

Promising approaches and lessons on sustaining the gains of Ending Violence Against Women and Girls

Photo: UNICEF/Nigeria

Overview

To better understand how to ensure the sustainability of Spotlight Initiative's results, it is pivotal to identify opportunities for bringing what works to scale to sustain the gains of ending violence against women and girls (EVAWG). Through an extensive mapping analysis of mid-term assessments, programme annual reports, Phase II programme proposals and the Secretariat survey, this knowledge brief draws out promising approaches, lessons on sustaining EVAWG efforts across Spotlight Initiative programmes as well as questions that need to be further interrogated to strengthen sustainability efforts of the Spotlight Initiative.¹

What works - Promising Approaches

In its four years of programme implementation, the Spotlight Initiative has identified the following promising approaches for sustaining the Initiative's gains.

Mainstreaming gender and other intersecting areas of violence against women and girls (VAWG) at different levels of government and into national development plans

In **Timor-Leste**, the Spotlight Initiative programme supported efforts to lobby parliament for greater budget allocations to women's rights and EVAWG, resulting in increased funding allocations. The programme also facilitated capacity building training on gender-responsive budgeting for women's rights organizations and civil society organizations to further advocacy efforts in the future. Advocacy efforts to integrate EVAWG considerations into policy were also made by the Spotlight Initiative programme in **Uganda** that lobbied for GBV interventions to be included in the National Development Plan. The **Safe and Fair Programme** provided technical inputs that directly integrated EVAWG into national policies. For example, in Indonesia, there was a Governor Decree on Minimum Service Standards for Integrated Services for women survivors of trafficking. In **Honduras**, the Spotlight Initiative programme supported legal reform that highlighted the need for an intersectional approach to violence in the legal ecosystem.

These efforts culminated in the publication that called for the harmonization between the Comprehensive Law Against Violence against Women initiative and other legal initiatives. Commitments to EVAWG were also demonstrated at the highest levels of government, for example, in **Liberia** the President declared rape as a national emergency and subsequently allocated USD 2 million for the Anti-Gender-Based Violence Road Map. During an advocacy-related meeting with the President-elect in **Ecuador**, the programme highlighted the importance of the work being done by the Spotlight Initiative programme. This subsequently resulted in the Government allocating USD 24 million to the Human Rights Secretariat to be invested in policy initiatives related to EVAWG.

Building and strengthening institutions' capacity development and access to resources in turn fosters national ownership and local agency

Spotlight Initiative programmes work to create and strengthen institutional mechanisms or bodies mandated to address violence against women and girls. This is one way of guaranteeing the sustainability of EVAWG efforts. In **Nigeria**, the Spotlight Initiative programme lobbied for Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team to become a state government agency. In **Liberia**, the programme mobilized government and top legal officials to establish a gender and human rights desk at the Law Reform Commission. An Inter-Ministerial Commission was created with the support of the Spotlight Initiative in **Timor-Leste** to provide oversight on the national action plan report on violence against women and girls submitted to parliament annually. Spotlight Initiative programmes also invested time and resources in the capacity development of local governments and institutions to secure local ownership, community buy-in, and strengthen prevention and response mechanisms. To ensure ownership and local sustainability, the Spotlight Initiative in **Nigeria** supported local and grassroots civil society organizations to access sub-grants. Fostering local agency from the on-set motivates actors to continue championing EVAWG efforts that can then be sustained even beyond Spotlight Initiative.

1. One reflection on Sustainability and how it is defined as it relates to Spotlight Initiative: A collaborative effort that outlines the key steps and conditions required by all involved to move from where the programme currently stands, towards a locally and nationally/regionally-informed vision for what it will be after Spotlight Initiative funds cease. This includes ensuring that achievement of a programme's goals across its comprehensive theory of change are not jeopardized and that progress towards these goals will continue by local, national and/or regional stakeholders. In essence, it is the path to how we ensure that impact continues beyond Spotlight Initiative while keeping its values intact (e.g., civil society partnership, 'Leave No One Behind', 'Do No Harm', etc.) A critical consideration is how the programme intends to ensure that survivors are not exposed to further risk or actual harm as a consequence of the programme transition and that stakeholders are supported during preparation to minimize possible risks

Leveraging relationships with traditional and non-traditional actors to build partnerships and synergies is critical to sustaining EAWG efforts

The Spotlight Initiative programmes invest in diverse partnerships with civil society actors, feminist groups, international development actors, faith-based organizations, academia, influencers, private sector actors, politicians, and leaders to achieve impactful results. In **El Salvador**, the Spotlight Initiative collaborates with the legislative branch on proposals to prohibit child marriage and better legislate the protection of women and girls against violence. The Spotlight Initiative programme in **Jamaica** partnered with the University of West Indies - Faculty of Medicine, who supported integrating VAWG components within the training curriculum for first-line responders. Partnerships such as these can be replicated across other faculties and areas of intervention. Programmes have also partnered with non-traditional actors such as the private sector to ensure cross-cutting approaches. The **Safe and Fair programme** is engaging the private sector at both regional and national levels, partnering with the ASEAN Confederation of Employers and the Malaysian Employers Federation on preventing violence against women in the workplace. In **Liberia**, the Spotlight Initiative programme supported the development of the Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation framework for the private sector.

Diversifying funding sources is pivotal in ensuring that implementation for programmes on ending violence against women and girls are not at any point halted

In **Trinidad and Tobago**, efforts were made by the Civil Society National Reference Group to help diversify their funding streams to access opportunities to implement larger-scale EAWG projects. These efforts also included a needs assessment that culminated with the development of a curriculum and capacity-building workshops which would guarantee future guidance to other civil society organisations seeking support in diversifying their funding streams. Spotlight Initiative programmes in **Malawi** and **Zimbabwe** cited the need to diversify funding sources to address the existing gaps through Public-Private Partnerships.

The Lessons - What We Take Forward

It is beneficial to create sustainability plans during programme development, continuously updating and clarifying stakeholder roles

All Spotlight Initiative programmes recognized the need to develop comprehensive and multi stakeholder sustainability plans from the onset through a participatory process that aims to bridge the financial and human resource gaps of partners. Despite the lack of sustainability plan, the **Pacific Regional Programme** incorporated elements of sustainability in the design and approach of the programme, such as working through existing regional and national EAWG networks. **Belize** on the other hand, highlighted how a sustainability plan needs to prioritize providing context-specific technical assistance.

Directing funding efforts at grassroots level has lasting effects that ensure that violence against women and girls is addressed at all levels of community

The Spotlight Initiative in **Jamaica** launched its small grants policy that awards civil society organisations (CSOs) and community-based organisations (CBO) with small grants to scale up EAWG efforts in the areas of advocacy, service delivery, and educational programming, engaging men, and boys, and creating safe spaces. The Spotlight Initiative programme in **Malawi** developed a Grassroots Action Plan to support and better fund feminist grassroots organizations. Funding made available at the grassroots level has far-reaching impacts that ensure EAWG efforts reverberate across communities.

All programmes have identified the need of focusing on capacity strengthening and development for multi-stakeholders across pillars to carry EAWG work forward

By placing an emphasis on building technical skills, this provides critical support for sustaining EAWG work. Capacity building across all programmes focused on Gender-Responsive Budgeting, integrating VAWG in National Action Plans, working with CSOs in service delivery and participatory monitoring and evaluation. The Spotlight Initiative in **Mali** highlighted how capacity building activities with government and municipal authorities helps in transferring technical skills that ensure this knowledge can be leveraged for future interventions.

Community-based solutions and mobilization is essential for local ownership and sustaining efforts to end violence against women and girls

The Spotlight Initiative in **Zimbabwe** promoted community-based solutions through engaging government at all levels, local, district and provincial systems. In **Mali**, to build local ownership and further enhance sustainability, capacity building efforts were made among municipal authorities, mayors, religious leaders and men and boys. The Spotlight Initiative in **Uganda** engages para-social workers who are community-based volunteers trained on prevention, identification, referral and follow up of violence against women and children's cases. The para-social workers are described as being connectors between community and formal structures that demonstrates national ownership to sustain EAWG efforts.

Securing longer-term financial commitments and partnerships is key to ensuring sustainability

Securing long-term financial support is both a real challenge and critical to ensuring Spotlight Initiative's efforts to EAWG are sustained. Across the Spotlight Initiative, all programmes have found that resource mobilization plans, or frameworks provide a clear roadmap on how best to secure longer-term financial commitments. In **Zimbabwe**, the first draft of the Sustainability Resource Mobilization Plan was produced by the inter-agency technical team.

Prompting questions

- How would you define sustainability for the Spotlight Initiative and/or for ending violence against women and girls more broadly?
- What are some examples that you can draw from that closely integrated element of sustainability?
- What are the key principles that should guide the development of sustainability strategies (e.g. Do No Harm, contextualizing, flexibility, transparency, participation)?
- What is critical to ensuring that gains to end violence against women and girls are not reversed, and that efforts continue after an initiative/programme ends? Can you share any key lessons?

To view the SHINE discussion on Sustaining our Gains for the Future of Ending Violence Against Women and Girls [click here](#)