masculinity initiatives, and enhancing initiatives to end FGM and child marriage. By leveraging on such high-level platforms to advance actions as a collective movement, the potential to directly benefit millions of vulnerable populations who are at risk of child marriage, FGM, and gender-based violence is among a myriad of challenges to be harnessed. The e-learning capacity enhancement programme on data collection analysis of VAWG and harmful practices will create a sustained effort to foster availability of globally comparable data and use of for programming. Selected gains of SIARP include the African Union harmful practices accountability framework, the EVAWG action plan, the work of CSRRG, and the Gender Observatory, which have got promising engagement of other partners to sustain them beyond December 2023.



Contextual Shifts and Implementation Status ●

At the time of writing of this report, the world and the African continent has been rocked by a series of shocks and stresses, a phenomenon described as a polycrisis, that have radically changed the context in which the United Nations and its partners operate. The interplay of conflicts, climate shocks, humanitarian emergencies, and the persisting effects of COVID-19 are putting at risk the gains made in eliminating harmful practices such as child marriage and FGM. Some of the challenges included:

- **Conflict and political instability:** In countries like Ethiopia, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, and the Sahel region, conflict has compromised democratic and development progress. This situation has made women and girls in these areas particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence, necessitating special protection measures. Political instability in countries like Burkina Faso, Guinea, Niger, and Mali has disrupted support for programme implementation, particularly affecting the work of implementing partners.
- **Economic challenges:** Economic difficulties witnessed in the region such as inflation and reduced earnings, have pushed individuals into sexual exploitation or trafficking, negatively affecting the promotion of sexual and reproductive health and rights and in certain cases contributed to child marriages and encouraged FGM. There has also been an increased incidences of gender-based violence, based on forced and economic migration within the continent.
- **Legal and policy environment:** While the region has also witnessed increased enforcement and ratification of laws and policies to prevent gender-based violence, it is also important to involve men and boys in EAWG and changing gender norms, attitudes, and behaviours. In some countries, programming and supporting issues that affect key populations has been made difficult due to national legislation that decriminalizes them. Uganda is one such country.
- **Data collection and analysis:** There is also a focus on strengthening the capacity of regional and national institutions to collect, analyze, and use data related to sexual and gender-based violence, child marriage, and FGM in line with international and regional standards. This is crucial for informing laws, policies, and programmes yet it is an area that needed a lot of strengthening.
- **Role of civil society organizations and women's rights organizations:** There is limited investment into the civil society movement over the recent years. Recently, there have been calls for increased investment in, and an enabling environment for, women's movements, civil society organizations, and women's rights organizations. Civil society plays a critical role in advocating and working towards ending sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices on the continent through advocacy, direct service delivery and holding Member States and traditional leaders to account.

Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme

SIARP has two streams of work (Stream I and Stream II) contributing to achieving outcomes related to policies, legislation, data, women's movement, and civil society. Stream I focus on women's and girls' rights, supporting the African Union Commission and regional women's rights organizations. Stream II addresses ending child marriage and FGM, aligning with the

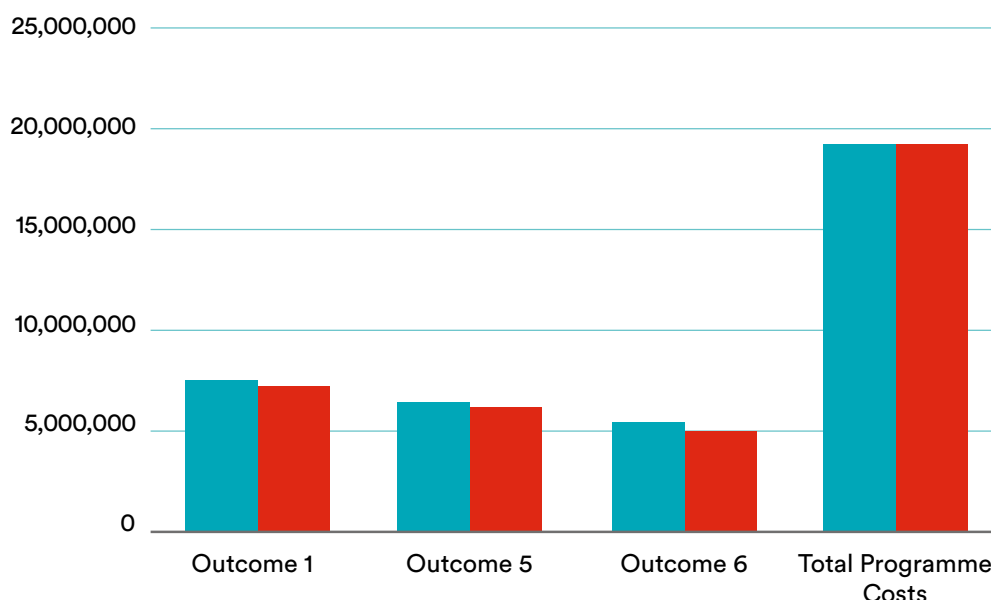
African Union's efforts. UN Women, UNFPA, UNDP, and UNICEF oversee programme implementation, promoting United Nations reform for inter-agency coordination and joint programming on gender equality. The programme leverages partnerships for transformative change, guided by the principle of "leaving no one behind".

Significance contextual shift and overall implementation status

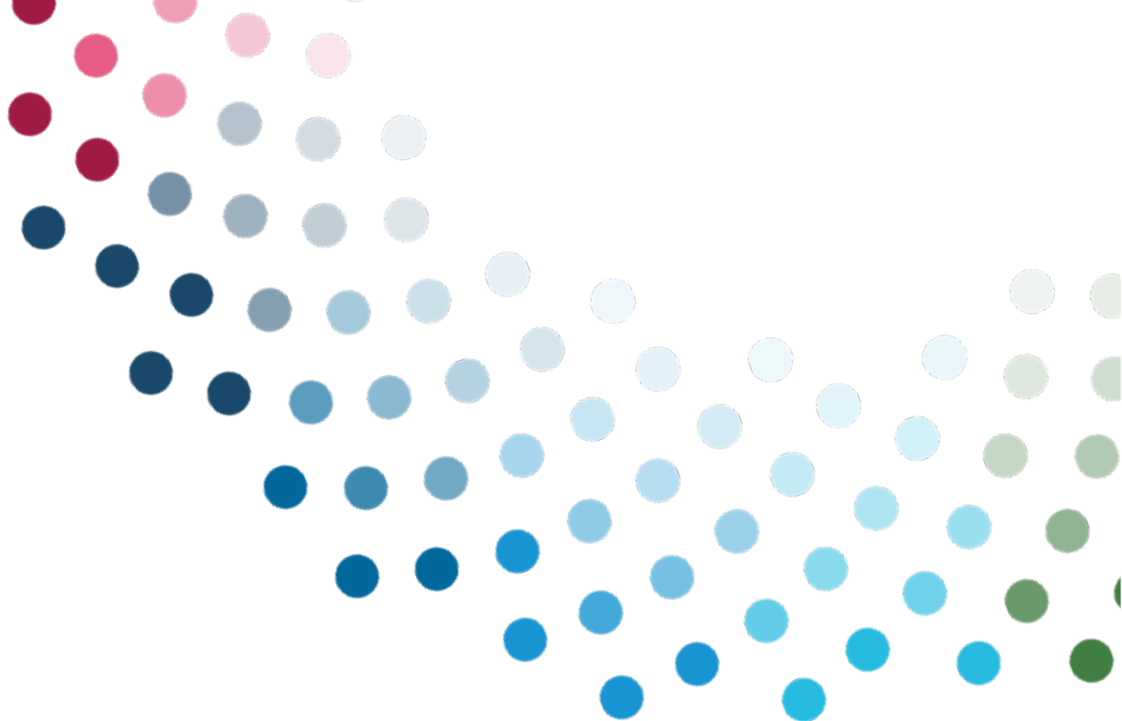
The implementation of SIARP has been shaped by several significant socio-political shifts, including the COVID-19 pandemic, persistent economic challenges and steep inflation which posed significant challenges to the programme's implementation, disrupting mobility, and limiting the ability of partners to innovate and keep up the momentum of their work. Additionally, political and economic instability in several countries in sub-Saharan Africa has exacerbated the prevalence of harmful practices and VAWG. Furthermore, climate change has had a negative impact on communities across the region, leading to increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, displacement, and disrupted services.

SIARP has faced several challenges, including difficulty in finding strong and qualified regional civil society organizations to partner with, lengthy approval processes for activities and budgets, and fragility and instability in some countries. To mitigate these challenges, SIARP has taken several measures, including increasing joint planning with partners and stakeholders, working through Programme Coordination Unit and the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat to accelerate the discussion and negotiation of annual work plans, and strengthening inter-agency coordination. Despite the challenging context, SIARP has made significant progress in addressing harmful practices and VAWG in sub-Saharan Africa.

SIARP budget utilization, November 2023



As depicted in the chart above, SIARP had effectively utilized 98 per cent of its allocated programme budget by the end of December 2023.

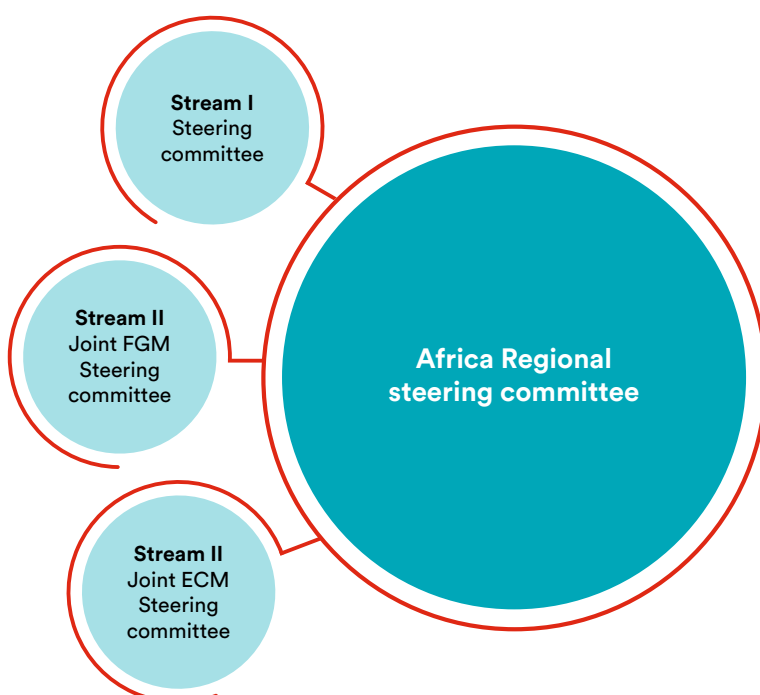


Programme Governance and Coordination ●

A. Africa Regional Steering Committee

SIARP operates through a two-tiered steering committee system: one at the regional level and another at the stream level. These committees convene separately at various times to offer crucial guidance for implementation, endorse annual work and budget plans, approve no cost extension plans and, significantly, focus on ensuring sustainability.

The upcoming sections of the report outline the specifics of the strategic meetings and offer a summary of the inputs and decisions made by the committee.



I. AFRICA REGIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE

SIARP regional steering committee, formed in 2021, consisted of regional directors from the African Union Commission and Recipient United Nations Organizations (RUNOs), along with representatives from CSRRG and the European Union. The committee has played a pivotal role in guiding the programme's trajectory and ensuring its effective implementation. Through five strategically convened meetings, the committee has steered the programme towards achieving its objectives, addressing emerging challenges, and laying the groundwork for a sustainable future.

- The inaugural meeting, held in May 2021, set the stage for the programme's success by delving into the 2021 results, crafting a comprehensive communication strategy, securing a no-cost extension, and outlining the 2022 deliverables. This initial gathering laid the foundation for a cohesive and results-oriented approach.
- The second meeting, convened in March 2022, marked a critical juncture in the programme's lifecycle. The committee meticulously reviewed the 2021 results and engaged in a thorough examination of the key findings and recommendations emerging from the MTA. Particular attention was paid to the draft sustainability outline,

ensuring that long-term viability was embedded into the programme's DNA.

- The third meeting, held in September 2022, delved deeper into the intricacies of sustainability, focusing on the status of the no-cost extension and the refinement of the sustainability plan. The committee's deliberations underscored the importance of securing the extension to maintain the programme's momentum and emphasized the need for a well-defined sustainability strategy to safeguard the programme's impact beyond its official end date.
- The fourth meeting, convened in June 2023, marked a pivotal moment as the programme entered its final stretch. With a sharp focus on programme progress, the committee meticulously assessed the implementation rate, noting the impressive 78 per cent delivery rate and the commendable 81 per cent budget utilization rate. This positive assessment instilled confidence in the programme's ability to achieve its intended outcomes.
- The final meeting, held virtually in October 2023, brought the committee's journey to a close. The committee comprehensively reviewed the programme's status, acknowledging the remarkable 95 per cent delivery rate. This achievement reflected the unwavering commitment of all stakeholders to achieving the programme's objectives.



THE SIARP STEERING COMMITTEE HAS BEEN PIVOTAL IN DRIVING THE PROGRAMME'S ACHIEVEMENTS AND SUSTAINABILITY FROM 2021 TO 2023

Throughout the committee's tenure, critical issues were addressed, ensuring that the programme remained responsive to emerging challenges. The urgent need to address the burden of sexual and gender-based violence in the post-COVID era was consistently emphasized, underscoring the programme's relevance and adaptability.

CSRRG played a vital role in providing valuable input and advocating for the programme's expansion to non-Spotlight Initiative countries. Their unwavering support for grassroots

organizations, NGOs, and frontline organizations ensured that the programme's reach extended to those most in need of its services.

As SIARP nears its conclusion, the Regional Steering Committee's legacy lies in its unwavering commitment to ensuring a smooth transition and lasting impact. Through their strategic guidance, thoughtful deliberations, and unwavering support for programme sustainability, the committee has set

the stage for a future where the programme's transformative effects continue to resonate.

II. SIARP STREAM I STEERING COMMITTEE

The SIARP Stream I Steering Committee was established at the beginning of 2022 and comprised members from Stream I implementing agencies (regional directors of UN Women, UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF), the European Union Delegation to the African Union, the African Union Commission represented by the Women Gender and Youth Directorate Director, and CSRRG.

The Stream I Steering Committee's governance played a crucial role in coordinating and implementing Stream I seamlessly. In 2022, the committee provided guidance on documenting promising practices, initiating discussions on an exit and sustainability strategy, and addressing resource mobilization. Responding to the European Union Delegation's request for closer involvement, communication and engagement were strengthened, including the inclusion of technical staff from the Delegation in regular coordination committees. During the programme duration, the SIARP | Steering Committee convened four meetings (April 2022, November 2022, and July and December 2023).

At the fourth and final Stream I Steering Committee meeting on 7 December 2023, members examined SIARP Stream I programme achievements and impact from a political and strategic level; provided guidance and recommendations on the sustainability of interventions following the SIARP project closure on 31 December; and exchanged about upcoming priorities, including on upcoming events, meetings, conferences related to EVAWG and SIARP.

All members reiterated the importance of bringing together implementing partners of SIARP to strengthen collaboration and eliminate the siloed approach to project work. Members further agreed that SIARP supported existing regional as well as new EVAWG interventions and ensured sustainability through sustained engagement of regional partners and civil society organizations. Members also underlined that regional

frameworks and knowledge products developed will serve as reference points for the future. The strengthened civil society and women's movement, exemplified also through CSRRG, will continue to be a vocal voice to end VAWG. Finally, members voiced the need for stakeholders' continued commitment and joint efforts across future programmes, meetings, and conferences to end VAWG once and for all.

III. SIARP STREAM II - ECM STEERING COMMITTEE

Since the inception of SIARP, the ECM steering committee has played a crucial role in offering strategic guidance and oversight for the overall management and functioning. This committee has demonstrated thought leadership by providing insights on the programming context, outlining the vision to end child marriage from 2020 to 2023, allocating resources to achieve this vision, advocating approaches to end child marriage, addressing intersectionality issues, exploring the intersectionality of climate change with harmful practices, and applying gender-transformative programming across all Spotlight Initiative programmes. In line with this guidance, SIARP has undertaken a comprehensive mapping exercise to identify countries and sectors where engagement or influence has been challenging.

IV. SIARP STREAM II - FGM STEERING COMMITTEE:

Since 2020, the steering committees of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the elimination of FGM have been instrumental in providing strategic guidance and oversight for the effective management of the programme. Both the steering committees and the technical steering committees of the FGM Joint Programme have offered recommendations and visions for the implementation of SIARP Stream II FGM component. In 2023, a steering committee meeting took place from 2–6 October, accompanied by a field visit to Ethiopia to witness firsthand programme activities.

B. Civil Society Reference Group

(CSRRG), comprising 15 members mostly women, was established in February 2022 to reinforce civil society's role in the Spotlight Initiative. Chosen by a civil society expert committee in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the European Union, and UN Women, CSRRG acted as advisors and advocates for SIARP, contributing to national and continental efforts addressing VAWG and harmful practices, ensuring inclusivity by considering various representations.

Throughout the programme, CSRRG actively engaged in regional and stream level steering committees' workshops, reviewed annual reports and regional strategic documents, regional high-level meetings, and organized events, contributing to SIARP's better coordination and implementation.

Key actions and events that CSRRG undertook and participated in include: the African Union's Accountability Framework on Eliminating Harmful Practices, the 2023 FGM International Conference, a Religious and Traditional Leaders

Workshop, SIARP review conferences 2022 and 2023, and an African Union High-Level Summit on EVAWG. CSRRG also organized a Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)67 Side Event (Round table on Strengthening Collaboration on EVAWG in Africa), participated in the African Union SUMMIT,

the 16 Days of Activism - UNITE! Activism to end violence against women and girls, the Global Learning Symposium in Cancún Mexico: Experiences from the Africa Regional Programme and organized a Virtual Stakeholders Dialogue on Increasing Investment in EVAWG in Africa.



FIGURE 2 SIARP CSRRG MEMBERS

Their involvement enhanced awareness, influenced policy, and expanded outreach initiatives. CSRRG also developed a [civil society scorecard](#) to monitor SIARP’s civil society engagement with a focus on participation, funding mechanisms, disbursement, and implementation processes. The scorecard acknowledged the programme’s radical approach and societal impact recommending engaging women’s right group during the United Nations call for proposal appraisal process and to strengthen the cooperation with SI-supported national and global civil society reference groups.

Furthermore, CSRRG provided valuable feedback on knowledge products, ensuring accuracy and relevance. Their engagement was pivotal, ensuring inclusivity, accuracy of knowledge products, and enhancing civil society capacity.

CSRRG recently wrapped up its term with notable achievements under SIARP. They highlighted successes like impactful activism videos and high-level summits, despite challenges in administrative issues and uneven participation. Key lessons emphasized the pivotal role of civil society, co-created terms of reference, and voluntary contributions. Recommendations for the future include increased representation, detailed work plans, and better engagement with leaders.

Moving ahead, the focus is on member ownership, collaboration with ECOSOC, bolstering local networks, and sustaining partnerships beyond SIARP. Representatives from the European Union and UN Women praised CSRRG’s dedication, particularly noting their advocacy for legislation against gender-based violence in Africa. Leaders stressed the necessity for continued investment in civil society and initiatives like the Spotlight Initiative.

The CSRRG meeting marked the end of a crucial phase while setting the tone for ongoing efforts toward a violence-free Africa for women and girls. CSRRG’s passion and commitment were recognized, fostering hope for a safer future for all.

C. Inter-agency coordination

SIARP has been working effectively to enhance coordination and joint planning among United Nations agencies and implementing partners. The dedicated spaces for coordination, such as the monthly Stream meetings and bi-monthly technical coordination meetings, have been particularly helpful in facilitating collaboration and ensuring that interventions are complementary and synergistic. Both UNFPA and UNICEF continued their work as critical partners under Stream II-ECM and FGM SIARP to promote cooperation around accountability to affected girls and women at the inter-agency level. UNFPA and UNICEF-SIARP staff seconded to the African Union Commission continued to contribute to the continental campaign against harmful practices and influence policy and technical guidance. The creation of the inter-agency coordination monthly meetings that include the African Union Commission senior staff and RUNO Deputy Regional Directors' participation is a positive outcome for operationalizing the SIARP work plans.

As a follow-up to the MTA, SIARP established and strengthened coordination mechanisms for each stream and pillar. A detailed joint work plan was developed for Pillar 1 to guide the implementation and monitoring of planned activities. A monthly technical coordination mechanism was established for Pillar 1 among RUNOs (UNDP and UN Women) and key implementing partners (Women and Law in Southern Africa – WLSA, Equality Now and FEMNET (the African Women's Development and Communication Network) to ensure effective collaboration and maximize efforts. For instance, WLSA and Equality Now collaborated and jointly facilitated sessions during Phase I and Phase II of ToTs that

enhanced the capacity of regional partners and civil society organizations to draft and review laws and policies to promote and protect the work of women's rights groups, civil society organizations and human rights defenders.

The acceleration of the implementation of a joint detailed work plan has enabled SIARP to improve coordination and collaboration. The work plan provided a clear roadmap for implementation and helped to ensure that all partners are working towards the same goals. It also allowed for regular monitoring of progress and identification of any challenges. The joint detailed work plan was essential for guiding RUNOs to consolidate results and make more rapid progress towards its goals of eliminating VAWG and harmful practices and promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights in Africa in the final year of the programme.

For example, the close collaboration between UNDP, UN Women, UNICEF, and UNFPA on joint planning and implementation of activities resulted in the development and implementation of national action plans and increased financing on EVAWG and sexual and reproductive health and rights as essential to ensuring that SIARP has a meaningful impact on the lives of women and girls in Africa. RUNOs contributed to the capacity needs assessment, development of the Facilitators Training Manual and the ToT workshop on the development and implementation of national action plans and increased financing on EVAWG and sexual and reproductive health and rights. This enabled to integrate the unique strengths and expertise of RUNOs in different thematic areas.

D. Use of United Nations reform inter-agency tools

During the programme implementation, SIARP developed a joint call for [Expression of Interest](#) in both English and French to identify experienced civil society organizations, women's rights organizations and/ or research institutes in Africa (including those representing regional and country networks) that would implement SIARP activities at the grassroots level. This approach facilitated learning from inter-agency collaboration by eliminating duplication, leveraging the common bargaining power of the United Nations and maximizing economies of scale. After the joint call, RUNOs also jointly reviewed and agreed on potential civil society organizations that have the potential to implement SIARP at the regional level. These civil society organizations include the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC), FEMNET, and Equality Now. After the selection, the programme also developed standard operating procedures to guide the joint engagement of RUNOs and civil society organizations throughout the programme implementation

process. Joint implementation also contributes to efforts to reform the United Nations on behalf of other United Nations entities.

The principle of "leaving no one behind" informed interventions that enhanced the capacities of civil society organizations/implementing partners to reach marginalized and vulnerable groups such as adolescent girls and young women, young boys and men, and persons with disabilities. These and other groups needed to be represented at all meetings and to participate and influence SIARP processes and outcomes. To further ensure that no one was left behind, the programme also engaged traditional and religious leaders (for example, in school reopening and addressing VAWG), who often interact more closely with communities and can cascade information between the duty bearers and their respective constituents.



Programme Partnerships ●

A. African Union Commission

SIARP collaborates closely with the African Union Commission. The African Union Commission plays a pivotal role in the programme, serving as its principal and overseeing implementation through two key directorates: Health and Humanitarian Affairs, and WGYD, led by the Health Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development Commissioner.

The engagement in SIARP implementation extends to African Union human rights organs, Regional Economic Communities, and regional Parliamentarians. The African Union Commission leads the regional steering committee at the commissioner level, while the Department head chairs the Stream I Steering Committee, actively guiding the bi-annual steering committees for effective oversight, as outlined in the governance section of the report.

Under Stream II of SIARP, efforts were dedicated to strengthening the African Union's initiatives against child marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). SIARP actively assisted in the development of a [five-year strategic plan on African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage](#). The [country post monitoring missions](#), supported by SIARP in 2022 and 2023, galvanized action in 14³ targeted countries, resulting in significant progress.

Several countries made strides at the legislative level; Burkina Faso, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe amended laws to restrict child

marriages, while six countries (Niger, Ghana, Uganda, Zambia, Mozambique, Nigeria) developed or renewed national action plans to combat child marriage. Notably, in [Zambia](#), efforts aligned the minimum marriage age for girls with international standards, introducing an amendment bill in Parliament.

The partnership also boosted the African Union Campaign's Phase II, enhanced the capacities of national statistical offices for data collection, thereby increasing the number of countries to 24 with comparable statistical data on harmful practices. SIARP embedded technical staff within the African Union Commission to aid programme implementation and facilitate reporting on specific campaign implementations, offering recommendations for quicker progress.

Additionally, SIARP supported the African Union Commission's collaboration with Child Help Line International. This initiative aims to fortify child protection systems, expand helpline services across Africa, and currently spans [in 33 countries in Africa](#), up from the initial 22. The SIARP Initiative has complimented and enhanced child helpline systems established by the national spotlight programs. This has elevated services through unification with the 116 child helpline number.

SIARP provided technical and financial backing to the African Union, hosting various impactful global and continental events.

³ Senegal, Niger, Mauritanian, Mozambique, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Zambia, South Africa, Seychelles, Madagascar, Kenya, Uganda and Democratic Republic of Congo.

These included the 2021 International Day of the African Child, the 3rd African Girls Summit, the 2022 International Day of the African Child, the 78th United Nations General Assembly African Union side events, the 2nd International Conference on FGM, and the planned 4th African Girls Summit.

Additionally, SIARP facilitated the second Positive Masculinity Conference and various high-level virtual events during significant observance days between 2021 and 2023. These efforts led to the adoption and reinforcement of several [calls to action](#) against harmful practices and gender-based violence in Africa, including the launch of the [End FGM Network in Africa](#).

SIARP has actively collaborated with African Union human rights bodies, notably, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR). This partnership was integral to the development of the Joint General Comment on the Elimination of FGM and the integration of an African Union harmful accountability framework.

Joint General Comment on FGM launched in November 2023, offers comprehensive guidance for states to eliminate FGM. Drawing from legal frameworks and advocacy initiatives like the Saleema Initiative, it outlines measures encompassing legislation, institutions, and actions necessary to prevent and eradicate FGM. It emphasizes individual and state-level accountability for human rights violations and gender-based violence resulting from FGM.

Additionally, the Comment stresses the importance of providing comprehensive support services for FGM survivors, including medical and psychosocial assistance. It addresses cross-border FGM practices, offers guidance for asylum seekers and internally displaced individuals fleeing FGM threats, and clarifies children's rights and principles of non-discrimination and gender equality in the context of FGM.

For Stream I, SIARP engaged primarily with the African Union Commission WGYD and Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Affairs Department as the overall lead. The African Union Commission's strategic involvement in SIARP was instrumental in planning and reviewing annual work plans, mobilizing stakeholders, revamping the Gender Observatory, co-hosting high-level events, overseeing civil society selection, and engaging consultants and staff related to African Union Commission programmes.



The African Union Commission's leadership in SIARP ensured alignment with continental priorities, promoting ownership, sustainability, and fostering collaboration among various stakeholders like Regional Economic Communities, regional Parliamentarians, Member States, civil society organizations, and development partners.

The collaboration between SIARP and the African Union Commission WGYD resulted in several impactful outcomes, including the development of key regional strategic documents such as evidence-based reports, action plans, training manuals, and toolkits focusing on addressing VAWG, harmful practices, and sexual and reproductive health and rights. This collaboration enhanced the capacity of Regional Economic Communities, Parliamentarians, Member States, and civil society organizations in enforcing laws and policies regarding VAWG and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

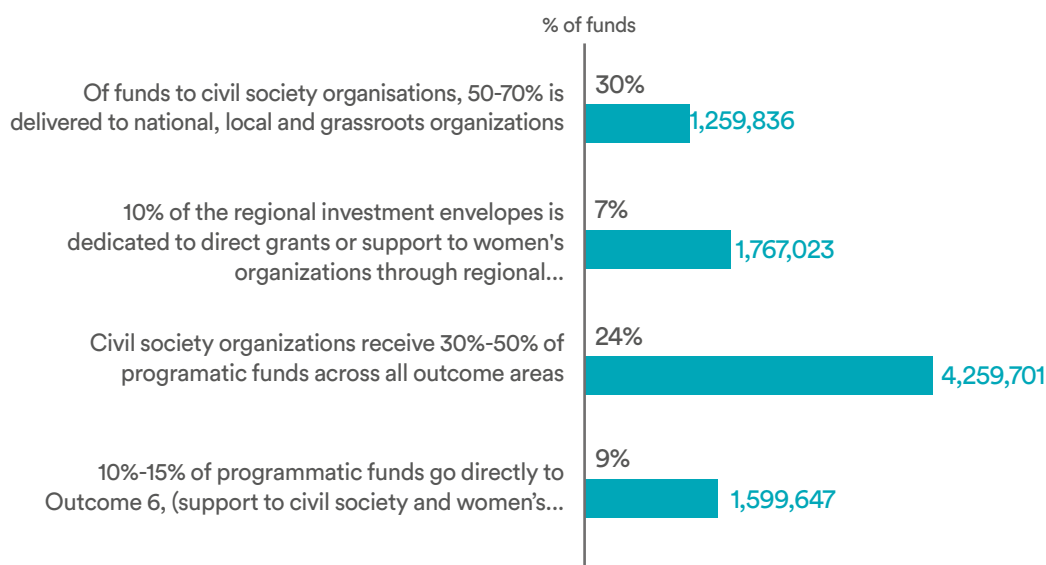
SIARP also closely engaged with regional Parliamentarians and Regional Economic Communities to ensure alignment with regional priorities and effectively tackle challenges related to VAWG and sexual and reproductive health and rights. This engagement with Regional Economic Communities was crucial, as they play a pivotal role in coordinating regional efforts addressing VAWG and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Additionally, involving regional Parliamentarians ensured the inclusion of women and girls' voices in decision-making processes and law formulation.

B. Civil society organizations

SIARP, in a concerted effort to address the challenges of VAWG and FGM, strategically collaborated with numerous regional and national civil society organizations. The collaborations established between SIARP and various civil society organizations has proven to be comprehensive and highly impactful, collectively striving to combat VAWG and advance sexual and reproductive health and rights.

During the entire implementation period, SIARP collaborated with 32 (20 national civil society organizations) distinct regional and national civil society organizations, including network organizations, consortia, research centres, and councils of religious leaders.

SIARP CSO fund commitment



These civil society organizations worked in partnership with all four RUNOs to execute a variety of initiatives across three defined outcomes (Policy Legislation; Data and the Women Movement plus support to civil society). These primary partnerships, in turn, established further connections with a secondary layer of actors, thereby magnifying the project's influence and impact. The regional civil society organizations concentrated their efforts on disseminating diverse EVAWG and harmful practices initiatives, frameworks, training, and knowledge platforms across multiple countries or at regional levels. Meanwhile, the national civil society organizations dedicated their attention to implementing projects specifically at the grassroots community level.

The chart illustrates how SIARP has fulfilled certain requirements of the Spotlight Initiative's commitment to civil society engagement, thereby upholding the programme's accountability through active involvement of civil society organizations.

I. CIVIL SOCIETY SELECTION CRITERIA AND OBJECTIVES

SIARP employed stringent selection criteria, evaluating civil society organizations based on their extensive experience, comparative advantages, reach, and scope of service

provision. Emphasizing representation in terms of geography, language, and operational levels (regional and grassroots), the selection aimed to foster broad-reaching and impactful collaborations.

II. ROLES OF ENGAGED CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

The enlisted civil society organizations actively championed various crucial initiatives:

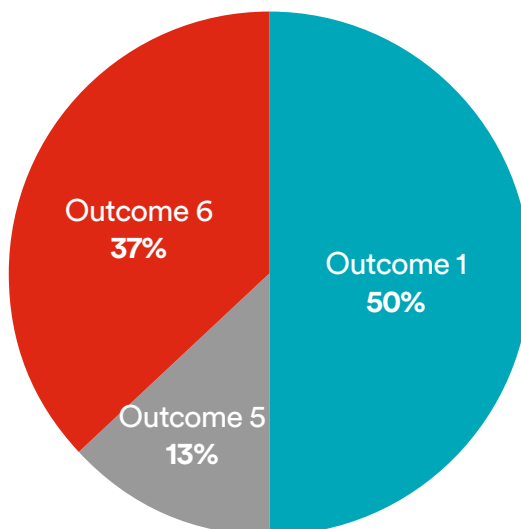
- **Advocacy and awareness:** Civil society organizations advocated for policy changes addressing VAWG and promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights. They also raised awareness and shifted social norms.
- **Capacity building:** Civil society organizations enhanced the capabilities of other organizations, strengthening the collective response to VAWG and sexual and reproductive health and rights issues.
- **Formulation of RAPs and capacity-building initiatives** for civil society organizations.
- **Execution of desk reviews, training workshops, and virtual discussions** to disseminate vital information among stakeholders.

- Implementation of strategies like engaging journalists, organizing youth forums, conducting multimedia campaigns, and facilitating dialogue sessions at local and national levels to raise awareness and drive change.
- Resolution implementation: Joint efforts by Equality Now, Purposeful, Dinidari Africa, and other participants emphasized the implementation of Resolution A/HRC/RES/44/16 and PRIMER on the elimination of FGM. This collective action sparked political commitment and tangible

steps by countries like Senegal, which incorporated PRIMER implementation into its 2022 work plan.

The pie chart below presents a breakdown of civil society fund allocations across the three pillars. Notably, the majority of the civil society funding is directed towards developing and implementing laws and legislations (Outcome 1) followed by Outcome 6 aimed at supporting women movement and grassroots civil society organizations.

CSO funding per outcome



III. EXEMPLARY ENGAGEMENTS WITH REGIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

1. **African Council of Religious Leaders (ACRL – RFP):** Over 130 senior religious leaders across seven countries underwent advocacy and engagement training. They committed to supporting African Union campaigns for eradicating harmful practices. Furthermore, joint declarations aimed to engage local religious leaders in cross-border districts to combat FGM and report cases.
2. **Girls Not Brides:** Through collaboration with Girls Not Brides and 15,000 network civil society organizations, SIARP adapted tools into a comprehensive guide, empowering civil society coalitions in Ghana, Nigeria, and Mozambique. This initiative enhanced gender-transformative skills, enabling collective action against gender inequality and positioning civil society coalitions within national strategies to end child marriage.
3. **Equality Now:** Equality Now, operating in 13 African countries, significantly influenced the prioritization of the Maputo Protocol within legislative frameworks. Their efforts included mapping assessments, capacity building for regional partners on ratification, and domestication of human rights instruments related to
4. **Foundation for Women’s Health Research and Development:** FORWARD -UK, partnering with SIARP in Kenya and The Gambia, established a young women’s network. This initiative engaged 58 young women from various countries, empowering them to undertake social action projects and contribute to reducing FGM.
5. **Women and Law in Southern Africa:** has a strong expertise and resources in supporting evidence-based interventions that promote and protect women and girl’s rights through legal and policy reform and changes to discriminatory socio-cultural and economic practices. SIARP partnered with WLSA to build the capacity of regional partners and influence Member States to develop, review, enforce and report on laws and policies to guarantee the ability of women’s rights groups, civil society organizations and human rights defenders.
6. **Human rights defenders’ continuous engagement:** Collaboration between human rights defenders and civil society organizations established a platform for ongoing engagement. This platform facilitated dialogue among national human rights institutions, addressing critical societal issues and supporting human rights defenders.

7. **APHRC:** SIARP, in partnership with APHRC, supported the development and rollout of a standardized toolkit on VAWG, harmful practices, and sexual and reproductive health and rights, enhancing data collection approaches. The partnership also led to the availability of training tools on African human rights mechanisms and gender programming.
8. **African Technology Hub:** The Innovation Challenge organized by SIARP worked with hubs across the continent with the support of a continent-wide hacklab called AfriLabs. This is a network organization that has supported innovation centres across African countries. AfriLabs coordinated all the hubs and innovators, as well as the incubation of 2021 winners in 2022. AfriLabs also worked with the East and Southern Africa Regional Office and the FGM UNFPA HQ team in 2023 for the 'We Scale'. HackLab continued this progress, involving dedicated innovators from the final pitch events of 2021 and 2022. Winning solutions will receive an additional \$15,000 in scaling funding, tied to measurable impact.
9. **Sonke Gender Justice Network:** Implemented initiatives to engage men and boys in eradicating FGM, generating notable outcomes under Outcome 6.
10. **FEMNET:** Organized capacity development and advocacy activities for women leaders and young FGM elimination champions across various African countries.
11. **AIDOS:** Collaborated on involving men and boys in the campaign against FGM, conducting thematic discussions and engaging anti-FGM stakeholders.
12. **Global Media Campaign:** Conducted trainings on sensitive reporting on harmful practices in collaboration with the African Union and SIARP, establishing a network for further collaborations and media competitions.
13. **EQUIPOP:** SIARP partnered with Equipop under Pillar 6 to mobilize feminist and youth activists through an intersectional feminist approach to agree on common positions and recommendations on key issues related to gender quality and sexual and reproductive health in West Africa in the framework of the 30-year review of the International Conference on Population Development (ICPD) Plan of Action, the 10 years of the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development, and Agenda 2063.
14. **EQUIMUNDO:** SIARP partners with Equipundo under Pillar 5 to support research on positive masculinities and male engagement to prevent gender-based violence, harmful practices, promote sexual and reproductive health and rights and to empower women and girls.
15. **Engagement with All Africa Conference of Churches:** SIARP CSRRG strengthened the capacities of 99 per cent of religious leaders, mainly male champions for gender justice from different countries in Africa, to address harmful practices and other forms of gender-based violence, during roundtable discussions organized by the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC). Religious leaders committed themselves to collaborate with their governments and other stakeholders to support EVAWG efforts. Furthermore, SIARP CSRRG participated and fed into the AACC's Women's Pre-Assembly, which facilitated the election of the First Woman President of AACC in its 60 years of existence.

Moreover, SIARP collaborated with other 20 local civil society organizations, particularly youth-led organizations, supporting advocacy, multimedia campaigns, dialogue sessions, and online initiatives to combat harmful practices like FGM and child marriage.

Other engagements and impact:

- **Journalists' training:** Capacity-building activities for journalists in sensitively reporting on harmful practices.
- **Technology Hub Engagements:** Innovation challenges engaging African hubs to pitch solutions ending FGM.
- **Local civil society collaborations:** Support and engagement of youth-led organizations in advocacy and multimedia campaigns to eliminate harmful practices.
- **Advocacy and policy promotion:** Civil society organizations championed for laws and policies addressing VAWG and advocating for sexual and reproductive health and rights. They also conducted awareness campaigns to challenge social norms contributing to these issues.
- **Capacity building:** Civil society organizations empowered other organizations at the community level to address VAWG and promote sexual and reproductive health and rights. This capacity building bolstered the overall response to these critical issues.

In summary, SIARP's strategic partnerships with a diverse range of civil society organizations and networks fostered extensive advocacy, capacity building, and implementation of targeted initiatives, significantly enhancing the programme's impact in addressing VAWG and promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights across Africa. Details of SIARP civil society engagement is captured in Annex C.



C. European Union Delegation

The European Union has played a pivotal role in SIARP through active participation in various committees, workshops, and consultations. The European Union's engagement significantly contributed to the success of SIARP by providing financial and technical support and advocating for its objectives.

The European Union's involvement in strategic guidance and oversight to SIARP, strengthened coherence across the two streams through steering committees and several coordination platforms which facilitated the programme's implementation and monitoring. Specifically, the European Union's engagement benefitted SIARP in three key ways: financial backing enabling programme activities, technical support enhancing implementation efficiency, and advocacy efforts elevating SIARP's visibility and objectives.

The European Union's participation in multiple events and forums, such as training sessions, knowledge-sharing forums, and high-level summits, showcased its dedication to combating VAWG and harmful practices while promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights in Africa. This continuous engagement reaffirmed the European Union's commitment to empowering women and girls in Africa through SIARP.

I. EUROPEAN UNION PARTICIPATION IN SIARP EVENTS:

- Engaged in virtual and in-person consultations, training sessions, and side events from 2021 to 2023;
- Participation in high-level summits and launches of crucial guidelines for strengthening partnerships and protecting women human rights defenders;
- Facilitated European Union parliamentary meetings that was conducted with the presence of all United Nations

agencies and the African Union Commission mainly to review how SIARP programming is aligned with African Union priorities and underscoring its commitment to the programme's objectives.

Overall, the European Union's ongoing participation and contributions to SIARP exemplify its dedication to advancing the lives of women and girls in Africa, emphasizing its leadership role in supporting initiatives combating VAWG and promoting gender equality.

II. COOPERATION WITH OTHER (NON-RUNO) UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES

During the reporting period, SIARP collaborated with UNECA's Gender Unit on Pillar 5 activities, specifically enhancing a Standardized and Harmonized Data Collection Toolkit for VAWG, harmful practices, and sexual and reproductive health and rights. UNECA's technical expertise aided toolkit improvement, connecting it with existing resources for better harmonization.

Moreover, SIARP partnered with OHCHR during a continental workshop focused on engaging national human right institutions (NHRI) to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights and prevent harmful practices. This collaboration involved substantive presentations on key populations and NHRI engagement with international human rights mechanisms, benefiting SIARP's initiatives. To bolster NHRI capacity building, further partnerships with UNDP, OHCHR, and other United Nations entities are essential to provide necessary institutional support and advance the methodology for monitoring sexual and reproductive health and rights and harmful practices.



Results •

Capturing Broader Transformations across Outcomes

SIARP supported existing regional as well as new EAWG interventions, ensuring sustainability through sustained engagement of regional partners and civil society organizations. The regional frameworks and knowledge products developed under Pillar 1 of SIARP ensured the continuity of existing regional interventions and introduced new initiatives on EAWG, guaranteeing sustainability through consistent engagement with regional partners and civil society organizations. Under Pillar 1, the development of regional frameworks and knowledge products significantly contributed to Pillar 6, bolstering the advocacy and social movements of women's rights organizations at both national and regional levels.

The focus of SIARP was on refreshing legal and policy frameworks concerning EAWG and harmful practices. Pillar 5 concentrated on ensuring the availability and quality of data and services pertinent to EAWG and harmful practices, while Pillar 6 centred on strengthening women's movements and civil society organizations.

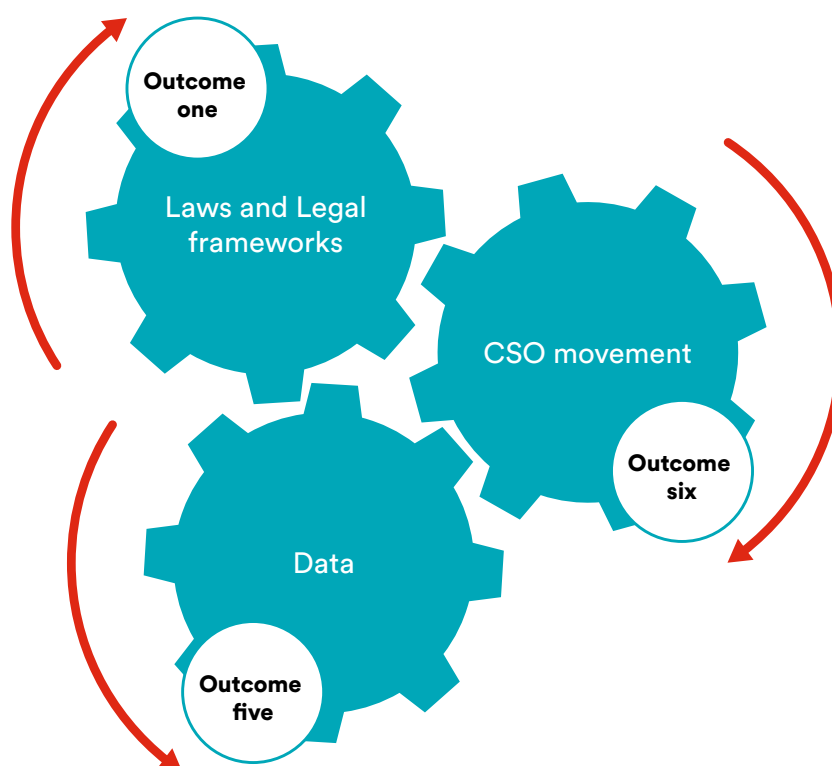
Several specific examples highlight how the regional frameworks and knowledge products, developed under SIARP in 2022, synergistically complemented interventions across various outcomes:

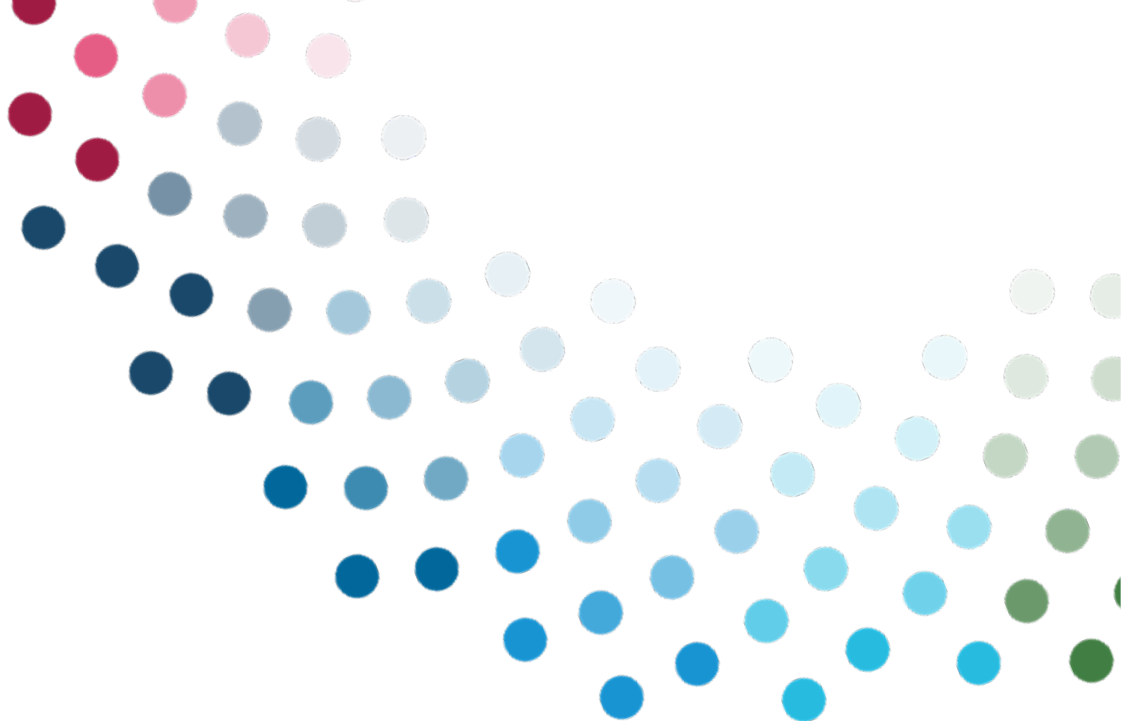
- Regional strategic frameworks and knowledge products developed under Outcome 1 directly contributed to Outcomes 5 and 6 by emphasizing the adoption and implementation of legal and policy frameworks on EAWG and harmful practices. The creation of the first-ever evidenced-based RAP for Africa with a M&E framework on EAWG comprehensively addressed data and civil society engagement related to EAWG and harmful practices.
- Documents like the Accountability Framework and the Continental FGM Report, developed under Outcome 1, are actively utilized by activists, youth groups, and human rights advocates supported under Outcome 6.
- Media training conducted under Outcome 1 incorporated components on leveraging available quantitative and qualitative data to advocate for the betterment of women and girls' lives in the context of violence against women and health programming.
- Diverse innovative solutions promoted under Outcome 6 to eradicate practices like FGM and child marriage offer valuable insights for informing feasible national programmes and strategies.
- Capacity strengthening initiatives under Pillar 1 enabled regional partners and civil society organizations to influence Member States in drafting and reviewing laws and policies

related to women's rights, aligning with Outcome 6's objectives to advance GEWE.

- Increased collaboration between the African Union Commission's Women Gender Youth Department and RUNOs under Pillar 1 fostered better coordination and understanding of the Spotlight Initiative among regional partners and civil society organizations, resulting in strengthened linkages between the three outcome areas to support ownership and sustainability beyond the programme implementation period.
- Adhering to United Nations reform principles facilitated achievements beyond specific outcomes, leveraging technical expertise across RUNOs on Pillars 1, 5, and 6 in programme implementation.

- The significance of data for governments in understanding the scale of VAWG and harmful practices problems was evident, as data and research reports generated under Outcome 5 were utilized by youth groups and civil society organizations funded under Outcome 6 to design community-level programmes and interventions.
- Pre-consultations and support for young people and religious leaders in formulating actionable recommendations for the implementation of the Kinshasa Declaration and Positive Masculinity contributed to reinforcing the African Union and Member States' accountability regarding adopted regional instruments.





Reporting on the implementation of participatory monitoring, evaluation and reporting, including the update on MTA recommendations

Throughout the implementation period, SIARP focused on enhancing participatory monitoring and evaluation across several crucial areas. SIARP actively engaged all relevant stakeholders, including right holders, project staff, and decision-makers to improve effectiveness of the programme, to increase ownership, to enhance accountability and foster learning.

By collecting and analysing data from stakeholders, it is possible to identify what is working well and what is not working. The following sections summarize key participatory monitoring, evaluation and reporting actions conducted throughout SIARP implementation period.

1. **Strengthening regular SIAPR monitoring:** SIARP developed a well-received and validated regional M&E plan outlining the programme's theory of change, result indicators, activity plan, and diverse monitoring methods. This instituted mechanisms like quarterly reporting,

monthly coordination meetings, and joint annual reviews to carefully track progress and foster coordination among stakeholders.

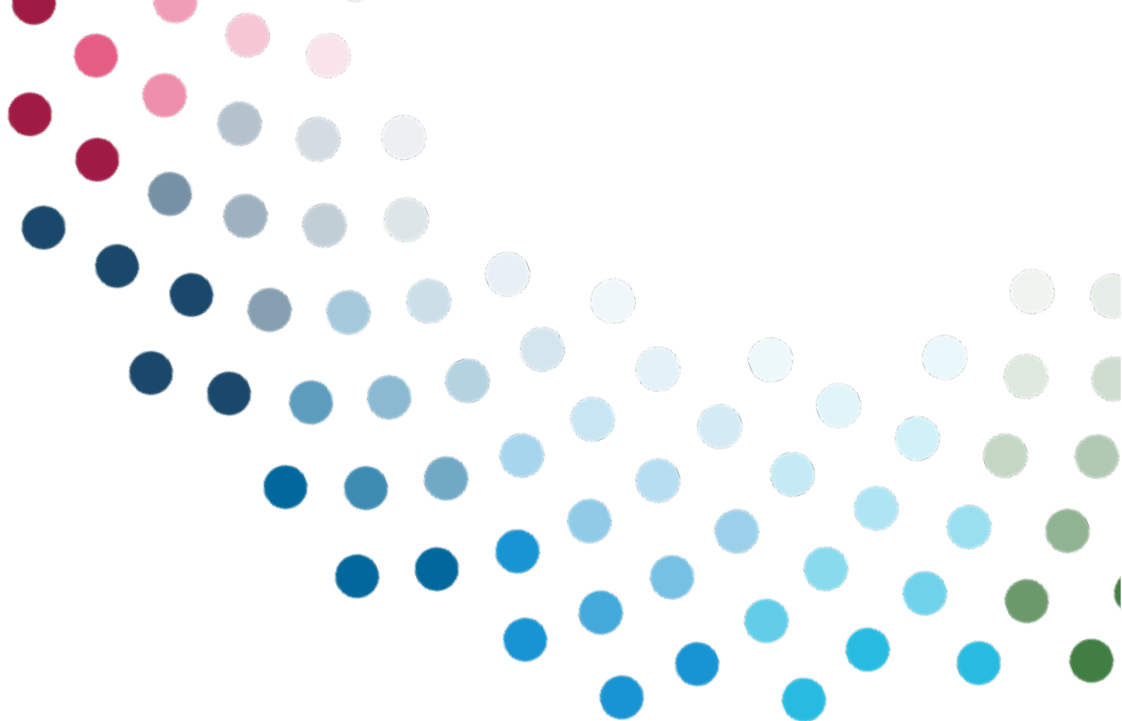
2. **Active engagement of CSRRG on M&E:** SIARP facilitated a consultation meeting with CSRRG members to gather systematic feedback on the 2021 annual report. This engagement included discussions on addressing civil society capacity challenges and exploring tools like the global civil society scorecard to improve reporting.
3. **SIARP Stream I Annual Review Meeting:** This virtual meeting gathered participants from RUNOs, civil society organizations/IPs, CSRRG, the African Union Commission, and the Programme Coordination Unit to review progress. It highlighted successful coordination among stakeholders, youth engagement, and emphasized the need for further acceleration despite encouraging progress.



FIGURE 3 SIARP REVIEW MEETING AND FIELD VISIT - LAGOS , NIGERIA

4. **SIARP Joint Review and Planning Workshop:** A four-day workshop aimed to strengthen synergies across SIARP. It presented results, challenges, and findings from regional assessments, fostering discussions on enhancing coordination, accelerating SIARP delivery, and ensuring sustainability.
5. **SIARP MTA and Final Evaluation:** A comprehensive midterm assessment conducted from March to September 2022 using various data collection methods highlighted programme areas performing well and those needing attention. Recommendations included establishing a stronger synergy between interventions, aligning indicators with global systems, and developing a sustainability plan. The SIARP final evaluation commenced in October 2023 as part of a global system assessment, gathering firsthand data in November 2023 from 37 stakeholders including from the African Union Commission, European Union, RUNO, the Programme Coordination Unit, and selected implementing partners. The evaluation report is anticipated in 2024 quarter one, with the findings guiding the next Spotlight 2.0 initiative at both the national and regional levels.
6. **Global Learning Symposium:** SIARP contributed experiences in a PME session, discussing challenges and strategies for regional result tracking. It fostered valuable conversations on monitoring strategies and experiences across programmes.
7. **Second Regional Review and Learning Workshop:** Held in Lagos, this platform facilitated knowledge exchange among SIARP stakeholders, identifying successful initiatives and enabling ongoing communication for sustained impact.

Overall, SIARP's participatory monitoring and evaluation initiatives aimed to foster collaboration, address challenges, and incorporate feedback to continually enhance programme effectiveness and impact.



Capturing Change at Outcome Level

SIARP supported existing regional as well as new EVAWG interventions, ensuring sustainability through sustained engagement of regional partners and civil society organizations. The regional frameworks and knowledge products developed under Outcome 1 contributed to Outcome 5 and 6 as the interventions focused on the adoption and implementation of legal and policy frameworks on EVAWG and harmful practices. For instance, the development of the first-ever evidenced-based RAP for Africa with M&E framework on EVAWG contributed to the other outcomes as it comprehensively addressed data and engagement with civil society organizations on EVAWG and harmful practices. The initiative under Outcome 1 (strengthening the capacity of regional partners and civil society organizations to influence Member States on drafting and reviewing laws and policies related to women's rights groups) contributed to Outcome 6 as it promoted the protection of civil society organizations and human rights defenders.

In addition, the increased collaboration with the African Union Commission WGYD, and among RUNOs, under Outcome 1, resulted in better coordination and understanding of the Spotlight Initiative Programme among regional partners and civil society organizations. The enhanced collaboration resulted in establishing linkages between the three outcome areas and allowed for closely working with civil society organizations/implementing partners to strengthen the ownership and sustainability of Spotlight's impact beyond the programme implementation period.

Moreover, working in line with United Nations reform has helped to achieve results beyond specific outcomes. For example, leveraging technical expertise across RUNOs on Outcome 1, 5 and 6 have been utilized in the implementation of the programme.

Outcome 1: Legislative and policy frameworks, based on evidence and in line with international human rights standards, on all forms of violence against women and girls and harmful practices are in place and translated into plans.

The following sections highlight the key accomplishments of this outcome, which have been realized through three primary output areas.

Output 1:

National and regional partners have strengthened evidence-based knowledge and capacity to assess gaps, draft new and/or strengthen existing legislation and policies and enforce implementation of existing legislation on ending sexual and gender-based violence, FGM and child marriage, that are in line with international HR standards and treaty bodies' recommendations.

Result Indicators	Progress		Achievement against milestone
	Baseline (2020) End of project/	Cumulative (2023)	
Number of draft new and/or strengthened laws and/or policies on ending VAWG.	35	65	170%
Number of Parliamentarians and staff of human rights institutions with strengthened capacities to advocate for, draft new and/or strengthen existing legislation and/or policies on ending VAWG.	0	164	80%

SIARP utilized an evidence-based approach by conducting comprehensive desk reviews and assessments to inform the development of tailored capacity-building packages. Some of the assessments included are:

Status of child marriage, legislation, policy environment and programmatic approaches in responding to child marriage in Africa

A desk review on child marriage legislation, policies and programmes in Africa **revealed gaps in birth and marriage registration procedures and systems as significant impediments to the prohibition of child marriage.** Child marriage campaigns by the African Union and international partners have successfully increased the number of African countries taking appropriate measures that ensure that no child marriage takes place before the minimum age of 18 as per Article 21 of the 1990 African Charter on the Right and Welfare of the Child. Despite the improvements, religion and cultural tradition are still determining factors in both the persistence and elimination of child marriage. For example, despite the high court decision to amend the Marriage Act to raise the legal age of marriage to 18 for girls and boys in Tanzania, the government has not outlawed child marriage. Traditional and informal justice systems in Africa have generally improved

although change has been less pronounced in rural areas. The use of digital technologies is helping to bring legal aid and other child marriage preventive services closer to adolescent girls.

A regional evidence-based mapping and assessment report on the status of domestication and enforcement of human rights instruments and the development and implementation of national action plans and financing on EVAWG in Africa

The [comprehensive assessment](#), spanning the years 2021 through 2023 was launched with another mapping and assessment report on the ratification, domestication, implementation, and reporting on global and regional instruments on GEWE. The online launch, held on 23 March 2023, brought together 105 (85 female, 20 male) participants/stakeholders from the African Union and Regional Economic Communities departments, Member States, civil society organizations, and United Nations agencies to discuss Member States' progress in ratifying, domesticating, and implementing global and regional human rights instruments on EVAWG and GEWE.

The mapping report provides a broad overview of the domestication of global and regional human rights

commitments on EAWG in all 55 African Union Member States and a deep-dive analysis of 18 Member States. It has contributed to **establishing a baseline for regional programmes related to EAWG**. Consequently, the report has informed policy decisions at both regional and national levels. Some of the key findings included to date, the Protocol to the African Charter on Gender Equality and the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol) has not secured universal ratification with 44 countries out of 55 Member States having ratified. In addition, there is a gap between the regional and international commitments and national-level policies, operational development plans, and level of investment by Member States on EAWG. Evidence of slow implementation can be seen, among others, in the absence of enabling legislation and policy environment to give effect to enforce human rights instruments related to EAWG, including the Maputo Protocol, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), and the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), among others.

Overall, mapping and assessment under this output served as key instruments for Regional Economic Communities, regional partners, and civil society organizations **to advocate for and influence Member States to ratify, domesticate, implement, and report on regional and global instruments on EAWG and GEWE and increase funding for EAWG**. A policy brief was developed to further disseminate the mapping and assessment reports findings and recommendations to diverse stakeholders.

Capacitated regional partners, including the African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities, Pan-African Parliament, and the Network of African Parliamentarians, on drafting and reviewing laws and policies to influence members to accelerate the ratification and domestication of regional and global human rights instruments related to EAWG and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

SIARP enhanced over 67 (56 female, 11 male) regional partners, national stakeholders, and civil society organizations from the African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities of ECOWAS, IGAD, Southern African Development Community (SADC), and EAC, regional Parliamentarians as well as representatives from national Ministries in charge of Gender and Women's Affairs. **The ToT** fostered cross-learning among regional partners, Member States, and civil society organizations on best practices for the ratification, domestication, and implementation of international and regional human rights instruments on EAWG. SIARP also successfully developed and rolled out a Facilitators Training Manual on the Ratification and Domestication of Human Rights Instruments related to EAWG based on the findings and recommendations of the mapping and assessment report. The Facilitators Training Manual serves as a resource guide and training tool to enhance the capacity of regional partners

and civil society organizations to engage and influence the Member States to ratify, domesticate, and enforce human rights instruments. The subsequent post-evaluation training demonstrated that the training brought several positive achievements at sub-regional, national and sub-national levels. The Facilitators Training Manual can be found [here](#).

The following box summarized key results.

Key results:

- » The ECOWAS Parliament took a significant step by initiating comprehensive reforms of all human rights and criminal codes, aligning them with international and regional human rights instruments.
- » In Uganda, local government staff underwent training that not only enhanced their understanding of EAWG as a human rights concern but also improved their ability to articulate these issues in current reporting and policy development within the country.
- » Namibia conducted public hearings addressing gender-based violence, where legislative members and Parliamentarians actively participated, highlighting their commitment to addressing this pressing issue.
- » Advocacy efforts in Burundi yielded positive results, as they successfully led to a revision of the Family Code to better address gender-based violence. In SADC, advocates called for a comprehensive analysis of the SADC model law on child marriage and actively pursued amendments to existing marriage laws.
- » Moreover, individuals who received training applied their newfound knowledge to advise regional Parliamentarians on international and regional treaty provisions, significantly contributing to the formulation of policies. Many civil society organizations reported increased involvement in policy drafting and reform committees, where they successfully influenced other committee members to consider human rights instruments related to EAWG.

SIARP supported the ECOWAS Gender Observatory (ECOGO)

SIARP in collaboration with ECOWAS contributed to **enhancing the capacity** of ECOWAS's Center for Gender Development (CCDG) representatives, national ministries, and civil society organizations to build the capacity of the ECOWAS Gender Observatory. The operationalization of the ECOWAS Gender Observatory was held from 13 to 15 July 2023 in Saly, Senegal, and attended by 43 individuals (23 females, 20 males), equipped participants with the competencies to effectively harness the Gender Observatory platform. The ECOWAS Gender Observatory is an innovative regional platform designed to collect, analyze, and manage reliable and consistent data on gender programmes implemented in ECOWAS Member States. It serves as a tool to monitor, evaluate, and report on the CCDG's programmes and activities in the Member States, providing timely and accurate information on the contributions of the CCDG to GEWE and EVAWG in the region. Most importantly, the Gender Observatory will enable ECOWAS to efficiently monitor and evaluate member States' compliance, especially on the status of ratification, domestication, enforcement, and reporting on regional and global commitments to GEWE and EVAWG.

Overall, this training workshop played a crucial role in building the capacity of participants to effectively utilize the platform, enabling them to contribute to evidence-based decision-making processes, monitor progress towards gender equality goals, and ultimately advance the rights and well-being of women and girls in West Africa.

SIARP, in collaboration with the African Union, developed an accountability framework to monitor national-level commitment and action towards the elimination of FGM and implementation of the plan of action of the Africa Union Initiative on the Elimination of FGM.

SIARP actively supported the African Union's endeavors in driving policy and legislative reforms through the adaptation of policy instruments within the Specialized Technical Committees, aiming to influence implementation at the Member State level. During the Fourth Ordinary Session of the African Union Strategic Committee on Social Development, Labor, and Employment held in April 2022, the Health, Humanitarian Affairs, and Social Development Department presented pivotal strategies on ending harmful practices at an experts meeting. These strategies were endorsed and directed to the ministerial meeting for official adoption, marking a significant milestone. The ratified Accountability Framework on Harmful Practices gained official status after a decisive resolution during the Executive Council Meeting in Lusaka in July. This framework is accessible in five languages on the African Union platform.

Moreover, in a bid to fortify oversight and assessment by African Union Human Rights Organs regarding State Party reports, a summit was convened on the African Union Accountability Framework on Eliminating Harmful Practices in December 2022 in Johannesburg, South Africa. Attended by 29 participants, including Commissioners, Member States, senior officers, and experts from the African Union, alongside representatives from the United Nations and international organizations, the summit aimed to conduct a comprehensive overview of the accountability framework. It also sought to develop operational tools, such as an operational plan and key questions, while fostering a stakeholder dialogue on the African Union human rights organs' role in reinforcing State Parties' accountability.

Representatives from African Union human rights organs showcased a strong commitment to adopting the accountability framework, urging Member States to report in accordance with its guidelines, reviewing reports, and supplementing them with shadow reports. The operational plan, along with the tools, is slated for finalization in 2023, with plans to operationalize the framework during the Member States meeting on the implementation strategy in 2024. The African Union Accountability Framework on Harmful Practices can be found [here](#) in five languages.

The collaborative support to the African Union Campaign (Phase II) to End Child Marriage work in holding members accountable to progress towards SDG 5.3, with Burkina Faso, Tanzania and Zimbabwe amending laws to restrict child marriages (with Zambia cabinet recently introducing the amendment bill to Parliament). Likewise, six countries (Niger, Ghana, Uganda, Zambia, Mozambique, Nigeria)



have developed or renewed their costed national action plans to end child marriage. The [country post monitoring missions](#) support to the African Union Goodwill Ambassador and ACERWC Special Rapporteur have galvanized action and accountability to eliminate child marriage and FGM in 14 targeted countries (Senegal, Niger, Mauritanian, Mozambique, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Zambia, South Africa, Seychelles, Madagascar, Kenya, Uganda and Democratic Republic of Congo). In [Zambia](#), for example, the country post monitoring mission addressed the alignment of the minimum age of marriage for girls to continental and international standards and an amendment bill approved by the Zambia's Cabinet was introduced to Parliament.

SIARP supported the ratification and implementation of the Maputo Protocol in Africa.

SIARP played a pivotal role in advancing the Maputo Protocol on Women's Rights by facilitating key initiatives across different regions. In collaboration with regional partners such as the African Union Commission and civil society organizations, SIARP spearheaded advocacy efforts in Egypt and Morocco, urging for the ratification, domestication, and enforcement of the Maputo Protocol among Member States.

Furthering this commitment, SIARP, in partnership with Equality Now and the African Union, engaged with the South Sudan Ministry of Gender, Child, and Social Welfare to accelerate the ratification process. A series of strategic meetings and engagements were organized to catalyze the formation of a Ratification Committee, supported by seven civil society organizations dedicated to promoting the Protocol's ratification. This endeavor included the development of advocacy strategies and a policy brief aimed at engaging key stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Gender, Child, and Social Welfare and the Office of the Vice President, ensuring the Protocol's ratification. Subsequently, an advocacy mission led by the African Union Commission Women, Gender, and Youth Directorate to South Sudan garnered commitments from government representatives, culminating in South Sudan [acceded to the Maputo Protocol by the President of South Sudan in March 2023](#). [SOAWR-Maputo-Protocol-Report-07-PDF.pdf\(soawr-test.org\)](#)

In tandem with these efforts, SIARP contributed significantly to commemorating the **20th Anniversary of the Maputo Protocol**. Collaborating with the African Union Commission, WGYD, SIARP supported the convening of a High-Level Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya. Under the auspices of H.E. Dr. William Samoei Ruto, President of Kenya, this conference saw the participation of various entities, including ACHPR, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa, Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR), civil society organizations, United Nations Agencies, and International Development Partners.

The conference issued a compelling Call to Action, emphasizing the imperative to overcome barriers impeding women's rights in Africa. This included mobilizing financial resources, combating violence against women and girls, fostering intergenerational dialogues, engaging men as partners, fostering commitment to inclusive transformation, and fortifying partnerships to empower grassroots women.

SIARP enabled the African Union to maintain peer review mechanism on national progress towards addressing FGM and implementation of the plan of action of the Africa Union initiative on the Elimination of FGM

Progress towards addressing FGM and implementation of the plan of action of the Africa Union initiative on the Elimination of FGM documented and disseminated.

Under the title 'Getting to Zero Female Genital Mutilation in Africa: Strengthening Human Rights, Accelerating Efforts and Galvanizing Accountability', the FGM Continental report was finalized and launched on 11 October 2022 with a virtual event attended by 471 people. The launch of the report also garnered strong engagement online.⁴

The aim of the African Union report on FGM on the continent is to provide a recent historic account, scope of the harmful practice, an examination of the impact on lives of young girls and women, a policy analysis and recommendations. The report analysis and discussions underpinned by human rights seeks to highlight good practices on the ground, whilst emphasizing the need for accountability at all levels if Africa is to get to the Zero FGM within its generation. After the launch, the report was disseminated to the African Union Organs, civil society organizations, NHRIs and other stakeholders working on FGM availing the latest information regarding FGM in the Continent. The Report and the policy brief can be found [here](#)

SIARP elevated FGM as a top high-level agenda through a high-level international conference as part of the implementation of the plan of action of the Africa Union Initiative on the Elimination of FGM.

SIARP played a significant role in supporting the African Union's 2nd International Conference on FGM held under the theme 'Change in a Generation' in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, from 9 to 11 October 2023 with approximately 750 individuals taking part, graced by the presence of esteemed figures like the Commissioner of Health, Humanitarian Affairs, and Social Development, H.E. Minata Samate Cessouma, Hon. Janet Salah-Njie from the Banjul Commission and an expert from the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child also contributed, along with representatives from esteemed bodies like the Pan-African Parliament, ECOWAS, EAC, and AMU.

⁴ 5000 impressions were posted from twitter accounts of the Saleema Initiative.

The conference culminated in the adoption of an outcome document titled ‘Change in a Generation – the Dar es Salaam Outcome to Accelerate Action towards the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation’ after rigorous discussions spanning three days from five high-level panels and 30+ breakout sessions. The focus was on empowering youth-led and women-led organizations to share insights and perspectives on FGM eradication.

Notable outcomes included a compelling call for action:

- Conducting a comprehensive study on population movement across borders to address FGM, especially in West and Central Africa where data is limited.
- Embracing a multi-sectoral approach to address FGM in the context of humanitarian, development, and health crises influenced by climate change, conflict, and emergencies.
- Engaging young people and traditional leaders and civil society organizations as catalysts for change to transform negative gender norms perpetuating FGM.
- Strengthening national accountability mechanisms to track progress on National Plans of Action for ending FGM and

hold governments accountable for legislative, policy, and financial commitments.

The conference also served as an excellent platform to launch the end FGM network Africa led by Orchid Project. [End FGM network Africa](#). End FGM/C Network Africa is an African-led initiative seeking to fill a critical gap: providing a platform for a united voice to influence decision-makers at all levels and to drive coordinated advocacy targeted towards ending FGM/C in Africa.

Following the conference, SIARP has undertaken several initiatives to address these urgent action points. This includes the development and testing of humanitarian development peace nexus toolkits in various countries and the publication of [case study on ending cross-border FGM in Uganda](#) and [statistical overview on ending FGM practices in Africa](#). Furthermore, efforts have been directed towards enhancing the capabilities of youth-led and women-led organizations, exemplified by the GTA [seven-step guide for civil society organizations](#), aiming to mobilize a mass movement for change and strengthen advocacy efforts. [Outcome Document](#) of the Conference and the [Youth Declaration](#) of the Conference. [News](#) on the FGM Conference from the journalist who was trained in the Media Training supported by SIARP.



AT THE 2ND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FGM IN DAR ES SALAAM, THE SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE GALVANIZED PARTNERS, UNITING THEM IN A RESOLUTE CALL TO END FGM WITHIN THE CURRENT GENERATION.

Strengthened advocacy and dialogue of the African Union and ACERWC's with Regional Economic Communities and governments to influence the drafting of new and/or strengthening of existing legislation on ending child marriage that are in line with international human rights standards and treaty bodies' recommendations supported.

SIARP, in collaboration with Equality Now, has developed two policy briefs aiming to shape legal advocacy efforts at both regional and national levels for the adoption and implementation of the SADC Model Law. These briefs delve into the implementation status of the SADC Model Law in Tanzania, Zambia, and Malawi, highlighting successful strategies fostering adoption and implementation in these countries and at the regional intergovernmental level. To ensure accuracy and relevance, local partners have collaborated on these briefs, ensuring the accuracy of facts and the utility of recommended strategies. These policy briefs will serve as the foundation for advocacy efforts at regional and national levels (see [Policy Brief 1](#), [Policy Brief 2](#)).

Additionally, UNFPA has provided substantial support to ACERWC for the development of the **Joint General Comment on FGM**. This support has included workshops, such as the one held in Pretoria in 2022, facilitating discussions on the draft general comment with the participation of ACERWC, ACHPR, commissioners, special rapporteurs, and civil society organizations. Further backing was extended for the meeting on 'Strengthening Accountability to Eliminate Harmful Practices in Africa' during the 41st session of ACERWC, where the Joint General Comment was adopted. The 42nd session of ACERWC took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in November 2023, the Joint General Comment was launched with UNFPA's support, marking a significant step in the ongoing efforts to address harmful practices ([Joint general comment on FGM](#)). This Joint General Comment highlights the legislative, institutional and other measures that should be taken to prevent and eliminate FGM; articulates the measures for accountability (individual and state level) in the context of human rights violations and gender-based violence resulting from FGM. It elaborates on medical, psychosocial, and other support services that should be made available for survivors of FGM; articulates measures that should be taken to prevent and ensure accountability for the cross-border practice of FGM; and the particular considerations to be taken into account in respect of asylum seekers fleeing from their countries due to the threat of FGM, or those who are internally displaced for the same reason.

Strengthened monitoring of national-level initiatives towards the elimination of FGM through support provided for the African Union Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Children.

SIARP supported the joint [country post monitoring missions](#) country post monitoring missions of the Goodwill Ambassador

of African Union campaigns on ending child marriage and the ACERWC Special Rapporteur on ending child marriage in 14 targeted countries (Seychelles, Madagascar, Kenya, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, [Nigeria](#), Senegal, [South Africa](#), [Zambia](#) and Zimbabwe). Aimed at improving the tracking and reporting on the country specific implementation progress on the campaign ending child marriage and FGM campaigns, the joint missions documented key country campaign outputs, including challenges, lessons learned, and best practices, and provided key recommendations to accelerate the implementation of the end child marriage and elimination of FGM campaign action plans.

Critical steps towards demonstrated leadership and commitment in accelerating programmes, policies, and legislation for preventing and responding to child marriage were observed in the countries visited, including steps towards **alignment with continental and international legal and regulatory frameworks on ending child marriage**. For example, [in Zambia](#), the monitoring mission addressed the alignment of the minimum age of marriage for girls to continental and international standards and an amendment bill approved by the Zambia's cabinet was introduced to Parliament. The missions also noted significant achievements towards the implementation of national action plans that have been enhanced by the increased governments' collaboration with civil society organizations, development partners and other non-government organizations. However, the lack of adequate funding from governments poses a critical challenge in the effective coordination, implementation and monitoring of national policy frameworks and plans to end child marriage. Throughout the mission, engagements were held with various stakeholders, including government officials, civil society, law enforcement, human rights bodies, community members, traditional and religious leaders, and United Nations agencies.

Key findings from the joint mission include:

1. **Strengthening legal frameworks:** Countries demonstrated commitment to aligning laws with international norms, exemplified by Zambia's efforts to adjust the minimum marriage age, showcasing a dedication to international and continental standards.
2. **National action plans:** While significant strides were made in implementing national action plans, lack of adequate funding from Member States poses a challenge, jeopardizing the successful execution of these plans to combat child marriage in Africa.
3. **Multi-sectoral coordination:** Countries like Malawi exhibited robust coordination networks at all levels, while Senegal showcased well-aligned coordination mechanisms under the National Strategy for Child Protection, signaling effective response to child marriage.

4. **Engagement of traditional leaders:** Stakeholders, including traditional leaders, played a crucial role in reshaping societal norms. Instances in Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Niger highlighted their contribution through enacting by-laws, canceling marriages, and supporting girls' education, showcasing their significant impact.
5. **Accountability and leadership commitment:** Most countries exhibited commitment at the highest levels in driving programmes, policies, and legislation to combat child marriage. The designation of an African Presidential Champion from Zambia has notably enhanced visibility and political will for the cause among peer leaders.

SIARP supported the African Union Commission to organize high-level panels with focus on strategic issues related to child marriage and FGM during African Union Summit, CSW, United Nations General Assembly and European Union forums.

Throughout various international platforms, concerted efforts have been made to address the pressing issue of FGM and child marriage, recognizing the imperative of fostering partnerships and innovative strategies.

Promoting the role of civil society organizations working with the African Union Commission to protect children against violence in Africa (child marriage, FGM, online child sexual exploitation and abuse, and violence against children).

The African Union in partnership with UNICEF and World Vision International convened a high-level side event at the United Nations General Assembly showcasing successful case studies, including emerging and promising practices from continental initiatives such as the European Union-funded SIARP and fostering dialogue between political civil society organizations, namely religious and traditional leaders. The 18 September 2023 event called for action to support accountability mechanisms including monitoring practices that track progress on the elimination of harmful practices, in addition to catalyzing the use of data and evidence to conduct regular progress assessments.

Engaging religious, political, and traditional leaders as catalysts for change in ending harmful practices by 2030

The African Union in partnership with UNICEF and the Government of the Republic of Zambia convened a high-level side event at the United Nations General Assembly on 19 September 2023 to provide a platform for dynamic and interactive discussions, showcasing successful case studies, including emerging promising practices from continental initiatives such as the European Union-funded SIARP and fostering dialogue between political, religious, and traditional leaders.

Vaillante: The fictional miniseries shedding light on child marriage

On International Women's Day (#IWD2022), UNICEF and Spotlight Initiative hosted a [private screening](#) of Vaillante, a fictional mini-series about child marriage in West and Central Africa. The screening was followed by a panel Q&A.

"The subject is very dear to my heart. When you mention #childmarriage, I am very willing to show up. I am very interested in empowering girls and child marriage is a priority for me as it is for UNICEF."

Catherine Russell, UNICEF Executive Director
(source: UNICEF Africa Tweet) ://

www.facebook.com/watch/?v=367481365034357

West and Central Africa, about 2 in 5 girls are married before their 18th birthday, and 1 in 8 is married before their 15th birthday. Despite some progress, a girl from West and Central Africa still faces the highest risk in the world of child marriage. Vaillante reveals the scale of the issue, and showcases how young people, especially girls, can be part of the solution if empowered to take action.

Over 16 million people from 101 countries have watched the three episodes since its online launch in November 2021. On the 2022 Day of the African Child celebrated on 16 June under the theme of 'Eliminating Harmful Practices Affecting Children: Progress on Policy and Practice since 2013', Vaillante was screened in four high schools located in Addis Ababa city, Amhara (Addis Zemen town) and Oromia regions (Chiro town) in Ethiopia. The screening sites (school districts) in the regions were selected due to the relatively high prevalence of child marriage in the areas and the ongoing activities in the locations on ending child marriage implemented by UNICEF and the government. Overall, the event helped to advocate for the increased role of young people and build synergies among different stakeholders.

Commission on the Status of Women

At the 67th **Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67)** held at the United Nations HQ, a [high-level panel](#) discussion was hosted by the Government of Burkina Faso, in collaboration with several key stakeholders such as the African Union, Canada, Egypt, Italy, Zambia, the European Union, UNFPA, and UNICEF. This panel emphasized the challenges and opportunities within humanitarian crises like climate change, COVID-19, and conflicts, underscoring the voices of young people and women-led organizations. A strong recommitment from government stakeholders was urged to accelerate the elimination of child marriage and FGM.

United Nations General Assembly

Similarly, during the **United Nations General Assembly**, the Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development Department of the African Union, in collaboration with UNFPA and UNICEF, organized a high-level side event. This event, ‘Empowering African Girls: Engaging Religious, Political, and Traditional Leaders as Catalysts for Change in Ending Harmful Practices by 2030,’ aimed to engage key leaders in ending harmful practices.

The Women Deliver conference in Kigali witnessed UNFPA’s support for a Pre-Conference Day on FGM, where the establishment of the FGM Africa Network was announced. Additionally, the Second International African Union Conference on the elimination of FGM marked the official launch of this network.

Partnerships with men and boys to transform social and gender norms to end FGM

SIARP also organized a global annual event in New York commemorating the **International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM**. This event launched hashtags #MenEndFGM and #EndFGM, reaching millions across social media. Under the theme ‘Partnerships with Men and Boys to Transform Social and Gender Norms to End Female Genital Mutilation, [two campaign hashtags](#) were launched with #MenEndFGM reaching 68.4 million views and #EndFGM reaching 266 million views across social media channels. In 2022, two publications were also published: [Engaging Boys and Men to End FGM](#) and [Promoting men and boys’ engagement in ending FGM in Middle East and North Africa](#) developed with Spotlight support.

SIARP has embarked on a comprehensive initiative aimed at strengthening the capabilities of NHRIs across various regions. Their focus encompasses advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights, addressing gender-based violence, and combating practices like FGM. Central to this effort was the development of crucial resources such as a technical note guiding countries in formulating anti-FGM laws aligned with human rights and ongoing work on a compendium outlining accountability mechanisms for FGM. Capacity-building workshops, engaging participants from diverse African countries, aimed to fortify NHRIs’ monitoring capabilities regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence eradication, and tackling harmful practices.

Moreover, a significant panel at CSW67 titled ‘**Catalysing Innovation to End Female Genital Mutilation and Child Marriage**’ provided a platform for stakeholders to discuss innovation and technological change’s potential in achieving SDG 5.3, drawing over 400 attendees both in person and online.

Further advocacy and awareness occurred through a webinar focusing on United Nations General Assembly resolutions on child, early, and forced marriage and FGM. Supporting Member States shared the resolutions’ content, emphasizing the importance of global, regional, and national advocacy towards fulfilling SDG 5.3 and highlighting challenges and the necessity of building partnerships for resolution advancement.

Regional and national human rights institutions in disseminating and advocating for full implementation of resolutions and recommendations from the different human rights instruments on FGM (United Nations General Assembly resolution, UPR, CEDAW, CRC and African Union/continental-level instruments).

SIARP fostered collaboration with NHRIs through specialized workshops like ‘Engaging with National Human Rights Institutions in Advancing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and Preventing Harmful Practices.’ These sessions, held across Anglophone and Francophone African countries, enabled NHRIs to pinpoint areas for human rights assessments concerning sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence, and harmful practices within their nations. Complementing this, SIARP developed tools like a guide for NHRIs on country assessments and a primer on conducting public inquiries to eliminate FGM, aiming to enhance NHRIs’ accountability and strengthen UNFPA-NHRI partnerships focusing on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The sessions underscored the importance of employing a human rights-based approach to address sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence, and harmful practices. Discussions revolved around challenges faced by NHRIs, spanning institutional, political, economic, and resource-related hurdles. Notably, securing sustainable funding emerged as a critical element in enabling NHRIs to conduct comprehensive assessments or inquiries related to sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence, or harmful practices. Despite positive feedback and shared dedication, NHRIs require increased capacity and collaboration with civil society and funding exploration to comprehensively address sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender-based violence in their monitoring role.

SIARP supported the development and implementation of a communication campaign for the African Union Initiative on the Elimination of FGM – the Saleema Initiative.

Throughout the implementation of SIARP, extensive support was extended to the Saleema initiative encompassing advocacy missions led by Ambassadors, comprehensive communication campaigns, and dedicated advocacy endeavors. The Saleema Initiative has successfully empowered six young African women from each of the African Union’s six regions, enabling them to collaborate

closely with the African Union Youth Envoy in advocating for the eradication of FGM. In June 2023, the selection process for the second cohort of Saleema Ambassadors commenced, enlisting six young women representing diverse regions across the continent. Notably, this fresh cohort of Saleema Ambassadors also features three Saleema Brothers who will collaborate closely with the Ambassadors within the Saleema Initiative. Together, their collective goal is to eliminate FGM in Africa by 2030 while fervently advocating for the protection of girls and the empowerment of women. The Saleema Initiative's communication campaign emphasizes grassroots engagement, involving communities, youth, and women in shaping the dialogue pivotal to the Saleema Campaign.

Strengthened capacity of the media to improve accountability and reporting on harmful practices in partnership with the African Union.

Media training sessions targeted 90 frontline journalists and media scholars from all over African countries. The aim was to fortify journalism practices that foster accountability in eliminating harmful practices. The training focused on

sensitive reporting on harmful practices, including for gender reporters, media scholars, and university journalism faculty members. These endeavors underscore a growing willingness among journalists to cover these crucial stories and break the silence surrounding FGM and related issues, contributing significantly to the dialogue for change. [Journalism and accountability](#).

Subsequently, these training efforts have yielded tangible results, with 23 media pieces produced across Uganda, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Somalia, and Zambia, highlighting issues such as FGM, child marriage, and teenage pregnancies. The trainees have covered several stories to advocate ending FGM. [Story one](#) and [Story two](#).

The capacity of regional and national partners built on gender-transformative and disability-inclusive approach programming

SIARP used the following feasible approaches to cascade gender-transformative programming approach at national and sub-national level.



THE SECOND ROUND JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA PERSONNEL TRAININGS ON SENSITIVE REPORTING , ADDIS ABABA ETHIOPIA

Improvement in social norms programming and measurement:

Guided by the principles of human rights and based on a needs assessment to implement the '[Everybody Wants to Belong](#)' framework (i.e. a practical guide to tackling and leveraging social norms in behaviour change programming), UNICEF, through SIARP, designed a [social norms training package](#)

that allow partners to understand the characteristics and benefits of well-designed social norms change programmes and equip them with the skills and tools (emotional, cognitive, and technical) they need to identify, implement and measure effective social norms change interventions in their work. In addition to converting the training package into a series of short courses for postgraduate training of students and practitioners with the University of Nairobi and others, over

200 government and civil society staff have attended in-person training and over 3,000 practitioners have attended the online course.⁵ In Eritrea, the training to 25 government officials enabled them to adapt the Assess and Ascertain, Consider and Context, Track and Triangulate framework tools to generate social norms data through household surveys and improve harmful practices programming.

UNICEF also collaborated with the African Union to develop a brief that supports programming to end child marriage across the continent. The '[LEADS Approach to Ending Child Marriage](#)' lays out key steps that the Global Programme and

the African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage must undertake, and must support the African Union Member States in pursuing, in order to achieve SDG 5.3, to eliminate all harmful practices, including child marriage, and Agenda 2063, 'the Africa we want'. The LEADS approach to end child marriage emphasizes: Legislation, development and implementation national laws that protect girls from harmful practices, engagement, empowerment of adolescent girls, generation and use of robust data and evidence to inform programmes and strengthening availability and quality of services.



[Tackling implicit bias to drive transformational change:](#)

UNFPA and UNICEF designed a values clarification and attitudes transformation training package that has been delivered in four countries (Mauritania, Senegal, Uganda,

and Zambia) to address staff implicit bias that may negatively influence the delivery of prevention and protection services and demonstrate gender equitable values to drive transformative change.

Output 1.2:

National, sub-national and regional partners have increased capacity to advocate for, influence and develop regional, national and sub-national evidence-based action plans on ending sexual and gender-based violence, FGM and child marriage in line with international human rights standards and achieved increased financing with M&E frameworks, and responding to the needs and priorities of vulnerable groups.

⁵ <https://www.unicef.org/esa/press-releases/university-nairobi-partners-launching-new-courses-keeping-children-safe>

Result Indicators	Progress		Achievement against milestone
	Baseline (2020)	End of project (2023)	
Number of evidence-based national and/or sub-national action plans on ending VAWG developed that respond to the rights of all women and girls, have M&E frameworks, and proposed budgets within the last year.	20	23	88%
Number of supported regional/intergovernmental frameworks/outcome documents that provide guidance to Member States to integrate commitments related to regional initiatives (harmful practices accountability frameworks).	0	5	125%

Strengthened implementation of the Africa-wide initiative to advocate on EVAWG/C in Africa in coordination with the African Union Commission and regional civil society organizations.

Promoting voice and agency for intergenerational dialogue and change

Guided by the principle of “leaving no one behind”, UNICEF and the Youth Division of the African Union Commission through SIARP created a [Youth Reference Group and convened 200 youths](#) across the continent to reimagine an Africa without harmful practices and test youth innovative ideas that promote mental well-being and mental health of children and young people in their communities as part of efforts to address child marriage. Through the Youth Innovation Challenge, 20 youth groups with outstanding innovative applications from 13 countries across the continent were each provided \$2,000 seed funding to: empower girls and support those affected by harmful practices and mental health; enable them work directly with peers in the communities; and advocate for laws and policies concerning girl child. In addition, 30 youth advocates supported by SIARP convened a side-event during the 3rd African Peer Review Mechanism in July to consolidate youth voices directed at transforming harmful practices and behaviours. The key outcome was to highlight the challenges of the pandemic and propose governance solutions that will inform decision-makers during the symposium. In conclusion, the symposium prioritized youth mainstreaming as a critical element for building prosperous, secure and self-sustaining African economies.

SIARP, in partnership with the African Union Commission, developed and validated the first-ever RAP for Africa with a M&E framework on EVAWG.

The regional framework and action plan will guide regional partners and Member States to translate their global and regional commitments into concrete strategies and actions at regional and national levels to address VAWG and promote

sexual and reproductive health and rights. Grounded both in evidence and addressing the specific needs of women and girls, it is a call to action for regional partners, Member States, and all stakeholders to be resourceful and determined in bringing these concerns to the forefront of our conversation and using all available instruments to prevent and address VAWG. This will enhance long-term engagement and a well-coordinated approach to addressing VAWG issues by all stakeholders. The full consideration of this RAP with a M&E framework will enable Member States to develop and implement comprehensive National Action Plans on EVAWG with all appropriate measures to prevent and respond to all forms of VAWG across the African continent. This will significantly contribute to meeting several regional and international human rights commitments concerning women and girls.

RAP was validated with key stakeholders from the African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities, Member States, civil society organizations, and RUNOs in 2022 and is aligned with the African Union Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls. This alignment ensures RAP’s complementarity with existing African Union policies and frameworks, including African Union’s Agenda 2063. Following these revisions, RAP integrated with the M&E framework, was formally submitted to the African Union Commission. and adopted by the Ministerial segment of the 8th Specialized Technical Committee on GEWE composed of African Union Ministers in charge of Gender and Women’s Affairs in November 2023. To operationalize RAP and drive coordinated efforts against VAWG, Member States recommended creating a continental community of practice for knowledge sharing and collaboration. Additionally, they suggested developing a comprehensive compendium of best practices to facilitate learning and build upon existing successes. This serves as a blueprint for regional partners to translate global and regional commitments into actionable strategies addressing EVAWG. The conception of RAP stemmed from an exhaustive collaborative effort



involving internal and external stakeholders, spanning a diverse spectrum of organizational, continental, and international entities.

SIARP enhanced the capacity of the African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities, regional Parliamentarians, and civil society organizations on the development and implementation of action plans and increased financing on EVAWG and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

SIARP in collaboration with the African Union Commission and the African Women's Development and Communications Network (FEMNET) enhanced the capacity of 25 (18 female, 7 male) regional partners (the African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities, regional Parliamentarians) and civil society organizations conducted a ToT on the development and implementation of action plans and increased financing on EVAWG and sexual and reproductive health and rights. from 3 to 5 October 2023 in Nairobi, Kenya.

The ToT is based on a capacity needs assessment that identified that progress remains limited because of inadequate resource allocation to implement EVAWG/harmful practices laws, policies, and programmes; and lack of action plans, national planning frameworks, and allocated budgets for EVAWG and harmful practices, including sexual and reproductive health and rights worsened by a lack of technical capacity and, failure to prioritize action plans within policy and programmes, and discriminatory social norms.

Overall, the ToT enhanced the capacity of regional partners and civil society organizations on lobbying, advocacy, and

negotiation skills for them to popularize and monitor Member States to translate their commitment through increased investment in EVAWG and sexual and reproductive health and rights. The workshop also fostered cross-learning among regional partners and civil society organizations on promising practices in the development and implementation of Action Plans and increased financing on EVAWG.

The impact of National Action and/or other sectoral plans towards ending child marriage investigated.

SIARP supported the **assessment of the level of integration of national and sectorial policies and plans to end child marriage in government budgets for six selected countries** (Chad, Ethiopia, Mali, Nigeria, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe) to enhance the capacities of governments and civil society partners, to advocate for, influence and develop programmatic actions and budgets to end child marriage. The findings showed a weak link between the drafting of policies and plans to guide national responses to harmful practices and their full implementation due to limited human, financial and technical resources as well as low integration of national plans to end child marriage in government budgets, with governments allocating negligible amounts of between 0.01 - 0.08 per cent of their GDPs to programmes that contribute to ending child marriage.

Evidence generated from the assessment will be used by UNICEF to inform advocacy with the African Union, Regional Economic Communities and regional civil society organizations in order to leverage the political will for governments in the two regions to increase budget allocations towards ending child marriage interventions.

MOZAMBIQUE ECM CASE STUDY:

Programme of Activities in Education Sector

In Mozambique, some sectors, such as health and education, have introduced their own internal system to bridge the gap between the plan and the budget in order to support implementation. The education sector has an annual Programme of Activities to implement the Operational Plan 2020–2022 of the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2020–2029.

The Programme of Activities identifies specific activities for each principal activity in the Operational Plan, together with the source of funds, the budget and the responsibility for execution. In this way not only are activities directly linked to the budget, but all sources of funding – including external funds – are brought to bear on one overall government plan. In addition, since the approval of the ESP there is a structural link between the ten-year strategic plan, the three-year rolling operational plan and the annual Programme of Activities. The estimated value of activities included in the Programme of Activities that are relevant to ECM grew from MZN 19.6 million in 2017, to just over MZN 390 million in 2020. In real terms it grew 17-fold. It also grew significantly as a share of the programme of activities, from 1 per cent on the total value of the PdA to 6 per cent in 2020.

The 2020 Programme of Activities included activities related to gender-responsive education; reintegrating out-of-school children into the formal education system, including married children and adolescent mothers; efforts to keep girls in school, including through improving water, sanitation and hygiene facilities and availability of materials; life-skills training; and addressing abuse in schools. None of these were present in 2017. In addition to the strategy actions tagged for the education sector, the Programme of Activities also included the adoption of measures of social support and psychological counseling, especially for the protection of girls; activities to empower girls through integrating the promotion of sexual and reproductive health into teaching (training of teachers in this respect); and programmes to raise awareness on the importance of girls' education among parents and communities.

Harmful practices public policy accountability tool

SIARP introduced the Harmful Practices Policy Index, a comprehensive tool aiming to enhance accountability and bolster public policies against harmful practices. Designed through participatory methods, the index sets benchmarks for monitoring, strengthening policies, and measuring good practices regarding harmful practices. The objectives encompass assessing policy development, implementation, and management while aligning interventions to achieve SDG 5.3.1 targets by 2030. The model, structured around six policy dimensions, underwent testing in 13 countries, highlighting its role as an advocacy tool, enhancing government accountability, supporting national action plans, and aiding in review and monitoring.

Across the 13 countries tested, the overall ratings on a 4-point scale varied from 1.8 (weak-building) in Bangladesh to 3.0 (Good-integrating) in Zambia. Financing and human resources were consistently rated the lowest (1.3), while governance and coordination received high ratings (2.7). Notably, in Ghana, the participatory assessment findings, conducted in collaboration with UNICEF, the government, civil society organizations, and UNFPA, played a pivotal role in reviewing the National Strategic Framework for Ending Child Marriage and informed recommendations integrated into the Operational Monitoring and Evaluation Plan to support its implementation from 2023 to 2024.

Annual policy and advocacy forums organized at the African Union Commission with focus on strategic issues related to harmful practices and sexual and reproductive health and rights

Youth leading change for the reduction and prevention of harmful practices

SIARP with youth advocates working on the prevention and reduction of harmful practices to tailor the existing youth advocacy guide training to their particular needs. Their perspectives and experiences helped adapt the Youth Advocacy Guide and training processes to be more relevant to issues facing young advocates who look to make changes for the prevention and reduction of harmful practices. This adapted version of the training will be used to empower young advocates and youth-led networks across the African continent to gain a deeper understanding of and capacities for advocacy, ranging from meaningfully engaging with policy, researching their advocacy issues, building networks, and fostering allies, to embarking on advocacy campaigns and monitoring their advocacy efforts to reduce and prevent harmful practices. The training is intended to continue efforts to build a cohort of young advocates for the prevention and reduction of harmful practices in the region and will conclude with participants developing an outline of their advocacy plan.

Output 3

Regional partners have greater knowledge and awareness of human rights obligations and can advocate for and influence drafting/review/enforcement of laws and/or policies that guarantee the ability of women's rights groups, civil society organizations and women human rights defenders to advance the human rights agenda and accountability on sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices.

Result Indicators	Progress		Achievement against milestone
	Baseline (2020)	End of project (2023)	
Number of draft laws and policies that guarantee the ability of women's rights groups, civil society organizations and women human rights defenders to advance the human rights agenda which have received significant inputs from women's rights advocates.	0	3	100%
The number of key government officials with increased awareness and capacity of human rights standards to develop laws / policies that guarantee the ability of women's rights groups, civil society organizations and women human rights defenders.	0	107	80%
Proportion of Member States who have submitted a situational report on women's rights in relation to EVAWG to the African Union Special Rapporteur on Women's Rights in Africa	9	11	66%

SIARP supported the development and roll out of the Guide and Guidelines on the Protection of Women Human Rights Defenders in Africa .

The guide aims to enhance the capacity of civil society organizations, women human rights defenders, and human rights defenders to effectively apply the standards, guidelines, best practices, and recommendations laid out in the guideline. The guide was validated and launched with the presence of 30 representatives from 25 organizations across 14 countries.

Following the launch of the Guide and Guideline, a civil society training was held with the active participation including countries that had not yet ratified the Maputo Protocol, including Egypt, Madagascar, South Sudan, Sudan, and Somalia.

The training on the Guide and Guidelines provided an in-depth content on advocating for the protection of women human rights defenders at the national, regional, and international levels. Participants reported a great level of knowledge about the protection needs of women human rights defenders, the need for enhanced legal protection at the national level to conform to international treaty standards aimed at protecting women human rights defenders as well as greater confidence in engaging with mechanisms at the national, regional and continental level on the protection of women human rights defenders.

SIARP enhanced the capacity of the African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities, regional Parliamentarians, and civil society organizations on drafting and reviewing laws and policies to promote and protect the work of human rights defenders.

SIARP in collaboration with the African Union Commission and WLSA enhanced the capacity of 75 (55F, 20M) regional partners (the African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities, regional Parliamentarians) and civil society organizations on drafting and reviewing laws and policies to promote and protect the work of women's rights groups, civil society organizations and human rights defenders. The ToT was held in two phases. **Phase I** was held online from 18th to 19 May 2023 while **Phase II** was held in-person sessions from 6 to 7 June 2023. The ToT workshop was guided by the Facilitator's Training Manual which encompasses diverse topics, including the mandates of women human rights defenders, regional mechanisms for protection, the crucial role played by regional partners, and the significance of collaboration with service providers and state actors.

Overall, the training of trainers emphasized the importance of building upon the achievements of women's human rights defenders in Africa, who have played a crucial role in making the rights we enjoy today possible. The ToT also greatly contributes to addressing obstacles in relation to drafting, reviewing, and enacting laws and policies that promote and protect the work of women's rights groups, civil society organizations, and human rights defenders.

After the training, for example, WLSA in Zimbabwe cascaded the training by conducting (4) four more trainings for civil society organizations, women rights groups, feminist organizations, coalitions and women human rights defenders on international and regional human rights treaties and enforcement mechanisms related to rights and instruments that guarantee the rights of Women Human Rights Defenders. The follow-up trainings aimed at ensuring that women's human rights defenders know, claim, and assert their rights. A total of 120 (30 participants in each training) women rights defenders were reached directly.

Moreover, women's situation rooms were set up in Zimbabwe which was led by women to support Women's Human Rights Defenders during election in August 2023. The first women's situation room was set up in Harare, Zimbabwe, as they were in the middle of an election season, and it was during this time that cases of VAWG increased. A total of 139 cases of violence responded through the situation rooms. The assistance included legal representation, medical assistance, and evacuation, where needed.

Roundtable dialogues and seminars for national and regional actors to facilitate the development of legal and policy recommendations to protect civic space and the work of women human rights defenders were also conducted in SADC region. This allowed the sharing of best practices and the development of planned actions collaborating with other regional actors to ensure that women human rights defenders are protected.

SIARP also established a linkage between WLSA and Equality Now as both were implementing partners under Stream I. This collaboration and knowledge sharing led to the development of a working relationship and subsequently, the two organizations were able to share learning and information gained across their regions focusing on SADC and IGAD regions.

[SIARP strengthened the regional civil society organizations/ women's rights movements on drafting and submission of periodic reports on the situation of the rights of women and girls in Africa.](#)

In 2022, using the Facilitator's Training Manual, 52 (35F, 17M) participants, representing 36 civil society organizations and women's rights movements, were trained in a three-day virtual [training programme](#) on the Drafting and Submission of Periodic Reports about the Rights of Women and Girls

in Africa. Following the capacity-building training, two civil society organizations (Alliances for Africa in Nigeria and Network Against Female Genital Mutilation (NAFGEM) in Tanzania) received additional support on the drafting and submission of periodic reports on the rights of women and girls in Africa. The two civil society organizations were capacitated to draft and complete alternative/shadow reports on the Rights of Women on Maputo Protocol for their respective countries. Through this process, civil society organizations actors not only had the opportunity to enhance their knowledge of the Maputo Protocol but also gained practical skills in writing alternative reports. While the initial plan was for the civil society organizations in Nigeria and Tanzania to submit their reports to ACHPR, it was deemed necessary to adapt the approach due to potential backlash or hostility from the government. NAFGEM made the decision to transform the alternative report into a shadow report once Tanzania finalizes its State Party report. NAFGEM continued lobbying the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs to develop its State Report on the implementation of the Maputo Protocol. Once the State Report is available, NAFGEM plans to revise the alternative report to provide additional information in response to the State's report, thereby creating a comprehensive shadow report. Similarly, the Alliances for Africa plans to submit the joint civil society report to the ACHPR once the tensions of the elections have subsided. UNDP and Equality Now will continue to provide support to ensure the timely submission of the reports during the ACHPR's Ordinary Sessions.

SIARP also successfully published and disseminated a Facilitators Training Manual on [Shadow Reporting on the Rights of Women and Girls in Africa](#). The facilitators' training manual was developed based on diverse experiences from RUNOs, implementing partners and with civil society organizations in Africa and a capacity needs assessment supported by numerous renowned human rights practitioners from the continent.

The Facilitators Training Manual garnered significant recognition, including an esteemed endorsement from ACHPR and Commissioner Janet Ramatoulie Sallah-Njie, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa. The Special Rapporteur described the manual as a comprehensive training and reference resource that informs capacity-building initiatives and assists civil society organizations in the preparation and submission of periodic reports.

Outcome 5: Quality, disaggregated and globally comparable data on different forms of violence against women and girls and harmful practices are collected, analysed and used in line with international and regional standards to inform laws, policies and programmes.

SIARP executed significant initiatives focused on enhancing the generation, analysis, and utilization of data to end violence against women and girls in two major output areas. The

following sections depicts key developments achieved in each output areas.

Output 5.1.

Key regional and national partners have strengthened capacities to regularly collect data related to sexual and gender-based violence, child marriage, and FGM in line with international and regional standards to inform laws, policies and programmes.

Result Indicators	Progress		Achievement against milestone
	Baseline (2020)	End of project (2023)	
Number of National Statistical Offices that have developed/adapted and contextualized methods and standards at national level to produce prevalence and/or incidence data on VAWG.	12	62 ⁶	81%
Percentage of targeted countries with system to collect administrative data on VAWG/harmful practices, is in place and in line with international standards, across different sectors.	335%	65%	35% 2023 data not collected
Number of functional capacity building systems/curricula and toolkits, including self-paced e-learning available on EVAWG, harmful practices, social norm programming.	0	5	100%
Number of government personnel from different sectors, including service providers, who have enhanced capacities to collect prevalence and/or incidence data, including qualitative data, on VAWG in line with international and regional standards, within the last year.	24	147	95%

SIARP enhanced the capacity of identified civil society organizations and the women's movement in data collection and analysis methodologies related to VAWG/sexual and gender-based violence/harmful practices and sexual and reproductive health and rights as well as in the utilization of African Human Rights Mechanisms and gender-transformative programming.

Over the course of the programme, a training curriculum on VAWG in English and French has been developed into an online course on data coordination and capacity development. The course is accessible to civil society organizations and other stakeholders via the APHRC platform.

The online course was developed as an outcome of several training activities for 121 representatives from the African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities, civil

⁶ National statistics offices might attend more than one training due to turnover of previously trained professionals

society organizations, women's rights organizations and national partners⁷ who strengthened their coordination capacities related to VAWG/sexual and gender-based violence/harmful practices and sexual and reproductive health and rights indicators, specifically to:

- Collect rigorous data related to VAWG/sexual and gender-based violence/harmful practices and sexual and reproductive health and rights;
- Enhance the capacities of gender data institutions such as national statistics institutions to manage VAWG prevalence and/or administrative data in line with globally agreed standards.
- Establish a network of regional experts that can be involved in inter-country collaborative initiatives across Africa;
- Use the resources available to country offices in the region to put standard evidence creation on VAWG into practice.

Six distinct modules of a curriculum on African Union human rights mechanisms have been developed and are being rolled out for the first cohort. The course covers the following important topics and is produced in both English and French:

- Introduction to the concepts of human rights

- African human rights instruments and African human rights mechanisms
- Obtaining human rights mechanisms observer status
- Advocacy interventions in the human rights space
- Knowledge and information exchange platforms
- Monitoring and reporting human rights (tools and guidelines)

Moreover, a training manual on gender-transformative programming is created after intensive discussion and collaboration amongst UNFPA, UN Women, APHRC, Eastern African National Networks for AIDS Service Organisations (EANNASO), and the Population Council. APHRC oversaw the training manual's preparation. The training is available in two languages, French and English, and covers the following primary themes in both offline and online formats:

- Gender-transformative programming
- Introduction to basic gender and gender-transformative programming concepts
- Frameworks and tools of gender-transformative programming
- Monitoring and evaluating gender-transformative programmes

Capacity-building on violence against women data collection and management training enhanced grant proposal and research skills of civil society and government personnel.

SIARP conducted Post follow up survey of trainee who took capacity building training on EVAWG research and data collection, management and analysis six month and before. The result showed they are implementing the skills and knowledge they gained from the training workshop. Most of them have finalized and submitted the research protocol they developed during the training for potential funds. Participants are also perceiving themselves as proficient in grant proposal preparation and management skills where they supported their respective offices design or revise programmes based on improved evidence. Two participants from South Sudan and Nigeria also reported that they are supporting their governments to conduct national violence against women surveys. A participant from Cameroon also explained the training allowed his team and organization to update the data collection tools, have better knowledge of research methodology, and correct research projects in progress.

SIARP made available tools to support the collection and use of harmonized and standardized data and indicators on VAWG, including harmful practices and sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.

SIARP, in collaboration with the African Union Commission and APHRC, rolled out a [regional toolkit](#) to support the

collection and use of harmonized and standardized data and indicators on VAWG, including harmful practices and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The [toolkit](#) was presented to 112 (86 female, 26 male) participants/stakeholders from the African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities, African

⁷ A total of 121 participants attended the training, representing the 22 countries: Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Tanzania, Nigeria, Ghana, The Gambia, South Sudan, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire and Burundi, Senegal, DRC Congo, Benin, Cameroon, Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso.

Union Member States, civil society organizations, and United Nations agencies during the rollout on 21 March 2023. The toolkit is a crucial step towards addressing the pervasive issue of VAWG, which remains a significant concern globally and in Africa. This toolkit was specifically developed to strengthen the evidence base to improve the adoption of human rights instruments and policies in this area. As such, participants in the workshop were provided with first-hand insights into the selection of indicators, the ethical dimensions of research in EAWG, and different methodologies that can be employed in the field to produce quality and comparable data. [See the press release here](#)

SIARP strengthened the capacities of national statistical officers on production and reporting on child marriage prevalence.

In the context of COVID-19, through SIARP, UNICEF adapted in-person statistical data generation, analysis and data utilization modules for [virtual training during the pandemic](#). During the ‘[Harnessing the Power of Data to End Harmful Practices](#)’ virtual workshop for all Spotlight Initiative countries and partners in Africa over 170 staff from government national statistical institutions and civil society organizations were trained on how to identify the common data sources and data needs for the analysis of child marriage and FGM; explain and interpret fundamental statistical and analytic approaches; use key child marriage and FGM indicators to track outcomes and impact data; use data to shape national targets, identify populations to target, bring awareness through social media and the press, influence and monitor the impacts of changes in legislation; and generate data stories that communicate data for action.

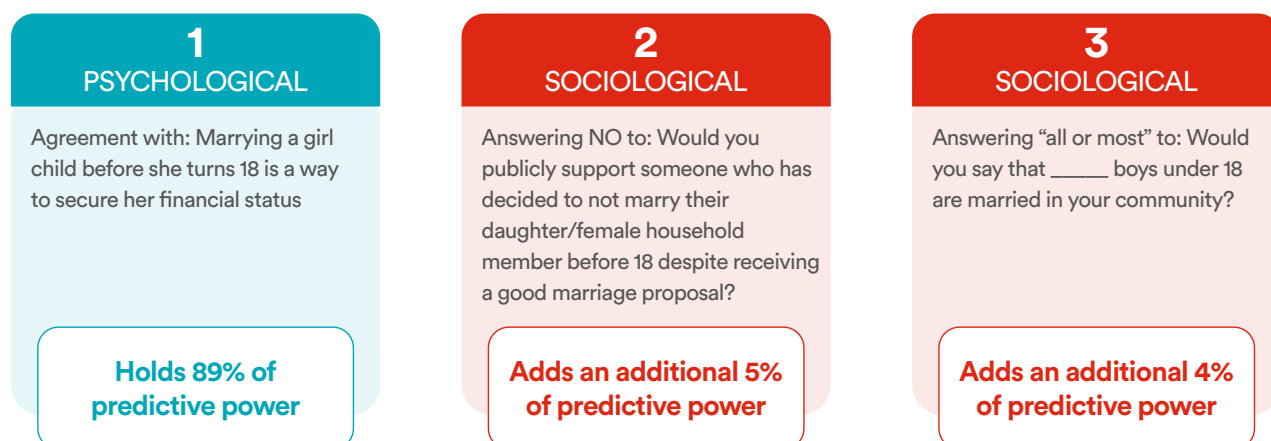
More than 600 people have registered and completed the online training courses via the UNICEF Agora platform worldwide. Trained UNICEF and national statistical office employees in Kenya and Nigeria have been able to identify

hotspot locations where harmful behaviours are most prevalent and more efficiently distribute resources thanks to improved data.

SIARP reinforce the capacities of governments and civil society organizations in data collection of child marriage data by developing and rolling out through training a standard set of effective and manageable M&E tools and measures to assess child marriage social changes including in national surveys (for example, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey – MICS, Demographic and Health Survey – DHS)

SIARP, in collaboration with the Global Programme to End Child Marriage, conducted a cognitive testing of social and behavioural change survey questionnaires and validation studies to assess if the survey tools sufficiently capture the relevant theoretical constructs to support harmful practices programming. These questionnaire modules have been used for baseline data collection of social and behavioural drivers of harmful practices using mixed methods in six African countries (Djibouti, Mozambique, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Zimbabwe), with evidence briefs that summarize key findings and recommendations developed and used in decision-making. For example, in Mozambique and Sierra Leone, the findings and recommendations have guided the review of impact and development of the next national action plans to end child marriage. In Djibouti, findings and recommendations from the baseline data collection have been used to design a community-based approach that focuses on social mobilization, community and household empowerment to strengthen social norms change in Obock region with the highest prevalence rates. In Zambia, tailored [technical capacity building by UNICEF Innocenti](#) with the survey modules has enhanced the capacity of Zambia Institute for Policy Analysis and Research to generate and use social norms data that has led to a scale up of child marriage programming in six new districts.

Top predictors of believing child marriage is the best decision for child in vignette



Overall, the best predictor for behavioural measure was ‘whether marriage was the appropriate option for the girl’ as it relates to marriage being a means of securing a child’s financial status, indicating this might be the foremost consideration for caregivers deciding whether to arrange a marriage for their child. Another predictor was ‘whether those caregivers would support someone who chose not to marry their child despite a good proposal’. The perceived prevalence of married boys under 18 in the community emerged as another strong predictor. Knowing from the factor analysis that the prevalence of child marriage among boys can be considered a proxy for the prevalence of child marriage in general, it can be argued that perceived prevalence is at the root of the decisions caregivers make.

Adapting the kNOwVAWdata curriculum for the African context: Enhancing responses to violence against women

Adapting the kNOwVAWdata curriculum to suit the African context has been an important process throughout the past years. While challenges exist in accurately gathering data on violence against women, having reliable and comparable data is essential for effective preventive and responsive actions.

Developed collaboratively by UNFPA, the University of Melbourne, ANROWS, and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in 2018, the kNOwVAWdata training course aimed to equip professionals with the skills needed to measure the prevalence of violence against women. This four-week course, available both online and through face-to-face sessions, delves into handling VAWG data ethically and safely, along with methodologies for both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Supported by SIARP, the current focus involves tailoring the kNOwVAWdata curriculum to suit the African regional landscape. The adaptation process primarily centres on producing comprehensive regional examples, commencing with a thorough literature review and customization exercises to align the content with the overarching global kNOwVAWdata curriculum. The exercise is completed with

five customized modules that will be a legacy of SIARP to ensure the platform benefit African violence against women data practitioners.

The global framework to measure social norms change on FGM operationalized.

Generating insights on community-specific factors

SIARP in 2023 introduced and trialed a social and behavior change toolkit, known as the ‘SBC Playbook,’ in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, and Nigeria. This toolkit serves as a guide for communities to identify specific social and behavioural factors driving harmful practices and collaboratively devise solutions to eradicate them.

For instance, in Ghana, communities recognized teenage pregnancy as a significant contributor to child marriage. To address this issue, interventions are underway to alter social norms, reduce stigma, and enhance access to sexual and reproductive health centres. Furthermore, the initiative identified enhancing financial access for adolescent girls through Village Savings and Loans Associations to alleviate their financial burdens.

SIARP strengthened the engagements with governments, the African Union Commission, and Regional Economic Communities and built the capacity of civil society organizations with relevant evidence-based advocacy tools through in-depth statistical analysis of child marriage data.

SIARP produced a set of statistical country profiles on [child marriage](#) and [FGM data](#). In order to provide an overview of the practice in each country, these statistical profiles draw on nationally representative data. The data also describe the characteristics of harmful practices, offer insights into the lives of adolescent girls and women across important domains of well-being, highlight trends in the practice, and highlight the acceleration needed to meet the 2030 SDG target. An exemplary advocacy from example is presented in the following box.

In Zambia, the UPR project submitted recommendations to the Zambia’s UPR working group on amending the Children’s Code Bill to harmonize statutory laws and customary laws on marriage basing on statistical data produced by UNICEF in the country profiles. In Burkina Faso, civil society organizations in partnership with UNICEF and UNFPA used data from the country profiles to increase advocacy that led to the resumption of discussions and finalization of the revised Personal and Family Code during a national consultative workshop in 2022. In Ethiopia, advocacy efforts in 2022 by civil society organizations in partnership with UNICEF and UNFPA during an engagement of 210 Parliamentarians and council members using the latest statistical data has resulted into commitments to increase domestic and federal financing on interventions to address end to child marriage.

Output 5.2:

Quality prevalence and/or incidence data on sexual and gender-based violence, child marriage and FGM is analysed and made publicly available for the monitoring and reporting of the SDG indicators 5.2 and 5.3 to inform evidence-based decision-making.

Key result highlights

Result Indicators	Progress		Achievement against milestone
	Baseline (2020)	End of project (2023)	
Number of knowledge products developed and disseminated to the relevant stakeholders to inform evidence-based decision-making, within the past 12 months.	4	50	270%
Monitoring and reporting system/platform/scorecard strengthen to ensure periodic, inclusive and quality reporting of Member States and civil society organizations on VAWG/sexual and gender-based violence/harmful practices and sexual and reproductive health and rights to generate evidence in order to inform policy and programmes.	0%	3	100%
Number of government personnel, including service providers, from different sectors with strengthened capacities on analysis and dissemination of prevalence and/or incidence data on VAWG, within the last year.	0	163	70%
Number of women's rights advocates with strengthened capacities on analysis and dissemination of prevalence and/or incidence data on VAWG, within the last year.	0	48	92%

SIARP supported the operationalization of the African Union Commission regional data and research Gender Observatory and scorecard to ensure periodic, inclusive and quality reporting.

The [African Union Gender Observatory](#) was developed and adopted as a key reporting and knowledge management platform for African Union Member States. The Gender Observatory is a technical centre as well as political and advocacy space that aim to facilitate networking and learning, especially through a mechanism of information dissemination and outreach. Gender observatories also serve as a mechanism to monitor gender equality and the advancement of women's rights. They are aimed at creating a data and knowledge base that allows multi sector stakeholders to monitor progress and challenges of advancing women's rights in Africa. Once it is launched, the platform will be handed over to the management information system for deployment and management, while WGYD will manage the day-to-day operations and reporting by Member States, Regional Economic Communities and civil society organizations. This system wide partnership with the African Union Commission

has strengthened ownership and enabled institutionalization of the African Union Gender Observatory platform.

As part of efforts to promote data availability and adequate monitoring of progress. SIARP, in collaboration with the African Union Commission's WGYD and UNECA, supported the development of an African Union Gender Scorecard report in 2021. The report was translated into the four African Union languages and compiled recent national data on four clusters (VAWG, sexual and gender-based violence, harmful practices, and sexual and reproductive health and rights) spanning a wide variety of variables. The scorecard supports African Union Member States in implementing their commitments to the human rights of women and girls by providing a comprehensive assessment of the progress they have made in securing and protecting women's socio-economic, civil and political rights. Additionally, it supports the analysis of implementation barriers and critical steps to expedite the implementation of regional frameworks by national and regional stakeholders. Furthermore, it encourages greater investment in gender statistics, which are indispensable for the development, execution, oversight, and assessment of programmes and policies pertaining to the rights of women and girls.

Regional knowledge management strategy developed and implemented to ensure utilization of best practices related to VAWG/sexual and gender-based violence/harmful practices and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Knowledge management strategy

In consultation with all RUNOs and the African Union, a regional knowledge management strategy was developed. The strategy provided a set of processes and methods focused on capturing, documenting, disseminating, identifying, leveraging, sharing, structuring and valuing VAWG/sexual and gender-based violence/sexual and reproductive health and rights and harmful practices information assets. Accordingly, the following key knowledge management and sharing initiatives are implemented.

South-to-South exchange to promote exchange of knowledge, evidence and best practices in order to accelerate action to ending child marriage organized.

SIARP and in collaboration with the Joint Programme convened a [South-to-South workshop](#) to take stock of the evolving global context in which programming to end child marriage operates, develop strategic and forward-looking ideas to inform programme policy and advocacy, and provide an opportunity for networking and capacity strengthening for the country and regional teams that are part of the Global Programme and for country teams beyond the 12 direct implementing countries that are also making investments in ending child marriage.

To complement evidence generation and learning within the Spotlight Initiative, UNFPA and UNICEF through the Global Programme to End Child Marriage partnered with Girls Not Brides and WHO to create the [Child Marriage Research to Action Network \(CRANK\)](#). Working in tandem with the African Union Commission and local civil society organizations, this network aims to improve partners' ability for information exchange and linking African scholars and practitioners to international discourse and vice versa. CRANK brings child marriage researchers, practitioners and policy makers together every three months to share and discuss the latest evidence on priority learning topics. Since its inception in 2021, CRANK has convened [nine global quarterly meetings](#) to share and discuss the latest data and evidence on ending child marriage and promote cross-learning across the globe, and with 122 key evidence on what works to end harmful practices tracked.

An annual continental coordination platform for African Union Member States implementing national Spotlight programmes

The coordination platform was launched by SIARP in collaboration with African Union Commission's WGYD. The platform provided a space for the Member States, Regional

Economic Communities, United Nations country teams, civil society organizations, and other implementing partners in the eight Spotlight Initiative Africa countries to share learning and best practices. As a result of this platform, SIARP, together with WGYD, published the [report 'Lessons Learned, Promising Practices, and Challenges to Overcome'](#) with key stories and actionable recommendations from the eight African countries implementing the Spotlight Initiative, on fighting gender-based violence. The report documents the lessons taken from the platform, where the eight countries implementing the Spotlight Initiative shared and learn from good practices, identified emerging trends, operational challenges, and strategies that can be implemented for future programming.

SIARP organized an annual forum to share knowledge, evidence and best practices to address FGM.

SIARP organized two important meetings for the Joint Programme on Elimination of FGM. The 2022 Annual Consultation in Banjul gathered 100 representatives from 17 focal countries and four additional nations, focusing on programme quality enhancement and leveraging data for partnerships. Insights highlighted maximizing data use, expanding partnerships, fostering movement-building, and refining research approaches within humanitarian contexts.

The subsequent 2023 Annual Technical Consultation in Jordan engaged around 100 participants, emphasizing pivotal advancements. These strides included detailed reporting on indicators, documenting successful FGM abandonment strategies, institutionalizing monitoring and evaluation, collaborating with governments, empowering girls through education and economic opportunities, and employing advocacy campaigns and innovative funding for sustained progress towards FGM elimination.

Gender data review on adolescent girls, young people, people with disabilities and vulnerable groups on VAWG, sexual and gender-based violence, harmful practices and sexual and reproductive health and rights conducted.

SIARP, in partnership with the Global Programme to End Child Marriage and the Joint Programme on Elimination of FGM, implemented a cascading gender-transformative approach. This method was aimed at developing inclusive social environments and gender equality across the continent. By employing the [gender-transformative accelerator tool](#), different strategies, including capacity building, skills transfer, and participatory methods, were used to foster ownership and drive positive social and gender changes across 11 targeted countries (Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Uganda, and Zambia).

In Ghana and Sierra Leone, actions resulting from participatory gender assessments have been integrated into the operational plans of national strategic plans designed to

combat child marriage. Furthermore, the box below highlights the significant influence of gender-transformative approaches on national child marriage strategies in Nigeria.

To address staff implicit bias that may negatively influence the delivery of prevention and protection services,

government, civil society organizations and United Nations staff implementing child marriage and FGM programmes have so far been trained on values clarification and attitudes transformation in four countries (Mauritania, Senegal, Uganda and Zambia).

Strengthening gender-transformative programming of harmful practices programmes in Nigeria

A gender-transformative assessment workshop was held in July 2022 with the active participation and engagement of technical staff from UNICEF (four staff), government (four representatives) and civil society organizations (19 people from 14 organizations). A big part of this workshop was reactivating the activities of the coalition and strengthening their programming capacity.

The workshop focused on identifying catalytic opportunities for shared action among the coalition members within the Nigerian context. Because the assessment process is meant to incorporate gender-transformative elements into existing work plans, the gender advocates and other key stakeholders were asked to identify crucial areas within their existing work plans where gender-transformative approaches can have both an immediate and potentially amplified impact. Participants agreed that they wanted to take advantage of the upcoming election year to strengthen platforms that can support women and girls in participating in political processes. The National Strategy to End Child Marriage is also under review and will be updated in the next year. Participants agreed to utilize the technical working groups established by the Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs to get advice on how the coalition can obtain government commitments and resources for implementing the National Strategy's gender-transformative initiatives.

Through participatory discussion, the Nigeria team decided to focus on: (1) girls' skills, agency and empowerment; (2) addressing masculinities and engaging men and boys; and (3) community mobilization to create an enabling environment.

Participants prioritized three types of actions to move ahead within these areas of focus: (1) positive parenting to help build more positive gender norms from an early age and expand expectations for girls' futures, (2) reinforce positive masculinities at all levels of the socio-ecological model, and (3) increase access to comprehensive sexuality education, facilitate more conversations about sex, and promote youth-friendly health services.

SIARP supported the cost modeling of FGM and enforced evidence generation.

A cost and impact modeling exercise was conducted to determine the level of investment required to eliminate FGM by 2030. Based on the analysis which used programme data, secondary data, and population-level costing methods, it is estimated that it would require \$3.3 billion to reach the high coverage targets by 2030 and avert about 25 million cases of FGM. This data has been widely used in communication channels for advocacy for more investment in programmes addressing FGM. Through the ongoing partnership between SIARP Stream II and Avenir Health, the report on the cost and impact of scaling up programmes addressing FGM was finalized and published at a [peer-reviewed journal article](#).

Additional evidence from the Joint Programme indicated that \$3.3 billion is needed to eliminate FGM by 2030 in 31 priority countries. The estimate further suggests that the amount of development assistance expected to be spent in these 31 priority countries from 2020 to 2030 is \$275 million, indicating a resource gap of about \$2.1 billion. An investment of every \$1 will result in a return of \$10. (UNFPA and UNICEF 2023, *Reimagining Resilience: Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation in the Context of the Polycrisis*)



DATA AND RESEARCH FELLOW PRESENTING FGM RESEARCH PRODUCTS- 2022 KENYA

In a related initiative, the UNFPA ‘Population data, FGM data and research fellowship’ initiative organized its first experts’ meeting from 22 to 24 March 2022 in collaboration with stakeholders. The event aimed to showcase the research fellows’ projects and engage FGM data experts in identifying pertinent research questions and methodologies, culminating in the presentation of six projects.

In addition, the UNFPA Population Development Branch presented updated survival analysis results for countries with new DHS and MICS data. The report of the experts’ meeting on research and data can be found [here](#).

SIARP supported evidence building on violence, sexual and reproductive health and harmful practices impacting young adolescent girls.

Engaging grassroots youth- and women-led civil society organizations to end harmful practices

Guided by the principle of “leaving no one behind”, SIARP conducted an assessment of grassroots-women and youth-led organizations with feminist and adolescent girl leadership to ensure they possess the capabilities to promote the rights and well-being of adolescent girls and amplify girls’ leadership. The findings from the [qualitative assessment of 134 grassroots-women and youth-led organizations](#) guided UNICEF in better supporting and identifying opportunities for improving gender-transformative approaches, resulting in the provision of small funds to 20 grassroots youth- and women-led organizations that meaningfully engaged over 1 million girls and women facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and vulnerabilities in dialogues to eliminate harmful practices and improve mental health.

An analysis of masculinities in relation to gender and gender-based violence

The [International Men and Gender Equality Survey \(IMAGES\)](#) is the only comprehensive study that explores men’s practices and attitudes related to gender equality alongside women’s. Since 2008, IMAGES surveys have been adapted in over 32 countries, representing in-depth research with more than 67,000 men and women on crucial topics, such as gender-based violence; health, including sexual and reproductive health; division of household labour; and caregiving and fatherhood.

Equimundo, in collaboration with SIARP, is creating an African edition of the IMAGES study with funding from SIARP. The report will use data from Tanzania, Rwanda, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Mozambique, and Uganda in order to represent the regions.

Along with increasing capacity, SIARP also worked to improve research organization’s ability to produce evidence that will guide the creation of policies and programmes. The ongoing capacity support provided to the South Sudan’s national gender-based violence prevalence survey is one of the major accomplishments. From the survey’s beginnings, SIARP has supported this effort by developing protocols, adapting tools, providing training, holding frequent meetings, and publishing reports. Additionally, to prevent sexual and gender-based violence/harmful practices and to empower women and girls, SIARP financed research on migration, positive masculinities, changing gender norms, and male engagement. The findings of this research will be shared with all SIARP stakeholders, including the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 implementing countries, to inform ongoing or future programmes.

SIARP strengthened capacity to manage research in order to produce data and guide policies and initiatives.

The ongoing technical assistance provided to the national gender-based violence prevalence survey of South Sudan is one of the major accomplishments. SIARP provided technical support for the overall process from protocol development, data collection tool revision, training of data collectors, data analysis, report writing, validation and dissemination.

The first draft of the report was validated, and the preliminary finding of the survey indicated that the prevalence of intimate partner violence among married women aged 15 to 49 is 49.6 per cent, (both physical and/or sexual).

Substantial proportions of women (aged 15 to 64 years) in South Sudan experience gender-based violence either in form of physical (34 per cent) or sexual (13.5 per cent) violence in their lifetime. The survey also provided estimates per region. [See more here](#). The final report will be released by next quarter after the review process. To prevent sexual and gender-based violence/harmful practices and to improve the lives of women and girls, SIARP also financed research on positive masculinities, and male engagement. Together with APHRC, SIARP will support the research in South Sudan and Malawi. The implementing partners who support the research implementation are selected. The research protocols along with the data collection tools are also developed. The research will be finalized by the end of 2023.



STAKEHOLDERS DURING VALIDATION WORKSHOP, SOUTH SUDAN

OUTCOME 6: Women's rights groups, autonomous social movements and civil society organizations, including those representing youth and groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination/marginalization, more effectively influence and advance progress on GEWE and VAWG, including sexual and gender-based violence/harmful practices.

The programme aimed to achieve three outputs under this outcome. The report summarized key results achieved under each output.

Output 6.1.

Increased opportunities and support for women's rights groups and relevant civil society organizations to share knowledge, network, partner and jointly advocate for GEWE and EVAWG, including sexual and gender-based violence, child marriage and FGM, and to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Result Indicators	Progress		Achievement against milestone
	Baseline (2020)	End of project (2023)	
Number of jointly agreed recommendations on ending VAWG produced as a result of multi-stakeholder dialogues that include representatives of groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, within the last year	4	9	83%
Number of civil society organizations representing youth and other groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that are integrated with coalitions and networks of women's rights groups and civil society working on ending VAWG between 2020 – 2023.	0	27	225%
Number of regional/grass root civil society organizations supported by SIARP to advance EVAWG and harmful practices programmes both at regional and grassroots levels	0	32	100%

SIARP established and capacitated a continental CSRRG.

SIARP established CSRRG in February 2022 and [inaugurated it in April 2022](#). This group was carefully constituted by a committee of civil society experts in collaboration with representatives from the African Union Commission, the European Union, the regional Programme Coordination Unit, and UN Women.

CSRRG serves as a Pan-African assembly of experts with a threefold purpose. Firstly, they leverage civil society expertise to guide the implementation of SIARP, acting as advisors to the initiative while advocating for and partnering in achieving its objectives. Their efforts have significantly contributed to addressing VAWG and harmful practices, encompassing vulnerable groups as outlined in the programme document – a critical aspect aligned with Agenda 2030's principle of "leaving no one behind".

Membership in CSRRG is diverse, considering geographical representation (from 11 countries), language, gender, age, and including representatives from faith and traditional leadership backgrounds ([see their profile here](#)).

The group conducted two annual reviews and planning meetings drafting and reviewing of an annual work plan focusing on four key areas: institutional strengthening, communications and visibility, advocacy, and increased investment.

Actively involved in programme implementation, CSRRG provided advisory, technical, and monitoring support to both streams of the initiative. Their engagement spanned various events, consultations, and platforms organized by the programme, such as regional forums, validation workshops, regional review meetings, conferences, and international symposiums. They actively participated in workshops, steering committees, and other key decision-making bodies, contributing strategic direction, coordinating regional operations, reviewing plans, and ensuring alignment with regional priorities. Additionally, the group played a prominent role in global events, facilitating sessions, and hosting webinars and dialogues focused on regional engagement, grassroots inclusion, and strategies against gender-based violence. Their initiatives attracted over 100 participants from diverse sectors, fostering dialogue, strategizing for effective engagement, and enhancing collaboration among stakeholders.

Moreover, CSRRG embarked on an independent monitoring effort to assess SIARP's implementation processes, funding mechanisms, and civil society engagement. Utilizing the Spotlight Monitoring Toolkit, they selected 14 indicators to guide their assessment, aiming to identify areas of improvement and strengths.

The civil society **scorecard** is part of independent efforts of CSRRG to monitor Spotlight processes and systems, with a focus on participation, funding mechanisms, disbursement, and implementation.



The civil society scorecard report (see the report [here](#)) was also presented and endorsed by CSRRG members. The scorecard reviewed the civil society organizations participation, funding, and disbursement mechanism of SIARP. Key findings include:

- **Participation:** Spotlight ensures meaningful participation of civil society, feminist activists, and intersectional movements, as well as those structurally marginalized, such as women with disabilities, and young feminists among others, in its governance, decision-making and programming.
- **Funding:** In 2021 and 2022, 68 per cent and 53 per cent percent of Spotlight grant-making was done through an open, competitive process, respectively. This fell slightly below the Spotlight minimum percentage threshold of 75 per cent for funds allocated through open and competitive processes.
- **Disbursement:** SIARP surpassed the minimum threshold of 50 per cent and there was a higher percentage of funding that reached constituency-led organizations in 2022 (81 per cent) than in 2021 (59 per cent). This indicates proper and accurate targeting of funding for women's organizations.

The members also developed an action plan to operationalize the scorecard recommendations. Members agreed to translate the recommendations into actions by:

- Developing a summary of the key recommendations as a package of an advocacy tool to use and share by stakeholders.
- Enhancing the partnership with the national, regional, and global reference groups, traditional, religious leaders, and regional bodies. Accordingly, CSRRG has been engaging with national and regional reference group intentionally for a wider engagement.
- Creating a platform for grassroots civil society organizations and women-led networks and organizations to share their experience and document their stories.
- Publication and dissemination of the scorecard key findings.

The group's strength lies in its diverse composition, technical expertise, and effective leadership, fostering comprehensive discussions on regional governance. Functioning as a collaborative platform, it encourages joint initiatives, knowledge exchange, and collective problem-solving. However, challenges, including resource limitations, communication gaps, and leadership issues, have hindered cohesive functioning.

Key lessons learned emphasize the importance of collaboration, adaptability, inclusivity, evidence-based advocacy, and capacity building for sustainable impact. Planning for sustainability post-SIARP involves strategies such as establishing sustainable funding sources, continuous capacity-building, advocacy efforts, and policy engagement with regional policymakers to ensure enduring impact beyond the programme's conclusion.

Multiple platforms were created for civil society organizations and women right groups to share knowledge, network and jointly advocate on GEWE and EVAWG.

SIARP, in partnership with Partners in Sexual Health, organized three rounds regional forum on EVAWG in Africa to influence the African Union and global policy processes on EVAWG. The Civil Society Forum aimed to contribute to women's rights groups, autonomous social movements and civil society organizations, including those representing youth and groups facing multiple intersecting forms of discrimination/marginalization, to more effectively influence and advance progress on EVAWG.

The forum:

- Created a dedicated opportunity for civil society organizations, governments, United Nations agencies, Regional Economic Communities and the African Union to effectively engage and explore opportunities to influence and advance progress on the EVAWG.
- Facilitated a space for building strategic partnerships and strengthening connections between civil society organizations (inclusive of women's rights groups,

movements, networks, youth-serving organizations, faith-based organizations, and those representing vulnerable groups) and networking opportunities; the exchange of views, opinions and expertise; and the knowledge sharing and best practices for influencing progress on EVAWG.

- Generated shared recommendations for accelerating progress on EVAWG, fostering long-term and continued collaborations across regional borders and in-country.
- Identified opportunities for civil society organizations to advocate and inform policy frameworks.
- Made African Union Member States and other regional bodies accountable for their commitments to EVAWG, and support exchange among civil society organizations on evidence-based advocacy and effective engagement in regional policy development and implementation processes.

Civil society organizations from eight Spotlight Initiative countries took the centre stage in forums and made deliveries using participatory and interactive methods to detail their critical contributions to EVAWG and lessons learned. During the forum, there were panel discussions involving civil society organizations, government, the African Union Commission, and Regional Economic Communities on topics such as challenges and entry points for increased civil society engagement at the level of the African Union Commission and Regional Economic Communities for enhancing networking and collaboration between civil society organizations, Regional Economic Communities, and the African Union Commission on knowledge management, documentation and disseminating. The highlight of the two civil society organizations knowledge sharing forum is published here [Video I](#), [Video II](#) and [Video III](#)

The three forums mobilized more than 111 participants from across 30 countries from East and West Africa regions pledged to support and to deliberate on how best to jointly advocate for realistic policies and better implementation of policies to fight gender-based violence through a [four key recommendations](#) that will be used to jointly advocate for violence-free communities and ultimately to effectively influence the African Union policy agenda on EVAWG in Africa.

The key recommendations are:

- Regional Economic Communities and African Union to strengthen resourcing, accountability, tracking and reporting on human rights and gender rights commitments – including but not limited to the Maputo Protocol (2003), African Union Gender Strategy, sub-regional, sexual and reproductive health and rights and sexual and gender-based violence commitments (harmful practices, FGM/C, child marriage).

- The African Union and Regional Economic Communities to facilitate standardization of rape sentencing across SADC and EAC Member States with provisions for minimum mandatory penalties.
- The African Union and Member States from Regional Economic Communities to review and align national laws and policies to domesticate and implement regional and international instruments for ending child marriage, including establishing comprehensive social protection systems.
- The African Union, secretariats from Regional Economic Communities and the United Nations to facilitate meaningful participation of civil society organizations, women's movements and youth organizations in their decision-making processes.

[SIARP strengthened regional youth-led innovation initiatives to amplify youth voices, particularly young women and girls' engagement in policy dialogue on EVAWG, sexual and gender-based violence/harmful practices and sexual and reproductive health and rights through relevant African Union directorates and high-level meetings.](#)

Youth advocacy training on preventing and reducing harmful practices

SIARP, in collaboration with the African Union Commission (specifically WGYD) and the secretariat of the campaign on ending child marriage at the Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development Department, hosted a comprehensive four-day training session bringing together 55 youth advocates and winners of the SIARP Youth Innovation Challenge across Africa from 24 to 27 October 2023 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The training aimed to achieve several key objectives:

- Young advocates become empowered in their efforts to drive meaningful change through youth-led advocacy, specifically targeting the reduction and prevention of harmful practices.
- Leadership, advocacy, and communication skills among these young champions were developed, preparing them for leading regional, national, and local actions.
- Young champions were equipped with essential strategies to conceptualize and execute advocacy and media campaigns focused on specific themes at the national level, aimed at reducing and preventing harmful practices.
- The engagement of young advocates was strengthened, enhancing their understanding of critical issues impacting children, young people, especially women and girls, across the continent.



SIARP-initiated partnerships between the African Union Commission, faith-based organizations, and communities of traditional leaders.

SIARP launched and initiated discussions on the operationalization of the [Guidelines to support partnerships between the African Union Commission, faith-based organizations, and communities of traditional leaders](#). In 2021 and 2022, SIARP brought together regional faith-based organizations, communities of traditional leaders, the African Union Commission and Regional Economic Communities for expanded dialogue on the importance of their partnership in addressing EAWG, harmful practices and sexual and reproductive health and rights. In 2021, guidelines were drafted that reinforced the engagement of traditional leaders, religious leaders, and the African Union Commission. In 2022, participants proposed [key time-bound action points](#) to be taken by African Union Heads of State and governments towards the implementation of the [Kinshasa Declaration](#),⁸ which was submitted during the Positive Masculinity Conference held in Dakar, Senegal in November 2022. Overall, the discussions strengthened interconnections between regional and traditional leaders, the African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities, other platforms, and high-level forums in detecting, preventing, and responding to sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices, and promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights in Africa.

SIARP supported the implementation of the Kinshasa Positive Masculinity Declaration

SIARP supported youth engagement as part of the 2nd African Union Conference on Positive Masculinity, which took place in Dakar from 8 to 10 November 2022. The youth consultation,

which was held on 8 November in Dakar, Senegal, brought together 248 participants (123 male, 125 female) from 40 countries across Africa. The purpose was to consult youth leaders (both male and female) to identify existing gaps in the implementation of the Kinshasa Declaration – a call to action on positive masculinity, which was developed at the First African Union Conference in Kinshasa and adopted as an African Union Assembly Decision at the African Union Heads of State Summit in February 2022.

Recognizing the role of youth as powerful contributors to the work on positive masculinity, the consultation sought to generate their support in this regard. The event included an update on the actions emanating from the first call to action on positive masculinity that took place in 2021, discussions of various challenges currently impeding the promotion of positive masculinity, experience-sharing on youth engagement to advance positive masculinity, and dissemination of findings of the [IMAGES study on positive masculinity](#).

The main outcome of the youth consultation was an Outcome Document providing tangible recommendations on advancing positive masculinity, which was also shared during the conference in front of Member States representatives. The recommendations focused on four thematic areas: Good practices of positive masculinity and critical allies, follow-up on the commitments and recommendations of the Kinshasa Declaration, engagement of young men in ending gender-based violence, harmful practices and online violence, and masculinities in crises, conflict and peacebuilding. The full report on the youth consultation and the recommendations can be found [here](#).

⁸ 41226-pr-Declaration_Mens_Conference_English.pdf (au.int)

Drawing from the outcomes of the two conferences, the African Union Heads of State and Government during their 36th Assembly held from 18 to 19 February 2023 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, adopted a historic decision (Assembly/AU/Dec.865(XXXVI) to negotiate **the African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls**. Once adopted, tentatively in 2025, the convention will be the first continental legal instrument for the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, showing African leadership in efforts to EVAWG globally.

SIARP supported the development of policy /analytical briefs and a practitioner guide on child marriage in 13 countries.

SIARP conducted research aimed at enhancing country-level responses to child marriage, emphasizing strategic and effective approaches. This initiative had a dual focus: firstly, assisting 13 country offices⁹ in collaborating across sectors with national partners to analyze, revise, reorient, and amplify their efforts to combat child marriage. Secondly, it aimed to establish and manage a virtual learning platform to facilitate the exchange of insights, information, and knowledge among countries within sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁰

Notably, strategy notes for accelerating action against child marriage in Burkina Faso, Malawi, Sierra Leone, and Zambia have been finalized. Moreover, strategies for ending child marriage in Ghana, Guinea, and Zimbabwe are in advanced stages, while ongoing work persists in Benin, Mali, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Niger, and Uganda.

Crucial lessons gleaned from strategy development underscore the importance of considering regional and country-specific variations. Recognizing differences across regions, such as between northern, central, and southern regions, is vital in crafting context-specific strategies that account for diverse cultural, social, and economic factors influencing child marriage. Additionally, analysing urban versus rural dynamics and understanding humanitarian versus developmental contexts within a country is essential to tailor interventions effectively to address the distinct challenges and opportunities in each setting. Consideration of other relevant dynamics, including ethnic or religious disparities, socioeconomic gaps, and legal frameworks, also proved to be invaluable in programming initiatives targeting the eradication of child marriage.

In West and Central Africa, the definition of girls' agency varies significantly, leading to differing drivers and risks of child marriage, particularly between countries in the Sahel and coastal regions. These distinctions directly impact programming aimed at expediting progress in ending child marriage. Presently, the strategy notes are informing the contextualization of the theory of change and country-

specific programme documents for the third phase of the Global Programme to End Child Marriage.

Furthermore, a virtual learning platform was established to share evidence and experiences on effective strategies to combat child marriage across various contexts in Africa. Although primarily intended for United Nations programme staff implementing initiatives to end child marriage and harmful practices in Africa, the platform is open to all African countries, including governments, multilateral agencies, NGOs, think tanks, academics, and others.

The platform's content is based on emerging evidence, learning, and recommendations from the strategy development process, aligning with the priority learning needs of participants. Three webinars have been conducted, exploring topics such as the linkages between adolescent sexuality, pregnancy, and child marriage, variations in child marriage drivers across contexts, and the relationship between child marriage, poverty, and social protection, featuring interventions delivered by the UNICEF Social Policy team and case studies from Ethiopia.

The capacity of national women's rights groups, youth movements and civil society organizations on social accountability to advocate and influence national-level responses in implementing policy commitments and legal provisions in addressing FGM was enhanced.

SIARP – through small-scale funding agreements – awarded small grants to a women-led organization to empower 866 adolescent girls from 433 village communities that has significantly reduced their exposure to underage marriages and exoduses to mining areas and urban centres. Through vocational training of youth groups offered from the grant, girls have been able to raise large sums of income from selling their products (soaps, beading, peanut paste etc.) and contribute to the financial costs of their family household including preventing the marriage of their peers through the sensitization of their parents. These adolescent girls discuss the consequences of FGM and child marriage on the health of girls and women in all the villages covered by the project. They raise awareness in their families and their social environment in favour of abandoning gender-based violence, particularly FGM and marriage before the age of 18. They actively participate in the prevention and referral of gender-based violence cases to the appropriate management services. The adolescent girls have become support groups to oppose marriages before 18 and FGM and were able to strengthen the skills of 10,810 new adolescent girls on prevention and responses to gender-based violence and on promising sectors. As result, 1,715 girls aged 14 to 16 years were saved from child marriage (before 18 years) and 944 girls aged 0 to 5 years saved from FGM through prevention and

⁹ Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Benin, Burkina-Faso, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone

¹⁰ To date, 191 individuals have signed up to the knowledge-sharing mailing list.

family mediation actions of members of adolescent groups in 238 villages.

The impact of the programme on the lives of adolescent girls in the 238 villages covered by the Spotlight Initiative and Joint Programmes is noticeable and the testimonial below.

“My name is Dada I am 15 years old and I come from a poor family. My mother and I go out to wash a family’s clothes to earn money to buy food for the family. Given these precarious conditions, my father decided to give me in marriage to a 54-year-old shopkeeper who already has two other wives. At 15, I was going to be the third woman. I refused this marriage, but my father threatened to exile and deny my mother if I did not accept this marriage. I was forcibly brought to this man’s house, but I never accepted that he touched me. I tried to commit suicide. One night, I decided to run away. I couldn’t go back to my family because my father told me that I am no longer his daughter. One of my friends advised me to contact the NGO TAGNE. With the help of this NGO, I joined the group of adolescent girls in my village, and I learned beading. This training positively changed my life because I had a job. I was able to generate income through the production and sale of necklaces, bracelets, key rings etc. that I learned how to make during training. After the training I was able to train 17 other girls from my village and neighbouring villages on beading. I also learnt a lot about the dangers of early marriage and FGM, how to prevent it, and how to refer a survivor to appropriate care services. Together with the other girls, we are now forming a support group in our village. The income we generate allows us to cover our expenses without asking anyone. We have become independent. After many awareness sessions, for my father and his reference group, I was finally able to leave this marriage and I am working on my beading job. I went back to my father who told the gentleman that I never wanted this marriage. That I am still a child. I cannot thank enough the NGO TAGNE and its partners, including UNICEF, for saving my life and giving meaning to my life.”

SIARP supported the Implementation of the Global Youth Consortium against FGM.

As part of marking the 2022 International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM, SIARP collaborated with the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of FGM and launched the Global Youth Consortium against FGM. The ceremony was opened by the UNFPA Deputy Executive Director for Programmes Ms. Diene Keita and was attended by the ambassadors of Portugal, the European Union, the United Kingdom and Norway, key donors to the Joint Programme. The purpose of this youth consortium is to empower young people to act against FGM in their communities. The vision of the Global Youth Consortium is ‘Youth Leading a World Free of FGM by 2030’.

Membership of the consortium has expanded since its establishment in 2021. Current membership is over 1,550 (from 1,000 in 2021) young people aged 17 to 40 years from 51 countries.

The consortium uses a social media platform to coordinate youth-led initiative and advocate for the role of young people to end FGM. Currently, there are three WhatsApp groups that are used to coordinate the activities of the consortium along with a Facebook and Twitter accounts to reach and influence young people, policymakers, practitioners, etc.

The Global Youth Consortium against FGM amplifies work against FGM and VAWG at both high-level and grassroots community levels. The Global Youth Consortium, which was

established with support from SIARP, engaged in a series of high-level and community advocacy initiatives over 2022 and 2023. For example, the consortium played an active role in the launch of the Movement for Good to End FGM in Nigeria, the African Union Humanitarian and Pledging Conference in Kenya, the regional launch of the UNFPA State of the World Population Report in South Africa, the 10th Africa Conference on Sexual Health and Rights, and the second African Union Conference on Positive Masculinity. Furthermore, consortium members engaged in several specialized technical committee and met several stakeholders in different countries such as the Minister of Public Service, Gender and Affirmative Action in Kenya, the national police, the UNFPA Country Representative, UNFPA youth panel executives and civil society organizations. The consortium also conducted various webinars to capacitate its members and online activism using social media influences and other prominent figures of digital space.

Engagement of feminist civil society from West Africa in the continental process for the 30-year review of the ICPD Plan of Action/10-year review of the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development

SIARP partnered with Equipop under Pillar 6 to mobilize feminist and youth activists through an intersectional feminist approach to agree on common positions and recommendations on key issues related to sexual and reproductive health in West Africa in the framework of the 30-year review of the ICPD Plan of Action, the 10 years of the

Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development, and Agenda 2063. The 30-year review prioritized advancing people-centred monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to ensure inclusivity in Africa's sustainable development, emphasizing the scaling up of inclusive legislation, policies, and programmes ensuring universal rights. Leveraging Africa's resources is crucial for transformative actions in humanitarian, development, and peace contexts, aiming for a resilient continent capable of responding to crises. Addressing multidimensional inequalities through partnerships, financial inclusion, and data-driven social protection mechanisms is essential. Strengthening data systems guides decision-making for policies and investments, while fostering innovation and digital transformation to create durable solutions tailored to diverse continental needs. Youth engagement is pivotal in co-creating strategies to accelerate the attainment of the ICPD Plan of Action, particularly in combating inequalities and advancing sustainable development.

Civil society engagement in policy advocacy and reporting on ending harmful practices (child marriage and FGM)

Recognizing the critical role of civil society organizations in elimination of harmful practices, UNICEF partnered with 22 local civil society organizations in 11 countries (Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) to mobilize stakeholders at the grassroots level to influence action on elimination of harmful practices. UNICEF has provided dedicated technical assistance and financial support so far to the 12 local civil society organizations to conduct policy advocacy, capacity building, and evidence-based reporting on ending harmful practices by working with young people, women and men's groups, traditional and religious leaders as well as local government officials including Parliamentarians. Some of the ongoing activities include:

- Youth-led research and synthesis of evidence illustrating how child marriages pose an impediment to the advancement of children's rights.
- High-level local youth-led advocacy engagements with duty bearers on eliminating harmful practices that perpetuate child marriages.
- Development of coherent and coordinated multi-media advocacy campaigns for the elimination of harmful practices.
- Dialogue sessions with traditional leaders on the protection of children and adolescents and the importance of birth registration.
- Collaborate with journalists to develop a feature story on sexual and reproductive health and rights, FGM and child marriage.
- Youth forums on FGM, child marriage and other harmful practices.

- Online campaigns to commemorate key calendar days on FGM and ending child marriage.
- Support young people to develop and submit a position paper with key recommendations on FGM, child marriage and other harmful practices.

Strengthened engagement of men and boys in initiatives to end FGM

In 2023, SIARP collaborated with AIDOS (Italian Association for Women in Development) to engage men and boys in efforts to eradicate FGM. The collaboration sparked various thematic discussions centering on men's roles in ending FGM, addressing critical aspects such as masculinities, engaging men in the FGM elimination process, employing gender-transformative approaches at the community level, and guidelines for involving men effectively. These discussions aimed to introduce a knowledge product. The involvement of men in a transformative gender approach was emphasized, acknowledging its central yet often misunderstood role. Following a survey among Community of Practice (COP) members, it became evident that many sought resources, exchanges of experiences and practices, as well as research insights.

The initial thematic discussion on masculinities commenced on 10 April 2023 and ran until the end of May delved into the significance of addressing masculinities within FGM-affected communities. Discussions encompassed integrating masculinities into various activities and workshops at the grassroots level. Additionally, tools and campaigns aimed at encouraging men to challenge harmful gender norms, foster respectful relationships, and advocate for gender justice were explored. Twenty-one messages were exchanged, supplemented by a virtual training session conducted in French with simultaneous English translation. This training provided insight into masculinities and analysed potential field challenges organizations might face when addressing this subject. The report and 14 related articles from the training were disseminated among members and/or posted on the website.

The subsequent thematic discussion on men's involvement in ending FGM aimed to scrutinize men's privileges and responsibilities in combating violence against women, particularly FGM. It sought to dispel misconceptions about FGM and highlight its connections to persisting gender norms within patriarchal societies. The conversation also emphasized the need for genuine gender-transformative approaches in anti-FGM campaigns.

Efforts were made by the COP team to engage stakeholders interested in joining COP through mailings and social media outreach. COP grew to 31 members from 16 countries, with the COP Google group registering 652 members by June 2023, up from 621 in December 2022. Social media activities,

especially on the FGM COP Facebook page, increased followers from 500 to 959 during this period.

Further engagement deliberated at Women Deliver Conference in Kigali, Rwanda, in July 2023. SIARP, alongside AIDOS, hosted a workshop to discuss men's involvement, promoting COP and the project within the pre-conference event themed 'Catalyzing Global Action to End Female Genital Mutilation or Cutting'.

SIARP supported regional level media campaign on the progress, achievements and challenges in addressing FGM in Africa, including a focus on the African Union campaign on FGM.

SIARP supported capacity strengthening of 300 FGM survivors and adolescent girls gender champions on digital skills and using social media platforms, to co-create solutions for scaling up digital engagement to accelerate the 'Movement for Good to End FGM' in 20 intervention communities across states (Ebonyi, Imo, Osun, and Oyo). The UNICEF-supported media campaign Movement for Good to End FGM aims to enlist 5 million individuals, including FGM at-risk women, adolescents, traditional leaders, community health workers and civil society, to use the pledge #Act2EndFGM and

eradicate the practice through local engagement. As a result of the support, the social media engagement individual pledge count ([from real-time monitoring](#)) has reached over 630,000 persons and 636 organizations. [Nigeria Movement for Good to End FGM](#):

In Mali, following the cancellation of the Saleema media campaign and all related campaigns through the government, SIARP and partners directed their focus on girls' economic empowerment. In the second quarter of 2023, 866 out-of-school adolescents from 433 community-based adolescent groups were trained on the income-generating activity of beading/jewelry making and participated in peer-to-peer educational dialogues and social mobilization activities to promote the abandonment of FGM and child marriage. As a result, girls' agency was increased through economic empowerment that in turn leads to prevention of harmful practices. During this period, 17 child marriages of girls aged 13 to 16 years were prevented, and 8 girls aged 5 to 9 years were prevented from undergoing FGM. The following story showcases how economic empowerment is helping women and girls enhance their agency and prevent harmful practices in their family and neighborhood.

Economic empowerment prevents harmful practices

"My name is AT and I am 17 years old. I dropped out of school to help my mother with household chores. At 14 I went to Kayes and then to Senegal to work as a housekeeper. During this journey I suffered a lot. I was poorly treated, suffered violence (sexual, physical and psychological). Having no other prospects abroad, I decided to return to my country to do braids for women and girls. This is how I was able to join the group of adolescents aged 10 to 17 and 18+ who have not attended school in my village, and I cried with joy on the day of my membership. I was trained in beading by the NGO TAGNE. Today thank God I am giving training to the other members of my group; I practice this profession individually and with my group. The members of our group meet at least twice a month to produce necklaces, bracelets, key holders, and rings, and raise awareness on FGM, child marriage and other forms of gender-based violence. We encourage each other to remain united and in solidarity to prevent FGM, child marriage and any other gender-based violence. In addition, with my income, I bought food for my family and clothes for my brothers and sisters. I am grateful for the support because I feel more empowered. The members of all the adolescent groups in our village have now declared, none of the girls in our groups will be given in marriage before the age of 18."

Output 6.2

Capacities of regional women's rights groups and relevant civil society organizations to use social accountability mechanisms to advocate and influence prevention and response to VAWG, including sexual and gender-based violence/harmful practices and GEWE enhanced.

A regional Spotlight Initiative training on EVAWG and sexual and reproductive health and rights advocacy was cascaded. UN Women, in partnership with FEMNET, put together a training targeting 60 women's rights organizations and civil society organizations advocating for sexual and gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health and rights policies in the Western and Central Africa region.

The training provides information on existing and promising EVAWG and sexual and reproductive health and rights budget advocacy strategies for influencing budget-making processes, tracking allocations and social accountability at country and regional levels.

SIARP developed a new social norms training package, which was adapted into self-paced online training modules. Through a partnership cooperation agreement with the [International Committee for the Development of Peoples](#) (CISP), the training was rolled out in four countries (Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi and Somalia) to enhance the quality of social norms programming and measurement at national and subnational

level. CISP, in addition to training, offered mentorship support to local civil society organizations targeted by the programme for capacity building. This results in an improved capacity of civil society organizations to design grassroots level programmes that respond and address social norm that perpetuate harmful practices.

Output 6.3

Capacities of regional women's civil society organizations and networks strengthened to design, implement, and monitor their own programmes on VAWG, including ending sexual and gender-based violence, child marriage and FGM, and promoting women's and girls' health rights.

Result Indicators	Progress		Achievement against milestone
	Baseline (2020)	End of project (2023)	
Number of women's rights groups and relevant civil society organizations representing groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination/marginalization that have strengthened capacities and support to design, implement, monitor and evaluate their own programmes on ending VAWG.	4	75	166%
Number of youth/groups supported to develop and implement innovation solutions to end harmful practices in the region.	0	19	82%

SIARP with close collaboration of regional civil society organizations (FEMNET and COCAFEM) facilitated the creation of eight regional civil society knowledge exchange forums for activists, lawmakers and policymakers to identify key challenges in national and regional contexts, share good practices, develop strategies and recommendations to mobilize, organize, and develop key messaging on challenging VAWG in the regions. As part of this initiative, the **High-Level Multi-Stakeholder Continental Summit** was convened on the sidelines of the African Union Heads of Assembly Summit, from 15 to 17 February 2023 and attended by regional civil society organizations, national civil society organizations, key government counterparts involved in the Spotlight Initiative, high-level representatives of the European Union, the African Union Commission and Regional Economic Communities. The summit leveraged the work of key regional national and regional civil society networks, coalitions and movements working on the key priority issues of SIARP, building on their experience and learning over the years to support the implementation of the programme. Further to sharing lessons, the platform helped to discuss on the sustainability and joint reflection on what is next beyond the Spotlight Initiative with civil society organizations, Member States, the African Union, Regional Economic Communities, and development partners. The following are some of the key recommendations of the high-level summit:

1. Stakeholders have a role to end VAWG, including harmful practices, and stakeholder engagement needs to consider the right approaches for different actors to shift practices at continental, country and community levels.
2. Increasing support for grassroots-led mobilization, especially led by women and youth, women and girls with disabilities.
3. EVAWG programmes must make the work of civil society organizations at the centre, women's rights organizations and women's rights defenders as essential partners in EVAWG work.

An innovation hub to promote exemplary and effective initiatives on the elimination of FGM established and implemented.

The evolving landscape of FGM practices, influenced by responses to anti-FGM policies, reveals generational shifts, notably in border towns. Increased community engagement, especially among women and youth, along with innovation and media exposure, is reshaping the social dynamics surrounding FGM. SIARP and the Joint Programme introduced FGM Innovation HackLabs that engaged young people in creating innovative solutions to address FGM and harmful practices in Africa. This multi-stage programme amplifies the involvement of African Young Innovators addressing social issues like FGM

and Harmful Practices. In 2021 and 2022, 300 innovative solutions were evaluated, and six outstanding winner solutions were incubated, involving over 1 million young individuals with FGM innovation information. AfriLabs, a network supporting innovation centres in African countries, joined the programme in 2022, focusing on scaling growth-stage solutions for investment readiness. In 2023, 'We Scale' HackLab continued this progress, involving dedicated innovators from the final

pitch events of 2021 and 2022. Winning solutions will receive an additional \$15,000 in scaling funding, tied to measurable impact. Innovators also received support in business scaling, programme design, and mentoring, along with connections to UNFPA country offices. The following two success cases shows the power of innovation solutions to fasten the process towards ending FGM in Africa.

From apathy to apps: New technology helping young people to report FGM and gender-based violence

Smart Reporting and Referral (Smart RR) is a mobile application that allows people to report FGM and sexual and gender-based violence and also connect them to the nearest service providers such as the police, NGOs, hospitals, and lawyers using their smart and basic phones anonymously. This means that survivors and adolescent girls can access all forms of services anonymously.

Samuel, the innovator behind Smart RR, recently won technical assistance and seed funding at Spotlight's FGM HackLab. This initiative has been implemented by AfriLabs. SMART RR supports the Spotlight Initiative to achieve its mandate of preventing sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices against women and girls.

The app has features connecting different service providers, including safe spaces, police, lawyers' health service and women's coalitions/civil society organizations. This is made possible through its seamless identification of service providers for FGM. To date, Smart RR operates in eight states of Nigeria, with 2,000+ users; so far 1,000 cases are reported.

Afyatoons visual storytelling: A revolutionary approach to sexual and reproductive health education

Afyatoon stands as an organization pioneering education and empowerment among the youth regarding their sexual and reproductive health and rights using animated characters. Rooted in the vision of Glory, its leader, who emerged victorious in Spotlight's recent FGM HackLab, Afyatoon received vital technical aid and a seed fund award.

Growing up in a rural Tanzanian community where the prevalence of FGM and sexual and gender-based violence was strikingly evident, Glory witnessed the adverse impact of these practices on her friends due to the absence of adequate sexual and reproductive health education. This firsthand experience ignited her passion to come up with an innovative venture employing animated characters to enlighten and empower the youth about their sexual and reproductive health rights.

These animated characters serve as channels for information, shedding light on the health ramifications of FGM and sexual and gender-based violence while showcasing positive alternatives. Afyatoon's unique visual storytelling method simplifies complex medical information, making it accessible and captivating for individuals within the community. Their strategy merges human-centred design, community collaboration, and storytelling through visual arts to encourage communities to disprove harmful practices.

Afyatoon's impact speaks volumes, having reached over 3,000 young individuals from diverse communities across Tanzania, employing educational visual arts to inspire positive change and foster a healthier understanding of sexual and reproductive health. Some animations have been broadcast on Hope TV and comics have been printed in the Mwananchi newspaper. These milestones have been achieved in partnership with fellow youth-based organizations and companies, such as Mobile Afya, the government and media outlets. By addressing harmful practice like FGM and sexual and gender-based violence and collaborating with existing solutions, Afyatoon seeks to collectively end these practices and champion sexual reproductive health and rights.

Regional innovation summit convened young innovators, FGM experts, business coaches, donors, investors, and communicators with the total of 236 participants to showcase UNFPA's innovative approach in the campaign against FGM. The aim of the summit is to support the sustainability of the InnoHacks on FGM in the future through meeting the business world and young innovators.

The [Outcome Document](#) states that the youth are at the crucial juncture where innovation can play a pivotal role in reshaping the future for millions of girls and women affected

by harmful practices such as child marriage and FGM. The commitment of the youth to eradicate harmful practices, they pledged to drive innovation for transformative change. This encompasses initiatives such as the Harmful Practices Innovation Summit integrated into the UNFPA ENGINE platform, empowering young African women and girls to lead in combating harmful practices through inventive approaches. The press release, [photos](#) and the [videos](#) can be found [here](#) in the links.



FIGURE 9 SIARP SUPPORTED YOUTH LEADERS, INNOVATORS, AND ACTIVISTS FROM 27 COUNTRIES TO GATHER AT THE NAIROBI SUMMIT, FOCUSING ON INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES TO ELIMINATE FGM AND CHILD MARRIAGE. THIS POWERFUL CONVERGENCE, FEATURING POLICYMAKERS, EXPERTS, AND YOUNG VOICES, UNDERSCORED A GLOBAL COMMITMENT TO ENDING THESE HARMFUL PRACTICES AND CHAMPIONING WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS.

Through the Spotlight Initiative, the UNICEF Office to the African Union and the African Union Commission launched a challenge for youth on innovative approaches to help address the impact of harmful practices on mental health and well-being. Following the applications' review and coaching, the 17 outstanding innovative applications were each provided \$2,000 seed funding to empower girls, including supporting those affected by harmful practices and mental health, enabling them to work directly with peers in the communities; and advocate for laws and policies that protect the girl child.

Some of the ongoing community level initiatives include:

1. Grow Right, Grow Bright

A community campaign implemented by Ripple Heights, winners of the Youth Innovation Challenge, which used participatory sports to rejuvenate the minds of young people to actively advocate against societal menace such as child

marriage and FGM that tend to impede their mental health. So far over 1,000 youth in four communities in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria have participated in the sports campaign activities. This intervention will continue until the end of the year.



FIGURE 10 RIPPLE HEIGHT COMMUNITY LEVEL ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVE- NIGERIA

2. Girls for Girls Africa Mental Health Foundation

Winners of the Youth Innovation Challenge provided mental health and psychosocial support to 40 victims of child marriage and their caregivers and engaged 500 community members in meaningful dialogues to address child marriage. The capacity building of 10 champions/ambassadors against child marriage enabled 400 adolescent girls to benefit from mental health psychosocial counseling in Myita and Kisauni communities in Mombasa, Kenya.



FIGURE 11 DIALOGUE WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Reporting on sexual and reproductive health and rights

Sexual and reproductive health and rights constitute a fundamental component integrated into the formulation of the RAP for Africa on EVAWG, complementing the focus on sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices. This plan serves as a strategic blueprint, guiding regional partners and Member States in translating policies into concrete measures to eradicate VAWG/sexual and gender-based violence/harmful practices and advance sexual and reproductive health and rights services. Notably, efforts are directed towards developing data collection tools inclusive of sexual and reproductive health and rights indicators.

A pivotal objective behind deploying the gender-transformative accelerator tool at various levels is to challenge detrimental norms and the power dynamics they uphold, ensuring the preservation of young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights. Specifically, within Outcome 5, drawing from field-testing conducted in Ethiopia, Mozambique, India, and Niger under the Global Programme to End Child Marriage, the initiative fortified interventions for adolescent girls and young women, augmenting system-level approaches, particularly concerning sexual and reproductive health and rights and bodily autonomy. This tool fundamentally aims to disrupt harmful gender and social norms and the underlying power structures. For instance, its field test in Mozambique facilitated discussions on bodily autonomy and sexuality, shedding light on the agency and potential biases of service providers delivering youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services.

SIARP played a pivotal role in supporting the 10th Africa Conference on Sexual Health and Rights, collaborating with Purposeful and the African Federation for Sexual Health and Rights. Held in Freetown, Sierra Leone, from 27 June to 1 July 2022, the conference centred on the theme 'Accelerating the Elimination of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence.'

Rights Holders (Spotlight programme beneficiaries)

Indicative numbers	Total (2020)	Total (2023)	Comments/explanations
Women (18 years and above)	437,959	6,065,541	Based on 24 countries in Africa supported by both Joint Programmes and Spotlight.
Girls 5-7	248,165	2,453,663	
Men (18 years and above)	341,224	5,741,270	
Boys 5-17	110,903	2,127,537	Community sensitization in Mali and Nigeria, 10th Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Conference, pre-conference events
Non-disaggregated	21284	0	
TOTAL	3,393,021	16,388,011	

As the above table shows, SIARP directly reached an estimated **3,393,021** rights holders, including through the Joint Programme in 24 countries. The interventions that are cascaded in the three outcome areas are estimated to reach **16,388,011** women and men indirectly.

During the entire implementation period, SIARP reached 45 countries directly in different capacity-building initiatives,

community sensitization, interventions through civil society networks, high-level country missions, human right consultation meetings, journalist trainings, pre-continental summits, and regional conferences. More than 75 per cent of these countries have received minimum of two or more capacity-building support.





Challenges and Mitigating Measures ●

SIARP faced various challenges impacting its progress:

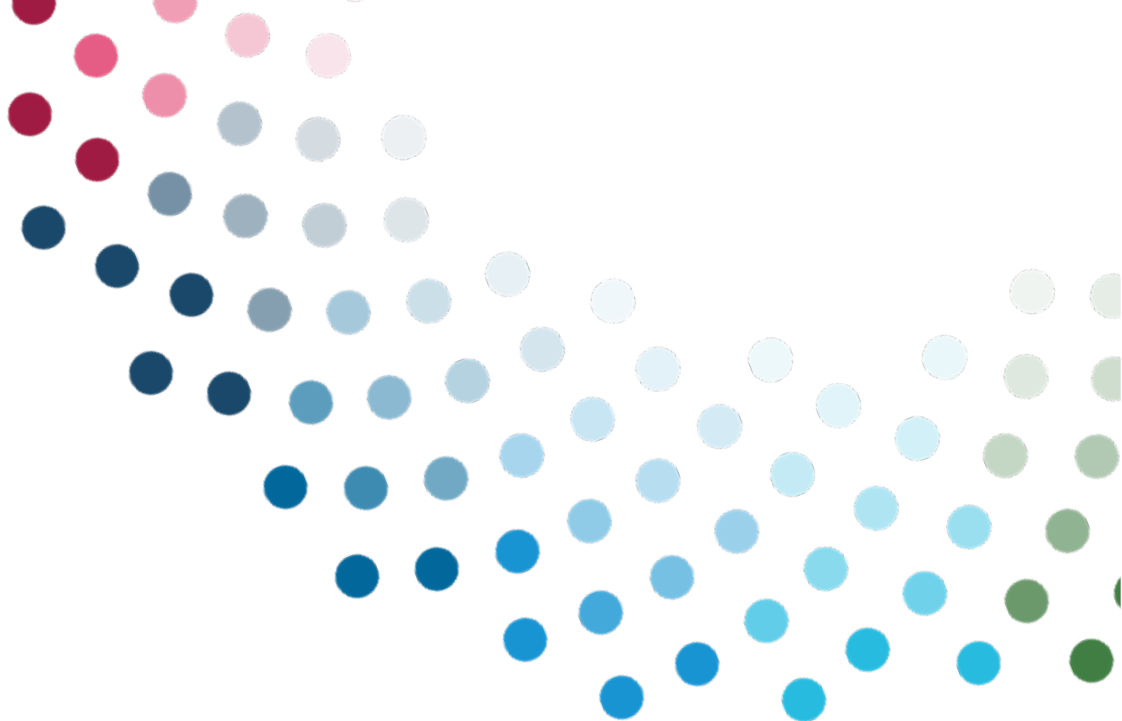
- 1. Funding constraints and delays:** The no-cost extension approval process and funding delays impacted implementation momentum. Replenishment delays in funds slowed down programme acceleration and procurement and hindered joint activities supporting the African Union Commission and programme implementation. RUNOs assisted in bridging the budget gap from other internal programmes temporarily.
- 2. Impact of COVID-19:** The pandemic-induced travel restrictions had a notable impact on various in-person activities such as trainings, workshops, field monitoring visits, high-level ministerial missions, and assessments. Consequently, limitations on collecting first-hand information disrupted research endeavors like the Regional Mapping and Assessment Study, compelling a reliance on outdated or inaccessible secondary data sources. Virtual communication method is effectively utilized to implement monitoring, consultations, validations and high-level meetings.
- 3. Stakeholder engagement and capacity limitations:** SIARP encountered delays due to bureaucratic processes, hindering the involvement of regional and national stakeholders in trainings and workshops. Additionally, feedback from regional partners and Member States for assessments/studies was delayed. To address this, RUNOs directly engaged with country offices in selected Member States and collaborated with the African Union Commission, garnering support for implementation and responses from Member States.
- 4. Sensitivity to some of the thematic areas covered by SIARP:** The sensitivity surrounding certain thematic areas within SIARP became evident, especially concerning the involvement of Member States' Human Rights Commissions in country assessments related to women's human rights defenders. Initially, there was reluctance among Member States to engage in these assessments due to discomfort discussing women human rights defenders within their countries' contexts. However, after clarifying the assessment's purpose – to identify areas for supporting women human rights defenders and fostering a more supportive environment for their work – government counterparts became willing participants in the assessments. This shift in perspective enabled their active involvement in examining the legal, policy, and socio-cultural landscapes affecting civil society organizations and women human rights defenders.
- 5. Limited civil society capacity and coordination:** The limited presence and capacity of regional civil society organizations affected programme delivery rates. Coordination efforts between RUNOs and civil society organizations were employed to enhance collaboration and address overstretching of civil society organizations. In addition, the potential for granting funds to civil society organizations faced constraints because regional civil

society organizations lacked the capacity to aid local and national civil society organizations. To address this, a concept note was formulated and circulated among regional offices. The goal was to facilitate collaboration between regional and country offices, enabling the identification of local civil society organizations. These identified organizations would receive capacity-building support to engage youth in advocating for policy changes and mobilizing communities to combat harmful practices.

6. **Communication and documentation challenges:** Insufficient communication and documentation capacities and different knowledge levels regarding communication and documentation work across all stakeholders, including the African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities, Member States, and regional civil society organizations, caused a need to strengthen the dissemination and sustainability efforts. To this end, RUNOs shared concrete guidance with all stakeholders and built their capacity.
7. **Limitations in human resources:** The African Union Commission's various directorates are experiencing significant staffing shortages, leading to delays in decision-making and impacting the speed of implementation.
8. **Implementation momentum and ratification challenges:** Political instability and wavering political commitment hindered ratification efforts in Madagascar and South Sudan, while high travel expenses and a scarcity of consultants also impeded progress. However, persistent negotiations with South Sudan's national civil society movement eventually led to the successful endorsement of the Maputo Protocol there.

9. **Absence of qualified consultants:** The programme encountered difficulties finding skilled consultants for two important tasks: integrating the African Union Gender Observatory into their website and managing discussions, recommendations, and reports for the African Union summit. To address this, they adjusted their plans and broadened their search for qualified applicants through various proposal channels.

Addressing these challenges involved varied approaches, including improved communication guidance, wider applicant outreach for consultant roles, direct engagement with stakeholders, and internal funding modes for joint activities. Efforts focused on collaboration, strengthening capacities, and adapting to unforeseen circumstances to maintain programme momentum and overcome implementation hurdles.



Lessons Learned and New Opportunities ●

Lessons

The subsequent section offers a comprehensive review of programmatic and operational insights gleaned from the extensive experience gained over the past three years of programme implementation. These insights have been extracted from a careful analysis of the strengths and challenges encountered throughout the implementation

phase. This retrospective examination aims to distill valuable lessons that have emerged from both successful endeavors and obstacles encountered, providing a holistic understanding of the programme's dynamics, achievements, and areas for consideration for subsequent programming.

Civil society organizations, CSRRG, grassroots and youth engagement:

- **Empowering grassroots civil society organizations:** Intensive support and capacity building for grassroots youth-led and women-led organizations significantly broadened the reach of programmes, directly involving marginalized adolescent girls and women. This active engagement empowered them to advocate against harmful practices within their communities, fostering meaningful change at the local level. Frequent reflections from grassroots civil society organizations also indicated the need to revisit the United Nations implementing partner requirements to make it more friendly and feasible.
- **Contextualized solutions for transformation:** The effectiveness of social and gender-transformative interventions was magnified through participatory approaches, identifying unique drivers of societal change in various communities. By collaborating with local stakeholders, tailored solutions emerged, addressing specific societal challenges and ingrained harmful practices.
- **Youth empowerment for advocacy:** Capacity building among youth in advocacy and programming played a pivotal role in bolstering their ability to drive advocacy efforts. Empowered with skills and knowledge, these young advocates spearheaded inclusive campaigns, leaving no one behind in the pursuit of ending harmful practices.
- **Robust and customized guideline for CSRRG:** The civil society regional reference group comprises diverse and experienced members from various parts of Africa. This group has been actively engaged in voluntary advocacy, advisory, and monitoring support for the regional programme. However, this voluntary nature has resulted

in limited accountability, challenges in assuming leadership roles, and limitations in delivering comprehensive support. To address these issues, it is essential to adapt a detailed guide for future programmes, focusing on aspects such

as facilitating leadership transitions, establishing robust accountability measures, and considering forms of compensation to enhance the group's effectiveness.

Accountability, collaboration, and partnership:

- Policy action through accountability: The rollout of accountability initiatives stirred action among stakeholders, prompting concrete legislative, policy, and financial commitments at both national and continental levels. This ensured a concerted effort toward eradicating harmful practices.
- The development of RAP and its robust M&E framework strengthens accountability pathways and promotes actions for advancing regional and national EVAWG commitments.

Stakeholder engagement and regional collaboration:

- Enhanced collaboration among partners: Regular collaboration meetings among implementing partners dissolved siloed approaches. This facilitated a cohesive strategy, fostering better coordination, and enabled a more comprehensive sharing of experiences and best practices among stakeholders.
- Engaging diverse stakeholders including private sector: SIARP focused on the engagement of regional and national stakeholders – mostly public institutions. Engaging private sector both at regional and national levels towards EVAWG would be a value add including: 1) it would help to ensure the sustainability of the project by mobilizing additional resources and expertise; 2) it would bring an additional voice to decision makers and influential people, and help to build a broader coalition of support for the fight against VAWG; and 3) it would help to promote gender equality and prevent VAWG in the workplace and beyond.
- Collaboration for impact: Collaboration with other regional programmes on GEWE enabled to reach more Member States, maximize impact, and avoid duplication of efforts. For instance, working with the UNDP Canada Regional Programme to advance GEWE, the creation of the ECOWAS Gender Observatory has been a successful step in facilitating the online reporting of West African Member States' progress in this area. This observatory serves as an effective platform for monitoring GEWE and EVAWG, streamlining the reporting process for Member States and improving information accessibility for stakeholders.

Customized resources and innovative funding:

- Tailored regional initiatives: Adaptation of global initiatives and resources to regional contexts streamlined survey methodologies and indicator creation. This facilitated standardized practices and comparability across different areas.
- Innovative partnership for funding: The unique funding partnership mechanism illustrated the importance of collaborative efforts among the European Union, African Union, and United Nations. Such collaboration was instrumental in implementing comprehensive continental programmes addressing critical issues.

Spotlight Initiative and project implementation:

- United Nations reform and programme implementation: The Spotlight Initiative served as a prime example of United Nations reform, showcasing effective collaboration among diverse United Nations agencies. This collective approach utilized their respective expertise, amplifying the impact of the programme.
- Extended implementation time: Reconsideration of the timeline for the Spotlight Initiative is necessary due to the shifts in policy, legislation, and societal norms at the community level, all of which demand time. This approach ensured a robust understanding of successful strategies and areas needing improvement.

Streamlining operational processes:

- Simplified stakeholder involvement: Future projects would benefit from simplified operational processes. By reducing bureaucratic barriers and enhancing collaborative

communication, stakeholders can seamlessly work together, improving efficiency and effectiveness in implementation.

New Opportunities

The subsequent section highlights some of the opportunities that have arisen during programme implementation. It shows how SIARP (or the specific programme) has effectively utilized and capitalized on these opportunities. Furthermore, it

provides insights on how existing or future programmes can continue to build upon these opportunities once the current programme concludes, ensuring their sustained progress and impact.

Strengthening civil society capacities for reporting and advocacy

The programme's strategic investment in regional civil society organizations and women's rights organizations has yielded collaborative partnerships. These alliances, formed with civil society organizations in Nigeria and Tanzania, have ignited efforts to prepare shadow reports. To bolster their capabilities

further, Equality Now is developing a comprehensive training manual focused on alternative periodic reporting. This initiative aims to empower these organizations to exert meaningful influence on the implementation of EAWG laws and policies.

Strategic partnerships and collaborations

Strategic partnerships with organizations such as EAC, ECOWAS, SADC, and the West Africa Health Organization have the potential to include private sector companies and other like-minded development partners that create innovative programmes and offer specialized knowledge to help adolescent girls and young women assert their rights and enhance their empowerment.

The relevant structures of Regional Economic Communities, including the Parliamentary forums (SADC), the Legislative Assembly (at EAC), the Gender Observatory (ECOWAS) and the East African Court of Justice (EAC), serve as vital conduits for integrating continental anti-violence initiatives for women into national agendas. The programme's commitment to

supporting ECOWAS in developing and executing a strategy and roadmap against FGM represents a strategic move to towards ending harmful practices.

Leveraging interfaith and cultural networks

Expanding collaborations with regional interfaith and cultural agencies is a move toward institutionalizing structured mechanisms at the national level. This collaboration is geared toward advancing commitments to address pressing issues such as child marriage and FGM. SIARP support to guides and protocols for cultural leaders and faith-based organizations further amplifies these concerted efforts.

Knowledge development and capacity strengthening

SIARP supported an extensive review of country experiences to comprehensively understand the nature of child marriage. An accelerated approach is being taken toward operationalizing results-oriented response services to end harmful practices. Real-time data generation serves as the bedrock for proactive measures, ensuring a swift and effective response to counter these practices.

This initiative will lead to the development of an adaptive programming toolkit that shares successful practices, particularly in humanitarian and fragile settings. The emphasis lies in bolstering countries' capacities in addressing and preventing FGM and child marriage.

Technological innovations and access to justice

Countries' capabilities in developing digital innovations to enhance access to justice for girls at risk of child marriage are being fortified. Guidance and technical assistance will play a pivotal role in enabling this technological empowerment, ultimately facilitating easier access to justice. Additionally,

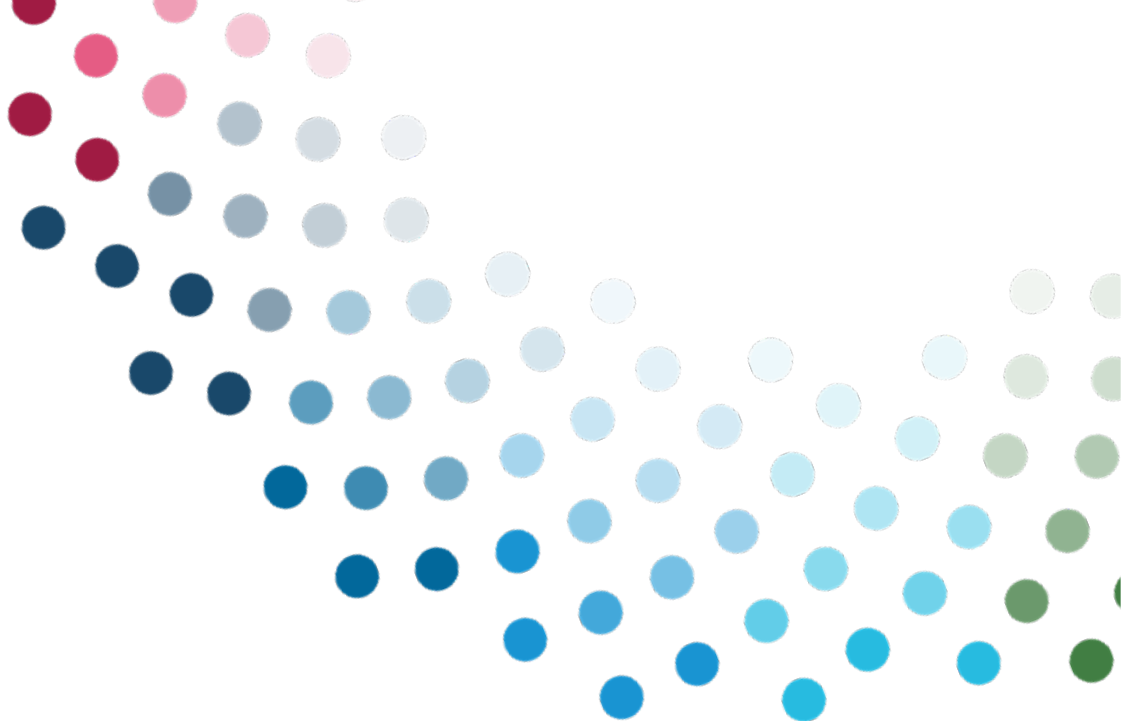
empowering grassroots youth-led and women-led organizations remains a focal point. This empowerment aims to facilitate effective public policy advocacy and reporting on issues related to FGM.

Advancing African Union's EVAWG and harmful practices initiatives

The programme remains steadfast in its dedication to assisting the African Union's goal of eradicating detrimental practices and putting a stop to violence against women. Vital components of this ongoing commitment include implementing the accountability framework and adhering to the African Union Convention on EVAWG, providing support for regional efforts against FGM and ECM, and amplifying the adoption of innovative concepts by young innovators. The support extends to implementing RAP for Africa on EVAWG and advocating for increased financing to drive impactful change. These efforts will persist across various relevant programmes upheld by the RUNOs.



SIARP ACTIVELY ENGAGED YOUNG PEOPLE IN ADVOCATING FOR THE ERADICATION OF HARMFUL PRACTICES, INCLUDING FGM, CHILD MARRIAGE, AND TEENAGE PREGNANCIES.



Innovative, Promising or Good Practices ●

SIARP has implemented several innovative and promising practices throughout its duration. These practices have been

successful in addressing VAWG, harmful practices, and sexual and reproductive health and rights in Africa.

Civil society engagement in policy advocacy and reporting on ending harmful practices

One of the most successful practices has been the engagement of civil society organizations in policy advocacy and reporting on ending harmful practices. SIARP has worked with civil society organizations in several countries to develop

proposals using a small-scale funding agreements to advocate for ending child marriage and FGM. These proposals have been successful in influencing government policy documents and guidelines.

Innovation Summit

Another promising practice has been the Innovation Summit. This summit brought together young African social innovators to share ideas, strengthen their skills and capacities, and meet with different actors including funders. The summit was

successful in generating new creative ideas and solutions to ending FGM, and enhancing the tackling of grassroots causes for FGM through innovative solutions.

RAP for Africa on EVAWG

SIARP strengthened accountability systems by supporting the African Union Commission to develop the first RAP on EVAWG with a M&E framework, which provides a framework

for regional and national stakeholders to facilitate and enhance the implementation and actualization of global and regional commitments on EVAWG.

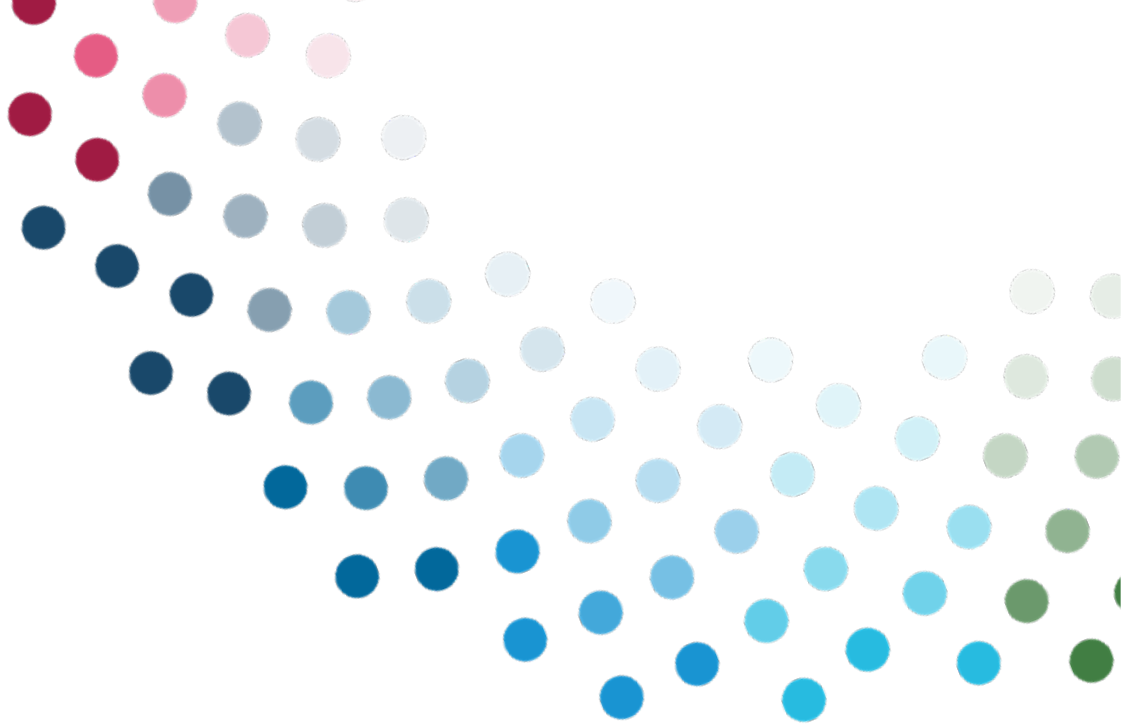


Implementing South-to-South cooperation

SIARP has also implemented South-to-South cooperation through the Annual Continental Coordination Platform for national Spotlight programmes in Africa. This platform has been successful in creating a unique opportunity for national Spotlight programmes to share and learn from good practices, identify emerging trends and operational challenges, and implement strategies that can inform future programming.

Civil society organizations reinforce a state's accountability for protecting the rights of women and girls

Civil society organizations have also been successful in reinforcing a state's accountability for protecting the rights of women and girls. SIARP has provided technical support to two national civil society organizations in Nigeria and Tanzania to draft and submit periodic reports on the rights of women and girls in Africa. These reports have been successful in providing facts, relevant information, and recommendations for the Nigerian and Tanzanian governments.



Communications and Visibility ●

SIARP employed communication strategies throughout the programme's duration to advocate for change, disseminate information, and ultimately engage with policymakers to influence policies addressing gender-based violence on the continent. Target audiences included government representatives, traditional and community leaders, civil society, traditional media, and social media influencers. Critical messaging also focused on influencing gender-based violence programming and funding through post event press release, brief articles, social media posts.

To achieve this, the project's communications and knowledge management efforts supported the development, curation, and publication of critical knowledge products. This endeavour was particularly collaborative, involving the respective RUNOs and partners (the African Union

Commission, civil society organizations), who all deployed their media assets, including websites and social media, to highlight the programme's objectives and activities, as well as share important messages around gender-based violence, harmful practices and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Existing platforms were leveraged to increase the programme's visibility and reach a broader audience.

A communication plan was developed and implemented for the planned activities and events, involving the African Union Commission's communication team, which fostered co-ownership of the messages and targeting of critical stakeholders, such as policymakers. Various communication assets, including short videos, quote cards, press releases, and posters, were employed as communication tools.

Key messages

SIARP emphasizes the importance of partnership and collaboration to achieve gender equality and safeguard sexual and reproductive health and rights in Africa. The project's social media strategy focuses on highlighting partnerships

between different organizations, empowering regional actors through training programmes, providing educational support to build capacity, and leveraging global attention on gender equality efforts in Africa.

Media and visibility events

The 2nd International Conference on FGM brought together over 650 people to develop a comprehensive plan to accelerate global action against FGM. With the backing of the African Union, the conference produced a plan to address the alarming number of girls at risk of FGM, with

nearly 4 million girls at risk annually and an anticipated 68 million girls affected by 2030. Tanzania's Minister of Social Development, Gender, Women and Special Groups, Hon. Dr. Dorothy Gwajima, emphasized the detrimental impacts of FGM on educational opportunities for girls and women's

overall well-being, noting that over 200 million women and girls globally have undergone FGM, with over 20 million of these procedures performed by health professionals. Below are some of the media coverage links for the conference:

- [Second International Conference on FGM set to begin in Tanzania](#)
- [After Key Meeting on FGM ends in Tanzania, focus turns to action](#)
- [Anti-FGM local frontliners to donors: “Please trust us with your resources.”](#)
- [Hotlines and data: More work lies ahead in eliminating cross border FGM](#)
- [Cross border FGM: Law enforcement, collaborations key in ending the practice](#)
- [Drawing men and boys into quest to end FGM](#)
- [Spotlight Initiative endorses call to end FGM in current generation at 2nd International Conference on FGM](#)
- [Change in a Generation for Girls and Women’s Wellbeing; Unlocking Full Potentials; Ending Harmful Practices](#)
- The UNFPA Innovation Summit that took place in Kenya in October 2023 was a significant event that brought youth and women leaders together to discuss and promote innovative interventions aimed at ending harmful practices such as FGM and child marriage. See link to the summit coverage [Youth leaders innovate to pave the way for ending FGM and child marriage by 2030](#).
- The African Union Commission Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development Department, in collaboration with SIARP, is conducting a training workshop for media practitioners from West, Central, and North African countries on sensitive reporting of harmful practices. The training covers topics such as classifying harmful practices, mapping audiences, ethical considerations for reporting on sensitive topics, protecting victims and survivors, and storytelling techniques for children. The workshop is being held at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and participants are from Niger, Nigeria, Mauritania, Egypt, Chad, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Ghana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, and Djibouti. Below are some of the media coverage links:
 - » [The African Union and UNFPA call on African media professionals to report sensitive and harmful traditional practices including FGM with an ethical lens.](#)
 - » [Journalists have crucial role in eliminating cultural harmful practices UNFPA](#)
 - » [The African Union trains journalists to help eliminate harmful practices](#)

- » [The African Union Empowers Media Practitioners to Report on Harmful Traditional Practice](#)
- » [The African Union and UN Galvanize Media Support to End Harmful Practices By 2030](#)

- Steering committee meeting and field visit to Ethiopia: A [comprehensive overview of the extensive media attention and coverage](#) of the Steering Committee’s visit to Ethiopia received and took place on 2 to 6 October 2023.
 - » [Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation \(EBC\): https://youtu.be/hLNI0ZEf8dl?si=JGCB4Hh7-M78myS9](#)
 - » [https://www.facebook.com/etvworld1/videos/1501033180669323](#)
 - » [2. SNNPR TV https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCv6gVk0aRo](#)
 - » [3. ARTS TV https://youtu.be/ieOBT8aRvd0?si=QUt4faFD9bdw562O](#)
- **2021 Annual Continental Coordination platform for the African Union Member States implementing national Spotlight programmes:** SIARP under Stream I launched the [Annual Continental Coordination Platform](#) in collaboration with the African Union Commission’s WGYD. The platform provided a space for the Member States, Regional Economic Communities, United Nations country teams, civil society organizations, and other implementing partners in the eight Spotlight Initiative Africa countries to share learning and best practices. It further included a [social media campaign](#), articulating commitments and statements by a range of high-level participants, on positive actions to address thematic issues.
- **Strategic consultation on strengthening the role of religious and traditional leaders in EVAWG:** A consultation was held from 19 to 21 October 2021 which brought together regional faith-based organizations, communities of traditional leaders, the African Union Commission and Regional Economic Communities, for expanded dialogue and commitment on the importance of their partnership in addressing VAWG, harmful practices, and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Through the strategic sessions, accountability mechanisms and longer-term efforts by the regional faith-based organizations and communities of traditional leaders were explored and documented. Based on the learning from the engagement, a guideline on the engagement of the regional faith-based organizations and communities of traditional leaders is under development. Several press releases were prepared: Main press release: [Press release 1](#); press release on Twitter: [Press release 2](#); press release on Facebook: [Press release 3](#).
- SIARP collaborated with Purposeful and the African Federation for Sexual Health and Rights to organize the 10th Africa Conference on Sexual Health and Rights,

in Freetown, Sierra Leone, from 27 June to 1 July 2022. The conference focused on accelerating efforts to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence in Africa. SIARP hosted a side event titled ‘Breakthrough moments under Spotlight Initiative,’ showcasing how SIARP has empowered women’s rights organizations and civil society organizations to advocate against gender-based violence and harmful practices. The event also analysed the legislative and policy landscape for addressing violence against women and girls in Africa. <https://twitter.com/UNDPAfrica/status/1542454590385405952?s=20andt=RYCOhfZOchRxolXfkkgx2w>

- **Launch of the ‘Lessons Learned, Promising Practices, and Challenges to Overcome’ Report** Within SIARP, the UN Women Liaison Office to the African Union and the African Union Commission, WGYD, launched the report ‘Lessons Learned, Promising Practices, and Challenges to Overcome’ with key stories and actionable recommendations from the eight African countries implementing the Spotlight Initiative, on fighting gender-based violence. The report provides first-hand experiences from the eight African countries implementing the Spotlight Initiative on EVAWG.
- A consultation was held in Addis Ababa from 3 to 4 November 2022, to support partnerships between the

African Union, regional faith-based organizations, and communities of traditional leaders to strengthen their engagement in the prevention of and response to gender-based violence in Africa. The meeting resulted in the launch of the ‘Guidelines to Support Engagement with Traditional and Regional Leaders’, which provide key recommendations for strengthening partnerships to address gender-based violence. In addition to the consultation, a virtual rollout workshop for the Toolkit to Guide Collection and Use of Harmonized and Standardized Data and Indicators on VAWG, including harmful practices and sexual and reproductive health and rights, was held on 21 March 2023. A virtual launch of the ‘Mapping and Assessment Reports on the Ratification, Domestication, Implementation and Reporting on Global and Regional Instruments on GEWE and EVAWG’ was held on 23 March 2023. Finally, a ToT on drafting and reviewing laws and policies to promote and protect the work of women’s rights groups, civil society organizations and human rights defenders was held on 18 to 19 May 2023. The communications collateral produced include a [press release](#) and social media <https://twitter.com/UNDPAfrica/status/1659187136719888389>, <https://twitter.com/UNDPAfrica/status/1666100679591469059>, <https://twitter.com/WLSAZW/status/1666175167905558530>

Campaigns

The I Belong to Me Book: ‘I Belong to Me’ is a book directed at children, pre-adolescents and parents, with the objective of generating a conversation within the household about African culture and harmful practices. The book was produced by a team composed exclusively of African Women, to preserve the cultural authenticity of the storytelling and the nuances that exist in African social norms and interactions. This product was designed by the African Union in partnership with the Spotlight Initiative and the Nala Feminist Collective. [African Union I Belong to Me book](#)



FIGURE XXX AMIRA ELFADIL, COMMISSIONER FOR HEALTH, HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, WITH GIRLS ACTIVISTS HOLDING COPIES OF I BELONG TO ME

16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (25 November to 10 December 2022)

Under the 16 Days of Activism advocacy efforts, UN Women developed a communication campaign to serve as a platform to reach a large audience and to promote prevention and EVAWG and disseminate key messages under the Spotlight

Initiative. Human interest story highlighted a SIARP beneficiary published on the International Days of Persons with Disabilities: [Social Media Post 1](#), [Social Media Post 2](#), [Social Media Post 3](#)

b. Human interest stories: As required by the Communications and Visibility Guide, please provide details for a minimum of five human interest stories during the reporting period. Include the story title, lede, and photo here, and then please link to the full story. Please review the [Web-writing Guidelines](#) for more details.

Some of the links to human interest stories are as below

- ‘Youth is the hope of the future’ - Using visual art and animation to end FGM [Youth is the hope of the future’ - Using visual art and animation to end FGM](#)
- Why it is easy to carry out FGM across borders [Cross border FGM: ‘Law enforcement, collaborations key in ending the practice](#)
- Role of men in ending FGM [Drawing men and boys into quest to end FGM](#)

Human Interest Story

Rama’s resilience: ‘Unmasking the Shadows of Gender-Based Violence’ centres on the harrowing experience of 8-year-old Rama Diallo, a resident of Koutiala, who faced sexual abuse. Living with her uncle after her father’s death, she was brought to the one-stop centre by her aunt, Aminata Tangara, for treatment following the incident. The one-stop centre in Koutiala, backed by Spotlight Initiative through UNFPA and operated by partners, is one of several centres in Mali dedicated to assisting survivors of gender-based violence. Rama narrates her traumatic encounter with a 30-year-old neighbour, which left her terrified and hesitant to attend school. Her story is, unfortunately, not uncommon, as Dr. Hanna Kounou Coulibaly from the centre highlights the frequency of such gender-based violence cases.

Despite the rise in reported gender-based violence incidents, the article stresses the significant role of centres like the one-stop centre, which offer holistic care for survivors – encompassing health, legal, social, and police services. Furthermore, these centres place a significant emphasis on prevention through awareness campaigns and training sessions. Rama’s case underscores the importance of these services, as she benefited from both medical attention and psychological counseling. The UNFPA report acknowledges the impact of integrated centres and community prevention mechanisms, which have seen a decrease in certain harmful practices like FGM and early marriages in specific regions, thanks to the widespread sensitization efforts. Yet, as Police Sergeant Kadiatou Sanogo articulates, while strides have been made in both victim care and prevention, there remains an urgent need for continued and heightened efforts to combat gender-based violence in Mali.



Testimonials:

2021

[One Action You take](#) is a video that shows testimonies of participants at the consultation meeting of traditional and religious leaders in ending violence against women:

- “When I go home, I will put emphasis on the misunderstanding of the religion of Islam on gender issues.” – Prof. Mustapha Ismail, Director, Centre for Human Rights in Islam and Lecturer, Department of Arabic, Bayero University, Kano
- “Spotlight is a daring initiative! From the country presentations we saw an extraordinary amount of work that goes beyond naming the problem, to finding solutions, in a way that implements existing commitments, and strives to shift negative social norms and celebrate positive cultural diversity” - Dr. Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, African Union Goodwill Ambassador for Ending Child Marriage, after facilitating the two-days learning platform organized by SIARP on Continental Coordination Platform for the African Union Member States Implementing National Spotlight Programmes, 1 to 2 June 2021.

2022

[Testimonials Video](#) of EVAWG on data coordination training organized in February 2022 and the blog or an [article on EVAWG data coordination training](#)

- “I believe this Regional Action Plan is a very innovative regional framework bringing together all stakeholders to effectively address the issue of VAWG. The development of the action plan is a positive move that will enable us to effectively coordinate and eliminate VAWG at regional, sub-regional and national levels.” – Mr. Awudu Ahmed Gumah, Head of Planning, Research, Monitoring and Evaluation, ECOWAS Gender Development Center (EGDC)

- “The Regional Action Plan for Africa on EVAWG in my opinion is a powerful tool that will help the continent to advance its cause when it comes to ending violence against women and girls. [...] The important thing for me is that it puts the survivors and women and girls at the centre of the programme. I believe RAP will go a long way to eliminate all forms of VAWG in Africa”. – Ms. Abimbola Aladejare Salako, Member of the Civil Society Regional Reference Group, Nigeria



REPRESENTATIVES FROM CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS, WOMEN'S RIGHTS GROUPS, GOVERNMENT, REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES, THE EUROPEAN UNION, THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION AND UN AGENCIES CONVENED AT 'SPOTLIGHT CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS KNOWLEDGE SHARING' EVENT

Videos

Videos: please include active links to any videos that have been produced during the reporting period, including any that document the contributions/results of Spotlight, here in the narrative. Please then submit the videos themselves via the [VIDEO SUBMISSION PLATFORM](#)

- VIDEOS: 2nd Media Training on sensitive reporting on harmful practices ([HIGHLIGHTS DAY 1](#), [HIGHLIGHTS DAY 2](#), and [HIGHLIGHTS DAY 3](#)).
- VIDEOS: UNFPA Innovation Summit in Kenya: ([Day one Highlights](#), [Day two Highlights](#) and [Day three highlights](#)), [Harmful Practices Innovation Summit | Day 3 - Main Plenary Room Sessions](#), [Harmful Practices Innovation Summit | Day 2 - Main Plenary Room Sessions](#),

- [Digital platforms to advance youth-led social,](#)
- [Scaling a social innovation business - Zero to Shero](#)

Two products were launched during the 16 Days of Activism Against Violence Against Women and Girls, ensuring communication around child marriage and other topics related to gender equality are linked and reinforced:

- [Vaillante](#), an original TV series on child marriage in West and Central Africa
- The second season of [Coping with COVID-19](#), a documentary series following nine adolescent girls in six countries as they film their lives during the lockdown.

Several videos were published on YouTube following the event ‘Strengthening the role of Religious and Traditional Leaders in Ending Violence against Women and Girls’ (19 to 20 October):

- [Highlights of the three days consultation meeting](#),
- [Call to Action to End Violence against Women. What are the solutions?](#),
- [Ending Violence against Women and Girls: How can we get everyone involved?](#)
- [Reverend Dr. Lydia Mwaniki on harmful practices and how they affect women differently](#)

Short videos produced by SIARP on the engagement of the African Union Commission, community and traditional leaders, and faith-based organizations were posted on the African Union Commission’s Facebook, Twitter account page in connection with the High-Level Positive Masculinity Conference held on 25 November 2021 and the advocacy of the Maputo Protocol Article 20 focuses on legal measures to ensure widows enjoy all human rights:

- [Video on Positive Masculinity](#)
- [Video on Maputo Protocol](#)
- The SIARP Programme Coordination Unit produced a 90-second video that features four real-life stories from the African region and the ways that SIARP supported these and other women and girls in having the right to make their own choices – whether it relates to education, profession,

financial independence or raising confidence. [Watch the animated video here](#).

- SIARP continued advocating for the rights of women and girls in this year’s 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. [Here is the message from the Regional Programme Coordinator](#).
- SIARP followed participatory engagement approach while developing regional strategic documents. [This video](#) shows interactive session of the EVAWG regional action plan validation event.
- [SIARP joint annual review and planning workshop](#), ‘Better Coordination for Effective Engagement and Harmonization’, parts one and two – these are short videos from the first joint annual review and planning workshop that brought together participants from the regional programme and the eight Spotlight countries.
- At the global level, the UNICEF partnership with the Spotlight Initiative [premiered the screening of Vaillante](#) on the side-lines of the 66th Commission of Status of Women in New York. Vaillante is a fictional three-part mini-series that follows the intertwined stories of two female protagonists and their painful experiences with child marriage.
- [Media training on harmful practices for East and Southern Africa overview](#) and [reflections from media training participants](#).
- 2021 Innovation winners message from the three countries: [2021 Innovator’s message to 2022 applicants: Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Uganda](#).

Publication of knowledge products

The Spotlight Initiative’s comprehensive knowledge management strategy has resulted in a suite of impactful products aimed at advancing the rights and well-being of women and girls in Africa. This includes a Facilitator’s Training Manual on Civil Society Organizations Shadow or Alternative Reporting (2022) and another manual on ‘Ratification and Domestication of Human Rights Instruments related to EVAWG and SRHR’ (2023), both focused on enhancing the capabilities of stakeholders in advocating and reporting on women’s rights.

Additionally, a Training Manual on Alternative Periodic Reporting on Women’s Rights in Africa (2022) was developed, alongside toolkits like the Community Conversations Toolkit, which empowers communities to challenge harmful practices, and a toolkit for Management of Health Complications and Prevention of FGM. These resources are complemented by significant research reports, including a country assessment covering 10 African Union Member States, a study on ‘Opportunities and Challenges of FGM Survivors in Ethiopia,’ and an ‘Evidence-Based Mapping and Assessment on the

Status of Domestication and Enforcement of Laws on EVAWG’ (2022).

Furthering its reach, the initiative also includes a study on ‘Spatial Clustering in Temporal Trends of FGM’ in East African countries and an assessment of the status of women human rights defenders (2022). Other vital resources include a Harmonized and Standardized Data Collection Toolkit on VAWG, harmful practices, and SRHR (2022), a curriculum for data collection, analyses, and utilization related to VAWG, sexual and gender-based violence, harmful practices, and sexual and reproductive health and rights Indicators, and a RAP for Africa with a M&E framework on EVAWG (2023). Lastly, the 2021 African Union Gender Scorecard Report was validated and endorsed by Member States in 2023, showcasing a commitment to GEWE.

See links below:

- [Facilitator’s Training Manual on Civil Society Organizations Shadow or Alternative Reporting on the Rights of Women](#)

and Girls in Africa. (2022) <https://www.undp.org/africa/publications/shadow-reporting-rights-women-and-girls>

- Facilitator's Training Manual on Ratification and Domestication of Human Rights Instruments related to Ending Violence Against Women and Girls and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (2023) <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-04/undp-africa-training-manual-ratification-and-domestication-of-human-rights-instruments-2023-eng.pdf>
- Facilitators Training Manual on Drafting, Ratification, and Implementation of HR Instruments in Relation to EVAWG/SRHR (UNDP) (2022) <https://www.undp.org/africa/publications/training-manual-ratification-and-domestication-human-rights-instruments>
- Training manual on alternative periodic reporting on Women's Rights in Africa (UNDP) (2022) <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000265281> Toolkits |
- <https://www.undp.org/publications/gender-based-violence-and-covid-19>
- Harmonized and Standardized Data Collection Toolkit on VAWG, harmful practices and SRHR (2022) <https://www.undp.org/africa/press-releases/regional-data-collection-toolkit-tackle-gender-based-violence-harmful-practices-africa>
- RAP for Africa with a M&E framework on EVAWG. (2023) <https://www.femnet.org/>
- 2021 African Union Gender Scorecard report validated and endorsed by the Member States (2023) [African Union Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment | African Union](#)

Additional knowledge management products for training on social norms are as listed below.

- Assessing Gender-Transformative Civil Society Organizations in Child Marriage Program [Gender assessment of civil society partners | UNICEF](#)

- How civil society organizations can use gender-transformative collective action to address child marriage and advance girls' rights: A [seven-step guide for civil society organizations](#)
- Social Norms Training Package Norms for Change: Changing the way you see the world [social norms training package](#)
- Playbook versions - Google Drive [Burkina Faso, Ghana, Nigeria](#)
- Five-year strategic plan on the African Union campaign to end child marriage [five-year strategic plan on African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage : 'LEADS Approach to Ending Child Marriage'](#)
- Case study on ending cross-border FGM in the Republic of Uganda: [case study on ending cross-border FGM in Uganda](#)
- [statistical overview on ending FGM practices in Africa](#)
- [Child marriage country profiles \(89 country profiles\)](#)
- [FGM data \(31 country profiles\)](#)
- [Maturity Index](#)
- A desk review on child marriage legislation, policies and programmes in Africa
- [Events/publications/campaigns](#)
- <https://agora.unicef.org/course/info.php?id=40035>
- <https://twitter.com/i/spaces/1YqKDoOLaazxV?s=20>
- <https://childhelplineinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/The-Stockholm-Declaration-2022.pdf>
- https://childhelplineinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Harmful_Practices_Factsheet.pdf
- <https://data.unicef.org/resources/child-marriage-in-eastern-and-southern-africa-a-statistical-overview-and-reflections-on-ending-the-practice/>
- <https://data.unicef.org/resources/child-marriage-in-west-and-central-africa-a-statistical-overview-and-reflections-on-ending-the-practice/>

Sustainability:

SIARP has prioritized strengthening existing strategies and initiatives, such as the African Union Gender Strategy 2018–2028 (African Union Strategy for GEWE), the Gender Observatory, the African Union campaigns to end child marriage (African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage), and the African Union Initiative on the Elimination of FGM. SIARP developed a sustainability plan, a collaborative effort involving diverse stakeholders from inception to the delineation of key actions extending beyond the programme's conclusion. Notably, stakeholders such as RUNOs,

implementing partners, the African Union Commission, and CSRRG actively contributed feasible strategies aimed at preserving the programme's gains. This encompassed the continuation of regional frameworks, sustaining e-learning platforms, and sustaining communities of practice. Furthermore, stakeholders played a vital role in validating and endorsing the final sustainability plan, ensuring collective commitment to its implementation.

This will ensure there is increased effectiveness of the programme as the focus will be on cascading initiatives beyond December 2023. To continue achieving the outcomes outlined in Pillar 1: Policies and legislation, Pillar 5: Data, and Pillar 6: Women's movements and civil society, the RUNOs will embed this work in their respective 2024 annual work plans. RUNOs will also continue supporting the African Union Commission, strengthening capacities and mechanisms to eradicate VAWG and harmful practices like child marriage and FGM.

Moving beyond 2023, efforts to strengthen collaboration with Regional Economic Communities will continue to be prioritized.



ANNEXES ●

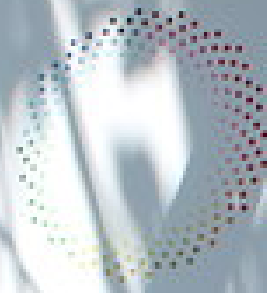
Annex A: [Results Framework](#)

Annex B: [Risk Matrix](#)

Annex C: [CSO Engagement Report](#)

Annex D: [Innovative, Promising or Good Practices Report](#)

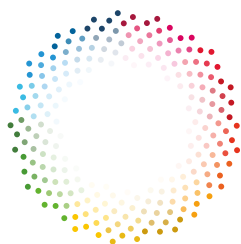
Annex F: [Assets/ Equipment/ Major Supplies](#)



Iniciativa Spotlight

*Para eliminar a violência
contra as mulheres e raparigas*





Spotlight Initiative

To eliminate violence against women and girls

Initiated by the European Union and the United Nations:

