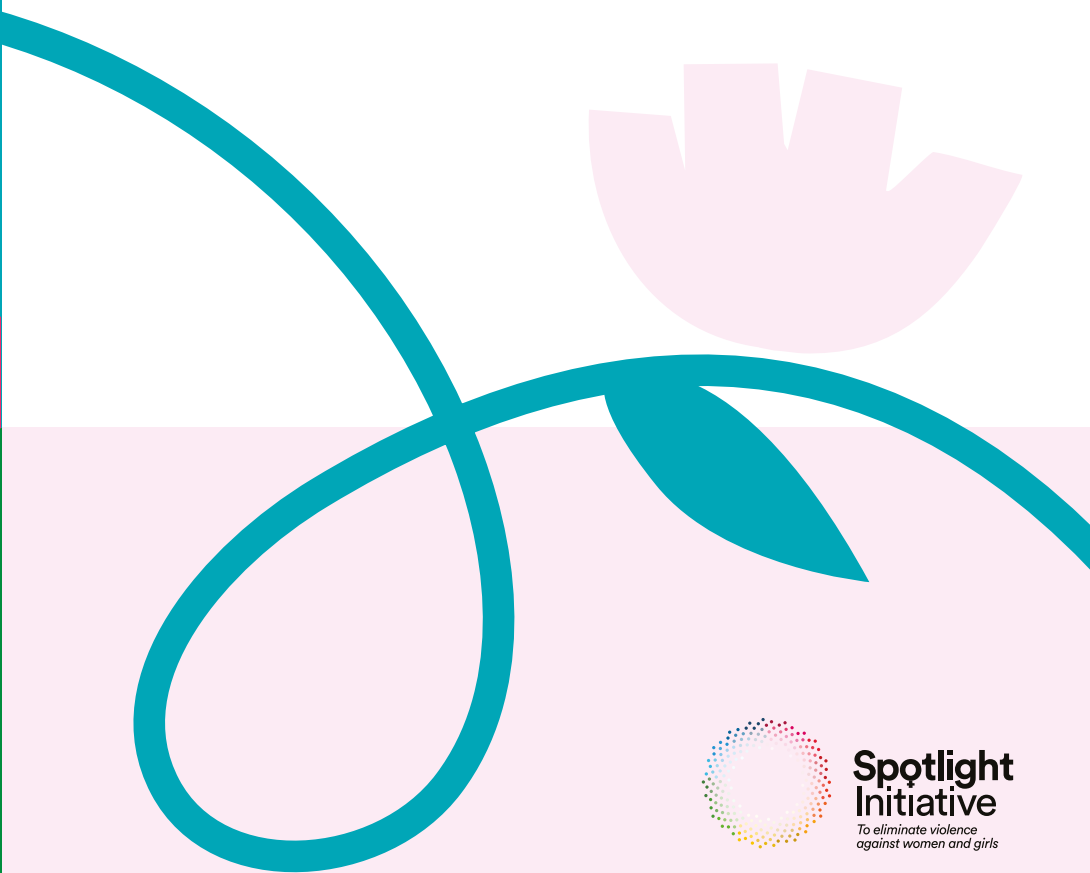


# A Sustainable Legacy

Insights and evidence from **seed investments** to end violence against women and girls

December 2025

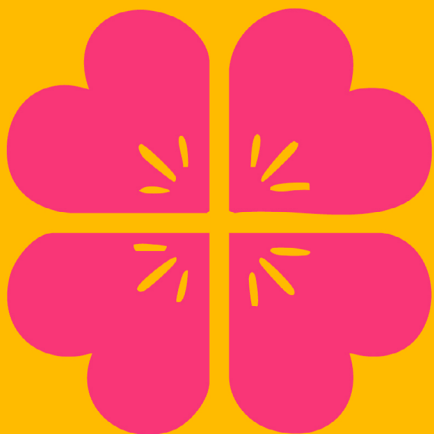


**Spotlight  
Initiative**  
To eliminate violence  
against women and girls

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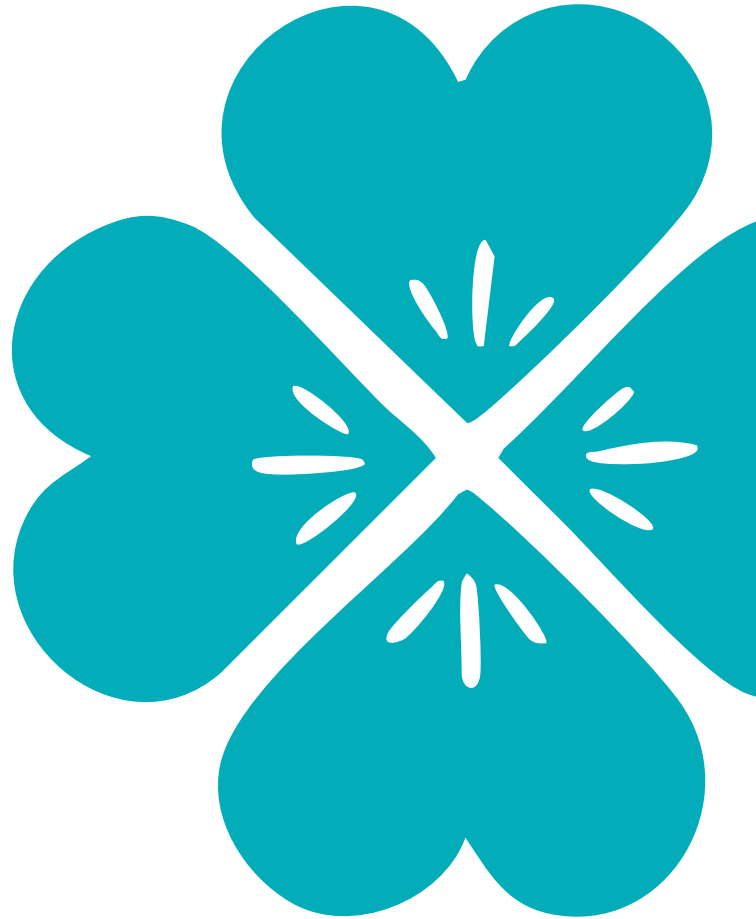
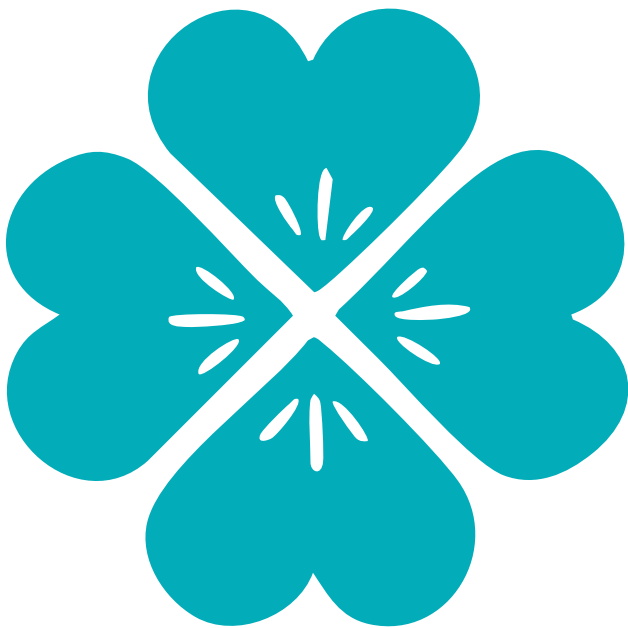
# List of acronyms and abbreviations

<b>ACT Programme</b>	Advocacy, Coalition Building and Transformative Feminist Action to End Violence against Women Programme
<b>ACTN</b>	Association of Traditional Leaders of Niger
<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired immune deficiency syndrome
<b>AMCHAM</b>	American Chamber of Commerce of Trinidad and Tobago
<b>ASEAN</b>	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>AU-CEVAWG</b>	African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls
<b>AUC</b>	African Union Commission
<b>BGA</b>	Bureau of Gender Affairs
<b>CADV</b>	Coalition Against Domestic Violence
<b>CCDC</b>	Community Skills Development Centres
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
<b>CHOGM</b>	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
<b>CONAVIM</b>	National Commission to Prevent and Eradicate Violence Against Women, Mexico
<b>CRPSGBV</b>	Centre for Response and Prevention of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
<b>CSE</b>	Comprehensive sexuality education
<b>CSNRG</b>	Civil society national reference group
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organization
<b>CSRG</b>	Civil society reference group
<b>DCO</b>	Development Coordination Office
<b>DFAT</b>	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
<b>DNA</b>	Deoxyribonucleic acid
<b>DSG</b>	Deputy Secretary-General
<b>DVIC</b>	Domestic Violence Intervention Centres
<b>EAGER</b>	East Africa Girls' Empowerment and Resilience Programme
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>EOSG</b>	Executive Office of the Secretary-General
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EVAWG</b>	Ending violence against women and girls

<b>FGM</b>	Female genital mutilation
<b>FGR</b>	Attorney General of the Republic
<b>FLE</b>	Family Life Education
<b>G4DU</b>	Gender for Development Uganda
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based violence
<b>GBVMIS</b>	Gender-based violence management information system
<b>GRB</b>	Gender-responsive budgeting
<b>GTG</b>	Gender theme group
<b>HIV</b>	Human immunodeficiency virus
<b>HIVE Programme</b>	High-Impact Programme for Violence Elimination by 2030
<b>HLPC</b>	High-Level Political Compact
<b>HRD</b>	Human rights defender
<b>HVAC</b>	Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning
<b>IDA</b>	International Development Association
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>INE</b>	National Electoral Institute
<b>INMUJERES</b>	National Institute for Women
<b>INTERPOL</b>	The International Criminal Police Organization
<b>IOC</b>	International Olympic Committee
<b>IPV</b>	Intimate partner violence
<b>JSC</b>	Judicial Services Commission
<b>KOICA</b>	Korea International Cooperation Agency
<b>LASU</b>	Lagos State University
<b>LGBTIQ+</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer
<b>LOIPEVCM</b>	Comprehensive Organic Law for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and evaluation
<b>MESC</b>	Ministry of Education and Culture
<b>MHRRC</b>	Malawi Human Rights Resource Centre
<b>MOGCSP</b>	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection
<b>MSSI</b>	Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion
<b>NACCEL</b>	National Council of Chiefs and Elders of Liberia
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>NSO</b>	National Statistics Office
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>PAHO</b>	Pan American Health Organization
<b>PMR</b>	Participatory monitoring and reporting
<b>PSAT</b>	Participatory self-assessment tool
<b>PSEA</b>	Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse

<b>RC</b>	Resident Coordinator
<b>RCO</b>	Resident Coordinator's Office
<b>RGA</b>	Rapid gender analysis
<b>RUNO</b>	Recipient United Nations Organization
<b>SDCF</b>	Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SEGOB</b>	Mexico Ministry of Interior
<b>SGBV</b>	Sexual and gender-based violence
<b>SOP</b>	Standard operating procedures
<b>SRHR</b>	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
<b>SVRI</b>	Sexual Violence Research Initiative
<b>TEPJF</b>	Electoral Tribunal of the Federal Judiciary
<b>TFGBV</b>	Technology-facilitated gender-based violence
<b>ToT</b>	Training of trainers
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNCT</b>	United Nations Country Team
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>UNRCO</b>	United Nations Resident Coordinator's Offices
<b>UNSDCF</b>	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
<b>UNTF</b>	United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women
<b>UPR</b>	Universal Periodic Review
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>UWI</b>	University of the West Indies
<b>VAWG</b>	Violence against women and girls
<b>VFM</b>	Value for money
<b>VSLG</b>	Village savings and loans groups
<b>WARIF</b>	Women at Risk International Foundation
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>WPHF</b>	Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund
<b>WRO</b>	Women's rights organization
<b>WSIS</b>	World Summit on the Information Society
<b>ZRP</b>	Zimbabwe Republic Police

# Foreword



Violence against women and girls is one of the most persistent and pervasive human rights violations of our time. It restricts the agency, wellbeing and safety of half the world's population and shreds the fabric of communities and societies, hamstringing progress on sustainable development. Confronting violence against women and girls demands locally owned action, enduring multi-level commitment, meaningful collaboration, feminist leadership and sustained investment.

Launched in 2017 by the European Union and the United Nations, Spotlight Initiative is the largest global effort to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. With over US\$ 630 million in investments to date, the Initiative has pioneered a new model of partnership between the United Nations, governments, civil society and communities, setting a new benchmark for coordinated, systemic action. In its first phase (2017-2023), the Initiative delivered transformative impacts and positioned women's rights organizations and survivors at the centre of this change. The Initiative has achieved significant results: it doubled of conviction rates in 13 countries, strengthened more than 540 laws and policies, supported 3 million women and girls with gender-based violence (GBV) services and enhanced the influence of over 5,000 women's rights groups. Twenty-one million women and girls are expected to have been prevented from experiencing violence as a result of the Initiative.<sup>1</sup>

When Spotlight Initiative was launched, global aid was on an upward trajectory and the international community was strengthening commitments to address inequality, violence against women and girls (VAWG) and the Sustainable Development Goals. Today, uncertainty dominates. Last year marked the first time in five years that global aid fell in real terms. With governments facing fiscal pressure, major political shifts and backlash against women's rights, further reductions in aid are expected in the future. Conflict has risen to its highest levels in decades. Climate-related disasters are becoming more frequent and destabilizing. Feminist movements face growing threats and shrinking civic space. Women's rights organizations are shuttering. And we are witnessing resistance to gender equality gains once thought secure. All of these factors heighten the risk of violence against women and girls. At the same time, the United Nations is undergoing a profound period of reflection and reform.

In the midst of this uncertainty, two things remain clear: the imperative to end violence against women and girls remains urgent, and evidence-based, sustainable solutions do exist. This report, *A Sustainable Legacy*, aims to amplify these messages and help drive progress forward. The report draws on the experience and expertise of more than 100 stakeholders, ranging from grassroots organizations and traditional leaders, to government ministers, UN colleagues and EU donors. It covers all 32 country and regional programmes from the first phase of Spotlight Initiative. What makes this report unique is that it engages stakeholders two years after programme closure. It is uncommon to be able to return to communities, partners, activists and service providers after a programme has ended. Yet, that is exactly what this report has done. Individuals and communities remain passionate, committed and steadfast. Even after programmes have ended, they continue to drive change on the ground.

The report found that nearly all Spotlight Initiative programmes (97 per cent) reported enduring achievements after closure – a remarkable outcome. These findings present an important contribution to the evidence base on what works to prevent and respond to violence against women in the long term, and show how positive change takes root. The findings also demonstrate that comprehensive, joint programmes, even with just three to four years of implementation, can deliver profound, enduring impacts for women and girls far beyond programme lifecycles. Scale-up is needed urgently. Change can happen if we continue to fund it boldly, with survivors, women and girls at the heart of every decision. Even in these uncertain times, we know what works. I urge you to draw on the lessons in this report to build the future we know is possible.

**Erin Kenny**

Spotlight Initiative Global Coordinator

# Acknowledgements

The Spotlight Initiative Secretariat would like to thank all those who contributed to and participated in the development of *A Sustainable Legacy: insights and evidence from seed investments to end violence against women and girls*.

This publication has benefited significantly from the committed participation of Spotlight Initiative programme and global-level stakeholders who shared their rich knowledge, experiences and insights.

This report stands as a testament to the courage of women and girl survivors who have shared their experiences and the enduring strength of women's rights advocates and feminist movements who remain at the heart of efforts to end violence against women and girls.

The report and its associated activities were overseen and coordinated by Amy Bretherton, Aissa Boodhoo, Flo Carson, Samu Ngwenya-Tshuma and Heran Ayele from the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat, and Alexandra Pittman and Mariana Servidio from ImpactMapper. The report is funded through generous support from the European Union.

## Citation

Spotlight Initiative (2025), *A sustainable legacy: Insights and evidence from seed investments to end violence against women and girls*.



# Executive summary

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is one of the world's most widespread human rights violations, affecting at least one in three women in their lifetime.<sup>2</sup> It is a global public health crisis that impacts people of all backgrounds. It has lasting impacts on survivors' physical, economic and psychological well-being. VAWG limits the full and equal participation of women and girls in public spaces and remains a major barrier to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In 2017, the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU) launched Spotlight Initiative, the largest global targeted effort to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls and advance the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. Through a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach, the Initiative was established to tackle the root causes of VAWG and ensure that all women and girls, particularly the most marginalized, could live free from violence.

With a €500 million investment from 2017 to 2023, the Initiative delivered significant results across six programming pillars: Laws and Policies, Institutional Strengthening, Prevention, Quality Essential Services, Data and Women's Movements. To date, more than 500 laws and policies have been signed or strengthened to end VAWG, almost 3 million women and girls have accessed essential services, and more than 5,000 CSOs have reported having greater influence and agency on ending VAWG (EVAWG).<sup>3</sup> As a result of the programme, 21 million women and girls are expected to have been prevented from experiencing violence.<sup>4</sup>

Following the launch of Spotlight Initiative's second phase in 2024 and the rollout of its second generation of programmes, assessing the sustainability of the Initiative's model and results is crucial. This report was developed with two main aims: first, to highlight best practices and drive sustainable approaches to end VAWG, and second, to demonstrate the long-term value of investing in EVAWG programmes to end VAWG.

The report draws from all 26 country programmes, 6 regional programmes and 2 civil society grant-giving programmes<sup>5</sup> from the first phase of programming (2017-2023). Programmes were implemented in five regions: Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Pacific and the Caribbean. The report includes insights from over 100 stakeholders from governments, civil society organizations (CSOs), the UN, the EU and other partners, in addition to analysis from evaluations and reports, to identify lasting results, enabling factors and actions needed to maintain programme legacies.

In this report, sustainability refers to the continuation of a programme's impacts and outcomes in preventing and responding to VAWG over the medium to long term. This is evidenced by stakeholders reporting that interventions, resources, systems and ways of working remain effective, accessible and resilient at the time of data collection, two years after programmes closed. The report is primarily a learning exercise which draws upon interviews, discussions and reflections instead of quantitative data. It presents a unique opportunity to demonstrate the long term value for money of EVAWG programmes.

Spotlight Initiative's comprehensive theory of change lays the foundation for sustainable achievements. By working across interconnected pillars and partnering with governments, CSOs and women's rights organizations (WROs), programmes promote national ownership, strengthen systems and embed EVAWG activities within sustainable structures, policies and plans. Grounded in UN Reform, the Initiative is designed to move beyond

piecemeal and small-scale EVAWG interventions towards a coordinated, One UN approach with lasting impact.

During the first phase of programmes, many activities were designed with sustainability in mind. While the immediate pressures and uncertainties of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic shifted focus away from sustainability in the early stages of programme implementation, stakeholders reported that teams developed sustainability strategies and plans to inform approaches in the longer term.

**The consolidated analysis revealed that nearly all country and regional programmes (97 per cent) reported sustained achievements after programme closure.** Achievements were identified across all six programming pillars, revealing lasting commitments and momentum on EVAWG in a range of contexts. Sustained achievements across pillars are summarized as follows:

**Pillar 1 – Laws and Policies:** Spotlight Initiative’s comprehensive theory of change places policy reform at its core, recognizing the role of governance in creating an enabling environment for EVAWG. Stakeholders from 20 programmes reported that gender equality and EVAWG laws, policies and frameworks established or supported by the Initiative continued to be implemented following programme closure. Sustained achievements also reportedly included the ongoing influence of CSOs and WROs in policymaking and accountability processes. Success was driven by multi-level and multi-sectoral government engagement inclusive policy-making that involved a broad set of institutions beyond government (e.g. universities, schools, private sector) leveraging political momentum and engaging high-level decision makers and building the advocacy skills and networks of CSOs.

**Pillar 2 – Institutional Strengthening:** Spotlight Initiative aims to ensure national systems prioritize EVAWG beyond programme lifecycles. Stakeholders from 15 programmes reported stronger institutions and governance structures, improved coordination, and enhanced capacity of service providers across justice, police, health and social sectors. Sustained achievements also reportedly included sustained public and political discourse, and continued gender-responsive budgeting (GRB). From the outset, Spotlight Initiative embedded domestic resource mobilization into its model, recognizing that sustainability depends on long-term domestic public investment. In four countries (Ecuador, Liberia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uganda), the Initiative’s efforts can be reliably tied to new budget allocations totalling nearly US\$ 50 million.<sup>6</sup> Success was supported by effective and empowered EVAWG taskforces, working concurrently on policies and coordination mechanisms to support policy development and delivery, fostering government ownership of tools and training, and the presence of well-trained staff and leaders with the skills to deliver.

**Pillar 3 – Prevention:** Spotlight Initiative prioritizes transformation in social norms, behaviours and attitudes to address the root causes of VAWG. Stakeholders from 14 programmes reported sustained or scaled up prevention strategies that continue to promote positive social norms. Sustained outcomes also reportedly included increased public awareness on EVAWG, heightened engagement of community leaders, integration of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) into national systems, and sustained women’s economic empowerment (WEE) and resilience initiatives. Success was driven by strong WRO and CSO leadership; piloting prevention strategies with well-documented evidence for scale up; and engaging community-based groups, networks and traditional leaders.

**Pillar 4 – Quality Essential Services:** Strengthening the availability, accessibility and quality of essential services for survivors of violence is a priority for all Spotlight Initiative programmes. Stakeholders from 21 programmes reported lasting improvements in services, sustained operations, increased access to VAWG services and strengthened staff capacities. Stakeholders also reported the continued use of protocols, referral pathways and case management systems developed during programmes. Success was driven by strong government leadership, strengthened expertise in survivor-centred services, collaborative development of tools and skills, private sector partnerships in service delivery and the integration of pilot initiatives into national systems.



**Pillar 5 – Data:** Spotlight Initiative's commitment to strengthening data systems has supported progress in addressing VAWG in the long term. Investments reportedly led to sustained improvements in data collection, harmonization and management systems across 12 programmes, supporting evidence-based policymaking, transparency and accountability. Stakeholders also reported the continued use of knowledge, evidence and tools generated by the Initiative to inform EAWG advocacy, policy and programming. Key enablers of sustainability included building tools and skills for diverse stakeholders, developing and piloting scalable data systems, integrating VAWG data goals into national plans, and generating flagship research which resonates with diverse stakeholders.

**Pillar 6 – Women's Movements:** Spotlight Initiative strengthens women's and feminist movements as drivers of sustainable EAWG efforts. Through country and regional programmes, in addition to grant-giving programmes with the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women and Girls (UNTF) and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF), the Initiative supported over 5,000 women's rights organizations with funding, capacity-building and technical assistance. Across 17 programmes, stakeholders reported stronger collective action. Others reported sustained achievements related to greater skills and visibility for diverse CSOs and WROs, and sustained youth-led networks after programmes closed.

**Case studies** from Jamaica, Niger and Zimbabwe highlighted Spotlight Initiative's comprehensive approach to tackling VAWG and sustaining progress and achievements. This strategy involved ongoing engagement among civil society, government, institutions, and prevention and response mechanisms. In Jamaica, it helped create multi-stakeholder platforms for policy dialogue, with CSOs benefiting from these networks for advocacy. Niger shifted from awareness-raising activities to providing survivor services such as psychosocial and medical care, but limited planning and resources threaten progress, stressing the need for sustainable funding. Zimbabwe advanced women's movements and civil society advocacy, which continue despite political instability, illustrating the resilience of CSOs but also the fragility of reforms amid political challenges.

Spotlight Initiative demonstrated effective whole-of-society approaches that contributed to **new funding for EAWG programming**, including for a second generation of Spotlight Initiative programmes which build on the lessons learned in the first phase and aim to sustain and scale its gains. Five programmes have been launched, in both former and new contexts (Uganda, Ecuador, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Zambia), and a new Africa Regional Programme is expected to be launched in early 2026. The programme portfolio has an investment of US\$ 84 million to date. In addition, the UN and the European Union established the Spotlight Initiative High-Impact Programme for Violence Elimination (HIVE Programme), enabling the sustained provision of technical support to UN country and regional teams to facilitate develop and implement new Spotlight Initiative programmes and sustain EAWG efforts to end VAWG.

In addition, Spotlight Initiative has indirectly catalysed new funding amounting to approximately US\$ 102 million in new funding for UN EAWG programming in 10 countries and through global programmes. By inspiring new programmes, new donor partnerships and follow-on investments, the Initiative has effectively seeded a broader ecosystem of support for EAWG and embedded action beyond the lifespan of the original funding cycle.

Spotlight Initiative served as a key demonstration of **UN Reform** in action, advancing a One UN approach through inter-agency collaboration, Resident Coordinator (RC) leadership and cost-sharing mechanisms to strengthen efficiency, coherence and sustainability. Its integrated model fostered enduring partnerships among UN agencies and with civil society, with 18 programmes reporting continued inter-agency collaboration and ongoing joint programming. The RC's strategic oversight proved vital in elevating EAWG within national agendas and embedding gender equality across UN and government planning, though outcomes varied depending on the RC's extent of engagement and capacity to prioritize EAWG amid competing priorities. Cost-sharing and common operational frameworks enhanced efficiency and collaboration, though systemic barriers to pooled funding and procurement limited long-term institutionalization. The Initiative's engagement with civil society, particularly through civil society reference groups, has been sustained or replicated in several countries and

inspired the development of a UN-wide feminist funding framework to strengthen CSO participation and resourcing.

**Key factors enabling sustainability** of Spotlight Initiative programmes' achievements included institutionalizing activities and building capacity through rights-based EVAWG training and civil society engagement. Following programme closure, UN agencies built on and scaled up Spotlight Initiative programmes' efforts in collaboration with civil society and government partners. Government budget allocations post-programme were crucial for maintaining services and prevention. Examples include government-led training, CSO-led women's empowerment and government-funded efforts. Prioritizing these factors can boost future EVAWG sustainability.

While Spotlight Initiative programme activities and achievements were sustained and scaled up in many areas, efforts were shaped by a range of **challenges and constraining factors**. The most common barrier was the lack of sustained financial resources, as donor funding cuts limited government budgets and short-term financing models weakened the long-term continuation of programme activities and services. Backlash and sociopolitical shifts, including restrictive laws, government changes and institutional dismantling, also undermined gains in gender equality and EVAWG efforts. Understaffing and technical capacity gaps in gender expertise, exacerbated by crises and "brain drain", further hindered continuity.

However, the vast majority of programmes — 28 in total — reported continued multi-stakeholder collaboration after closure, which helped sustain progress in many contexts. In some settings, though, multi-stakeholder coordination declined without institutionalized mechanisms and resourcing. Political commitment proved vital, with some countries integrating Spotlight Initiative programme activities into national systems, while others saw momentum fade amid shifting priorities. Overall, sustainability required early and integrated planning, national ownership and strategies to embed EVAWG priorities within permanent structures, ensuring resilience to financial, political and social disruptions.

In **conclusion**, Spotlight Initiative demonstrated that a comprehensive, whole-of-society, whole-of-government approach can drive significant and sustained results in ending VAWG. It offers a global model for tackling systemic gender equality issues in the long term. By continuing to reflect on and build upon these lessons, governments, UN agencies, civil society organizations and other partners can expand on Spotlight Initiative's successes to create programmes that address complex challenges in diverse contexts and deliver long-term impacts for women, girls and survivors of violence.

**Recommendations** emphasize building strong, well-financed and equitable partnerships with feminist organizations, CSOs and implementing partners; ensuring collaborative, context-driven design of sustainability strategies from the inception stage; strengthening accountability of governments and duty bearers; and proactively fostering national ownership to support sustained momentum on EVAWG in the long term.

# 1

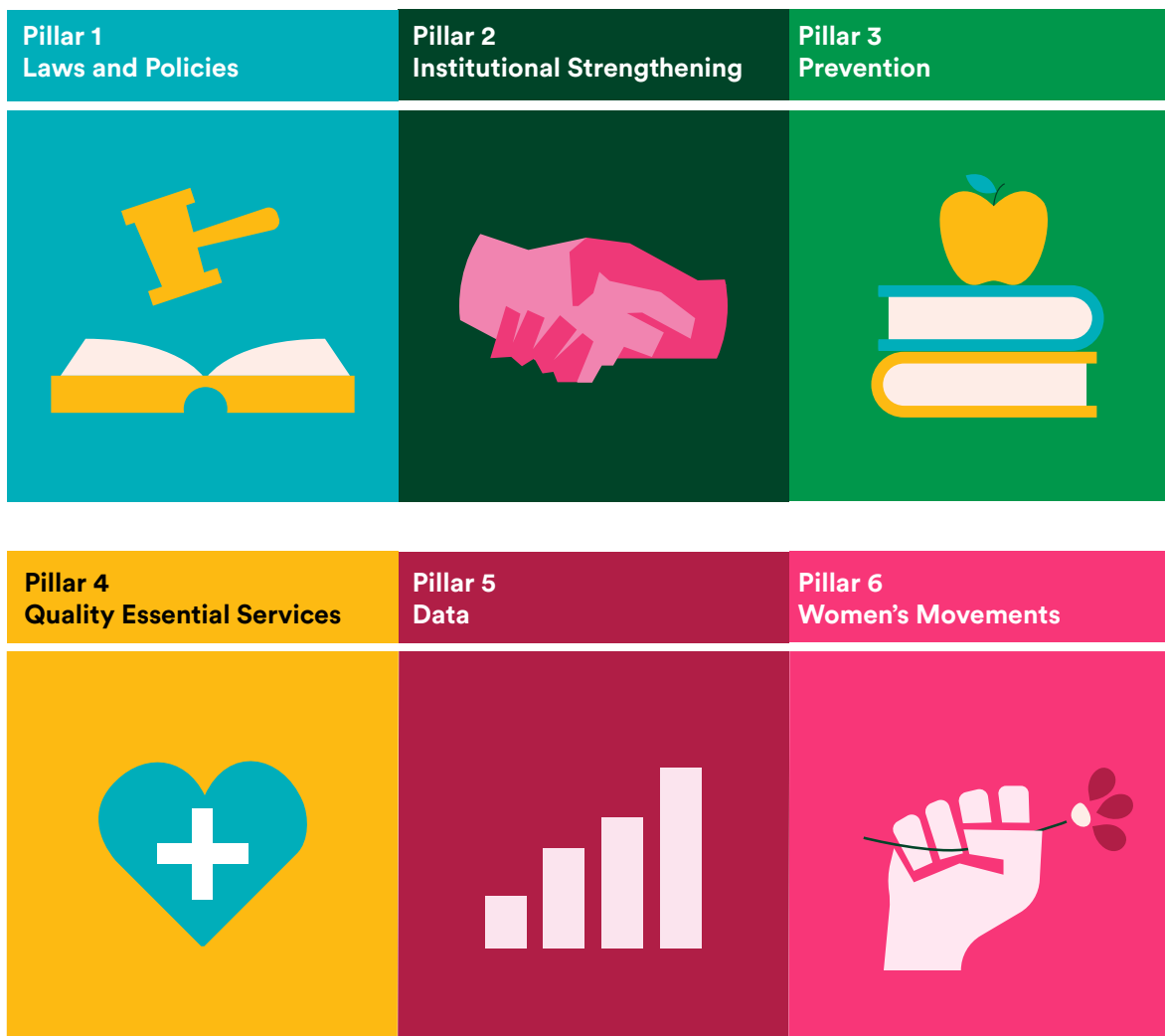
## Introduction

Violence against women and girls has a profound and lasting impact on physical, economic and psychological well-being. It limits the full and equal participation of women and girls in politics, decision-making and the public space. Despite the severe harm it causes to individuals and societies, progress toward ending VAWG remains slow and fraught with obstacles.

The persistent and widespread nature of VAWG, coupled with slow progress in eliminating it, highlights the urgent need for a transformative and coordinated global response. In 2017, the UN and the EU launched Spotlight Initiative to meet this urgent call for action and to advance the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Through its whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach, the Initiative aimed to tackle the root causes of VAWG and ensure that women and girls, particularly the most marginalized, could live free from violence. With a € 500 million investment from the EU between 2017 and 2023, Spotlight Initiative's first phase implemented 26 country programmes, 6 regional programmes<sup>7</sup> and 2 civil society grant-giving programmes<sup>8</sup> in partnership with UNTF and WPHF. Across these programmes, the Initiative delivered activities in five regions: Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Pacific and the Caribbean.

During this period, Spotlight Initiative delivered significant progress across six programming pillars, contributing to tangible results at community, national, regional and global levels.<sup>9</sup> Key results from the first phase include: more than 540 laws and policies being signed or strengthened to end VAWG; close to 3 million women and girls accessing GBV services, including long-term recovery services; over 5,000 local and grassroots WROs reporting greater influence and agency to work on EVAWG; and the Initiative delivering US\$ 195 million to civil society organizations.<sup>10</sup> As a result of the first phase, 21 million women and girls are expected to have been prevented from experiencing violence.<sup>11</sup>

#### Spotlight Initiative Programme Pillars:



A new phase of programming is currently underway. Spotlight Initiative's second generation of programmes are in planning or delivery phases in many countries and regions. As Spotlight Initiative broadens its reach, examining the sustainability of its model and lasting achievements is essential.

This report explores the sustainability of Spotlight Initiative programmes two years after their closure. It is expected that the findings of this report will support new Spotlight Initiative programming, as well as global action to end VAWG.

This report is a learning exercise, not a formal evaluation. Analysis focuses on qualitative examples, enablers, challenges and aims to prompt reflection. It provides evidence of the effectiveness and value of investing in comprehensive EVAWG programmes. Rather than presenting new quantitative data, it captures insights, lessons and examples to inform future programming, using principles of appreciative inquiry to explore what worked well and why. Information on sustained achievements are accurate as of date of interview or survey responses.<sup>12</sup>



**Defining sustainability:** Sustainability is defined as the extent to which the net benefits of an intervention continue, or are likely to continue, over time.<sup>13</sup> In this report, sustainability is understood as the ability of a Spotlight Initiative programme to reportedly maintain positive impacts and outcomes in preventing and responding to violence over the medium to long term. For this report, this means that evidence of sustainability was reported two years after programmes closed when data collection occurred. Such evidence includes demonstration that interventions, resources, systems and ways of working remain effective, accessible and resilient following programme closure.

The report begins with an overview of the report's goals and methodology in **Section Two**, followed by an overview of Spotlight Initiative's approach to strategy in **Section Three**. **Section Four** analyzes sustained achievements across programmes, providing concrete examples of results and enabling factors. It also includes three in-depth case studies.

**Section Five** highlights new funding mobilized since the closure of the first phase of programmes, while **Section Six** focuses on the sustainability of Spotlight Initiative features and ways of work that continued beyond the Initiative's lifecycle. **Section Seven** focuses on the sustainability of UN Reform strategies, including mechanisms such as inter-agency collaboration, coordination and the oversight of Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs).

The report closes with a conclusion in **Section Eight**, while **Section Nine** provides actionable recommendations focused on promoting and sustaining high quality, long-term EVAWG outcomes globally.





# 2

## Report goals and methodology

### 2.1 Learning goals

The findings and learnings consolidated in the report ultimately aim to:

1. Highlight best practice and drive sustainable approaches to end VAWG
2. Demonstrate the long-term value of investing in EVAWG programmes.

Data collection sought to generate learning across the following areas to achieve these aims:

- Examine how achievements of the first phase of Spotlight Initiative country and regional programmes have been sustained approximately two years after their closure
- Understand how Spotlight Initiative infrastructure including multi-stakeholder engagement has been sustained
- Understand the state of efforts to end VAWG at country or regional levels, including how governments have scaled up efforts, and the added value of Spotlight Initiative
- Examine how UN Reform strategies championed by Spotlight Initiative have been sustained following programme closure
- Understand how sustainability was conceptualized and identify measures that were implemented to sustain, scale up or replicate gains, achievements and learnings of the Initiative.

## 2.2 Sample and data collection

### Sample

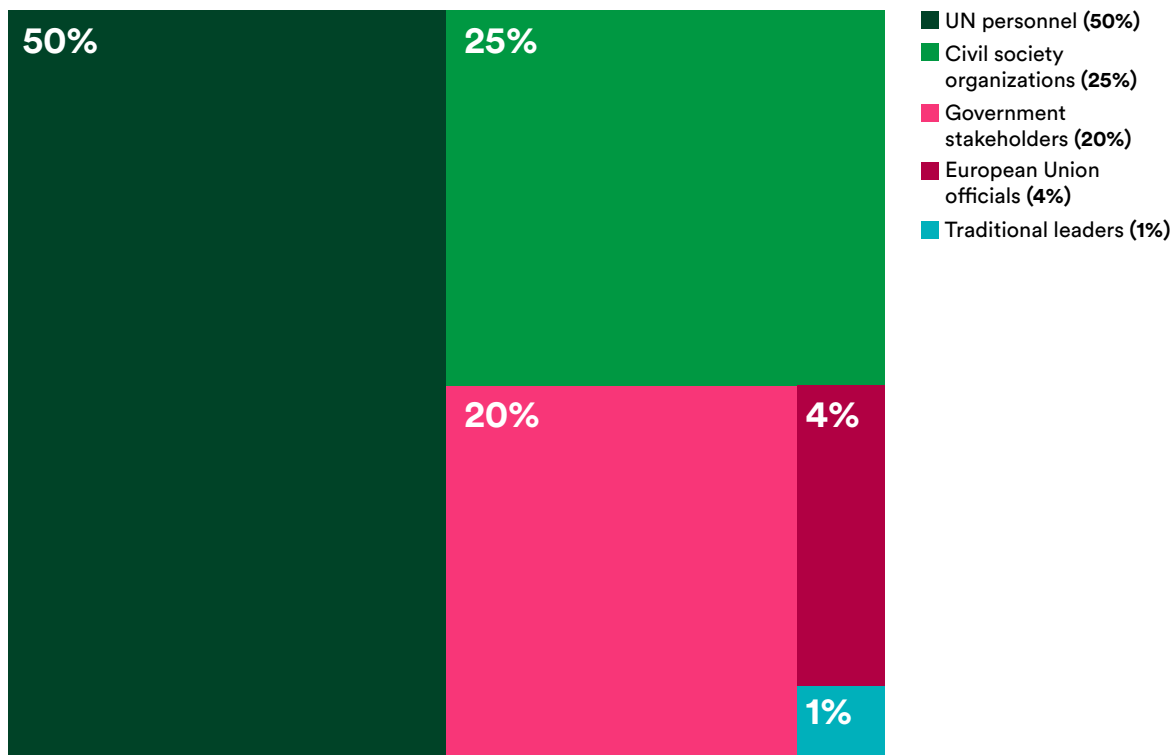
A total of **106 interviews and survey responses** were completed by the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat. This included 81 interviews and 25 survey responses. The sample covered all programmes, including **26 country programmes, 6 regional programmes and 2 civil society grant-giving programmes**.<sup>14</sup> Interview and survey participants were selected based on guidance from Heads of UN Resident Coordinator's Offices (RCO), due to the RCO's oversight of the programme and its stakeholders. Interview and survey participants included CSO, government, UN and European Union stakeholders. They also included stakeholders at the global level, including UN Agency Focal Points and Spotlight Initiative Secretariat representatives who were selected by the research team.

The distribution of interview and survey participants is as follows (Figure 1):

- **Civil society organizations:** 27 interviews and survey responses (15 interviews, 12 survey responses).
- **Government stakeholders:** 21 interviews and survey responses (13 interviews, 8 survey responses).
- **UN personnel:** 53 interviews and survey responses (48 interviews, 5 survey responses).
- **European Union officials:** 4 interviews.
- **Traditional leaders:** 1 interview.

Figure 1: Chart on consulted stakeholders

### Interview breakdown



Most stakeholders consulted (98 participants) were involved in country or regional programmes, while 8 involved stakeholders from the global level, including Spotlight Initiative's Secretariat.

### Data collection

Primary data collection was conducted by the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat between January and June 2025. The Spotlight Initiative Secretariat collected data through virtual interviews and surveys. Guiding questions were developed and reviewed based on the overall learning goals, and were used as a tool to systematically guide interviews and the survey. Interviews varied in format, including key informant interviews with individual stakeholders or larger group discussions. All interviews were recorded, transcribed and supported by interview notes. A survey was administered to broaden the reach of data collection and overcome challenges related to stakeholder availability and workload. Interviews and surveys were conducted in English, Spanish, French and Portuguese. The report drew on primary and secondary data sources. Secondary data sources included Spotlight Initiative's final evaluation. Programme mid-term assessments, programme annual reports, and country and regional programme sustainability strategies, as well as other relevant documentation.

## 2.3 Data analysis

Data analysis prioritized generating useful learning and surfacing indicative conclusions. The report is not a formal evaluation; rather, it seeks to produce recommendations, highlight best practices for sustainable programming and identify areas for deeper follow up. The report consolidates qualitative data and analysis from interview and survey findings. Qualitative data was analysed using an iterative coding structure led by a research team independent of the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat. The process involved; 1) developing an initial coding taxonomy based on the goals of this learning process; 2) using interview guides and survey questionnaires to refine this taxonomy; 3) conducting a first round of interview coding to test and adjust categories; and 4) validating the final taxonomy. Both deductive and inductive coding approaches were applied. Specific examples and sustained achievements from each country and regional programme were coded for ease of analysis and searchability, and manually grouped into thematic areas. Most of the data from the eight interviews with global stakeholders was not coded since the focus of the interviews were different, but their findings were summarized and integrated across the report.

Three case studies were developed to highlight examples of programmes which demonstrated sustainability across multiple pillars. Case studies from Jamaica, Zimbabwe and Niger were selected on the basis of the following criteria: 1) a notable level of sustained achievements reported by programme stakeholders, and 2) confirmation of achievements by a broad range of stakeholders. For each of these case studies, in-depth interviews were completed, providing sufficient data, insights and diverse perspectives for the programme.

Recommendations build on evidence and insights generated through the report's overall findings, including specific suggestions offered by stakeholders during the data collection process.

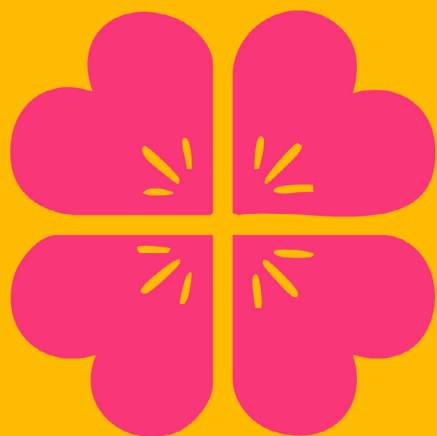
### Quality assurance

Quality assurance measures were embedded through the research process to ensure the accuracy, credibility and robustness of learnings. Coded interviews and surveys were peer reviewed by the research team to reduce bias in data interpretation and ensure consistency. Data was triangulated by cross-checking and verifying perspectives from different stakeholders who worked within the same country or regional programme by the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat and research team. Triangulation was also facilitated by reviewing and validating information using secondary data sources. Finally, an external validation process was conducted by the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat. The draft report was shared with a sample of interviewed stakeholders, enabling them to confirm the accuracy of findings and address outstanding questions.



## 2.4 Report limitations and mitigating measures

- Focus of analysis:** As a learning exercise rather than a formal evaluation, this report does not aim to draw definitive conclusions. Instead, it seeks to generate insights and reflections to inform future work. Therefore, the report's methodology does not allow for the direct comparison of sustainability strategies or assessing country versus regional level achievements. Findings are, instead, big picture, preliminary and indicative. They seek to promote best practice and identify areas for deeper follow-up to validate impact and sustainability, including potential reassessment in the future.
- Variation in stakeholder representation:** Every programme from Spotlight Initiative's first phase was engaged in the data collection. However, the number of stakeholders consulted for each programme varied due to availability and interest.<sup>15</sup> Programmes with fewer data points were primarily used to illustrate specific contextual insights.
- Data collection methodology:** The mix of interview formats, from broadly framed guiding questions to surveys with more targeted questions, limited the ability to systematically analyse data across sources. Some survey responses lacked detailed information. Additionally, examples shared during interviews primarily focused on sustained achievements, rather than activities or outcomes that were not sustained. Where available, secondary sources were consulted to augment and validate data.
- Challenges with data triangulation:** In some cases, stakeholder perspectives varied significantly within the same programme, offering contradictory perspectives that could not be validated by the research team. Follow up clarification was sought when possible. When data could not be validated or verified, it was not included in the report.
- Diversity in programme activity portfolios:** Spotlight Initiative programmes implemented different activities according to contextual priorities, including whether they were implemented at country or regional level. This means, for example, not all programmes included activities around women's economic empowerment. Consequently, the reader should note that lower levels of reported sustained achievements under specific topics does not necessarily indicate weaker sustainability outcomes, but may instead reflect programme diversity.






# 3

## Overview of Spotlight Initiative's approach to sustainability



Spotlight Initiative programmes are grounded in a comprehensive theory of change, where interventions work simultaneously across multiple outcome areas. Spotlight Initiative's primary vision is for women and girls, especially the most marginalized, to live a life free from violence. Evidence shows that working in this comprehensive way is more effective than taking a siloed approach to EAWG. Spotlight Initiative's theory of change is grounded in a whole-of-society approach that mobilizes a range of stakeholders. Operating under the One UN model, the Initiative also brings together the expertise, experience and capacities of multiple UN agencies to work collaboratively and efficiently on EAWG. Spotlight Initiative's key features and theory of change were adapted and applied to different country and regional contexts during the first phase.



Many of the Initiative's features can be considered foundational for achieving sustainable achievements and outcomes. The Initiative's comprehensive theory of change addresses the root causes of VAWG by working across laws and policies, institutions, prevention, data, and services. Working holistically across these interconnected areas, and in partnership with feminist and women's rights organizations (WROs), contributes to more effective and sustained results over time. In addition, Spotlight Initiative programmes are designed to ensure national ownership, including at the highest level, by engaging heads of state, as well as diverse and influential ministries in programme development and implementation. By positioning programmes under the leadership of UN Resident Coordinators (RCs), EAWG efforts were further elevated within national agendas, strengthening linkages between the UN and national governments.

The Initiative's whole-of-society, multi-stakeholder approaches also emphasize the essential role of civil society, recognizing that community ownership and an enabling civic space are building blocks for lasting change. Global, regional and national Civil Society Reference Groups (CSRGs) are established and engaged alongside programmes to ensure the meaningful inclusion of CSOs and WROs, including those representing survivors and grassroots movements, in programme design, implementation, oversight and closure. By collaborating with government at the highest level and civil society groups, programme activities and outcomes are well placed to be locally owned, contextually relevant and integrated within national systems for the long term.

Across Spotlight Initiative country and regional programmes, activities were designed and implemented in line with best practice, including with sustainability in mind. Most programmes developed a sustainability plan and/or strategy tailored to their specific context and needs.

Stakeholders reported that, in some cases, challenges during programme implementation hindered or delayed the adoption of a sustainability-focused approach (including at programme and Secretariat level). The onset of COVID-19 early in Spotlight Initiative's implementation period introduced many challenges. Urgent adaptation and identifying critical health and VAWG mitigation priorities became paramount and overshadowed the need for sustainability planning early on in some cases. Following the pandemic, sustainability emerged as a priority and a structured framework was developed with the support of the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat. The [Spotlight Initiative Sustainability Note](#), prepared with the participation of governments and civil society stakeholders, outlined key principles, components and approaches for developing a sustainability strategy, as well as suggested interventions to strengthen the sustainability of results. The Spotlight Initiative Secretariat provided guidance through webinars, discussions, in-person convenings, and the development and dissemination of technical guidelines to programme teams which promoted ethical, inclusive and sustainable programme exits.

Many country and regional programmes used these resources to develop their sustainability strategies or plans. Many outlined transition timelines, defined roles and responsibilities of key partners (including government and civil society), and in some cases, identified funding sources to ensure effective transition of activities. As part of planning discussions, some programmes conducted assessments to determine which activities should be continued, discontinued or adapted. Many sustainability strategies placed a focus on the institutionalization of EVAWG as a political priority, seeking to ensure its integration in government action plans and budgets. Common sustainability strategies included ongoing capacity-building for EVAWG actors, maintaining an accessible inventory of EVAWG tools and resources, and supporting coordination platforms to sustain networking, advocacy and engagement across stakeholders, including women's movements.



# 4

## Sustained achievements of Spotlight Initiative programmes

▣ Sustained achievements were identified in nearly all country and regional programmes (97 per cent)<sup>16</sup> and across all six pillars.

The consolidated analysis of sustained achievements across country and regional programmes revealed that the majority of programmes successfully sustained the gains of Spotlight Initiative under Pillar 1 (Laws and Policies), Pillar 4 (VAWG Response Services) and Pillar 6 (Women's Movements). Out of all 32 country and regional programmes, a **majority (21 programmes)** reported the sustained provision of essential, survivor-centred services. A majority (20 programmes) also reported strengthened laws, policies and frameworks as sustained achievements, while more than half (17 programmes) demonstrated their contribution to sustained collective action through civil society and women's rights movements, networks and alliances.

## 4.1 Most frequently reported sustained achievements across programmes

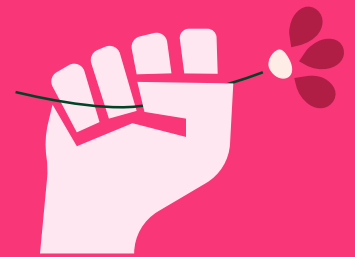
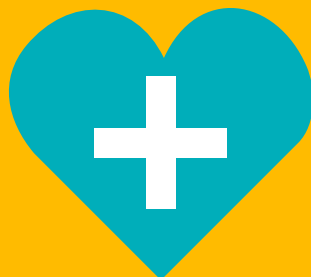
Figure 2: Most frequently reported sustained achievements across programmes



Most frequently reported sustained achievements across programmes

**20** programmes strengthened and/or sustained gender equality laws, policies and frameworks

**21** programmes strengthened and/or sustained provision of essential services for survivors of violence



**17** programmes strengthened and/or sustained collective action through women's movements and civil society

**15** programmes strengthened and/or sustained institutional coordination, collaboration and engagement on EVAWG



**14** programmes sustained and/or scaled up prevention strategies which promote positive social norms

## 4.2 Most frequently reported sustained achievements in regional programme interviews

Figure 3: Most frequently reported sustained achievements in regional programme interviews



## PILLAR 1

# Laws and policies



### 4.3 Key achievements and sustainability-enabling factors by pillar

This section examines sustainable achievements across programme pillars. It provides concrete examples reported by stakeholders which illustrate sustained achievements, activities and outcomes, as well as the enabling factors that made their sustainability possible.

#### 4.3.1 Pillar 1: Laws and policies

**“Before, there was no prohibition of violence against children. The root cause of those policy reforms was Spotlight Initiative... Last year, Tajikistan became the sixty-sixth country in the world to ban corporal punishment. Now [the Government of Tajikistan] are asking themselves how to take this further and operationalize it.”**

↳ UN colleague in Tajikistan

Spotlight Initiative’s comprehensive model places policy change at its core, recognizing the value of legal and policy frameworks in creating an enabling environment for EVAWG. Findings suggest that legal reform, civil society participation and political engagement act as mutually reinforcing drivers of systemic change, ensuring that EVAWG can remain a priority beyond programme lifespans.

Stakeholders from 20 programmes reported Spotlight Initiative’s contribution to **strengthened laws, policies and frameworks has endured**. This was one of the most frequently cited sustainability achievements across all programmes and pillars. Another lasting achievement under Pillar 1 was in the continued and **strengthened influence of WROs and CSOs in policy and accountability processes**, reported by 11 programmes. Stakeholders reported that many civil society groups with whom the Initiative engaged continued to play a pivotal role in efforts to end VAWG after the closure of Spotlight Initiative programmes.

Enabling factors detailed by stakeholders included: working at multiple levels of government to develop and implement laws and policies; exploring opportunities for policy-making beyond national government legislation, including at district level and educational institutions; leveraging existing political momentum and engaging high-level decision makers; and building advocacy skills and networks of CSOs.

A review of sustained achievements for Pillar 1, examples and enabling factors shared by stakeholders are presented below.

## Strengthened gender equality laws, policies and frameworks

**Twenty programmes** across all five regions<sup>17</sup> reported that Spotlight Initiative's work has resulted in laws and policies that have been established and have endured, promoting protections and rights for women and girls beyond programmes' closure. Stakeholders reported that legal and policy developments and reforms supported by the Initiative (for example, the passing of new laws on GBV, gender policies and anti-sexual harassment workplace policies) created ongoing frameworks and obligations for governments and institutions, addressed impunity, and offered women and girls legal safeguards beyond donor-funded programmes. Enabling factors highlighted by stakeholders centred on the value of close collaboration with government, programmes' in-depth understanding of the political landscape, and integration of programme activities within existing systems, plans and frameworks. Stakeholders also reported how advocacy efforts initiated under Spotlight Initiative were sustained and contributed to new milestones in human rights reporting and engagement with global gender equality mechanisms.

**Examples reported by stakeholders, include:**



In **Mexico**, Spotlight Initiative contributed to reforms of federal and state laws while simultaneously strengthening national and local institutions to implement activities and advance equality for survivors in the long term. From 2019 to 2023, Spotlight Initiative contributed to the reform of 31 federal laws and over 45 state laws in Mexico, addressing VAWG issues such as femicide (and associated orphanhood), sexual violence, enforced disappearance and family violence.<sup>18</sup> Spotlight Initiative provided technical assistance for the development of legal texts, support to CSOs advocating for nationwide adoption of reforms and implementation support to government institutions at federal and state levels. Legislative milestones achieved during the programme, such as the April 2020 reform protecting women from political violence and the November 2020 criminalization of non-consensual sharing of intimate content, continue to be enforced. Implementation is now led by institutions previously supported by Spotlight Initiative, namely the National Commission to Prevent and Eradicate Violence Against Women (CONAVIM) within the Ministry of Interior (SEGOB), the Office of the Attorney General of the Republic (FGR), state prosecutors, the National Institute for Women (INMUJERES), the National Electoral Institute (INE), the Electoral Tribunal of the Federal Judiciary (TEPJF), and local women's and justice institutions, all of which continue to champion survivors' rights.<sup>19</sup>



In **Malawi**, policy advances supported by Spotlight Initiative have been sustained through institutionalization within national systems. During the programme period, Spotlight Initiative catalysed the development of the Public Service Workplace Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy. Spotlight Initiative provided technical expertise and assisted the government in drafting and validation, ensuring alignment with international standards and national priorities. The Policy was adopted in 2023 and continues to be applied across all government institutions. Spotlight Initiative also developed a Model Gender and Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy for Higher Learning Institutions, which guided universities to create their own systems, policies and oversight committees.<sup>20</sup> Since the Initiative's support ended, the National Council for Higher Education has expanded this policy, extending oversight to cover additional institutions (including private universities) and enforcing compliance through reporting and referral protocols.<sup>21</sup>



In the **Africa Regional Programme**, Spotlight Initiative catalysed regional advocacy around the **Maputo Protocol** and fostered regional momentum by engaging political leaders, heads of state and civil society (especially WROs). The programme facilitated and enabled the participation of diverse stakeholders in conferences and assemblies, including the African Union (AU) Men's Conferences on Positive Masculinity (2021 and 2022) and the thirty-sixth AU Assembly (2023) where AU Heads of State and Government adopted a historic decision and tasked the AU Commission (AUC) to negotiate the AU Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (AU-CEVWAG).<sup>22</sup> The **Convention** was successfully adopted in February 2025, after the programme had closed. Facilitating political dialogue on EVAWG and providing technical support laid the ground-



work for this landmark convention. There are plans to build on this momentum and ensure implementation of the AU-CEVAWG through Spotlight Initiative's forthcoming second generation Africa Regional Programme.



In **Papua New Guinea**, global advocacy efforts initiated under Spotlight Initiative led to lasting shifts in national-level processes and new milestones in human rights reporting<sup>23</sup>. Just before the programme's conclusion, with support from the Initiative, national stakeholders began the development of Papua New Guinea's long-overdue CEDAW report. Through Spotlight Initiative engagement, capacity-building and the momentum galvanized through civil society advocacy, Papua New Guinea's CEDAW report was finalized, marking the nation's first submission in nearly 15 years<sup>24</sup>. Papua New Guinea also subsequently completed its Beijing+30 report, marking the first Beijing report in the country's history. These achievements demonstrate how advocacy and technical support enabled Papua New Guinea to re-engage with global gender equality mechanisms and improve accountability to survivors through human rights reporting, even after programme closure.

### Ongoing civil society influence and impact on EVAWG policy, programming and accountability

**Eleven programmes** across all five regions<sup>25</sup> reported that the Initiative's work to strengthen the participation of WROs and CSOs in policy and accountability processes generated sustained outcomes or achievements. This is an important achievement because it ensures that the voices of survivors, women and marginalized groups can continue to influence laws and policies, while strengthening accountability for long-term enforcement of critical reforms.

While a majority of WROs and CSOs had strong foundations for advocacy and influence, many stakeholders highlighted that the Initiative built on these strengths, scaling up civil society engagement and enhancing influence. Achievements in this area therefore reflect both the Initiative's support to civil society and the long-standing expertise of these organizations. Stakeholders shared examples of ongoing joint advocacy and engagement between policymakers and WROs following programme closure. Programme governance mechanisms, such as the civil society reference groups, were also cited as enablers of engagement and accountability.



In **Papua New Guinea**, Spotlight Initiative played a catalytic role in strengthening the influence of WROs over national policy through the creation and resourcing of the programme's Civil Society National Reference Group (CSNRG). The group was formally established under the programme and supported by a costed work plan which included compensation modalities to enable meaningful participation of WROs in the CSNRG.<sup>26</sup> Spotlight Initiative supported CSRG members to access formal policy processes, including parliamentary hearings and consultations with the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV. Although the Initiative concluded in 2023, a coalition of WROs maintained contact and coordination, with some networks forming organically with little or no funding<sup>27</sup>. Building on the legitimacy, access and experience gained through the programme, former CSNRG members and WROs continue working together. They have developed a roadmap for a future National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and co-authored a CEDAW shadow report.<sup>28</sup> This demonstrates how Spotlight Initiative's foundational support to the CSNRG mechanism generated lasting EVAWG networks and collaborative action centred on strategic planning and accountability.

**“One of the major things we were able to achieve under Spotlight, and something we're extremely grateful and proud of, is the Family Violence Act.”**

↳ Government official in Guyana

## PILLAR 2

# Institutional strengthening



### 4.3.2 Pillar 2: Institutional strengthening

**“Spotlight was a huge, huge investment that we haven't seen enough in the Caribbean region... So figuring out how to sustain that and keep up the momentum is a challenge, but a very good step in the right direction was making sure that there is space within national budgets dedicated to VAWG.”**

↳ UN Colleague in the Caribbean

Spotlight Initiative's model is anchored in institutional strengthening to ensure national systems address and prioritize VAWG beyond programme lifecycles. This focus proved successful, with stakeholders **from 15 programmes reporting that improvements to institutions and governance structures and enhanced coordination in ending VAWG were sustained following programme closure. Twelve programmes reported enhanced capacity of multi-sectoral service providers and institutions** (justice, police, health and social services) which have continued to deliver coordinated and survivor-centred responses. Other reported sustained achievements included **elevated public and political discourse on broader GBV as well as gender budgeting** (reported by 6 programmes). Collectively, these outcomes suggest that Spotlight Initiative's approach effectively embeds gender-responsive norms, skills and accountability mechanisms within diverse institutions and duty bearers.

Enabling factors detailed by stakeholders included: the development of effective and empowered EVAWG taskforces or working groups, working concurrently on policies and coordination mechanisms to support policy development and delivery, engaging high-level political stakeholders and transitioning delivery and ownership of resources and tools (including training modules) to government. Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) was highlighted as a key enabler for long-term resourcing and delivery of EVAWG activities. Stakeholders also reinforced the importance of having well-trained staff and leaders with the skills to deliver gender-transformative EVAWG commitments.

A review of sustained achievements for Pillar 2, examples and enabling factors are presented below.

## Strengthened ending EVAWG coordination, collaboration and engagement

**“The strengthening of community by-laws on GBV, as I am speaking, is still continuing. Why? Because all the local structures which we managed to establish during Spotlight Initiative are still in existence.”**

↳ CSO representative in Malawi

**Fifteen Spotlight Initiative programmes** across five regions (nearly half of all programmes)<sup>29</sup> reported that strong institutions and governance structures continue to deliver EVAWG outcomes after the programme’s closure. Stakeholders reported sustained institutional commitment through the establishment and continuation of working groups for VAWG prevention, the creation of permanent forums to ensure political oversight of EVAWG and institutionalize cross-sectoral collaboration, and strengthened coordination among regional institutions. Examples of sustained achievements shared include:



In **Liberia**, Spotlight Initiative helped strengthen the role and commitment of national institutions on EVAWG through the establishment of a National GBV Taskforce. The Taskforce was formed to minimize risks of fragmented efforts and ensure collaboration across multiple sectors. Although the programme concluded in 2023, the Taskforce remains active under the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection’s leadership. The National GBV Taskforce continues to coordinate VAWG-related policy development and service delivery across government ministries, CSOs and development partners.<sup>30</sup> The presence of the Taskforce has helped sustain collaboration and consistent communication among national and international partners. These conditions laid the foundation for the development of the Spotlight Initiative second generation programme in Liberia (currently in the inception phase), which will further strengthen the capacity and coordination role of the GBV Taskforce and its sub-national structures.



In **Tajikistan**, advocacy efforts during and after the Spotlight Initiative programme reportedly led to the subsequent establishment of the Multi-Sectoral Coordination Council on the Prevention of Domestic Violence in February 2025.<sup>31</sup> The Council was made possible by multiple Spotlight Initiative activities, including multisectoral, participatory consultations and engagements (which included the executive branch, local government, diverse ministries and sub/national CSOs); technical support consolidating recommendations from gender experts and partners; and advocacy by the Civil Society National Reference Group (CSNRG), the Committee on Women and Family Affairs, UNFPA, and the EU Delegation. The Council’s establishment was also enabled by the approval of the amended Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence in June 2024, which incorporated provisions for a formal multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism. Chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, the Council includes ministers, national agencies and municipal leaders, and ensures the delivery of the amended law and approaches initiated under Spotlight Initiative.<sup>32</sup>



In **Papua New Guinea**, Spotlight Initiative supported the second United for Equality Summit in 2023.<sup>33</sup> This was the largest national event focused on advancing gender equality and EVAWG that the country has hosted. It included members of parliament and provincial governors. The Summit led to the creation of the Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment. The establishment of this Parliamentary Committee was set out as a priority in the programme’s sustainability strategy, due to its potential for securing ongoing political oversight and ensuring government coordination and accountability. The Committee continues to operate and deliver on its mandate.<sup>34</sup> In collaboration with UNDP, the Committee held a parliamentary inquiry in 2025, the outcomes of which are expected to inform recommendations to Government and Parliament in accelerating gender equality in the country.<sup>35</sup>

## Enhanced capacities and tools for service providers and institutions to address VAWG

Following programme closure, **12 Spotlight Initiative programmes**<sup>36</sup> across all 5 regions reported sustained capacity-building for multi-sectoral service providers and institutions addressing VAWG. Stakeholders shared examples including: the continued training of trainers (ToT) for justice, social and health sector professionals, as well as the integration of capacity-building tools and systems into national structures to support service delivery following programme closure. Capacity-building reportedly generated lasting positive outcomes, including improved quality of care for survivors, strengthened management and oversight of systems and services, and enhanced technical capacity among individual staff and stakeholders. Several programmes reported the lasting benefits of gender equality education or activist training, with the continued roll-out of curricula and training modules for higher education following programme closure. Embedding these practices in schools and universities will expose new generations to values of equality and non-violence, fostering cultural shifts over time that help prevent VAWG and sustain social change. Examples of sustained achievements shared include:



In **Vanuatu**, Spotlight Initiative developed the first national training on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) standard operating procedures (SOPs), designed through a training of trainers (ToT) model to ensure doctors, midwives and other local facilitators could independently deliver SOP courses after programme closure.<sup>37</sup> The course was officially handed over to the Ministry of Health in 2022 and the Initiative's facilitator model was expanded and integrated within the Ministry of Health's regular training system.<sup>38</sup> After the programme closure, the Ministry of Health continued SOP training sessions, enabling the nationwide expansion and long-term sustainability of GBV capacity development. Stakeholders highlighted a range of enabling factors for success, including the development and availability of high quality standardized materials, strong demand from health professionals and government ownership.<sup>39</sup>



In **Grenada**, Spotlight Initiative supported the development of comprehensive SOPs in 2022 for the justice, police, health and social work sectors. These SOPs provided a unified framework to deliver consistent, high-quality and survivor-centred services. Medical staff were also trained in the clinical management of rape and equipped with essential laboratory tools, improving the quality of care for survivors. According to stakeholders, the SOPs and training improved coordination and strengthened survivors' access to justice.<sup>40</sup> These lasting achievements were subsequently highlighted in Grenada's 2025 Universal Periodic Review (UPR) report to the UN Human Rights Council.<sup>41</sup> The SOPs continue to be used by the Government and are being updated under the Build Back Equal Joint Programme, funded by the Government of Canada, and implemented by UN Women and UNFPA. Updates to the SOPs are expected to ensure greater reach and accessibility for underserved communities in Carriacou and Petite Martinique.



In **Kyrgyzstan**, Spotlight Initiative contributed to the institutionalization of gender equality-related content in higher education through partnering with the Ministry of Education and Science, the Kyrgyz State Law University, the Kyrgyz National University and Osh State University to co-develop curricula and teaching modules. GBV prevention training modules are now owned and delivered by universities. Stakeholders reported that these modules and materials have been integrated into specific courses, and course content has been made available on university platforms for ongoing and broad use.<sup>42</sup> In October 2024, after programme closure, the Gender-Sensitive Journalism course which had been developed through the Initiative was officially launched at several universities.<sup>43</sup> It is expected that this training will equip future journalists and professionals with the skills to promote equality in media and challenge harmful norms, ensuring sustained impact beyond the Initiative.



In **Nigeria**, the non-profit organization, Women at Risk International Foundation (WARIF), through the support of Spotlight Initiative, worked with Lagos State University (LASU) to introduce a compulsory first-year course on school-related GBV in 2020, co-created with CSOs and university stakeholders. The course and the momentum it generated created broader institutional shifts, including the 2022 update of the LASU Student Handbook which classified sexual harassment and rape as punishable offences,<sup>44</sup> and the subsequent creation of the University's Centre for Response and Prevention of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (CRPSGBV).

The Centre provides a safe space for students and staff to report GBV incidents and delivers gender equity and mentorship programmes for students, with the aim of promoting a culture of safety and accountability on campus.<sup>45</sup> Following programme closure, additional universities are in the process of replicating these models, including in Abuja and Calabar, demonstrating the Spotlight Initiative programme's catalytic impact.<sup>46</sup>

### Expanded political interest and commitment on VAWG and gender equality

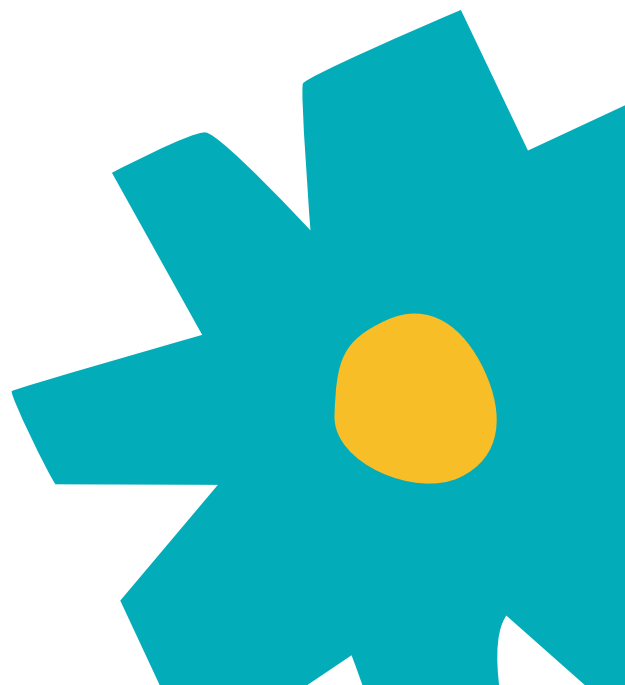
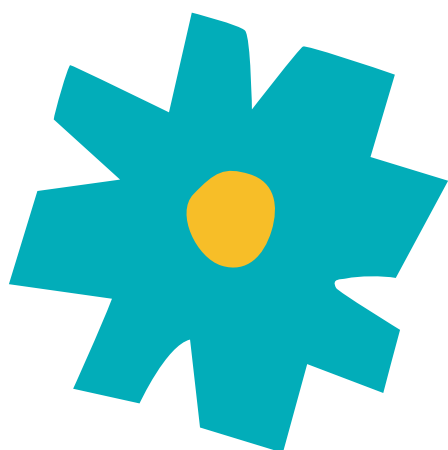
**Six Spotlight Initiative programmes** across four regions<sup>47</sup> reported sustained achievements in relation to political engagement and continued attention and discourse on gender equality and VAWG. Many stakeholders were able to demonstrate this ongoing political commitment through new domestic resources allocated toward efforts to end violence against women and girls following programme closure. Maintaining political focus and discourse on gender equality is essential to keeping EVAWG high on national agendas, securing resources and institutionalizing accountability mechanisms to ensure commitments translate into tangible actions. Spotlight Initiative has embedded domestic resource mobilization into its model, recognizing that sustainability depends on long-term domestic public investment. In four countries (Ecuador, Liberia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uganda), the Initiative's efforts can be reliably tied to new budget allocations totalling nearly US\$ 50 million.<sup>48</sup> Stakeholders shared the following examples of sustained results:



In **Grenada**, Spotlight Initiative built momentum and engagement that led to significant developments in the government's approach to public financial management. Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) began initially as a Spotlight Initiative pilot activity involving four ministries. Now, this has reportedly become an institutionalized practice across all of the Government of Grenada's 28 ministries.<sup>49</sup> After the programme closed, the Government of Grenada pledged to continue GRB. In the 2025 budget statement, the Government set aside an allocation of approximately US\$ 34.4 million to support policies and programmes on social and community development and gender equality.<sup>50</sup> The sustained achievements of Spotlight Initiative's GRB activities reportedly rested upon securing high-level political commitment, training ministry personnel, rolling out GRB tools and methodologies, and developing procedures for the systematic integration of gender analysis into broader budget planning.



In **Papua New Guinea**, Spotlight Initiative advanced groundbreaking GRB processes, helping to secure the first national budget allocations dedicated to EVAWG.<sup>51</sup> In 2022, the government allocated US\$ 2.24 million, rising to US\$ 2.53 million in 2023 for GBV programming.<sup>52</sup> As a result of continued momentum and advocacy, national and provincial stakeholders convened throughout 2023 to develop Papua New Guinea's first comprehensive Gender Policy (2024–2034).<sup>53</sup> Spotlight Initiative helped lay the foundations for this by building political will, including through facilitating high-level visits by UN Women, and simultaneously building capacities and systems to support the Government to follow through on its commitments.<sup>54</sup>



## PILLAR 3

# Prevention



### 4.3.3 Pillar 3: Prevention

**“After Spotlight finished, UNICEF continued working with faith-based partners and civil society to roll out the parenting programme. They also institutionalized this programme...and they are building the framework now.”**

↳ UN colleague in Papua New Guinea

Prevention efforts are lifesaving and stop violence before it occurs. As a result, lasting achievements under this pillar are of particular significance. Spotlight Initiative’s prevention pillar prioritizes transformation in social norms, behaviours and attitudes to address the root causes of VAWG. Stakeholders reported sustained achievements, including lasting outcomes around **positive social norm change** (reported by 14 programmes), **increased public awareness on EVAWG** (12 programmes) and **heightened engagement of community leaders in ending VAWG** (3 programmes). Other lasting results include **improved integration of gender-responsive and comprehensive sexuality education (CSE)** in education institutions (6 programmes) and **sustained economic empowerment and resilience activities** (7 programmes). Stakeholders highlighted the value of reinforcing the leadership of WRO and CSO partners in driving prevention efforts, recognizing their role as experts, conveners and influencers within their communities, countries and around the world.

Enabling factors shared by stakeholders include: piloting prevention strategies and ensuring strong documentation of evidence to support scale up; engaging community-based groups, networks and traditional leaders motivated to address EVAWG; integrating CSE materials with government curriculum; and piloting youth-based innovations.

A review of sustained achievements for Pillar 3, examples and enabling factors are presented below.

#### **Sustained and scaled up prevention strategies which promote positive social norms**

Transforming deeply rooted social norms through diverse stakeholder engagement is pivotal in reshaping attitudes around VAWG and advancing gender equality. **Fourteen programmes** across four regions<sup>55</sup> reported sustained efforts in reshaping community ideas around VAWG. Stakeholders detailed a range of strategies which

continue to be operationalized after programme closure, including partnering with traditional leaders as allies for change, collaborating with WROs and grassroots CSOs to deliver community-based parenting and peer-support programmes, engaging men and boys on positive masculinities, and delivering targeted messages for children and young people on equality and consent. The report also found broader evidence of lasting prevention efforts targeting men and boys, which have translated into longer term national strategies. For example, in Malawi, Spotlight Initiative's work on engaging men and boys laid the groundwork for its National Male Engagement Strategy (2023-2030).<sup>56</sup> Examples of sustained achievements shared include:



In **Timor-Leste**, Spotlight Initiative supported the Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion (MSSI) to scale up the “Hametin Familia” parenting education programme in new locations (Ermera and Viqueque) between 2019 and 2023. The programme utilized group sessions to enhance knowledge, attitudes and practices of parents and caregivers, equipping them with the skills to better support the well-being and development of their children. Hametin Familia also included home visits offering peer support initially for conditional cash transfer recipients. This was subsequently extended to all parents in targeted villages, in response to pilot results and local authority requests. Since the programme's closure, MSSI has continued using the materials developed and has sustained activities through government funding.<sup>57</sup> The continued support was made possible by the strong evidence base of positive results, demonstrated programme adaptability, and capacity built among MSSI staff during implementation.



In **Mozambique**, community-led prevention efforts established by Spotlight Initiative have continued after programme closure. Spotlight Initiative established two forms of grassroots groups focused on violence prevention and response, namely community clubs and school clubs. The community clubs, or Community Skills Development Centres (CCDCs), established by Kuvumbana Association implemented economic empowerment activities across three districts in Gaza province (Xai-Xai, Chongoene, Chicualacuala). They provided a space where women, girls, men and boys discussed economic independence, GBV, SRHR and early marriage. Since the programme ended, community clubs have continued to meet.<sup>58</sup> Local leaders, many of whom are active members of CCDCs, have remained committed to addressing VAWG issues, including by leading GBV reporting and referral processes. Sustainability was reinforced by the recognized benefits of linking violence prevention efforts with economic empowerment (including skills training). School clubs have also remained active, engaging students, teachers, school directors and council members in VAWG prevention-focused activities, including addressing child marriage. Schools have integrated prevention clubs within their own structures.



In **Trinidad and Tobago**, Spotlight Initiative supported the Heroes Foundation to develop the Heroes Development Programme in 2022.<sup>59</sup> The programme created a youth-focused curriculum, integrating a module on equality and EVAWG, alongside other topics including energy, environmental sustainability and personal development. It also promoted youth-led projects such as peer counselling, mental health rooms and school-based awareness campaigns. After the closure of the programme, the Heroes Foundation continues to collaborate with UNICEF to adapt and deliver the Spotlight Initiative module, focusing on migrant youth.<sup>60</sup> The programme plans to further expand by mentoring youth leaders to act as champions for change, educating their peers on EVAWG, child abuse and equality. The training gained long-term traction because it combined a standardized curriculum with practical opportunities for youth to apply learning through peer-led initiatives. Strategic partnerships with trusted, community institutions created credibility and pathways for scale-up.



In **Liberia**, the “Initiation Without Mutilation” campaign was introduced in 2022 as part of Spotlight Initiative's strategy to prevent FGM. Launched during the 16 Days of Activism, it generated pledges from traditional leaders and religious elders who declared a ban on the practice. A major commitment came from the National Council of Chiefs and Elders of Liberia (NACCCEL) 3-year moratorium on FGM<sup>61</sup> and **a formal declaration of a nationwide ban on FGM in February 2023**.<sup>62</sup> The moratorium demonstrated that cultural rites of passage into womanhood can be preserved without FGM practices. While the moratorium has expired following the programme's closure, traditional leaders continue to participate in campaigns and events such as the



International Day of Zero Tolerance,<sup>63</sup> reaffirming their commitment to legally ban FGM in the country. The second-generation Spotlight Initiative programme in Liberia, which was launched in July 2025, is expected to build on this approach while supporting advocacy for the pending anti-FGM bill.<sup>64</sup>

### Ongoing public awareness and campaigns on VAWG, gender equality and human rights

While awareness alone cannot prevent violence, it helps create a conducive environment for prevention and response. Spotlight Initiative programmes invested heavily in increasing public awareness on VAWG issues and women's rights through wide-reaching campaigns led by CSOs, governments, media and community networks challenging stigma, encouraging open dialogue and increasing visibility of VAWG as a public concern. **Twelve programmes** across all five regions<sup>65</sup> reported sustained efforts to raise awareness on VAWG and generate national dialogue. These interventions demonstrate how strategic communications can move VAWG from an invisible, private or taboo subject into a long-term collective and political concern. Examples of sustained achievements shared include:



In the **Central Asia Regional** programme, Spotlight Initiative engaged with youth, universities and post-secondary institutions to create lasting momentum. Post closure, in Kazakhstan, UN Women partnered with the Central Asian Alliance for the Elimination of GBV to organize a 16 Days of Activism cultural event at the Kurmangazy Kazakh National Conservatory, engaging 700 participants using art and music.<sup>66</sup> Widely covered by the media and highlighted by the Foreign Minister, the event forged a strong association between EVAWG and the Conservatory. As a result of increased awareness and the ongoing role of the Alliance elevating the issue more broadly, the Conservatory began receiving reports from students experiencing harassment, bullying and other forms of violence. The Conservatory responded to these reports, including through the introduction of psychological support services, illustrating how awareness and engagement built throughout Spotlight Initiative translated into long-term institutional commitment and leadership on EVAWG.



In **Guyana**, under Spotlight Initiative, local leaders and representatives from CSOs<sup>67</sup> came together to form the Civil Society National Reference Group (CSNRG) to raise awareness, deliver collective advocacy messages and implement joint activities at the community level. After the closure of the programme, CSNRG members remained active and coordinated.<sup>68</sup> In 2024, former members, in collaboration with local leaders, CSOs and the Women and Gender Equality Commission, mobilized around the Red Shoe Project during the 16 Days of Activism Against GBV.<sup>69</sup> Building on the mutual trust, skills and networks developed during the programme, the multi-stakeholder public campaign successfully garnered attention, including **front-page coverage in a major newspaper**. By building cross-sectoral networks with shared priorities, Spotlight Initiative nurtured the foundations for longer term, organic engagement and collaboration on EVAWG, as well as impactful advocacy and campaigning.

### Ongoing role of community and religious leaders as EVAWG advocates

**Three programmes**<sup>70</sup> in two regions reported sustained engagement of traditional leaders in ending VAWG after programme closure. Traditional leaders hold significant influence over community norms and practices, and can sway the cultures of religious or community institutions. Stakeholders described how leaders continue to challenge harmful practices, promote survivor-centred approaches and recognize how ending VAWG aligns with their communities' values. Achievements shared included traditional and religious leaders utilizing skills gained during the programme to enforce by-laws and commitments against harmful practices, and traditional leaders advocating for GBV prevention, norm change and gender equality. Examples of achievements, along with their enabling factors include:



In **Malawi**, Spotlight Initiative increased the ownership and role of traditional leaders in addressing VAWG by strengthening the Chiefs' Forum and supporting collaboration across traditional leaders, courts and police. With guidance from Spotlight Initiative and the Malawi Human Rights Resource Centre (MHRRRC), by 2022, many chiefs had adopted by-laws in relation to preventing child marriage and VAWG in their communities. Chiefs also annulled underage unions and ensured girls returned to school.<sup>71</sup> Beginning in 2021,



in Mzimba district, the MHRRC worked with the Mzimba Heritage Association, the Chiefs' Forum and 110 group village heads to promote gender equality through campaigns and training. Following programme closure, in Mzimba, the 2025 Umtheto Cultural Festival dedicated a day to reviewing and reporting progress on ending child marriage and teen pregnancy in their community. Chiefs have also continued to apply by-laws and refer cases of defilement and rape to police, demonstrating their sustained role as agents of change.<sup>72</sup> Between September 2024 and July 2025, 320 child marriages were recorded in Mzimba district, of which 188 were annulled.<sup>73</sup>



In **Tajikistan**, Spotlight Initiative strengthened religious leaders' knowledge of GBV and elevated their role in promoting gender equality. In 2022, a national workshop by the Committee of Religious Affairs brought faith leaders together to discuss GBV, which was followed by a high-level forum with government officials. These events highlighted the role of religious leaders in preventing VAWG and advancing equality. Following the programme's closure, leaders that received training through the programme continued their advocacy, promoting non-violent conflict resolution, engaging in domestic violence prevention groups and addressing harmful social norms. In Dushanbe, for example, as a result of Spotlight Initiative's training, couples now reportedly have more access to quality pre-marital consultations. In addition, female Muslim, Christian and Catholic leaders continue to draw upon Spotlight Initiative materials to strengthen GBV prevention, child marriage, and approaches around reproductive health and family relations. In 2024, more than 60,000 people were reached through social media with video materials co-developed with Imam Khatibs (members of the Tajikistan Ulema Council - a former Spotlight Initiative partner), highlighting women's societal role, the importance of girls' education and domestic violence prevention.<sup>74</sup>

### Integration and ongoing delivery of comprehensive sexuality education

Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) is critical for advancing gender equality and promoting healthy relationships. It plays a key role in preventing VAWG by challenging harmful norms, promoting consent and respect, and equipping young people with the knowledge and skills to build non-violent relationships. **Six programmes** across three regions<sup>75</sup> reported sustained progress in strengthening or integrating CSE in national systems. Stakeholders described how national governments incorporated CSE into standard curricula, national budgets and continued to roll out tools, building on the Initiative's close collaboration with Ministries of Education. Examples of sustained achievements are outlined below:



In **Samoa**, Spotlight Initiative partnered with the Ministry of Education Sports and Culture (MESC) in 2020 to integrate CSE into the national university curriculum. Strong political commitment, early institutional buy-in and timely donor investment sustained momentum beyond programme closure. The curriculum is still being taught in universities and the Ministry remains engaged through partnerships with youth councils. In addition, a pilot CSE-focused mobile app, "Talavou", that was conceptualized under Spotlight Initiative through a youth-led design process, was launched during the Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM) meeting in Samoa in 2024 with funding from Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Spotlight Initiative's approach to piloting innovative approaches to CSE, combined with high-level exposure and alignment with national priorities around CSE, laid the groundwork for the apps' continued development, resourcing and rollout after programme closure. The app is in the final stages of development and will be disseminated in 2025-2026.



In **Papua New Guinea**, Spotlight Initiative supported the development of CSE materials for Grades 7 to 12, including an instructor's guide, in partnership with stakeholders including the National Department of Education. The Government took ownership of the tools, and collaborated with national CSE and Family Life Education (FLE) committees to deliver training and prepare for nationwide implementation. Spotlight Initiative also convened a series of South-South learning exchanges, where Papua New Guinea was able to share its approach with regional leaders, governments and technical experts. Following the closure of the programme, Papua New Guinea government departments, UN agencies and CSOs continue to build on momentum, and are planning a national launch of the CSE learning resource materials and accompanying teachers' manual in 2025/2026. Importantly, the nationwide rollout of these materials will be funded through the National Department of Education's budget which has included CSE as an annual recurring budget line item starting in 2026.<sup>76</sup>

This domestic resourcing was supported by Spotlight Initiative's work on gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) in the country (see Section 4.4.2 on Institutional Strengthening). Stakeholders shared how Spotlight Initiative's support laid the foundations for nationally led, systemic education reform by ensuring institutional integration from the onset, driving multi-stakeholder collaboration, using regional platforms to generate interest and pride, and securing government budgetary commitments to CSE through support on GRB.

### Expanded community-level women's economic empowerment activities

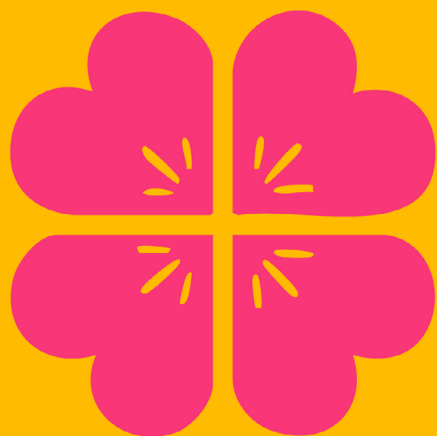
Combining women's economic empowerment (WEE) with social transformation initiatives can drive meaningful progress towards gender equality and EVAWG. In some cases, economic security generated by women's economic empowerment activities can provide women with the autonomy, tools and resources to leave abusive situations. **Seven country programmes** across three regions<sup>77</sup> reported sustained economic empowerment activities that build on Spotlight Initiative activities. Stakeholders shared achievements including: ongoing activities related to women-led group savings schemes, income-generating activities, and support to survivors to rebuild their livelihoods and reintegrate into communities. Examples of achievements and how they have been sustained are detailed below:



In **Malawi**, WEE activities launched under Spotlight Initiative have been sustained and expanded. The programme initially supported 20 village savings and loans groups (VSLGs) for GBV survivors and vulnerable women. After the programme ended, this number grew to 67 groups, each with 15 to 20 members trained in income generation, gender equality and resilience-building. The continuation of the savings groups has been made possible through vocational training and skill-building sessions provided by local civil society and NGOs. Many groups have continued operating independently, with members mobilizing local resources and support from district councils to sustain their activities. Sustainability was enabled by embedding vocational training and savings practices within community structures, providing women with practical skills and immediate economic returns. Continued recognition and support from district councils, alongside strong peer networks, has reportedly helped ensure groups continue to operate effectively.



In **Guyana**, Spotlight Initiative's investments in women's economic empowerment and providing business support and equipment to women entrepreneurs have evolved into a fully fledged government-led programme. Post closure, the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security has built on the programme's foundations and is implementing the Women's Innovation and Investment Network (WIIN)<sup>78</sup>, upskilling women in garment-making and culinary skills, and providing a business incubator for young women entrepreneurs. This transition from donor-supported programming to a nationally led and funded initiative reflects strong political commitment and shows how well-aligned pilot programmes can catalyse long-term, systemic changes.



## PILLAR 4

# Quality essential services



### 4.3.4 Pillar 4: Quality essential services

**“We do not say the programme has ended because we still continue all the service provision.”**

↳ Government official in Mozambique

Strengthening the availability, accessibility and quality of essential services for survivors of violence is a priority for all programmes. Spotlight Initiative programmes sought to embed survivor-centred approaches across health, justice and social services sectors. Stakeholders from 21 programmes reported lasting improvements to services that continued following closure, including through the **sustained operation and access to VAWG services**, based on capacity built among health, law enforcement and social services staff. Notably, this was the most frequently cited sustainability achievement across all programmes and pillars. **Strengthened and expanded protocols, referral pathways and case management systems for GBV response** were also reported as an achievement (10 programmes).

Enabling factors detailed by stakeholders included: the importance of government ownership and capacity in service delivery, including monitoring skills and the presence of inter-ministerial working groups; collaborative skills and tool development; recognizing the role of the private sector in service provision; and piloting components of service delivery and integrating these within existing systems. An in-depth analysis of sustained achievements, along with examples and enabling factors, follows.

#### **Sustained provision of essential services for survivors**

Spotlight Initiative programmes have been impactful in increasing access to quality essential services, with **21 programmes** across 5 regions<sup>79</sup> reporting that significant infrastructure and services, such as one-stop centres, hotlines, shelters and crisis centres, have been sustained after programme closure. Many of these facilities have been handed over to government partners and are now funded through national government resources or other sources, including the private sector. This is especially significant given that service delivery requires long-term human and financial resources and planning, as well as ongoing political support from decision makers. Stakeholders also reported continued survivor access to legal services, counselling and psychosocial support. Below are some examples highlighting achievements and how they have been sustained:



In **Honduras**, Spotlight Initiative supported the establishment of 13 safe shelters for VAWG survivors, responding to the surge in VAWG cases during the COVID-19 pandemic and a subsequent hurricane. In collaboration with the Ministries of Education and Health, the Initiative also developed protocols and operational guidelines to ensure shelters provided consistent, high quality, survivor-centred care. Since the closure of the programme, three safe shelters located in critical areas continue to operate.<sup>80</sup> In these shelters, government institutions have institutionalized the protocols and guidelines, using them to train and strengthen staff capacities. Continued operation has been enabled through new funding and partnerships built between the national CSO, which managed the shelters, and local government and other partners, ensuring shared ownership and ongoing service delivery.



In **Tajikistan**, Spotlight Initiative partnered with the Ministry of Health to establish 15 victim support rooms within health facilities to provide survivors with medical, psychosocial and referral support, and access to short-term shelter. Over 300 health professionals and 90 teachers were trained on national protocols and curricula as part of the programme to support service delivery. Following the closure of the programme, all 15 victim support rooms have been fully maintained and integrated into Tajikistan's national health system.<sup>81</sup> Many of the trained staff remain active within their institutions and the government reportedly conducts regular monitoring and refresher training to sustain knowledge and uphold the quality of services. These efforts have ensured continued, free-of-charge access to comprehensive support for survivors. This achievement was a result of embedding survivor-centred protocols directly into health systems, ensuring they became part of standard practice. The strong partnership cultivated between the UN and government ministries created shared ownership, while the proven effectiveness of multi-service support (confirmed through the government's own monitoring processes) reinforced the value of maintaining these services.



In **Argentina**, Spotlight Initiative piloted a community-based legal empowerment model in Salta by training local women as bilingual legal facilitators. Facilitators received legal training and subsequently co-designed referral pathways tailored to their communities' needs. Since the closure of the programme, facilitators have expanded their role and mandate, forming a regional network that provides legal support to survivors.<sup>82</sup> Trained facilitators now engage in regional advocacy efforts and integrate their work into broader development programmes. Their engagement and visible leadership has reportedly driven momentum for the replication of this model across the Gran Chaco region. This example demonstrates the value of piloting locally owned and peer-based models that embed co-design and collective capacity-building.



In **Liberia**, as the Spotlight Initiative programme neared its end in 2023, the Initiative convened a development partners' café to engage the private sector and encourage funding in gender equality and workplace violence prevention. Through momentum and advocacy, the Orange Foundation committed US\$ 100,000 in seed funding for a National Sexual and Gender-based Violence Prevention Fund, and the Government of Liberia pledged to engage the diaspora private sector through a dedicated conference the following year. Alongside this, a plan was developed by late 2023 to introduce a standardized essential service package across public and private health service providers. Following the closure of the programme, this plan led to the establishment of several one-stop centres and safe houses, offering a safe space for survivors, especially in remote areas.<sup>83</sup> Stakeholders shared that the private sector platform attracted stakeholders' attention and created a new avenue for investment in EVAWG, while the roll-out of a standardized service package progressed after the closure of the programme to ensure survivors receive quality care, regardless of the service provider.

### Enhanced and expanded protocols, referral pathways and case management systems

Ten programmes across four regions<sup>84</sup> reported the continuation of Spotlight Initiative-developed protocols, referral pathways and case management systems. The continuation of these systems means that survivors are more likely to access timely, coordinated and survivor-centered support across a multitude of sectors. Below are some examples highlighting how systems have been sustained according to stakeholders:



In **Kyrgyzstan**, Spotlight Initiative played a catalytic role in establishing and supporting an inter-agency working group in 2022, bringing together ministries and institutions under the leadership of the Ministry of Emergency Situations. This platform created, for the first time, a coordinated, government-led mechanism for VAWG prevention and response during crises. One of the working group's most significant achievements was the development and formal adoption of the Instruction on the Procedure for Interaction, a standardized government-wide protocol outlining how agencies should work together to prevent and respond to GBV in emergencies. Since the programme's closure, government institutions have continued to utilize this protocol and related training tools built during the programme. In 2024, the Government initiated a three-day live simulation in the Batken district to test these response systems. The exercise simulated an emergency evacuation, and focused on survivor support and GBV risk mitigation activities. Stakeholders described how the exercise, which used Spotlight Initiative tools, strengthened coordination and capacity among participating government, law enforcement, healthcare, social services and NGO staff, enhanced understanding of roles and responsibilities during emergencies, and reinforced survivor-centred approaches such as confidentiality protocols. Gaps and needs around GBV prevention and mitigation were also identified, leading to the subsequent development of improved protection strategies for women and girls in crises. The Ministry of Emergency has reportedly committed to revising the GBV response SOPs, ensuring they are updated and responsive to changing needs.



In **Malawi**, Spotlight Initiative developed and rolled out standardized case management tools to enhance the coordination, tracking and delivery of EVAWG services. Tools included survivor intake forms, referral registers and reporting templates, and were adopted by frontline service providers. The Initiative also trained multisectoral teams in survivor-centred response protocols, and supported the revival and engagement of government-led district councils to play a role in decentralized EVAWG service delivery. Stakeholders described how these efforts significantly improved the documentation of cases and the referral of survivors to appropriate health, legal and psychosocial services. Following the closure of the programme, District Councils have reportedly remained active, and been equipped with new tools and capacities to maintain consistent service delivery. Forms and protocols developed under the programme continue to be used routinely in service delivery.



In **Nigeria**, Spotlight Initiative strengthened GBV response in schools and universities by leveraging digital tools for student-led dialogue and anonymous incident reporting. Spotlight Initiative's partnerships with academic institutions<sup>85</sup> led to the creation of WhatsApp groups that connected thousands of students and authorities in ongoing discussions on EVAWG. At the same time, the WARIF Anonymous platform developed under the programme provided a safe, confidential channel for incident reporting and information access. Following the closure of the programme, many of the student WhatsApp groups evolved organically and now operate independently, demonstrating sustainability and interest in youth-led digital engagement and leadership. By June 2025, the WhatsApp groups had facilitated initial referrals of 19 VAWG incidents.



In **Tajikistan**, Spotlight Initiative supported the establishment of a national incident reporting mechanism in 347 schools, creating a formal process for students to report cases of violence and abuse. Activities under the programme included the development of standardized guidelines to manage complaints and ensure procedural consistency in handling cases. The Initiative helped build school-level awareness, staff capacity and accountability mechanisms within the education system. Prior to Spotlight Initiative, there were no prohibitions around violence against children. Stakeholders described how the programme's momentum contributed to national policy reform and the subsequent banning of corporal punishment.<sup>86</sup> Since the conclusion of the programme, the Government of Tajikistan has fully taken over activities by embedding the reporting mechanism within national structures. Building on this success, the government publicly committed at the First Global

Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children (also known as the Bogotá Summit 2024) to expand the school reporting system nationwide by 2030.

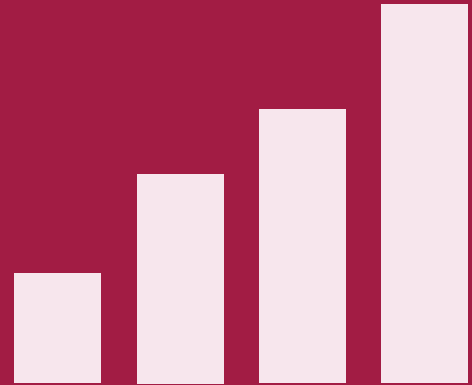


The ASEAN regional **Safe and Fair** programme supported the development of the ASEAN Guidelines for Developing National Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for a Coordinated Response to Violence Against Women and Girls. These SOPs have been further institutionalized following programme closure.<sup>87</sup> The Guidelines were created through extensive consultation with ASEAN Member States, CSOs and service providers. Their value and applicability have endured beyond the programme's lifecycle, with the Guidelines formally adopted and launched in 2024 under PROTECT, a new regional joint programme, in collaboration with the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children. The Guidelines are being referenced and applied as operational frameworks in the development of the next generation ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on EVAW (2026-2035) and Cambodia's Fourth National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women (NAPVAW IV), ensuring continued uptake and impact on coordinated, survivor-centered service delivery across South-East Asia.



## PILLAR 5

# Data



### 4.3.5 Pillar 5: Data

**“Spotlight Initiative effectively supported the systems for handling gender-based violence. At first, these were fragmented, but because the programme was committed to [the] development of tools for GBV reporting and the data collection of GBV, starting from community to the national level... the systems are still working.”**

↳ Government representative in Malawi

Spotlight Initiative’s commitment to strengthening national data ecosystems has supported progress in addressing VAWG in the long term. Robust and interoperable data systems enable governments and civil society to track progress in addressing VAWG, allocate resources more effectively and design evidence-based policies, while also ensuring greater transparency and accountability in addressing violence in the long term.

Investment in data through Spotlight Initiative has delivered lasting results according to stakeholders, including sustained **improvements in coordination, harmonization, collection and use of VAWG data by governments and institutions**, and **strengthened data management systems** (12 programmes). A further sustained achievement reported by stakeholders included the **continued use of research and knowledge produced under Spotlight Initiative** to inform advocacy, policy and public investment in EVAWG.

Enabling factors that have helped ensure the continued collection and use of VAWG data shared by stakeholders include: tools and skills development across stakeholders, scalable data systems which can be expanded nationwide, harmonized data collection processes, the integration of VAWG data within costed national action plans, and generating flagship research which addresses knowledge gaps and engages diverse stakeholders.

An analysis of sustained achievements reported under Pillar 5, examples and enabling factors are presented below.



### Strengthened and scaled up VAWG data management systems

Stakeholders from **12 programmes** across 4 regions<sup>88</sup> highlighted how Spotlight Initiative contributed to strengthened data management systems that continue to operate and support policymaking. Reported achievements included the development and integration of VAWG data systems, standardized data collection tools, aligned data sources, enhanced data coordination across sectors and the ongoing use, refinement and application of high-quality VAWG data. Some stakeholders reported how GBV strategies are now informed by data and evidence as a result of Spotlight Initiative programming. Achievements and examples detailed by stakeholders are set out below.



In **Ecuador**, Spotlight Initiative supported the development of tools to strengthen VAWG data collection and data management systems, including the Observatory to Prevent Femicide and the Single Registry of Violence (SRV). The SRV tracks reported cases of VAWG and creates a single, consolidated record for each survivor, facilitating coordinated action across different national institutions, including the police, health services and the Prosecutor's Office. The SRV also links to an early warning system model. These instruments required significant inter-institutional coordination. Efforts to expand and strengthen the SRV are ongoing in the second generation of Spotlight Initiative's programme in Ecuador (launched in 2024).<sup>89</sup> Partners are building on the SRV's foundations from the first phase, and are now focused on improving data visualization tools to facilitate swifter decision-making and enhance the quality and availability of data used for prevention policymaking.<sup>90</sup>



In **Malawi**, Spotlight Initiative launched the National Observatory Hub in 2022, a data platform that captures data on SGBV, harmful practices, and SRHR from the community to the national levels. Following the closure of the Spotlight Initiative programme, the government and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) (through UNDP) have continued to collaborate in supporting the Observatory Hub, with funding from the EU and the Governments of Iceland and Norway. The Observatory Hub has expanded in multiple ways. Firstly, it now connects data from community support units, police and courts. Secondly, it has expanded operations from 6 to 12 districts, with plans to cover all 28 districts in Malawi. Thirdly, new features are being added, including mobile reporting tools and links to national case systems. Built on secure government servers and aligned with national plans, the Hub is now considered a central tool for responding to GBV.<sup>91</sup> Since its roll-out, the platform has documented over 15,800 cases, reportedly improving coordination and accelerating prosecution timelines. In 2025, the Hub was recognized at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Prizes as one of the top 360 global digital innovations.<sup>92</sup>



In **Belize**, Spotlight Initiative supported the harmonization of VAWG data systems and promoted inter-agency coordination. Between 2021 and 2023, the Initiative delivered technical assistance to address the inoperability between existing data systems and support government and partners to enhance the consistency and comparability of statistics from health, justice and social sectors.<sup>93</sup> Impacts were sustained beyond the programme's conclusion, as reflected in Belize's 2024 Voluntary National Review, which highlighted ongoing improvements in VAWG data coordination and reporting to inform evidence-based policy and programming through an integrated national system.<sup>94</sup> Further recognition of this progress was noted in the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women's (CEDAW) 2025 session, which commended Belize's continued commitment to strengthening data systems to support evidence-based responses to VAWG.<sup>95</sup> This example demonstrates how technical support on VAWG data led to durable institutional reforms which have been maintained, globally recognized and used for decision-making after the programme ended.



In **Tajikistan**, Spotlight Initiative supported the improvement of government and civil society VAWG data. Firstly, the Initiative developed a VAWG data methodology with the aim of harmonizing data collection. The methodology was approved and endorsed by seven government departments, including the Ministry of Interior Affairs and the Ministry of Health.<sup>96</sup> Following the programme's closure in 2023, plans around establishing a VAWG administrative database were included in the Government's National Action Plan (NAP) on the Prevention of Domestic Violence 2025-2030.<sup>97</sup> Plans included allocated funding and a timeline for nationwide, government-led roll-out.<sup>98</sup> The integration of VAWG data as a national priority has enabled multi-agen-



cy coordination and continued work around digital infrastructure in the country. Additionally, the Initiative supported an offline case registration system for use by 16 CSOs to document VAWG incidents. This has now been upgraded to include cloud-based storage, data disaggregation, multiple data sources and the generation of automated monthly reports. Despite current funding limitations, the women's rights organizations connected to the system continue to collect data and disseminate these reports, contributing to ongoing monitoring and response to VAWG cases.

### Ongoing use of Spotlight Initiative research and knowledge products

**Five programmes** across four regions<sup>99</sup> highlighted how VAWG research produced under Spotlight Initiative has continued to be utilized. Stakeholders reported the ongoing use of studies, knowledge platforms, repositories, technical guidance and training materials. Some stakeholders reported the valuable role of CSOs in the generation and dissemination of VAWG research and evidence, and the importance of co-creation, securing government buy-in, and establishing institutional mechanisms to ensure knowledge products remain accessible, relevant and integrated, regardless of political or programme transitions.

Stakeholders shared achievements in relation to the lasting impact and continued use of national studies on the economic costs of VAWG. The **Caribbean Regional Programme** supported national studies on the costs of VAWG. These studies have continued to inform public debate and policy.<sup>100</sup>

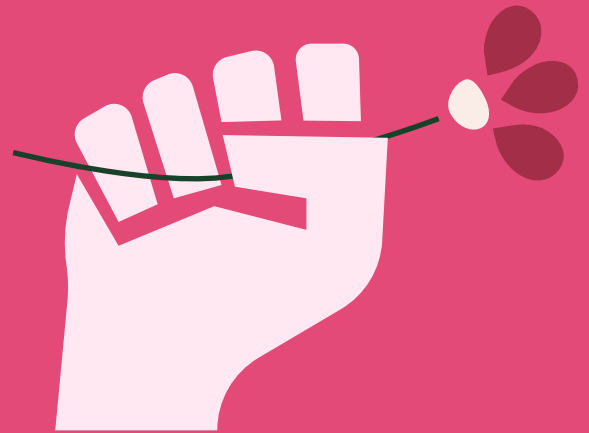
The national study in **Jamaica** estimated the annual cost of VAWG to be over US\$ 816.9 million annually (6.5 per cent of GDP).<sup>101</sup> Jamaica's Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport formally submitted the report to Cabinet to raise awareness across government and highlight the fiscal impacts of VAWG. According to stakeholders, government and development partners continue to reference the study in advocacy, policy and programming dialogues.<sup>102</sup>

The national study in **Trinidad and Tobago** focused on the economic cost of family violence in three communities and estimated direct costs associated with IPV.<sup>103</sup> Completed in 2022, in partnership with the Network of NGOs for the Advancement of Women, the report has been recognized as a foundational baseline for future national-level studies.<sup>104</sup> Throughout 2024, its findings were featured in public forums, national dialogues, workshops, policy discussions and highlighted in media campaigns.<sup>105</sup> This strategic use of the study has continued into 2025, reinforcing calls for increased investment in prevention and survivor support services by civil society.



## PILLAR 6

# Women's movements



### 4.3.6 Pillar 6: Women's movements

**“Spotlight Initiative helped create [stronger] relationships with CSOs at the district level... The relationship still exists today because of Spotlight Initiative.”**

↳ UN colleague in Mozambique

Women's rights organizations WROs and women's movements are at the forefront of efforts to end violence in their communities and around the world. They hold duty bearers to account and ensure that service delivery continues beyond programme cycles. The sustainability of efforts to end VAWG depends heavily on the strength of feminist movements and civil society.<sup>106</sup> In line with evidence which shows that supporting civil society, particularly WROs, women's and feminist movements is critical to ending VAWG, Spotlight Initiative delivered US\$ 195 million to civil society (49 per cent of total programme activity funds) during its first phase.

Recognizing the importance of meaningful partnerships with civil society, including local and grassroots groups, Spotlight Initiative partnered with the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women and Girls (UNTF) and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) to deliver two grant-giving programmes to better reach and support diverse WROs and CSOs. As a result of this resourcing support and as well as the Initiative's broader funding, capacity-building and technical support, more than 5,000+ local and grassroots women's rights organizations worldwide reported having greater influence and agency following their involvement in Spotlight Initiative programmes globally.<sup>107</sup>

Stakeholders from **more than half of programmes** (17 programmes across all 5 regions) reported **strengthened collective EVAWG action** following programme closure. Stakeholders also highlighted that the Initiative **sustained the visibility and skills of diverse CSOs and WROs** (9 programmes), and **strengthened youth-led networks** for the long term (5 programmes).

An analysis of sustained achievements, examples and enabling factors shared by stakeholders follows.

### Strengthened and sustained collective action on EVAWG

Strengthened collective action was reported as a lasting achievement by stakeholders from **17 country and regional programmes** in all 5 regions.<sup>108</sup> Building capacities and networks across CSOs has generated lasting benefits and new alliances. One example shared by stakeholders includes:



Spotlight Initiative's **Central Asia Regional Programme** strengthened regional collaboration among CSOs working to end VAWG. In 2022, the programme supported the establishment of the Ray of Light CSO Network, uniting human rights advocates, feminist groups and CSOs across Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Spotlight Initiative built the foundations for the Network which was the first of its kind in the region. The Network placed an emphasis on amplifying the voices of often under-resourced CSOs. It was supported by Spotlight Initiative to facilitate national consultations and online discussions. The Ray of Light Network also played a pivotal role in the establishment of additional groups, namely the Central Asian Alliance. Today, the Ray of Light Network still serves as a hub, providing legitimacy and political weight to its members.<sup>109</sup> The Network creates a space for CSOs to collectively address legislative and policy gaps related to GBV and advocate for gender-responsive reforms. Ray of Light's membership has now reached 600. Members continue to meet and conduct regional forums, workshops and conferences online and offline. The Central Asian Alliance has also continued to operate. In 2024, for example, the Alliance facilitated a meeting between Alliance leaders, organizations of persons with disability and WROs to develop recommendations on legislation and protection measures.

### Enhanced skills and visibility of civil society and women's rights organizations

**“[The programme] also supported the institutional capacity-building of civil society organizations with a specific attention to community-led organizations and women-led organizations. We have seen that these organizations had very good results with this institutional capacity-building. They are doing very well after the closure of the programme in terms of management of the organizations and continuing their GEWE/EVAWG efforts.”**

↳ Civil society representative in Mozambique

Stakeholders from **nine Spotlight Initiative programmes** across four regions<sup>110</sup> reported that the programme strengthened and amplified CSOs, enabling them to expand VAWG prevention activities, scale up survivor support, sustain advocacy and community engagement after programme closure. Stakeholders also explained how targeted support to small, grassroots organizations helped strengthen the capacities of these groups, enabling them to grow, attract new funding and become increasingly influential. Below are some examples that highlight these achievements:



In **Grenada**, Spotlight Initiative supported the capacity development of an organization called Grenchap, initially through a small grant in 2020. Through Spotlight Initiative's investment and utilizing a capacity-building methodology from the UN Women Foundations Programme, Grenchap staff were supported to build their technical and operational capabilities. The organization subsequently secured a larger grant from Spotlight Initiative. Since the closure of the programme, Grenchap has remained an active and influential organization in the EVAWG sector. It is now reportedly managing increasingly impactful and large-scale programmes on GBV, intimate partner violence (IPV) and family violence, with support from UN Women as well as other donors including the Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives. Grenchap has expanded to deliver training to CSOs, teachers, students, church leaders and government organizations.<sup>111</sup> In collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development, Grenchap also now hosts a safe space for 32 women survivors of violence in Carriacou and Petite Martinique, two under-served islands. Gaining experience, funding and capacity-building support through Spotlight Initiative has enabled the organization to grow and expand its reach.



In **Trinidad and Tobago**, Spotlight Initiative's investments in CSO capacity strengthening have translated into ongoing GBV work that creates durable change. One example of this is the ongoing work by Spotlight Initiative's former partner, the Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CADV). Following programme closure, CADV continued outreach to schools and faith-based communities, and delivered training to nurses on GBV responses. In 2024, CADV and the government-led MiLAT Programme<sup>112</sup> staged Colours of Peace: Young Men Confronting GBV, an art exhibition that used visual storytelling to spark dialogue on toxic masculinity. CADV also advanced workplace safety by partnering with the American Chamber of Commerce of Trinidad and Tobago (AMCHAM) and the University of the West Indies (UWI) Institute of Gender and Development Studies to urge private sector firms to adopt formal domestic violence policies. It also launched a dress-making and design course for 15 survivors of domestic violence, alongside training in financial management.<sup>113</sup>

### Meaningful youth engagement in networks and movements

Recognizing the critical role of youth in driving long-term change, Spotlight Initiative invested in youth leadership and intersectional movement-building. Stakeholders from **five programmes** across four regions<sup>114</sup> reported sustained youth engagement in networks and movements following programme closure. Stakeholders described the lasting benefits of youth coalitions, including the creation of opportunities for young women to join existing women's movements and connect with government along the way. Regional programmes in particular reported success. Youth parliaments were commonly reported as sustainable activities by stakeholders:



In **Papua New Guinea**, Spotlight Initiative collaborated with diverse stakeholders, including the Ministry of Youth, Sports, Arts and Culture, the EU and the U.S. Embassy to launch the Youth Parliament Programme, which incorporated a focus on gender equality and sought to promote the value of youth-led advocacy. After the closure of the Spotlight Initiative programme, youth engagement was expanded, reportedly as a result of sustained multi-partner investment, institutional integration and high-level political interest built over the course of the Initiative. The Youth Parliament Programme was subsequently mainstreamed into national youth policy and government programming, culminating in a high-profile National Mock Youth Parliament session taking place at the Parliament House in Port Moresby in November 2024.<sup>115</sup>



In **Timor-Leste**, Spotlight Initiative supported the launch of a Youth Parliament Programme. The Ministry of Youth, Sports, Arts and Culture was supported to roll out the Youth Parliament Programme, developing accompanying curricula that addressed gender equality and GBV. After the programme's closure, the Ministry of Youth, Sports, Arts and Culture integrated the Youth Parliament Programme into national programming. Government stakeholders continue to connect and engage with alumni. Trained youth reportedly thrive as a result of new government and community leadership opportunities, and act as peer educators, providing life skills education to rural adolescents, including out-of-school youth and those at risk of early marriage or pregnancy.<sup>116</sup>

**“We learned quite a lot of different approaches to programming [through Spotlight Initiative] which we are also using in other, new programmes.”**

↳ Civil society representative in Zimbabwe

## 4.4 Achieving sustainability: lessons from case studies

This section presents three case studies that delve deeper into sustained achievements across multiple programme pillars, emphasizing the critical role of Spotlight Initiative's comprehensive, whole-of-society approach in fostering long-lasting impacts.

**“Spotlight Initiative was able to help us strengthen what was already in place... There is more work to be done, but ... the support that we got was invaluable.”**

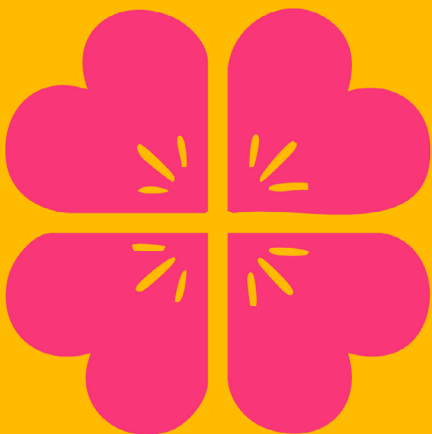
↳ Government stakeholder in Jamaica

**“It was very impressive to see this important, exceptional mobilization of traditional leaders to EVAWG and to facilitate these rich and appreciated debates. I am overwhelmed. For me, the Spotlight Initiative programme must continue in Niger, covering the four other regions (Diffa, Agadez, Niamey, Dosso) and expand to new countries around the world.”**

↳ Traditional leader from Niger

**“Everywhere the government goes, even the Commission on the Status of Women, the government owns it [the High-level Political Compact developed with support from Spotlight Initiative].”**

↳ UN colleague in Zimbabwe



## 4.4.1 Jamaica case study

2020-2023

Duration

US\$ 10.7 million

Total investment

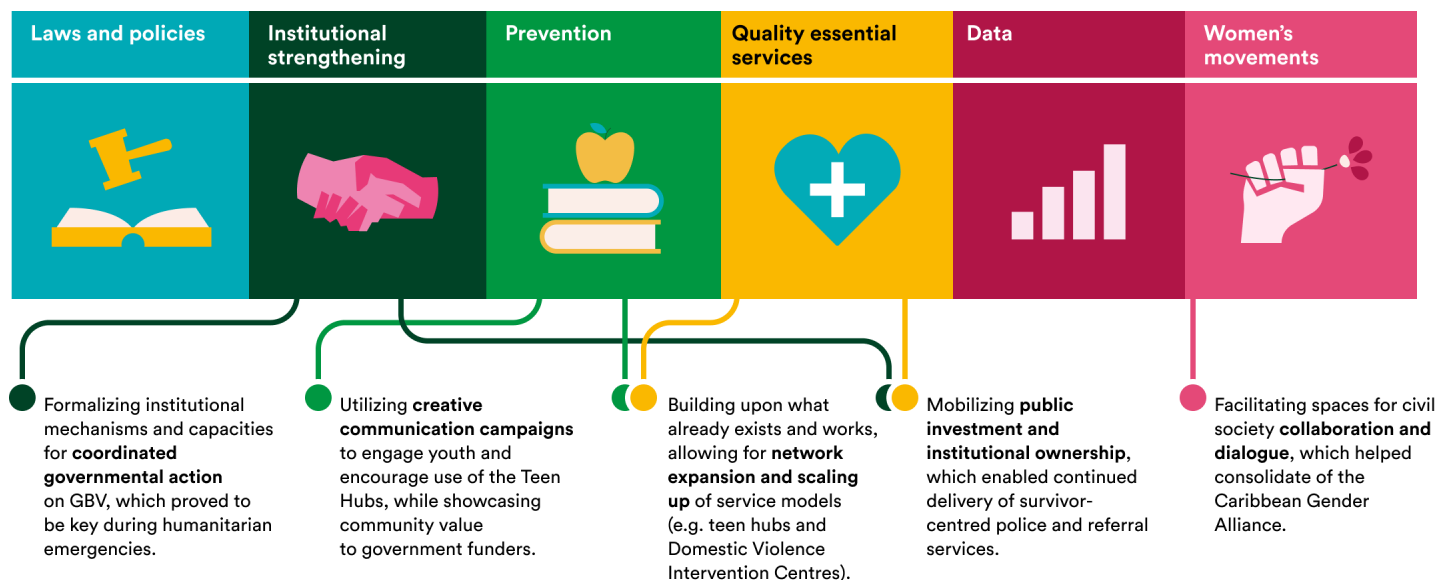
22,260 people

Direct reach

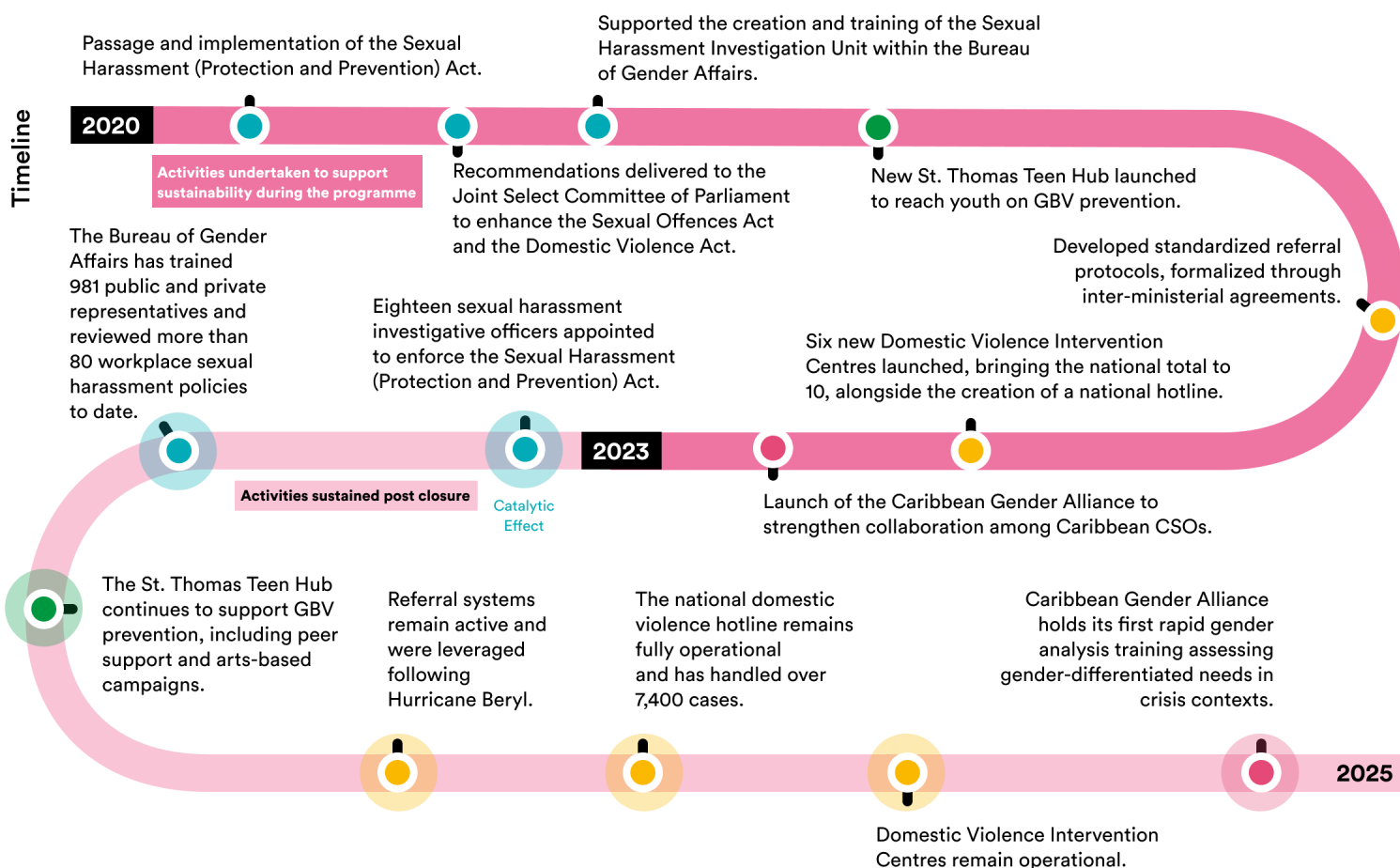
Figure 4: Jamaica case study

Pillars

Enabling Factors



Timeline



Catalytic After-Effects

Spotlight Initiative in Jamaica served as a springboard for the launch of a new programme – the 'So-Just' Project – a 7-year, US\$ 8.8 million initiative led by the Ministry of Justice, UNDP and Global Affairs Canada. Building off Spotlight Initiative's work to strengthen access to justice for survivors, the programme aims to promote the broader human rights of GBV survivors, persons with disabilities, and residents of rural and vulnerable communities, while improving their access to justice.

The project builds on the strengthened legislative landscape fostered by Spotlight Initiative and aims to expand public awareness of legal reforms, while sustaining community sensitization activities. It incorporates a small grants fund for civil society organizations, continuing the Initiative's emphasis on civil society support, multi-stakeholder collaboration and inter-ministerial coordination.

## 4.4.2 Niger case study

2019-2023

Duration

US\$ 27.4 million

Total investment

447,502 people

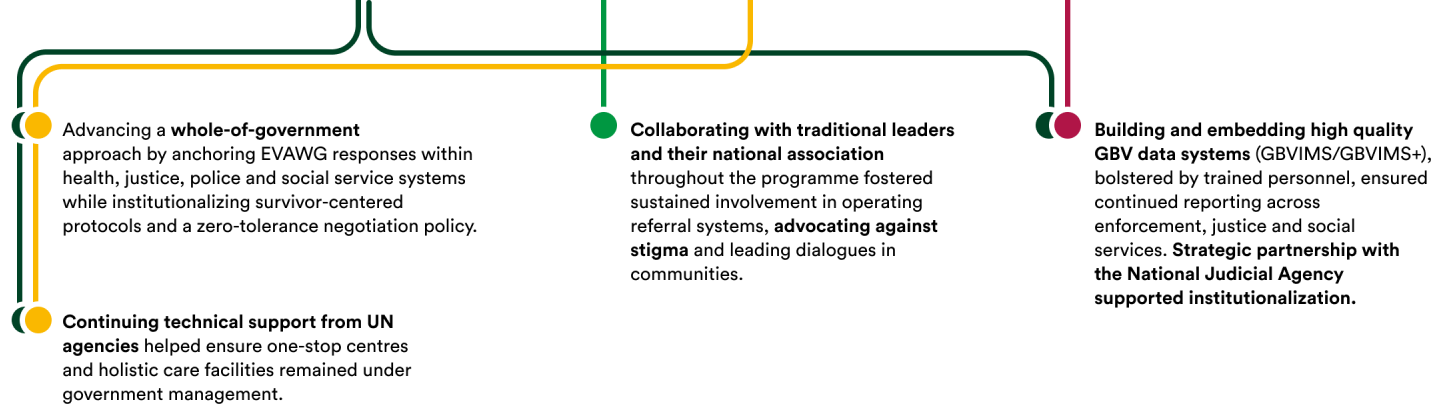
Direct reach

Figure 5: Niger case study

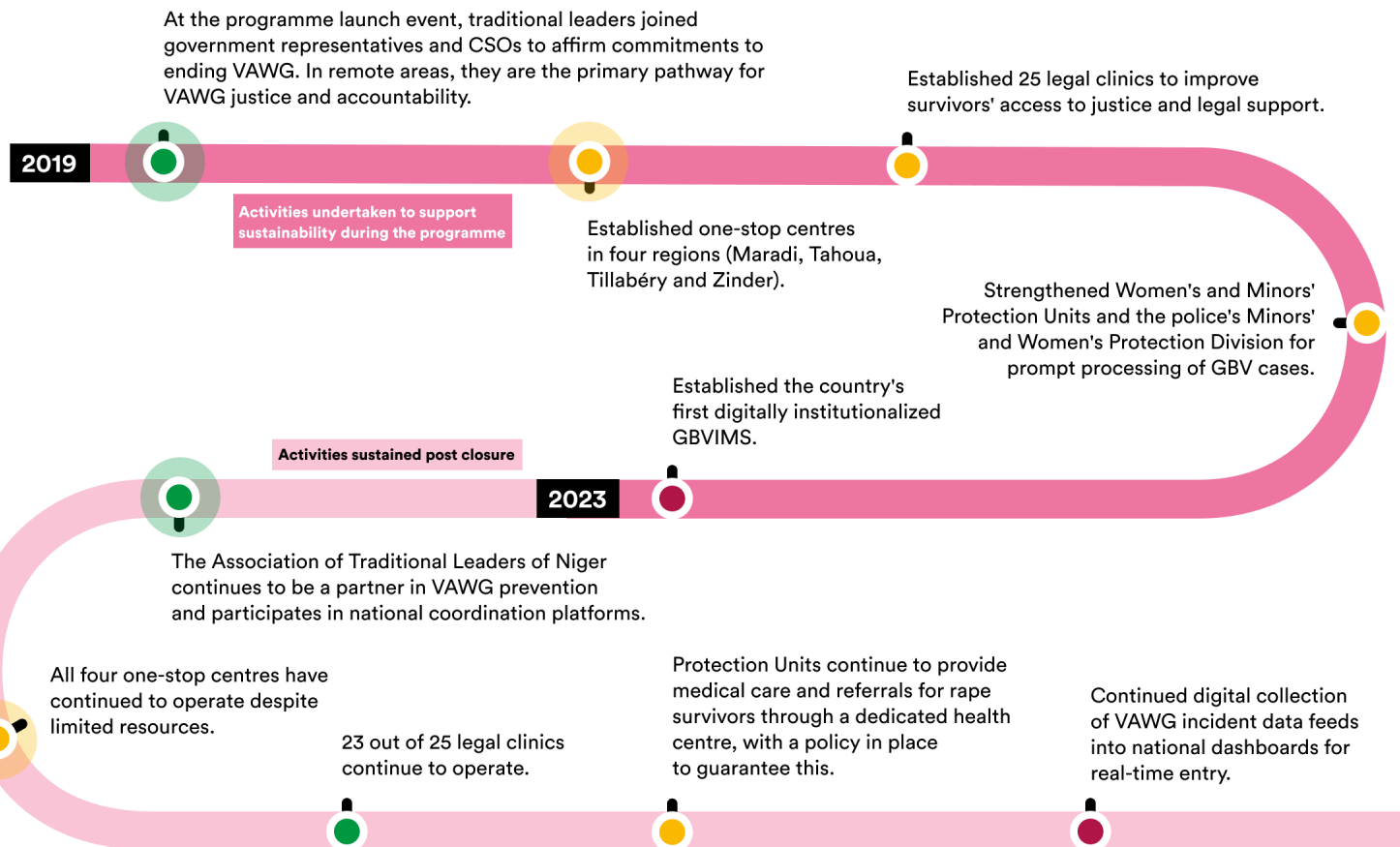
Pillars



Enabling Factors



Timeline



Catalytic After-Effects

- For the first time in the history of traditional leadership in Niger, some traditional chiefs have appointed women within their courts as focal points to address GBV issues, child marriage and girls' education.
- Médecins du Monde and Plan International established additional one-stop centres in the Konni and Madawa regions.



## 4.4.3 Zimbabwe case study

2019-2023

Duration

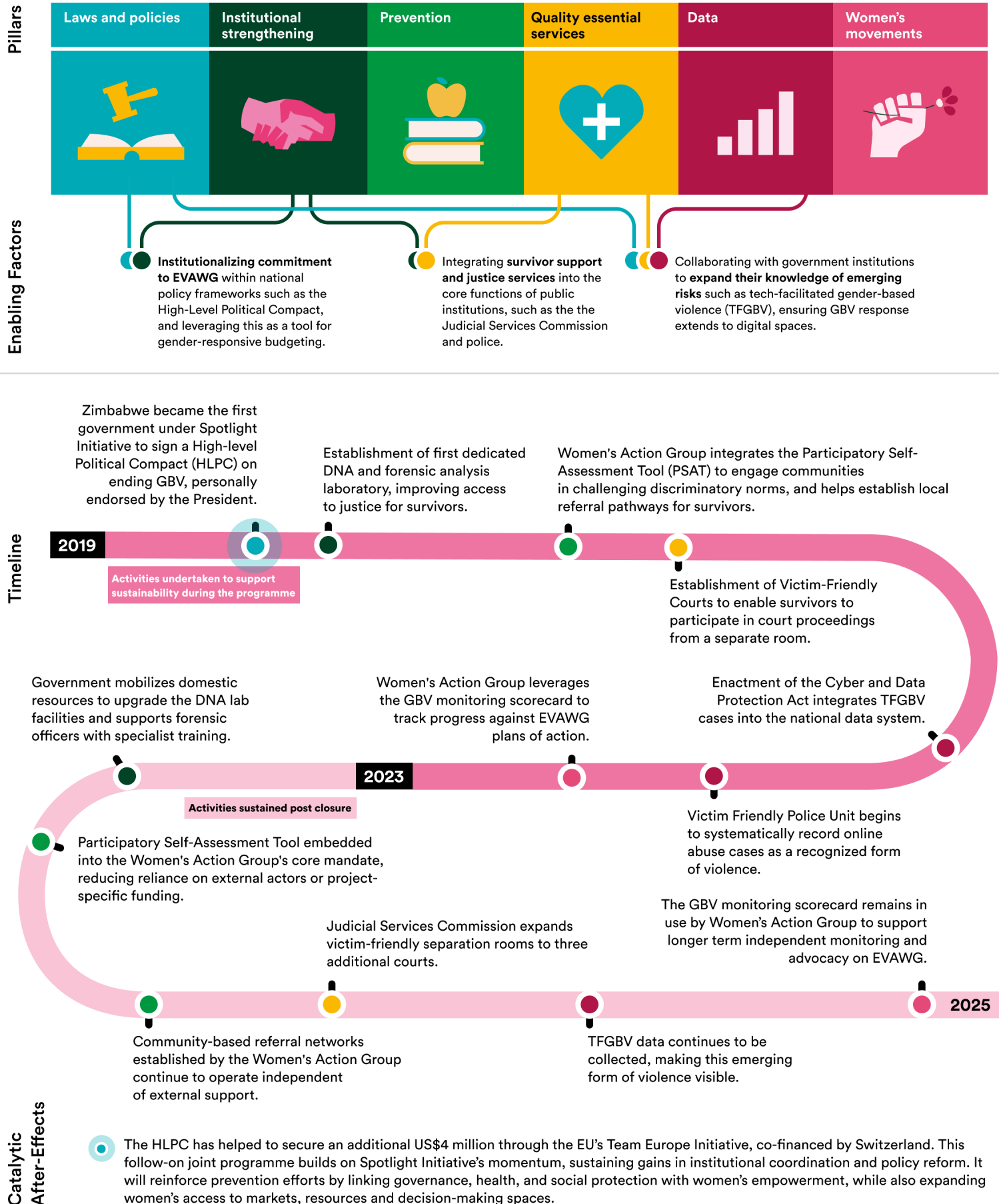
US\$ 33 million

Total investment

7.9 million people

Direct reach

Figure 6: Zimbabwe case study





## 4.5 Lessons learned - what enables or blocks sustainability in EAWG programming?

Stakeholders reported many lessons learned, including enablers and barriers to sustainability. Key sustainability-enabling factors included a combination of Spotlight Initiative design features, implementation practices and efforts that extended beyond the programme's formal conclusion. Across both country and regional contexts, these factors have driven sustainability across multiple pillars, transforming legislative, institutional and community systems while fostering the capacity and ownership necessary for long-term impact.

The following enabling factors emerged from analysis of stakeholder interviews. They look across country and regional programmes and demonstrate key enabling factors reported by multiple stakeholders during or after programme implementation.

Figure 7: Key sustainability-enabling factors



One of the most commonly reported barriers to sustainability, was **the lack of financial resources** followed by **backlash against gender equality**. Other challenges highlighted by stakeholders included **human resources**, **low technical capacity of national stakeholders**, **gaps in multi-stakeholder coordination** and **low political commitment**. Less frequent, though notable, barriers also included **changes in government leadership**, **institutions and structures**.

### The need for sustained financial resources

Since the end of the first phase of Spotlight Initiative, and amid the design of new programmes, there has been a massive decline in global overseas development assistance (ODA).<sup>117</sup> Reductions have major implications for survivors, those at risk of violence, women and girls, as well as broader gender equality and the SDGs. Pressures on financial resources driven by conflict, climate change, economic instability and the growing influence of far-right movements are leading to shifting political choices and priorities. Resources focused on EVAWG are particularly vulnerable, as they are often among the first to be deprioritized during periods of fiscal tightening.

A lack of financial resources post programme was the most commonly reported barrier to sustainability. This was reported by 24 programmes across all 5 regions.<sup>118</sup> Stakeholders highlighted that in some cases, this reduced the scale and depth of interventions and limited institutional capacity to sustain activities. The withdrawal or reduction of international donor funding, insufficient budget allocations by local/national governments, and reliance on short-term or piecemeal financing meant that resource constraints hindered long-term action. While most Spotlight Initiative programmes reported sustained achievements two years after programme closure, it cannot be assumed that these gains will be continued indefinitely. Without new investments, interventions will struggle to maintain or scale up operations.

Stakeholders indicated that some services, such as one-stop centres and VAWG data systems, were left without sufficient resources in the long term. For example, in **Trinidad and Tobago**, domestic resources have not been sufficient to maintain the shelters for GBV survivors that were supported by Spotlight Initiative. One interviewee noted, “We only get \$7,000 a month from the government to basically run and operate an entire shelter for 21 people, which, as you can tell, is just no money at all... Our average grocery bill is \$14,000 a month.” Local CSOs have resorted to fundraising to plug these gaps, but the short-term nature of project-based funding impedes the steady and predictable flow of resources necessary to minimize risks of service disruption.

Similarly, in **Zimbabwe**, one-stop centres have been in jeopardy following programme closure due to insufficient public funding and the withdrawal of major global aid funding which many NGOs relied upon. In several states in **Nigeria**, GBV data situation rooms and dashboards, which were adopted and owned by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs following the programme, stopped operating reportedly due to insufficient government budget allocation, despite continued efforts from government and UN agencies.

While gender-responsive budgeting and political will have generated domestic resources in many programme settings, stakeholders at the global level emphasized challenges and complexities in integrating EVAWG activities that were initially developed or implemented through Spotlight Initiative into national budgets and plans. Stakeholders highlighted that expectations for full domestic funding risk being unrealistic in today’s economic climate. Many governments face tough trade-offs between competing priorities, making it difficult to sustain VAWG initiatives, particularly when political will is inconsistent.

### Navigating socio-political shifts and backlash

Seventeen programmes across four regions<sup>119</sup> reported that backlash hindered progress in sustaining achievements. Some stakeholders explained how sociopolitical changes led to an environment that is resistant to gender equality and EVAWG efforts. In some cases, stakeholders highlighted how these shifts have paved the way for reversals in laws, budget cuts, the imposition of legal or institutional restrictions on CSO operations and political bans on GBV-related work.

One example comes from the Central Asia region which has experienced significant sociopolitical shifts. In **Kyrgyzstan**, the 2024 Law of Foreign Representatives has reportedly placed new limitations on the operations of CSOs.<sup>120</sup> This law, coupled with significant reductions in international funding, has negatively impacted the operational capacity of CSOs, including those working to end VAWG and advance gender equality. Stakeholders highlighted that these shifts have curtailed the ability of many CSOs to provide services, advocate for reforms, and sustain activities initiated under Spotlight Initiative.

Spotlight Initiative's programme in **Afghanistan** faced major disruptions during programme delivery as a result of the resurgence of the Taliban in 2021, the extreme oppression of women and the subsequent dismantling of human rights and women's rights governmental structures, including the national-level Ministry of Women's Affairs and its provincial-level departments. Programme stakeholders reported severe restrictions imposed by the de facto authorities, including bans on women's participation in NGOs and UN activities. Case management, referrals and service provision continue to be considered high-risk, however service providers have drawn upon alternative modalities and negotiated with authorities to guarantee service continuity. In order to overcome challenges, service delivery has been embedded in community-family-level activities or integrated under the umbrella of health and education sectors.

Stakeholders highlighted the need to work through community-based or multisectoral approaches to support service delivery in restrictive or complex conditions. Flexibility in programme design, along with contingency planning and risk-informed strategies, can help keep services operational in these settings.

### Human resources and technical capacity

Stakeholders from 16 programmes across all 5 regions reported challenges in relation to insufficient human resources and capacity at the national level to sustain Spotlight Initiative's activities and achievements.<sup>121</sup> Stakeholders shared details around high turnover among CSO staff, understaffing in government agencies, "brain drain" and limited technical EVAWG expertise among staff delivering services or support. Without strategic investments in workforce development, capacity-strengthening and institutional retention, programme achievements risk being short-lived.

Stakeholders from **Haiti** described how the country had endured a series of interconnected crises including political instability, financial crises, gang violence, natural disasters, health outbreaks and escalating sexual violence. These dynamics triggered emigration and significant brain drain. As a result, CSOs have reportedly struggled to recruit staff with the technical expertise required to sustain many of Spotlight Initiative's activities, a challenge compounded by international funding cuts.

Sustainability planning must go beyond programme activities and include considerations around long-term strategies for EVAWG sectors to recruit, train, retain and support qualified personnel. Without this, the technical and institutional knowledge required to maintain progress can be easily lost and achievements risk being eroded over time.

### Multi-stakeholder coordination and collaboration

The vast majority of Spotlight Initiative programmes (28 programmes) reported continued multi-stakeholder engagement after programme closure. Stakeholders highlighted the value of sustained coordination and engagement to maintain momentum on EVAWG. However, examples of sustained engagement and direct collaboration with traditional leaders, duty bearers (such as frontline police or judicial actors) and community members were less frequently reported by stakeholders, indicating a potential area for improvement.

In **Grenada**, the government reportedly continues to engage Spotlight Initiative programme partners, including CSOs representing marginalized groups. Government ministries have maintained a repository of women-led NGOs created during the Initiative and consistently invite representatives to participate in official processes. For example, the Ministry of Community and Social Development, Housing and Gender Affairs collaborated

with Soroptimist International, a former Spotlight Initiative grantee, on the launch of a disability awareness video, illustrating ongoing partnership between state institutions and women's rights organizations.

Similarly, in **Papua New Guinea**, women's councils and diverse WROs continue to work together and jointly engage with the government, building on the partnerships established during Spotlight Initiative's **Pacific Regional Programme**. The programme supported the re-establishment of the National Council of Women, funded national feminist forums in 10 countries and the landmark Pacific Feminist Forum, and facilitated CSO participation in EVAWG symposiums and working groups. Building on the joint advocacy fostered during the programme, women's councils in Papua New Guinea continue to collaborate, uniting WROs — including those representing women with disabilities and LGBTIQ+ communities — around a shared agenda.

Some stakeholders reported challenges and complexity around multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms, which have limited the sustainability of achievements and activities. Without a foundation of trust and mutual-ity established during a programme, it is difficult to sustain results. In **Guyana**, CSO stakeholders highlighted that while a CSNRG and consultation mechanisms were established during the programme, these often served as platforms for updates on completed actions rather than forums for genuine dialogue or co-creation. In the **Caribbean Regional Programme**, some CSO stakeholders felt that their contributions were undervalued during Civil Society Reference Group (CSRG) meetings, and that they felt unable to influence decision-making or outcomes meaningfully. In **Honduras**, a stakeholder described how coordination between UN agencies, the government, and CSOs significantly weakened following programme closure, making the transition of activities and services difficult. Contributing factors included the disbanding of the Spotlight Initiative programme's co-ordination unit after programme closure, which led UN agencies to revert to siloed ways of working. At the national level, coordination was affected by limited capacity within the newly established Ministry of Women and the dissolution of the CSNRG. Political divisions among CSOs further reduced engagement. As a result, stakeholders reported that cross-sectoral collaboration has now become more ad-hoc, issue-specific and activity-focused.

Effective coordination relies on strong, trusted, maintained interpersonal relationships, and can be dependent on individual dynamics. But, effective multi-stakeholder coordination for EVAWG cannot rely solely on individual relationships or temporary structures. Coordination mechanisms must be institutionalized within national systems, with clearly defined roles, leadership and long-term resourcing.

### High-level and sustained political commitment

**“In the initial meetings around Spotlight Initiative, when we said the word 'sexual' or 'gender-based violence'... the government were wary to mention that word, but now the use of that term has become easier. Spotlight Initiative had a profound impact on GBV work.”**

↳ UN colleague, Tajikistan

While Spotlight Initiative programmes engaged with political leaders throughout the course of implementation, sustaining political interest and momentum after programme closure was reportedly difficult in certain contexts. Limited political commitment was identified as a major challenge by 10 programmes.<sup>122</sup> In addition, 8 programmes<sup>123</sup> reported that government personnel changes and institutional shifts affected the sustainability of results.

In some contexts, leadership transitions and administrative restructuring affected institutional relationships, the delivery of political commitments and the sustainability of EVAWG activities. For example, stakeholders shared how in **Mexico**, the planned adoption of a self-paced learning platform on VAWG prevention was delayed due to transitions related to the establishment of the new Ministry of Women and shifting institutional roles and responsibilities. In **Argentina**, government restructuring measures undertaken in 2023, aimed at improving

administrative efficiencies and reducing costs, resulted in the dissolution of the Ministry of Women, Gender and Diversity. According to stakeholders, the Ministry had served as a key counterpart for Spotlight Initiative, and its dissolution has left a potential gap in institutional leadership and coordination for public policies and EVAWG activities, posing challenges to the sustainability and expansion of ongoing initiatives.

Sustainability planning must incorporate intentional strategies to maintain momentum and institutionalize political ownership of EVAWG and gender equality, such as embedding EVAWG priorities in national development plans, securing formal policy commitments and fostering cross-party support to minimize risks of shifts after elections or political change. Long-term EVAWG action depends on consistent leadership, not just temporary engagement during the lifespan of donor-funded initiatives or political terms. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of taking a whole-of-society approach in sustainability planning. This means going beyond a singular transition plan which places the government as the sole duty bearer or lead in delivering EVAWG action. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of transferring certain responsibilities to civil society to minimize the impact of government shifts on sustainability. They also highlighted the value of accountability mechanisms, such as civil society scorecards, UPR or CEDAW shadow reporting, in sustaining government EVAWG commitments beyond programme cycles.

### Designing and implementing a sustainability strategy

**“Transfer was built into the design. Things were designed to be sustained by government, and informed by government capacity and knowledge around how they can be delivered. It wasn't a handing over of services, it was a continuation.”**

↳ UN colleague in Kyrgyzstan

Approaches to sustainability planning varied across Spotlight Initiative programmes. While some integrated sustainability considerations early in the implementation phases, others developed strategies towards the end of the programme, limiting their effectiveness. In some cases, programmes developed structured exit strategies, while in others, processes lacked coordination or long-term vision.

As stated earlier in the report, many Spotlight Initiative programmes were heavily focused on implementation and delivering results, driven by the scale of investment and the pressure to use funds promptly within a fixed time frame. Stakeholders shared that the prioritization of immediate delivery often constrained opportunities for long-term planning. Additional challenges included the need to urgently pivot and respond to COVID-19, complex governance structures, cash flow constraints, staff shortages, high turnover within partner organizations, and burdensome monitoring and reporting requirements which disproportionately affected smaller grassroots civil society partners.<sup>124</sup>

In **Malawi**, programme closure was reportedly proactively managed through dedicated planning meetings which also included CSOs and local stakeholders. This inclusive process resulted in a sustainability plan with a long-term vision of strengthening women's movements by linking them to permanent community governance structures.

**“We should think about sustainability as an outcome.”**

↳ UN colleague in Samoa

# 5

## An unprecedented, global investment in EVAWG

The first phase of Spotlight Initiative represented the most significant global investment in working comprehensively to end VAWG to date. The EU's investment of € 500 million was unprecedented in a funding landscape previously marked by fragmented, short-term and smaller investments. The Initiative's significant funding and global visibility encouraged governments, UN Resident Coordinators, UN agencies and civil society partners to prioritize EVAWG and dedicate specialized teams and resources to delivering on programme goals.

Spotlight Initiative was designated as a High-Impact Initiative during the 2023 SDG Summit, in recognition of results that have accelerated impact across several SDGs. Data suggests that Spotlight Initiative's approach is 70 to 90 per cent more effective at reducing VAWG compared to interventions focusing on individual components or siloed projects.<sup>125</sup> This provided a compelling case for investment in EVAWG programming that brings together the full UN system and a whole-of-society approach under a comprehensive framework. Spotlight Initiative's impact and evidence of effectiveness created the foundations for new programmes. Despite Spotlight Initiative's demonstrated impact, stakeholders expressed concern that in some cases, programmes have reverted to smaller-scale, single-agency or issue-specific approaches — representing a missed opportunity to consolidate gains and mainstream evidence-based, comprehensive approaches.

This section highlights examples of programmes which have built on the Initiative's first phase, including the next generation of Spotlight Initiative programmes, new UN joint programmes or other EVAWG investments.

## 5.1 New funding for Spotlight Initiative

In 2024, the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund was officially launched as a United Nations Secretary-General Fund, with the goals of increasing impact, building on lessons learned and broadening the donor base. Its establishment resulted from extensive collaboration between the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, the Development Coordination Office, the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office and various UN agencies, and was guided by a co-design process engaging over 600 CSOs. This expanded scope reflects growing ambition and commitment across stakeholders to a comprehensive, rights-based approach to counter VAWG. As part of this renewed effort, the UN and the EU established the Spotlight Initiative High-Impact Programme for Violence Elimination (HIVE Programme), which aims to increase global awareness, comprehensive and effective country programmes, knowledge sharing and networking on EVAWG. Global stakeholders recognized the value of the HIVE Programme as an interim approach, enabling the sustained provision of technical support to facilitate the development and implementation of new comprehensive EVAWG programmes.

Enhancing sustainability of programming has been a key focus of the HIVE Programme. Priority activities have included the revision of programme sustainability guidance, delivering capacity-building to UN personnel, developing a revised Global Results Framework to better capture and measure change, and ensuring the evidence, research and tools developed under Spotlight Initiative are disseminated and adopted widely to enhance survivor-centred approaches and quality programming. Resources and platforms developed under the first phase – including the Spotlight Initiative [Learning Centre](#), the [SHINE Hub](#) (in collaboration with UN Trust Fund) and the [Compendium of innovative and good practices and lessons learned](#) – continue to act as enduring repositories of evidence and knowledge. The Compendium is one of the most accessed resources on the Spotlight Initiative website more than a year after its publication, demonstrating continued interest and uptake of the Initiative's technical guidance and tools.

Partnership and resource mobilization efforts continue to drive promising collaborations with a broad set of stakeholders, including the World Bank<sup>126</sup> and the International Olympic Committee (IOC).<sup>127</sup> Global stakeholders recognized the importance of diversifying donors and partnerships for many reasons – it can generate greater financial sustainability, spread risk, bring in longer-term funding sources and integrate EVAWG efforts within wider development agendas, such as economic empowerment and sport for development. Ongoing interest in Spotlight Initiative from diverse sectors indicates that the model resonates beyond traditional donor circles.

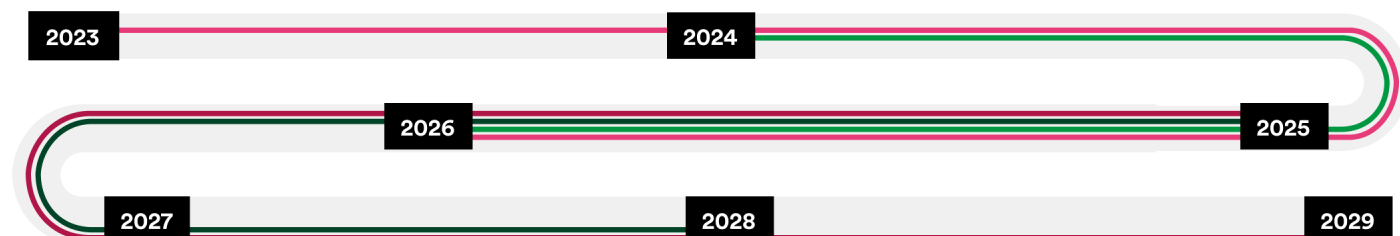
Spotlight Initiative has also gained renewed commitment and funding at country and regional levels from the EU and new donors including Belgium, Ireland and the Netherlands. As of September 2025, the Initiative has mobilized a financial pipeline of US\$ 84 million for country and regional programming.<sup>128</sup> Six programmes have been launched in former and new contexts. More details are outlined below.



# Spotlight Initiative second generation programmes

Four successor programmes have been launched in the Spotlight Initiative's second phase:

Figure 8: Spotlight Initiative second generation programmes



## Ecuador

Budget:  
US\$ 2.1 million

Timeline:  
2024-2026

Implementing agencies:  
UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women

Donors:  
EU, USAID

Co-chairs: Resident Coordinator and the Ministry of Women and Human Rights, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility, and National Council for Gender Equality.

Thematic focus: The Ecuador programme builds on the Phase 1 programme and aims to roll out a national plan to support the implementation of GBV laws and policies, expand survivor-centered services, enhance cross-government coordination, and pilot a national monitoring system to prevent and respond to VAWG.

## Uganda

Budget:  
US\$ 32.1 million

Timeline:  
2023-2026

Implementing agencies:  
UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR,  
UNICEF, UN Women

Donors:  
EU, Netherlands, UN

Co-chairs: Resident Coordinator and the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development

Thematic focus: The Uganda programme builds on the Phase 1 programme, aiming to reduce GBV that contributes to girl-child school drop-out, promote SRHR, strengthen social norms, and expand access to multi-sectoral services for adolescents and young women, while supporting women's organizations to develop greater influence and agency in addressing VAWG.

## Liberia

Budget:  
US\$ 16 million

Timeline:  
2025-2029

Implementing agencies:  
UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women

Donors:  
EU, UN

Co-chairs: Resident Coordinator and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection

Thematic focus: The Liberia programme builds on Phase 1 and aims to reduce SGBV by 20 per cent by strengthening and monitoring the implementation of GBV laws and policies through robust monitoring and evaluation systems, enacting a new nationwide law to prevent FGM, the promotion of gender-equitable norms at community and individual levels, and strengthening access to survivor-centered services.

## Africa Regional Programme

Budget:  
US\$ 22.1 million

Timeline:  
2025-2028

Implementing agencies:  
UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF,  
UN Women

Donors:  
EU, UN

Co-chairs: UNDCO Africa Regional Director and the African Union Commission Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development

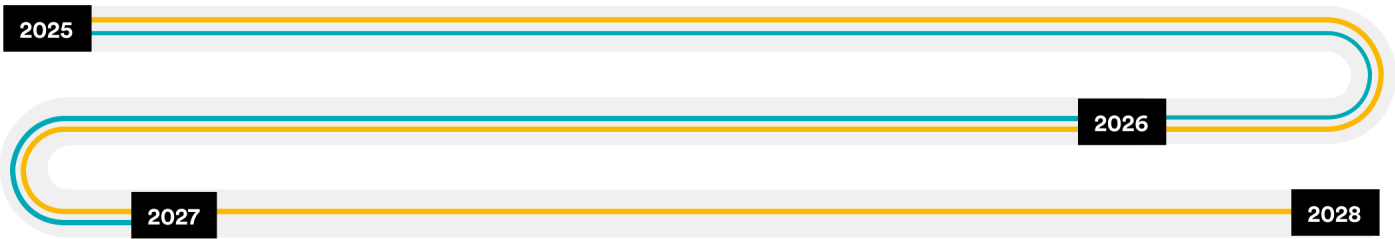
Thematic focus: Thematic focus: The Africa Regional Programme builds on Phase 1 to drive change across all African Union Member States, harmonizing regional and national laws on EAWG, building the capacity of national governments to monitor and report on progress, enhancing understanding of evidence-based prevention approaches, and improving engagement between civil society and the AUC to increase participation of CSOs in decision-making.



# New Spotlight Initiative programmes

Two Spotlight Initiative programmes were launched in new countries.<sup>129</sup>

Figure 9: New Spotlight Initiative programmes



## Zambia

**Budget:**  
US\$ 2.1 million

**Timeline:**  
2025-2027

**Implementing agencies:**  
UNDP, UNFPA, IOM, UNESCO

**Donors:**  
Ireland, UN, Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund

**Co-chairs:** Resident Coordinator and the Ministry of Finance and National Planning supported by the Gender Division

**Thematic focus:** The Zambia programme aims to drive change through legal and policy reform, institutional capacity strengthening, by implementing nationwide behaviour change campaigns, expanding access to services for survivors and strengthening the women's movement.

## Sierra Leone

**Budget:**  
US\$ 12.5 million

**Timeline:**  
2025-2028

**Implementing agencies:**  
UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women, UNICEF

**Donors:**  
EU, UN

**Co-chairs:** Resident Coordinator and the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs

**Thematic focus:** The Sierra Leone programme aims to address GBV and harmful practices by reviewing laws and policies to identify enforcement gaps, transforming gender norms in schools and communities and enhancing CSE, and strengthening survivor-centered coordination and case management systems.



## 5.2 Catalysing new funding for UN EVAWG programming

**“Many of the [Spotlight Initiative] evaluation findings supported the development of new programmes.”**

↳ UN colleague in Mozambique

Stakeholders highlighted that, in 10 countries, Spotlight Initiative created the conditions and credibility that encouraged donors to invest in new UN EVAWG programming. In some cases, this led to new partnerships, programmes or funding which sustained Spotlight Initiative activities, scaled up pilot activities or built on lessons learned from the Initiative. While direct attribution is not possible in this report, information provided by stakeholders indicates that these investments add up to more than **US\$ 105 million for new EVAWG programming** (US\$ 80 million for country and regional programmes, US\$ 25 million for the Advocacy, Coalition Building and Transformative Feminist Action to End Violence against Women (ACT) Programme).

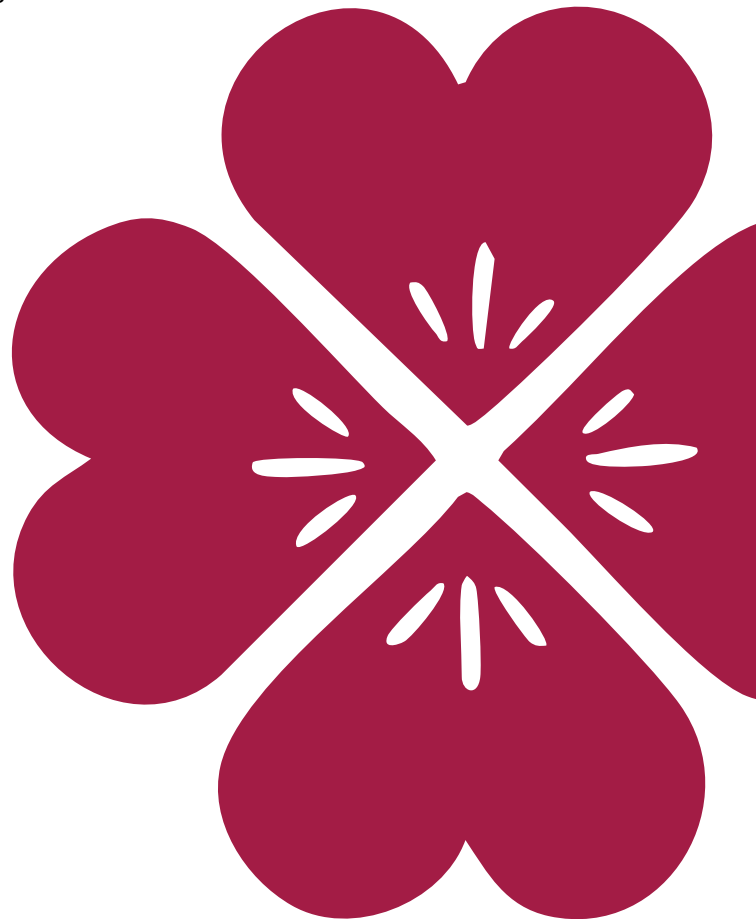
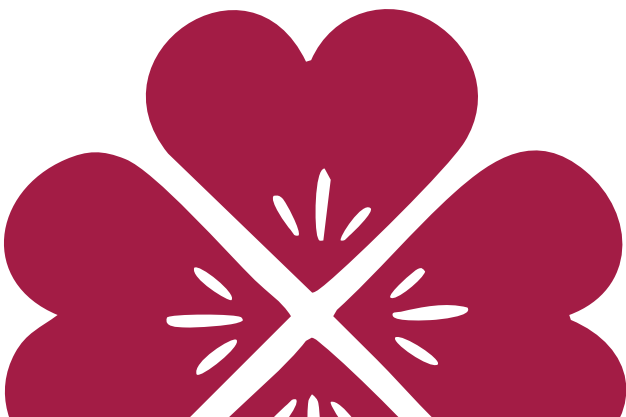
Examples of country and regional programme investments shared by stakeholders:<sup>130</sup>

- In **Afghanistan**, the EU has continued to fund women-led civil society since the closure of Spotlight Initiative. Their US\$ 27 million<sup>131</sup> support to UN Women (2023-2026) also includes a focus on essential services, livelihoods and community-based assistance to women.<sup>132</sup>
- In **Belize**, reportedly building on Spotlight Initiative's efforts, Canada committed US\$ 2.9 million<sup>133</sup> to support a 5-year adolescent pregnancy prevention programme (also in Suriname), through UNFPA, between 2025 and 2029.<sup>134</sup>
- In the **Caribbean**, UNFPA allocated US\$ 50,000 from its strategic investment facility grant to carry forward work initiated by Spotlight Initiative to combat workplace GBV in the tourism industry.
- In **Jamaica**, Canada provided US\$ 8.8 million to support the So-JUST Project in 2024, delivered in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and UNDP, reportedly building on Spotlight Initiative's work.<sup>135</sup>
- In **Malawi**, Iceland and Norway committed US\$ 2 million to support the expansion of the Spotlight Initiative established Digital Observatory Hub from 6 to 12 districts. Another investment shared by stakeholders was additional funding of US\$ 23.6 million from the EU and US\$ 2.9 million from the Government of Ireland to support the Social Protection for Gender Empowerment and Resilience programme, which builds on Spotlight Initiative efforts in 9 districts.
- In **Mozambique**, building on Spotlight Initiative's work at the community level, the Government of Catalonia and the EU provided US\$ 1.7 million<sup>136</sup> to support UNFPA's Tolerância Zero! À Violência Baseada no Género initiative to combat GBV.<sup>137</sup>
- In **Nigeria**, the Ford Foundation granted US\$ 2.8 million to UN Women to sustain community-level GBV prevention efforts, including engagement with traditional leaders and justice actors, building on Spotlight Initiative's work.
- In **Papua New Guinea** UN Women, UNFPA and UNOPS are implementing Soim Wokabout: Gender-Based Violence Referral Pathways Programme to protect at-risk communities and strengthen access to justice for survivors. It is financed by an EU contribution of US\$ 12 million.

- In **Vanuatu**, Australia, through the DFAT, committed US\$ 1.5 million<sup>138</sup> to IOM reportedly building on Spotlight Initiative's work with migrant workers and their families.
- In **Zimbabwe**, Switzerland and the EU committed US\$ 4.5 million to support Sustaining the Gains: Strengthening Accountability to Gender Equality and Women's Rights – a joint UN programme<sup>139</sup> that reportedly builds on the Initiative's work around institutional strengthening and delivery of the High-level Political Compact.

### **The Advocacy, Coalition Building and Transformative Feminist Action to End Violence against Women Programme (ACT Programme)**

Launched in September 2023, the ACT Programme is a € 22 million,<sup>140</sup> 3-year joint initiative between the EU and UN Women, in partnership with the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women. The ACT Programme seeks to function as a global EVAWG advocacy accelerator to elevate the priorities of WROs, coalitions and networks.<sup>141</sup> Building on the consolidated results and lessons from Spotlight Initiative, and in particular the Initiative's work on Pillar 6, the ACT programme aims to strengthen coalition-building, networking, leadership, and resilience of global and regional feminist movements while enhancing advocacy, campaigning, and policy-making through multi-stakeholder partnerships and coalitions, primarily in Africa and Latin America.<sup>142</sup> It was designed to be implemented in collaboration and coordination with the HIVE Programme, as well as build on the tools, resources and momentum established by engaging WROs through the Initiative.<sup>143</sup> The Civil Society Reference Group (CSRG) mechanism under Spotlight Initiative has directly informed the ACT Programme, which has established a similar inclusive and collaborative structure for its advisory groups. Some civil society representatives participate in both the Spotlight Initiative Global Reference Group and ACT advisory groups, facilitating cross-programme learning and synergies. The ACT Programme builds on and enhances Spotlight Initiative's approaches by centering civil society leadership, recognizing that sustainable progress rests upon strong, well-resourced grassroots actors. In Latin America, for example, ACT and its partners are advocating for the continued implementation of the Esperanza Protocol, a legal protection mechanism for women human rights defenders in Latin America that was supported under Spotlight Initiative.





# 6

## The sustainability of UN Reform strategies

Spotlight Initiative is a demonstration fund for UN Reform, designed to move beyond piecemeal, disconnected and small-scale EVAWG interventions to a whole-of-UN approach that orients programming based on on-the-ground capacities and needs. Spotlight Initiative's first phase leveraged several key strategies of UN Reform and sought to apply a One-UN approach. Stakeholders shared how this included inter-agency collaboration, coordination and oversight of the Resident Coordinator, and cost-sharing efforts across UN agencies to support synergy, efficiency and reduce risks of duplication. Stakeholders also highlighted how programming influenced **UN agency partnerships with civil society organizations**.

### Inter-agency collaboration and coordination on EVAWG

Spotlight Initiative programmes championed an integrated, multi-agency approach to implementation, with each agency bringing its specific mandate, expertise and implementing capacity to the issue of EVAWG. Seventeen programmes across all five regions reported that agencies continued to collaborate and coordinate on EVAWG after Spotlight Initiative programmes closed.<sup>144</sup> Stakeholders shared how in **Belize**, building on momentum fostered under Spotlight Initiative, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women have continued to jointly support the Women's Parliamentary Caucus, with oversight provided by the Resident Coordinator's Office. In **Mali**, UNDP, UNICEF and UN Women have reportedly expanded vocational training, micro-grants, and community networks developed under Spotlight Initiative to continue strengthening the economic independence of women in rural areas. In **Timor-Leste**, Spotlight Initiative trained labour inspectors on EVAWG and workplace harassment, and established codes of conduct and grievance mechanisms. These continue to be strengthened by IOM, UNDP, UNFPA and UN Women under the KOICA-funded Together for Equality programme. Following the closure of the **Safe and Fair** programme for ASEAN countries, UN Women, ILO and UNODC continue to jointly implement many aspects of the programme as part of the new regional PROTECT programme. The mobilization of new resources to support inter-agency, joint programming underscores a broad recognition of the effectiveness of this model.

Some stakeholders described how implementing Spotlight Initiative programmes enhanced attention and capacity on gender equality within their respective UNCTs. A stakeholder in **Honduras** reported that gender is now a standing item at the UNCT's bi-weekly meeting, and that Spotlight Initiative programming had supported consolidation of the Inter-Agency Gender Theme Group. Stakeholders also emphasized how Spotlight Initiative programming had enhanced technical expertise on EVAWG. For example, stakeholders from **El Salvador** noted that they had transitioned from thinking in terms of isolated "pillar-based" execution to a more holistic programmatic approach, while in **Timor-Leste**, stakeholders noted that the Initiative's comprehensive model had transformed their local approach to EVAWG programming. Stakeholders in **Mexico** reported that lessons learned from implementing Spotlight Initiative's whole-of-society approach are informing the UNCT's new Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (SDCF). Stakeholders across the vast majority of country and regional programmes<sup>145</sup> also reported the continued use of knowledge products generated by Spotlight Initiative to support ongoing efforts to end VAWG. This includes the use of research, studies, knowledge platforms, repositories, technical guidance and training materials, that continue to inform institutional strengthening, advocacy, professional training, community engagement and evidence-based policy. For example, a UN Women-hosted knowledge platform developed by the **Latin America Regional Programme** continues to serve as a knowledge **repository** and is regularly updated with new materials. The platform hosts two online courses, on essential services and clinical management, which continue to attract participants and foster an active virtual community of practice.

The inter-agency collaboration structures established by Spotlight Initiative programmes have reportedly been successful in fostering ongoing engagement on EVAWG among broader stakeholders. Across all programmes, Spotlight Initiative established National Steering Committees as a multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism to support implementation. In **Mexico**, the National Steering Committee brought together UN agencies, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Multilateral Affairs, the then National Institute of Women (now Ministry of Women), the Senate, the Chamber of Deputies and five CSOs. This space has since evolved into a platform for political dialogue, even after the programme has closed. Interviewed CSO representatives highlighted the value of this platform as one of the few consistent opportunities to engage directly with federal authorities. By fostering a space and promoting a culture of open dialogue, the platform has strengthened connections between civil society, government institutions, the UN and international partners, reinforcing collective efforts to end VAWG.

The credibility and sustainability of Spotlight Initiative's inter-agency model are also reflected in UNCTs' efforts to preserve this collaboration within the second generation of Spotlight Initiative programmes. In **Uganda**, towards the conclusion of Spotlight Initiative's first phase in 2022, the National Steering Committee, supported

by UN agencies, led high-level negotiations advocating for the continuation of the programme. Drawing on the strong inter-agency partnerships and joint engagement of civil society and government established under the Initiative, stakeholders worked alongside EU and UN representatives to co-design a successor programme. This coalition-based, inter-agency process enabled the joint identification of gaps, mobilization of domestic and development partner resources, and the creation of a shared One UN roadmap on EVAWG in the form of the new second generation programme in Uganda. The programme has successfully gained funding from the EU and the Netherlands.

According to stakeholders, maintaining inter-agency, comprehensive approaches to EVAWG programming was not always easy or consistent, following programme closure. Despite evidence indicating that comprehensive, integrated approaches yield stronger outcomes for ending violence, in some contexts, programming reverted to more fragmented or sector-specific models, with individual agencies implementing interventions that could have formed part of a broader, coordinated programme. In some cases, this was reportedly linked to limitations in operational and administrative systems. A stakeholder in **Honduras** explained that while Spotlight Initiative demonstrated the UN's ability to deliver large-scale, joint programming, its success relied on governance and funding arrangements that are not yet fully embedded in the wider UN system. They noted that the ongoing UN development system reform could help address this gap by creating a more adaptive framework, more streamlined pooled funding and clearer joint accountability mechanisms.

### Oversight of UN Resident Coordinators (RC)

Spotlight Initiative programmes are implemented under the overall leadership of RCs. In many cases the programme team would sit within the Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO). RC leadership supported the embedding of EVAWG into both national and UN system planning, enabling programmes to be more responsive to country needs and facilitating systems-thinking approaches that accelerate progress not only on SDG 5 (Gender Equality), but across all 17 SDGs. The Initiative's Final Evaluation found that placing programmes under the RC's leadership facilitated engagement with government, positively impacted the visibility of VAWG in-country and elevated GBV issues within the national development agenda.<sup>146</sup>

Many stakeholders, including at the global level, recognized the strategic value of the RC leadership in enhancing the sustainability of Spotlight Initiative's results. Stakeholders provided examples of how RCs elevated VAWG issues to the highest levels of national leadership, engendering greater government ownership, with some countries witnessing their presidents personally launching Spotlight Initiative programmes. In **Liberia**, stakeholders noted that the presentation of the Initiative as a united One UN with clear, visible leadership from the RC, fostered trust among the government and other national partners.

**“When they hear that it is the entire UN, they [the government] feel the necessity of coming together as partners.”**

↳ UN colleague in Liberia

In some cases, experience delivering Spotlight Initiative programmes through the RCO generated valuable lessons for high-impact UN programming and coordination. In **Jamaica**, following the closure of the programme, the RCO created SOPs to help UN agencies operate more cohesively under the RC's leadership, partially informed by lessons from the Initiative and other joint programmes.

RCs continue to play an important role in Spotlight Initiative's new phase. The Initiative is now hosted by the UN Development Coordination Office (DCO), which lays the foundation for EVAWG to be integrated more fully into the core UN Reform agenda, ensuring alignment with UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (SDCF), national development plans and reinforcing EVAWG as a system-wide priority to ensure the broader delivery of the SDGs. This may further enhance sustainability, coherence and political visibility of EVAWG efforts and long-term UN programming.

However, challenges related to the oversight of the RC were also identified throughout the process. Global stakeholders highlighted that Spotlight Initiative's contribution to fostering sustained collaboration on EVAWG among UN agencies varied significantly by country, depending largely on the leadership and support of the RC. In countries where RCs demonstrated a strong commitment to EVAWG, gender equality and inter-agency collaboration, partnerships and coordination flourished. In other contexts, multiple urgent priorities constrained the level of RC engagement, impacting inter-agency coordination.

### Cost-sharing between UN agencies

In alignment with UN Reform principles, Spotlight Initiative programmes seek to leverage efficiency tools to enhance cost-effectiveness and programming quality. This includes joint operational processes, mutual recognition between agencies' policies, procedures and operational mechanisms, and use of common services in procurement, finance, and information and communication technology.

### “Spotlight Initiative brought about a model that can be very cost-effective for the UN.”

↳ UN colleague in Zimbabwe

Several stakeholders discussed the effectiveness and efficiency of the model. Some stakeholders reported sustained cost-sharing measures between UN agencies following programme closure. In the **Africa Regional Programme**, the closure of the programme prompted UN agencies to explore ways to sustain momentum without dedicated funding. UNFPA, UNDP, UN Women and UNICEF mobilized internal funds and pooled contributions to continue to support joint activities, with ongoing coordination support from the African Union and other regional bodies. Through this cost-sharing approach, the same Spotlight Initiative inter-agency team remained active, and UN and Spotlight Initiative personnel were able to retain their roles, supporting major political processes such as the adoption of the AU-CEVANG<sup>147</sup> in February 2025.

Some stakeholders emphasized challenges of being unable to pool funds or engage in procurement activities uniformly across UN agencies. In some cases, this undermined the sustainability of cost-sharing and efficiency efforts after programme closure. In **Trinidad and Tobago**, agencies such as UNDP and PAHO faced bureaucratic and operational barriers that prevented joint funding and streamlined contracting, resulting in reported inefficiency, delays, and the undermining of collaboration, despite strong team commitment. In some cases, without sufficient incentives or mechanisms to resolve these challenges, agencies reverted to previous ways of working following programme closure. Ongoing UN development system reform could help address these systematic issues by creating more streamlined and interoperable administrative mechanisms.

### Enhanced approaches to partnering with civil society organizations

CSOs play a central role in Spotlight Initiative programme governance and activities. Each programme established a civil society reference group (CSRG) serving a triple function - to advocate and advise the programme, serve as partners for the realization of the programme's objectives, and hold the programme accountable to its commitments. Several stakeholders reported that the CSRG model had been sustained, replicated or adapted by UNCTs following programme closure, recognizing the expertise and accountability pathways it fostered. For example, in **Guyana**, the CSRG continues to operate under the auspices of the RCO and continues to engage with UNCT working groups. Based on lessons learned from Spotlight Initiative and other programmes, stakeholders in **Samoa** reported that the RCO is in the process of formalizing a Civil Society Reference Group within the UN SDCF framework, to ensure continued accountability and responsiveness to emerging needs. Former civil society partners are expected to be included within the Reference Group.

Several stakeholders also reported the continued engagement of CSRG members in broader UN EVAWG programming. Members of **Niger's** CSRG have reportedly remained a key partner in a UN Women-led campaign called **Niamey Ville Sûre** (Niamey Safe City), contributing to its design and validation. Former CSRG members

have participated in international events to promote the campaign and are expected to contribute to other global and local panel discussions.

UN stakeholders in **Belize** shared how the UNCT is applying key learnings from the CSRG mechanism to strengthen civil society engagement in future programming. This includes consulting civil society partners to determine preferred modes of engagement in upcoming EVAWG programming, with the goal of creating a new civil society monitoring and accountability mechanism tailored specifically to Belize.

At the global level, lessons learned from Spotlight Initiative programme's engagement with CSOs have directly informed the design of the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund. More than 700 civil society partners, including former CSRG members at national, regional and global levels, participated in a year-long co-design process to shape the ambition of the new fund. This process focused on four core principles: centring human rights and protecting women human rights defenders; enhancing the quality of programming; deepening meaningful civil society engagement at every stage of programming; and improving funding mechanisms for women's organizations. Across this process, civil society has played a key role in informing inter-agency discussions and plans to strengthen the quality and accessibility of funding for civil society organizations.

One significant outcome of Spotlight Initiative's engagement with CSOs, alongside experiences of the UNTF and WPHF, is the current development of a UN-wide Funding Framework, which aims to create a unified approach across agencies with clear and consistent principles and guidelines. Expected to be launched soon, the framework emphasizes the importance of core funding and sustainable resourcing for CSOs. Guided by a UN task force composed of 12 different agencies and led by Spotlight Initiative and the UNTF, the drafting of the framework involved extensive consultations with UN civil society partners, including representatives of the Spotlight Initiative Global Civil Society Reference Group and several UNTF grantees. This directly responds to the UN Reform agenda's call for delivering as one, greater alignment and harmonization of approaches. The framework reflects a shift from fragmented, top-down programming to a more participatory model that values civil society as a strategic partner and knowledge holder for achieving the SDGs.





# Conclusion

Spotlight Initiative offers a model for how comprehensive, evidence-based and feminist-informed EVAWG programming can strengthen institutions, mobilize sustainable financing, and inspire broader systemic change. This report consolidates insights and evidence to support progress in EVAWG and seeks to illustrate the importance of developing sustainable interventions that deliver long-term benefits for women, girls and survivors.

## Conclusion 1.

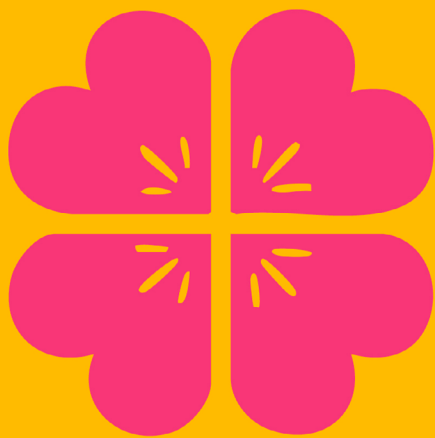
**Spotlight Initiative has delivered sustainable results, but their continuation depends on further commitment and investment.** Sustained Spotlight Initiative achievements were reported by nearly all country and regional programmes and across all six pillars. The report highlights notable examples of these achievements and reveals a model of development cooperation that builds durable systems, institutions and movements, and one that advances the UN's Reform vision. The report also demonstrates evidence of value for money. Spotlight Initiative's comprehensive theory of change demonstrates lasting results. Despite the Initiative's impacts, various challenges hindered progress, including insufficient financial resources, social backlash and limited political commitment. Moreover, these achievements cannot be taken for granted. The global context has evolved significantly since the Initiative's inception: the aid sector faces increased pressures and civic spaces have narrowed. Severe funding shortfalls, compounded by a global economic slowdown, escalating humanitarian emergencies, and conflict, mean that without a scale-up of political and financial support, even the most durable gains risk erosion. The findings of this report stand as both proof of what coordinated, comprehensive EVAWG action can achieve, and a reminder that sustained change demands ongoing investment and commitment.

## Conclusion 2.

**Long-term progress on EVAWG depends on a diverse set of enabling factors.** Sustainability does not happen by chance, but comes as a result of deliberate, long-term investments, planning and evidence-based action that targets the root causes of VAWG and inequality. Stakeholders highlighted a diverse set of enabling factors which promoted sustainability, transformed legislative, institutional, and community systems, and fostered national ownership. Many of these enabling factors are illustrated in case studies from Jamaica, Zimbabwe and Niger. According to stakeholders, the Initiative's governance model, which places civil society at the centre, often helped to deliver lasting impact. Stakeholders described how trusting relationships built through these structures have endured, leaving behind a community of EVAWG advocates and allies.

## Conclusion 3.

**The UN Reforms can support gender equality, but long-term implementation requires incentives.** Spotlight Initiative is a demonstration fund for the UN's Development Reforms.<sup>148</sup> Through the Initiative's One-UN approach, inter-agency collaboration, joint programming and the leadership of RC, the Initiative elevated VAWG issues and demonstrated the practical value of the Reform principles of alignment, coordination and collective accountability. According to stakeholders, the Initiative has also successfully catalysed new and diversified funding, including US\$ 84 million for second generation Spotlight Initiative country and regional programmes. Evidence of domestic resource mobilization in several countries further underscores the Initiative's success in embedding EVAWG priorities within national agendas for the long term. Sustaining these ways of working is not simple. Following programme closure, some stakeholders explained that UN agencies sometimes reverted to siloed, single-programme approaches rather than maintaining integrated modalities. Additionally, administrative and funding structures fail to incentivize collaboration. The Initiative's integration into the UN Development Coordination Office (DCO) represents an important opportunity for further championing these principles and embedding gender equality into the UN's core Reform agenda.



# Recommendations

The following recommendations are intended for Spotlight Initiative programmes, UN agencies, donors, governments, CSOs, and other partners committed to advancing gender equality, ending VAWG, and driving feminist transformation. They are grounded in insights from stakeholders and lessons learned about what drives sustainable achievements in EVAWG.

1

## Build EVAWG programmes with context-driven, collaborative sustainability strategies at their core.

- Sustainability strategies should be developed during programme design and finalized within the first year.
- Strategies should be reviewed and updated throughout the programme lifecycle. Sustainability strategies should be connected with the programme workplan to support continuous adaptations.
- Sustainability planning should be inclusive, leave no one behind and champion whole-of-society approaches. This includes the One UN approach. Diverse stakeholders should be meaningfully engaged throughout the plan development and implementation.



**Tip:** Include WROs, CSOs, rightsholders, survivors and government counterparts in sustainability planning processes as co-creators. Multi-stakeholder workshops and participatory, feminist approaches to sustainability planning will improve engagement and strengthen the outcomes of the plan.



**Tip:** Establish or sustain inter-institutional, intersectoral coordination mechanisms to support programme sustainability planning and transition processes. Prioritize sustained engagement with traditional leaders, community members and duty bearers (such as police or judicial actors). Ensure multi-stakeholder partnerships do not dissolve after programme closure.



**Tip:** Integrate gender-responsive risk analyses into sustainability planning to navigate risks of political backlash, rising conservatism, anti-gender movements, and disruptions to service delivery impacting long-term action. Develop mitigation strategies, including advocacy coalitions, legal protections for women's rights defenders and strategic communications that reinforce EVAWG objectives.

- Sustainability strategies should prioritize the integration of programme activities within existing local structures and systems, such as government-led health and education services, to support long-term continuity and financial resourcing.
- Ensure sustainability strategies consider plans for resource mobilization and partnerships to minimize risks of disrupted service delivery after programme closure.



**Tip:** Donor roundtables, organized jointly by the RCO, UNCT, governments and civil society, prior to programme closure, can be an effective tool to highlight programmes' results and generate commitment for future investment.

## 2

### Recognize civil society leadership, capacity and partnerships as amplifiers of sustainable and locally led EAWG outcomes.

- Prioritize multi-year, flexible core funding to national, local and grassroots WROs and CSOs, alongside technical support, to facilitate immediate service delivery, long-term organizational resilience and promote an enabling environment for gender equality.



**Tip:** Ensure that capacity-building plans fill gaps identified by local stakeholders. Civil society should co-create capacity-building content and have the chance to facilitate delivery of training to maximize the lasting outcomes and benefits. This will make the capacity-building more impactful in the long term.



**Tip:** The creation of specific, co-created exit plans for CSOs as part of sustainability planning can support sustainability. This may involve reducing CSOs' dependency on a few donors, enabling CSOs to identify wider sources of funding, upskill staff in resource mobilization, and may guarantee the continuity of services, advocacy and GBV survivor support after programmes close.

- Sustainability planning should set out considerations for civil society engagement and coordination mechanisms. Structures such as CSRGs should be built upon and, where possible, integrated within UN or government structures to institutionalize long-term collaboration on EAWG.
- Prioritize the co-creation of knowledge with feminist organizations, CSOs and traditional leaders to ensure EAWG research, evidence and data systems are preserved. Ensure that products, tools and resources remain accessible in the long term.
- Engage the private sector to identify opportunities for in-kind or financial support, that goes beyond the programme's lifecycle.



**Tip:** In multiple contexts, Spotlight Initiative stakeholders reported that private sector companies helped strengthen response and prevention work, for example, by providing free hotel rooms to domestic violence survivors in times of crisis. In-kind assistance can extend the impact and scale of EAWG action.

## 3

**Ensure a focus on accountability to support lasting, inclusive and impactful EVAWG action.**

- Programmes and sustainability strategies should prioritize the development of EVAWG laws, policies and frameworks (including National Action Plans) which are publicly available, accessible and backed through budgets.



**Tip:** Encourage governments to commit to publicly visible budget allocations for EVAWG, including in local and national action plans.

- Support governments to make high-level, public commitments at national, regional or global events. Ensure commitments are backed by domestic resource allocations and documented broadly, to encourage action.
- Communities, civil society, governments and media should be supported with the skills to measure long-term systemic change in gender equality and survivor empowerment, as well as adherence to commitments. Programmes should build CSO skills in monitoring and reporting, including as part of UPR and CEDAW processes, in addition to other techniques to monitor government budget and spend on gender equality.



**Tip:** As part of programmes, introduce **civil society scorecards** which evaluate EVAWG services beyond programme lifecycles and help ensure activities are responsive to community needs.

- Build the capacity of service providers to undertake centralized, unified and transparent national reporting on service infrastructure and delivery, including access and uptake of services by marginalized or excluded groups to support service delivery planning, resourcing and adaptations in the long term.

## 4

**Maximize partnerships with decision-makers and government at all levels, to support sustained momentum on EVAWG.**

- Programmes should establish lasting inter-ministerial EVAWG coordination mechanisms. Membership should include high-level stakeholders and seek to go beyond the ministry which nominally leads on gender equality. The mechanism should include clearly defined roles, a long-term workplan and budget that extends beyond the programme lifecycle.



**Tip:** Showcase and recognize governments that successfully sustain programme activities through awards, public acknowledgments or awareness campaigns to raise visibility and incentivize others to follow.

- Use gender-responsive political economy analyses to identify potential gender equality champions across government, civil society and communities early in programme design. Involve them in shaping strategies and activities. Provide targeted training, mentorship and platforms for advocacy which enable them to influence policy, mobilize resources, and sustain political commitment.



**Tip:** Use a non-partisan approach to engage stakeholders and build relationships across the political spectrum. This can safeguard continuity and sustain progress in periods of political change (for example, shifting leadership or priorities).

- Co-design and co-deliver targeted training and mentorship programmes which enable power holders to deliver evidence-based EAWG policies and programmes. Co-create EAWG tools, modules, and resources to support enduring utilization and future adaptation. These tools must remain easy to access even after the closure of the programme.

**5****Prioritize evidence-based, comprehensive approaches to ending violence, as opposed to siloed projects.**

- Siloed programming undermines long-term impact. Donors should fund evidence-based, comprehensive EAWG approaches using a whole-of-society, whole-of-government and One UN approach. Investment should prioritize multi-stakeholder programmes that include feminist movements and build an enabling environment for inclusive, high-quality service delivery and enhance community ownership of EAWG interventions for the long term.
- Donors should explicitly incentivize UN Reform strategies by funding joint programming which delivers on value for money and drives progress across multiple SDGs at once.
- Programmes should continue to capture, synthesize, and disseminate knowledge, and foster opportunities for cross-context learning and collaboration, to enhance evidence-based policy, programming and advocacy on EAWG in the future. This will allow for pilots to be scaled up, replicated, adapted and rolled out to support survivors in different contexts.



# Endnotes

- 1 Dalberg (2022), [\*\*Imperative to invest: How addressing violence against women and girls today reduces violence over time fosters peace and stability, and enables people to reach their full potential – all of which advances us toward the SDGs.\*\*](#)
- 2 WHO (2025), [\*\*Violence against women prevalence estimates, 2023.\*\*](#)
- 3 For a full overview of the cumulative results from Spotlight Initiative's first phase, see the final report: Spotlight Initiative (2024), [\*\*Spotlight Initiative global final narrative progress report.\*\*](#)
- 4 Dalberg (2022), [\*\*Imperative to invest: How addressing violence against women and girls today reduces violence over time, fosters peace and stability, and enables people to reach their full potential – all of which advances us toward the SDGs.\*\*](#)
- 5 The full list of country and regional programmes are listed later in the report. The two civil society grant-giving programmes were implemented in partnership with the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women and Girls (UNTF) and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF).
- 6 Spotlight Initiative (2025), [\*\*Why domestic public resources are key to ending violence against women and girls.\*\*](#)
- 7 Country Programmes: Africa: Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Uganda, Zimbabwe. Central Asia: Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan. Caribbean: Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago. Latin America: Argentina, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico. Pacific: Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu. Regional Programmes: Latin America Regional Programme, Africa Regional Programme, Caribbean Regional Programme, Pacific Regional Programme, Central Asia Regional Programme, Safe and Fair Programme. Country programmes and regional programmes differ in focus and scope. Generally, most regional programmes prioritized regional policies, systems and enabling environments, as opposed to direct service delivery.
- 8 In partnership with UNTF in Africa and Latin America, and WPHF in different countries in Africa, in addition to Afghanistan, Haiti and Papua New Guinea.
- 9 For a full overview of the cumulative results from Spotlight Initiative's first phase, see the final report: Spotlight Initiative (2024), [\*\*Spotlight Initiative global final narrative progress report.\*\*](#)
- 10 For a full overview of the cumulative results from Spotlight Initiative's first phase, see the final report: Spotlight Initiative (2024), [\*\*Spotlight Initiative global final narrative progress report.\*\*](#)
- 11 Dalberg (2022), [\*\*Imperative to invest: How addressing violence against women and girls today reduces violence over time, fosters peace and stability, and enables people to reach their full potential – all of which advances us toward the SDGs.\*\*](#)
- 12 Data collection was conducted between January and June 2025.
- 13 OECD (2023), [\*\*Glossary of key terms in evaluation and results based management for sustainable development \(second edition\).\*\*](#)
- 14 Country Programmes: Africa: Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Uganda, Zimbabwe. Asia: Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan. Caribbean: Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago. Latin America: Argentina, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico. Pacific: Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu. Regional Programmes: Latin America Regional Programme, Africa Regional Programme, Caribbean Regional Programme, Pacific Regional Programme, Central Asia Regional Programme, ASEAN Safe and Fair Programme. Civil society grant-giving programmes: UNTF in Africa and Latin America, and WPHF in different countries in Africa, in addition to Afghanistan, Haiti and Papua New Guinea.
- 15 For example, five programmes only included data collection from one stakeholder, while other programmes (Niger, Zimbabwe and the Central Asia Regional Programme) had between 7 and 11 interviews or survey responses.
- 16 Of the 32 consulted country and regional programmes, 31 reported sustained achievements. Haiti was the only country without any reported sustained achievements in the two years following programme closure. Only one stakeholder was interviewed to represent the Haiti programme, which may have generated a limited view of the programme's achievements. In addition, the country has faced significant challenges during this period. As such, the absence of reported achievements does not necessarily indicate that no outcomes were sustained.
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- 119 Seventeen programmes across four regions reported backlash. Six programmes in Africa: Mali, Mozambique, Niger,

Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and the Africa Regional Programme. Four programmes in Asia: Afghanistan, Cambodia, Kyrgyzstan and the Central Asia Regional Programme. Four programmes in Latin America: Argentina, Ecuador, Honduras and the Latin America Regional Programme. Three programmes in the Caribbean: Haiti, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago. Although interviews did not reveal backlash from other countries, CSOs are nonetheless facing restrictions, as seen in El Salvador.

**120** The Law on Foreign Representatives requires NGOs and CSOs receiving funding from foreign sources and engaged in broadly defined "political activities" to register as "foreign agents", subjecting them to increased government oversight, financial audits and regulatory hurdles, among other restrictive measures.

**121** Sixteen programmes across all five regions reported this challenge. Three programmes in Africa: Mali, Mozambique and Niger. Four programmes in Asia: Afghanistan, Cambodia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Six programmes in the Caribbean: Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Caribbean Regional Programme. One programme in Latin America: Argentina. Two programmes in the Pacific: Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu.

**122** Ten programmes across four regions reported this challenge. Four programmes in Africa: Mali, Mozambique, Niger and Zimbabwe. Two programmes in Asia: Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan. Three programmes in the Caribbean: Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Caribbean Regional programme. One programme in Latin America: Argentina.

**123** Eight programmes across four regions. Two programmes in Africa: Nigeria and the Africa Regional programme. Two programmes in Asia: Afghanistan and the Central Asia Regional programme. One programme in the Caribbean: Haiti. Three programmes in Latin America: Mexico, Argentina and Honduras.

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**129** These two countries did not have a Spotlight Initiative first generation programme.

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**131** € 23 million.

**132** Delegation of the European Union to Afghanistan, [The European Union commits an additional €14 million to strengthen community resilience and support for women and girls in Afghanistan](#), 7 September 2025.

**133** CAD 4.0 million.

**134** Government of Canada (2025), [Project profile — Adolescent pregnancy prevention in Belize and Suriname – program 2024 to 2029](#).

**135** According to Jamaica's Ministry of Justice, the So-Just project "has a JMD 1.3 billion budget, or CAD 12 million, [and] will be implemented from 2023 to 2030". This is equal to US\$ 8.8 million. Source: Ministry of Justice, Jamaica, [Social Justice \(SO JUST\) Project Launch](#), 12 January 2023.

**136** € 1.5 million.

**137** Government of Catalunya, [Catalan Government grants 1.5 million euros to the European Commission to eradicate gender-based violence in Mozambique](#), 28 November 2023.

**138** A\$ 2.2 million.

**139** Swiss Confederation (2024), [Strengthening Accountability for Gender Equality \(SAGE\) in Zimbabwe](#).

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**144** Seven programmes in Africa: Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Uganda, Zimbabwe and the Africa Regional Programme. Two programmes in Asia: Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Three programmes in the Caribbean: Belize, Grenada and Jamaica. Three programmes in Latin America: Argentina, Honduras and Mexico. Two programmes in the Pacific: Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste.

**145** Twenty-four programmes across all five regions. Four programmes in Africa: Mali, Mozambique, Niger and Zimbabwe.

Four programmes in Asia: Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and the Central Asia Regional programme. Six programmes in the Caribbean: Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Caribbean Regional programme. Six programmes in Latin America: Argentina, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico and the Latin America Regional programme. Four programmes in the Pacific: Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu and the Pacific Regional Programme.

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