

**Management
Response**



**UNITED NATIONS
SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GROUP**



**Follow-up Reporting:
Final Evaluation of the Spotlight Initiative**

DATE

January 2026

Introduction from the UNSDG System-Wide Evaluation Office

The **final evaluation of the Spotlight Initiative**¹ was conducted by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group System-Wide Evaluation Office (SWEO) between 2023 and 2024. This evaluation examined the Spotlight Initiative's overall performance and contribution to the United Nations reform mandated by A/RES/72/279. This evaluation covers implementation at the global, regional and country levels, inclusive of two civil society grant-giving programmes, from 2017 to 2023. This evaluation was theory-based, using a mixed-methods approach to draw on qualitative and quantitative data and analysis. It engaged with stakeholders at all levels in a participatory manner.

Overall, the evaluation found proof of concept for the Spotlight Initiative model while also highlighting areas for improvement. The comprehensive design demonstrated the ability of an integrated, inter-agency approach to ending violence against women and girls to contribute to higher-order changes at the regional, national and local levels. The Initiative responded to contextual changes to deliver important results across pillars, while deepening stakeholders' understanding of the need for a broad range of actors to work collaboratively. The Initiative's governance model expanded stakeholder engagement, with civil society playing an important role. While noting these achievements, the evaluation found that programme delivery was significantly challenged by a complicated operational model and by limitations in the compatibility of United Nations administrative and financial systems, which restricted their capacity to function collaboratively. While there are signs that some elements and activities of the Initiative will be continued, the evaluation considered that sustainability of the overarching approach is still to be determined.

The evaluation made eight recommendations:

1. maintain the key strengths of the Spotlight Initiative design, including its comprehensive approach, while allowing for greater flexibility and adaptability and simplifying its results framework;
2. respond to changing contexts with swiftness and agility to maintain consistent and relevant support for ending violence against women and girls, particularly in crisis and emergency contexts;
3. improve the operational model, including funding modalities and human resources planning;
4. simplify systems for monitoring, learning and dissemination of knowledge;
5. extend civil society stakeholder engagement;
6. develop a holistic funding strategy;

7. ensure that lessons learned inform efforts to accelerate United Nations development system reform and maximize collective results on ending violence against women and girls;
8. embed the comprehensive approach of the Spotlight Initiative into the implementation of United Nations system-wide actions, plans and processes.

This document presents follow-up reporting by the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat in January 2026, to the management response to the evaluation recommendations which was published in January 2025.

¹ The evaluation report, annexes, brief and management response are publicly available [here](#).

Overview of recommendations, management responses and follow-up reporting

Recommendation	Management response and follow-up reporting
<p>Recommendation 1</p> <p>For the Spotlight Initiative 2.0, work with key stakeholders to review the theory of change to simplify the focus to encompass fewer pillars, while still maintaining the comprehensive approach and cross-cutting elements and promoting interaction across pillars and programme levels. Allow for greater flexibility within programmes for prioritizing and adapting to different contexts (including full UN entity engagement without core and non-core designations) while maintaining key non-negotiable requirements. Develop a simplified results framework while maintaining the comprehensive framing.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Accepted</p> <p>The ability for Spotlight programmes to adapt more readily to their contexts is a key feature of Spotlight Initiative 2.0 design and roll-out.</p> <p>The Initiative is in the process of reviewing its theory of change and revising its global results framework to improve relevance and responsiveness, maintaining the comprehensive approach, crosscutting elements, and key non-negotiable requirements.</p> <p>Technical and programmatic guidance, including guidance on promoting interaction across pillars and between country and regional programmes, is also being developed.</p> <p>The Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund also reflects more flexibility and simplified processes across the programming cycle, including in design, implementation, monitoring and reporting.</p>
<p><i>Timeline: Immediate (within one year as part of 2.0 design)</i></p>	<p>Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat</p>
<p>Sub-recommendation 1a</p> <p>Ensure that all key stakeholders are engaged in the redesign process including civil society and all entities with specialized expertise including the World Health Organization (WHO) given its proven expertise and deep experience of the health services sector on issues of VAWG and gender-based violence.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Accepted</p> <p>The Secretariat is engaging all key stakeholders – including civil society and UN agencies (inclusive of WHO) – in the re-design of Spotlight Initiative 2.0.</p> <p>Spotlight Initiative and its Civil Society Global Reference Group led a year-long CSO co-design process that engaged over 700 civil society actors to develop key recommendations for Spotlight 2.0.</p> <p>The Initiative also conducted a participatory scoping study on the state of evidence in the EVAWG field, consulting all key stakeholders – including UN agencies and entities (including WHO), CSOs, governments, and others working to EVAWG, to ensure learning and knowledge from the Initiative fill critical sector wide gaps.</p> <p>The Initiative is engaging all relevant stakeholders in the re-design of its global results framework, methodological notes, and reporting templates and guidance.</p> <p>The Initiative will continue to dialogue with stakeholders to ensure the new fund set up is fit for purpose.</p>

<i>Timeline: Immediate (within one year as part of 2.0 design)</i>	Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat, in collaboration and consultation with all key stakeholders. Q3 2025
Implemented	
<p>Follow-up reporting: As of 31 December 2025, the Initiative completed the scoping study on evidence gaps in efforts to end GBV. Its findings informed the Initiative's research agenda, with the first high impact research study on operationalizing the principle of LNOB in EAWG programming underway.</p> <p>The re-design of the Initiative's results framework and reporting templates is complete. The process of revising both was consultative, engaging civil society, UN agencies, and the Initiative's other key stakeholders.</p> <p>The Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund Terms of Reference were developed collaboratively and introduced a more inclusive governance structure, including rotating UN agency representation and a programme appraisal committee to strengthen programmatic oversight during design.</p> <p>Recommendations from the CSO 2.0 co-design process are being implemented, including alignment of guidance with agreed principles. All Spotlight Initiative 2.0 programmes engaged civil society during design and inception through interim and formal Civil Society Reference Groups.</p>	
<p>Sub-recommendation 1b</p> <p>Simplify the six-pillar model to fewer pillars to allow for greater tailoring and prioritization across contexts, including consideration of an approach tailored to SIDS contexts, while retaining all elements of the proven model.</p>	Accepted
<i>Timeline: Immediate (within one year as part of 2.0 design)</i>	Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat, in consultation with all key stakeholders. Q2 2025
Implemented	
<p>Follow-up reporting: As of 31 December 2025, this recommendation has been actioned.</p> <p>The six pillar model has been simplified. The new Initiative-wide results framework features four pillars and strengthened indicators for both country and regional programmes.</p>	

The results framework now allows programmes to select those indicators most relevant to their context. As before, the framework includes mandatory “core” indicators – though far fewer – which allow the Initiative to retain all elements of the proven model and capture global impact, while also remaining flexible and tailored to diverse settings.

Sub-recommendation 1c

Accepted

Complement the theory of change with the development of a theory of value creation at the inception phase of the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 to facilitate the comprehensive capture of both tangible and intangible results.

Spotlight Initiative welcomes the value for money (VFM) study as part of the final evaluation, and appreciates its findings and recommendations, including for improvements in operational coordination, and stronger mechanisms to track the impact of programming on marginalized groups.

Spotlight Initiative notes that the absence of a theory of value alongside the Initiative’s theory of change in its original design may have limited the ability of the Initiative to capture the full value it created.

At the same time, the Initiative acknowledges the (methodological) limitations of value for money studies more generally, including that such exercises can inadvertently reduce complex human rights issues to economic terms.

In addition to the potential methodological challenges, the current financial reporting architecture does not lend itself to costing GBV interventions at activity level. A level of disaggregation at outcome level is possible, but places an additional burden on programmes (at a time when the Initiative is being asked to further simplify processes). The VFM study itself notes these limitations, as well.

This said, Spotlight Initiative, the MPTF Office, and relevant stakeholders are committed to exploring the best way to take forward this recommended action.

Actions:

The Initiative – together with all relevant stakeholders – will reflect on developing a theory of value creation.

The Initiative will explore various approaches to capture the full range of value created by the Initiative, keeping in mind the limitations of data availability, methodological approaches to costing GBV interventions, and of the existing financial reporting architecture. It will also consider the ethical challenges of this for a programme working to end VAWG.

	As the Administrative Agent, the MPTF Office will collaborate with stakeholders to consider how best to take this action forward.
<i>Timeline: Immediate (within one year as part of 2.0 design)</i>	Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat and MPTFO, with all key stakeholders. Q3 2025
Closed/not implemented	
<p>Follow-up reporting: The Initiative, together with relevant stakeholders, further reflected on this recommendation, and concluded that the development of a “theory of value” is currently not feasible, given the myriad constraints outlined in the “management response” column. These include the methodological limitations of value-for-money analyses for complex, rights-based GBV programming and constraints in the current financial reporting architecture.</p> <p>However, the Initiative has focused on strengthening the foundations required for any credible value assessment, including refining the Initiative-wide results framework and indicators, strengthening monitoring systems, and improving reporting templates for strengthened programme data.</p>	
Sub-recommendation 1d	Accepted
Work with key stakeholders to identify specific aspects of women’s economic empowerment programming with strong linkages to EVAWG to provide guidelines in order to clarify the focus of this area within the Spotlight Initiative model as a critical component of a comprehensive response in certain contexts.	Building off existing learning, the Initiative will develop new or adapt existing guidance on implementing interventions to address women’s economic rights and empowerment in the context of comprehensive EVAWG programming.
<i>Timeline: Immediate (within one year as part of 2.0 design)</i>	Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat with key stakeholders. Q3 2025
Implemented	
<p>Follow-up reporting: As of 31 December 2025, this recommendation has been actioned. Spotlight Initiative updated its technical guidance across the four pillars and provided more in-depth advice around women’s economic empowerment initiatives which do no harm and can contribute to the Initiative’s impact. This has been translated in multiple languages and is available on the Learning Centre.</p> <p>Spotlight Initiative has also communicated best practice and evidence-based approaches for women’s economic empowerment to more than 190+ UN colleagues.</p> <p>The newly revised Initiative-wide results framework includes newly developed indicators that more meaningfully capture progress in women’s economic rights and empowerment. This strengthens the Initiative’s ability to track its contribution to promoting women’s economic rights and empowerment, as a critical component of holistic, comprehensive programming to end VAWG.</p>	

<p>Sub-recommendation 1e</p> <p>Provide flexibility on pillar focus at regional and country levels to allow for prioritization and staging, while maintaining the comprehensive approach. The design should include key core elements to preserve the integrity of the model including a focus on civil society organization engagement as a pillar-specific and cross-cutting element.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Accepted</p> <p>Spotlight Initiative will revise the guidance provided to UNCTs regarding pillar focus.</p> <p>This will be done with a view to fostering flexibility while maintaining the integrity of the model, working across all pillars and programme levels, with a focus on engaging CSOs in pillar-specific and cross-cutting work.</p>
<p><i>Timeline: Immediate (within one year as part of 2.0 design)</i></p>	<p>Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat with all key stakeholders. Q3 2025</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Implemented</p> <p>Follow-up reporting: As of 31 December 2025, this recommendation has been actioned, including through revisions to the Initiative-wide Results Framework and accompanying M&E guidance, which promote flexibility while maintaining the comprehensive Spotlight Initiative model.</p> <p>Key elements of the model, including civil society engagement as both a pillar-specific and cross-cutting element, have been retained to preserve the integrity of the approach.</p> <p>In 2025, in response to interest from crisis and conflict-affected states on how to deliver Spotlight programming in fragile settings, Spotlight Initiative developed a high-level guidance framework outlining minimum considerations to align activities with local priorities and ensure flexible approaches to reduce the risk of harm. These principles were reinforced through Concept Note webinars, particularly those provided to fragile countries such as Syria and Sudan.</p>	
<p>Sub-recommendation 1f</p> <p>Clarify and formalize relationships and interactions between and across regional and country programmes to capitalize on opportunities for synergistic programming.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Accepted</p> <p>The Initiative will revise programme guidance (and offer advice during programme development) to leverage opportunities for new programmes to work together across levels.</p> <p>The Initiative will further clarify relationships between country and regional programmes through technical guidance on implementing the model.</p>
<p><i>Timeline: Immediate (within one year as part of 2.0 design)</i></p>	<p>Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat, in consultation with RUNOs and other key stakeholders. End of 2025 and beyond</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">In progress</p> <p>Follow-up reporting: As new programmes come on board, particularly the Africa Regional Programme 2.0, the Initiative is clarifying and strengthening the relationships between regional and country programmes. This includes the development of guidance for UN Country Teams, and fostering structured engagement between regional and country teams to support coordination and leverage opportunities for collaboration.</p>	

<p>Sub-recommendation 1g</p> <p>Allow for engagement with the full spectrum of UN entities without designation of core and non-core.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Accepted</p> <p>Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund Terms of Reference, and engagement with the Agency Focal Point group, now reflect inclusive engagement of UN entities, without designation of core and non-core.</p>
<p><i>Timeline: Immediate (within one year as part of 2.0 design)</i></p>	<p>Action Lead: EOSG and Spotlight Initiative Secretariat. 2025</p>
Implemented	
<p>Sub-recommendation 1h</p> <p>Develop a simpler results framework with fewer indicators, drawing on good practice from the United Nations joint programmes to end female genital mutilation and early child marriages, maintaining the comprehensive framing, while ensuring the more systematic capture of disaggregated data on programme reach to vulnerable groups.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Accepted</p> <p>The Initiative launched a revision process of its results framework engaging key stakeholders and drawing on good practice. The new framework will better capture change across diverse contexts and populations, including vulnerable groups, and offer more meaningful and measurable metrics of progress while continuing to feature a range of indicators (reflective of the comprehensive model).</p>
<p><i>Timeline: Immediate (within one year as part of 2.0 design)</i></p>	<p>Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat with key stakeholders. Q2 2025</p>
Implemented	
<p>Follow-up reporting: As of 31 December, this recommendation has been actioned.</p>	
<p>The results framework has been revised and streamlined, drawing on lessons learned and good practices from across the sector. The new framework features a range of indicators that reflect the Initiative’s comprehensive model.</p>	
<p>The revised framework is also designed to better capture change across diverse contexts and populations, including vulnerable and marginalized groups, while offering more meaningful and measurable metrics of progress.</p>	
<p>The newly revised framework accompanying methodological notes now more explicitly support programmes in systematically capturing disaggregated data, strengthening the Initiative’s ability to track and assess its commitment to the principle of “leaving no one behind”.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>For the Spotlight Initiative 2.0, ensure that programme design and operations maintain relevance and dynamic responsiveness to changing contexts in design and operationalization of Spotlight Initiative 2.0 including establishing systems to enable swift and coordinated</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Accepted</p> <p>Enhancing the relevance and responsiveness of programme design and operations in shifting changing contexts is a priority for Spotlight Initiative 2.0, and is underway, as detailed further below in response to recommendations 2a, 2b, and 2c.</p> <p>The Initiative is exploring ways to adapt its work to crisis and emergency contexts, ensuring complementarity with existing humanitarian interventions and coordination mechanisms, including</p>

<p>adjustments to changing contexts so that programming can pivot with agility. Consider how the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 may allow for intervention in existing crises or emergency contexts by establishing simplified operational processes and selective focus interventions to support a comprehensive approach to EVAWG, complementing existing humanitarian-focused gender-based violence systems and structures.</p>	<p>the Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR), and the work of UNFPA, UNHCR, and others.</p>
<p><i>Timeline: Immediate (within one year as part of 2.0 design)</i></p>	<p>Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat</p>
<p>Sub-recommendation 2a</p> <p>Assume dynamic environments in the design stage to create more agile systems to adjust and respond to changing contexts, drawing on learning from MPTFs in complex contexts (for example, the UN Peacebuilding Fund and the Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund).</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Accepted</p> <p>As the final evaluation underscored, the Initiative has pivoted well in dynamic and shifting contexts, including during COVID-19.</p> <p>The Initiative will continue to assume that contexts are dynamic and ensure that programme design and operations allow for increasing agility.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <p>Learning from existing work, the Initiative will revise its Programme and Operations Manual to further facilitate the ability to quickly adapt to shifting contexts (including by codifying how Spotlight Initiative programmes can fast track budget revisions, and other operational and programmatic approvals).</p>
<p><i>Timeline: Immediate (within one year as part of 2.0 design)</i></p>	<p>Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat, with key stakeholders, including those working to end GBV in humanitarian and conflict settings.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">By Q4 2025</p>
<p>Follow-up reporting: Design of the Programme and Operations Manual is underway, and will be completed in Q2 2026.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">In progress</p>	
<p>Sub-recommendation 2b</p> <p>Develop crisis preparedness guidance and systems for adaptation to substantial changes to context, based on lessons learned from the Spotlight Initiative and other programmes.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Accepted</p> <p>Spotlight Initiative will develop guidance to help programmes adapt to changes in contexts based on learning from the first generation of Spotlight Initiative programmes, and from other programmes.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <p>The Initiative will develop technical guidance on how to adapt to substantial changes in context and remain responsive.</p>

	Learnings from existing interventions and programmes, and from the first generation of Spotlight Initiative programmes will inform the guidance.	
<i>Timeline: Immediate (within one year as part of 2.0 design)</i>	Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat, with UN Agency Focal Points, and those working to address GBV in crisis settings.	By the end of 2025
Implemented		
<p>Follow-up reporting: Building on existing learning and guidance, the Initiative convened practitioners with experience delivering Spotlight Initiative programmes in fragile settings to develop a “Framework and Considerations for Implementing Spotlight Initiative Programmes in Fragile Settings”. This framework offers considerations for planning and adaptations in fragile contexts.</p>		
Sub-recommendation 2c		Accepted
<p>Consult with key stakeholders in the GBV space for humanitarian and conflict settings to develop a Spotlight Initiative design model tailored to complex contexts, allowing for nimbler implementation and pillar-specific focus areas to support a broader comprehensive approach to EVAWG that targets gaps and reinforces work across wider gender-based violence programming in complex contexts.</p>	<p>Spotlight Initiative recognizes that the existing humanitarian architecture, including coordination mechanisms, can deliver effective GBV programming in humanitarian and conflict settings.</p> <p>The Initiative will engage with key stakeholders working to end GBV in these settings to ensure its 2.0 design fosters operational flexibility, and allows Spotlight Initiative programmes to quickly adapt to complex contexts, targeting gaps and reinforcing existing work.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <p>In close collaboration with key stakeholders, the Initiative will revise its global results framework, produce relevant guidance (including technical guidance on pillar specific focus areas in complex contexts), and review its Programme and Operations Manual.</p>	
<i>Timeline: Immediate (within one year as part of 2.0 design)</i>	Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat, with key stakeholders, including UN Agency Focal Points, and those working to deliver GBV programming in humanitarian and conflict settings.	By the end of 2025
Implemented		
<p>Follow-up reporting: As of 31 December, Spotlight Initiative has acted on this recommendation in several ways, including through the revision of the Initiative's Global Results Framework. The revised framework includes indicators that track the Initiative's contributions in humanitarian and crisis contexts, while accompanying methodological notes now require programmes to specify whether work is being implemented in humanitarian or crisis settings and, where applicable, to describe how approaches have been adapted. This strengthens the Initiative's ability to learn from and improve implementation in these contexts, including through strengthened coordination with other actors.</p> <p>Additionally, the Initiative finalised its Fragility Framework, which is designed to support reflection and planning. The Fragility Framework presents key features, principles, and a set of minimum considerations to ensure Spotlight programmes (and interested UNCTs) do no harm and respond to priority needs. This Framework is being used to support and advise a range of UNCTs already, including in Sudan, Syria and Palestine, that have expressed interest in programming.</p>		

<p>Sub-recommendation 2d</p> <p>Systematize minimum standards for do no harm considerations throughout programme design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Accepted</p> <p>The Initiative will compile and share existing guidance (developing new, if needed) on applying a survivor centred approach to ending GBV, including ensuring programming is aligned with the principles of “do no harm” and “leaving no one behind”.</p> <p>The Initiative will deepen the capacity of practitioners in participatory monitoring, evaluation, and reporting to center the experiences of survivors, rights holders and communities through targeted guidance, workshops, and knowledge exchanges.</p>
<p><i>Timeline: Immediate (within one year as part of 2.0 design)</i></p>	<p>Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat, with key stakeholders, including the Initiative's Civil Society Reference Group members and UN Agency Focal Points.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">2025</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Implemented</p> <p>Follow-up reporting: This recommendation has been actioned. In 2025, Spotlight Initiative updated its technical guidance to include a set of technical principles for programming, including doing no harm (or conflict sensitivity). This technical guidance has been translated into multiple languages and is available on the Learning Centre. The technical principle of doing no harm is expected to be delivered throughout the programme cycle.</p> <p>Support to programmes in doing no harm also included as part of Inception webinars – provided to newly onboarded Spotlight Initiative programme teams – and in Concept Note webinars delivered to any UNCT or Regional Team interested in developing a programme. This helps to ensure that this is considered in the very earliest stages of programme design.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>For the Spotlight Initiative 2.0, explore alternative phasing and sequencing approaches to implementation and revise aspects of the Spotlight Initiative operational model including the fund disbursement modality. Ensure human resource planning by RUNOs, including staffing of programme management units, is aligned with programme delivery and operational requirements.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Accepted</p> <p>Spotlight Initiative recognizes the importance of streamlined phasing and sequenced approaches to implementation. The Initiative is committed to ensuring efficient fund allocation based on available funds.</p> <p>The MPTF Office will continue to adhere to the standard KPI on fund disbursement (5 business days following receipt of the Funds Transfer Requests (in line with legal agreements and based on the approved allocations by the governing body). Spotlight Initiative Secretariat and Recipient UN Organisations acknowledge the need for and importance of aligning human resources with programme delivery and operational demands.</p> <p>However, the Initiative faces strong political and operational pressure for efficiency, including with regards to staffing and programme management unit costs, and anticipates that it may be difficult (due to factors outside of the Initiative’s control) to take forward this recommendation. The requirements and expectations of donors and auditors, for example, and challenges coordinating and cohering UN administrative and financial reporting processes pose barriers to alignment.</p>

	Nonetheless, the Initiative will work with all stakeholders to these bottlenecks to ensure improvements can be made.	
<i>Timeline: Immediate (within one year as part of 2.0 design)</i>	Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat and Recipient UN Organisations	Immediate
Sub-recommendation 3a		Accepted
As part of programme development, allow time and space (specifically, an inception phase) for the development of cohesive operational processes needed for efficient programme implementation, drawing on documented good practice examples (for example, Kyrgyzstan).	<p>The Initiative will update its Programme and Operations Manual to include targeted advice on how to further streamline and cohere operational processes. This update will include guidance on a programme inception phase.</p> <p>Guidance will reflect learning from the first phase of the Initiative, as well as findings from evaluations and assessments of the Initiative, and other documented good practices.</p>	
<i>Timeline: Immediate (within one year as part of 2.0 design)</i>	Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat with UNCTs and UN Agency Focal Points.	By the end of 2025
Follow-up reporting: Design of the Programme and Operations Manual is underway, and will be completed in Q2 2026. The Initiative developed a guidance pack to support UNCTs during programme inception. This pack includes guidance to improve operational processes during roll-out.		In progress
Sub-recommendation 3b		Accepted
Review fund disbursement modalities to mitigate challenges in maintaining implementation timelines and the recruitment and retention of key programme personnel. This includes revisiting pre-financing mechanisms and amending the current fund disbursement modality requiring all RUNOs to achieve 70 per cent rate of fund utilization before replenishments are released to participating agencies.	<p>There is a distinction between <i>fund allocations</i> and <i>fund disbursements</i>.</p> <p>The former refers to the approval of programmes by a Fund's governing bodies, and decisions to release further funding, while the latter refers to the process of transferring funds from the Administrative Agent to RUNO bank accounts.</p> <p>Allocation processes are carried out by the governance of the Fund, based on available funds.</p> <p>For disbursements, according to the UN Sustainable Development Group's legal instruments for UN MPTFs (i.e. MoUs with Agencies and contribution agreements with Donors), the Administrative Agent (MPTF Office) is responsible for disbursing funds within 5 business days following receipt of the Funds Transfer Requests (itself based on approved allocations by the governing body).</p> <p>The Fund Secretariat and the MPTF Office will work together to ensure that facilitating parameters that allow Agencies to meet the conditions to request further disbursements are put in place, while maintaining accountability and compliance.</p> <p>Actions:</p>	

	<p>Spotlight Initiative will advocate for flexible fund allocation modalities to align with implementation timelines and ensure timely recruitment and retention of key programme personnel.</p> <p>This, however, is in part dependent on and must be aligned with the frequency and amount of donor instalments to the MPTF Office (as the Administrative Agent), as well as the requirements of donors to trigger the release of further instalments.</p>
<i>Timeline: Immediate (within one year as part of 2.0 design)</i>	<p>Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat, in consultation with UN Agency Focal Points and the MPTF Office.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">2025</p>
In progress	
<p>Follow-up reporting: The Spotlight Initiative Secretariat has advocated with donors for larger upfront or first tranche disbursements. This is to enhance predictability and support smoother operational delivery at the country level. However, donor preferences continue to favor more fragmented or smaller instalment disbursement modalities, driven by internal regulations, risk considerations, and contextual factors.</p>	
Sub-recommendation 3c	Accepted
<p>Build on efforts to operationalize the principles of budget flexibility and adaptive programming within the Spotlight Initiative operational model, prioritizing contexts where RUNOs and their implementing partners are likely to face greater operational and human resource challenges, including multi-country office and SIDS contexts and countries shifting into crisis situations (see also Recommendation 2).</p>	<p>The Initiative will further embed the principles of budget flexibility and adaptive programming by codifying this in revisions of its Programme and Operations Manual (in line with relevant donor contractual requirements).</p>
<i>Timeline: Immediate (within one year as part of 2.0 design)</i>	<p>Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat with UNCTs and UN Agency Focal Points.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Q3 2025</p>
In progress	
<p>Follow-up reporting: The development of the Programme and Operations Manual (POM) is well underway, and will be completed in Q2 2026. The POM includes updated information on budget revisions (with improved flexibility to respond to implementation needs).</p>	
Sub-recommendation 3d	Accepted
<p>Ensure programme management units are adequately staffed to perform monitoring and evaluation, communications and coordination functions while also ensuring that the coordination capacities required to operationalize joint and integrated UN EVAWG</p>	<p>Staffing is the purview of the UNCTs (in line with the needs of the country and other factors). Spotlight Initiative Secretariat will, however, continue to provide guidance to and encourage Spotlight programmes to ensure that key programme functions – including programme coordination, M&E, and communications – are properly reflected and resourced, in line with learning from the first phase of Spotlight Initiative.</p>

<p>programmes are reflected in programme design and allocations.</p>	<p>Actions:</p> <p>Spotlight Initiative Secretariat will codify its advice and guidance on this through revisions to its Programme and Operations Manual.</p> <p>The Secretariat will also provide advice on and encourage adequate human resourcing through its review of programme budgets.</p>
<p><i>Timeline: Immediate (within one year as part of 2.0 design)</i></p>	<p>Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat with UNCTs and UN Agency Focal Points. Mid 2025</p>
<p>Implemented</p>	
<p>Follow-up reporting: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat has provided guidance to UNCTs to ensure adequate human resourcing of programmes throughout the design of recent Spotlight Initiative 2.0 programmes. Key programme functions and their costs (including programme coordination, M&E, and communications) are budgeted for in the majority of new 2.0 programmes. At the same time, staffing configurations must maintain cost efficiency, and accommodate donor preferences and requirements related to cost structures, staffing and levels, funding modalities, and risk management.</p>	
<p>Sub-recommendation 3e</p> <p>Ensure RUNO staffing needs and capacities are adequately assessed and aligned to support implementation of Spotlight Initiative programmes, from the design stage onwards (action point directed at RUNOs).</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Accepted</p> <p>Under the oversight of the Resident Coordinator, Recipient UN Organisations (RUNOs) will assess staffing needs and capacities and try to ensure they are well-aligned to support effective programming.</p> <p>Based off learning from the first phase of Spotlight Initiative, the Secretariat will work with RUNOs and donors to help ensure staffing is adequately resourced (within the operational requirements Agencies may have).</p>
<p><i>Timeline: Immediate (within one year as part of 2.0 design)</i></p>	<p>Action Lead: RUNOs (UN Country Teams) in consultation with Spotlight Initiative Secretariat and UN Agency Focal Points. 2025 onwards</p>
<p>Implemented</p>	
<p>Follow-up reporting: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat regularly consults with Recipient UN Organisations (RUNOs) as Action Leads on this recommendation, supporting RUNOs, as relevant and needed, to assess staffing needs from the design and onset of new Spotlight Initiative programmes to ensure adequate staffing for programme implementation. As noted, staffing configurations must maintain cost efficiency, and accommodate donor preferences and requirements related to cost structures, funding modalities, and risk management.</p>	
<p>Sub-recommendation 3f</p> <p>Accelerate recruitment and procurement processes to mitigate operational bottlenecks for implementation of Spotlight Initiative programmes, leveraging UN efficiency</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Accepted</p> <p>While required to follow agency specific rules and regulations for recruitment and procurement passed by Executive Boards, Spotlight Initiative Secretariat will continue to encourage Recipient UN</p>

<p>gains in business operations where possible (see also Recommendation 7 below) (action point directed at RUNOs).</p>	<p>Organisations (RUNOs) to work to streamline recruitment and procurement processes, to the extent possible, to mitigate operational bottlenecks to efficient implementation.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <p>In line with joint programme guidance and where possible, and with the support of the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat, RUNOs will further work to streamline operational processes and leverage UN efficiency gains in business operations.</p> <p>Examples of this include deepened coordination, joint recruitment and procurement plans, joint calls for proposals, joint monitoring visits and collective reporting.</p> <p>RUNOs will be encouraged to use key frameworks and instruments to do this, such as the UNSDG business efficiency framework and the Business Operations Strategy 2.0.</p>
<p><i>Timeline: Immediate (within one year as part of 2.0 design)</i></p>	<p>Action Lead: UN Country Teams (RUNOs) in consultation with Spotlight Initiative Secretariat and UN Agency Focal Points. 2025 onwards</p>
<p>In progress</p>	
<p>Follow-up reporting: RUNOs delivering new Spotlight Initiative programmes are encouraged to leverage UN efficiency gains, including by using available frameworks and instruments (such as the UNSDG business efficiency framework and the Business Operations Strategy 2.0, and supported by Spotlight Initiative Secretariat (as needed and relevant) to do so. Spotlight Initiative Secretariat has also underscored the importance of this in the forthcoming Programme and Operations Manual, expected to launch in Q2 2026.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 4</p> <p>For the Spotlight Initiative 2.0, strengthen and simplify monitoring, reporting and learning systems in line with a streamlined results framework. Expand efforts to ensure that monitoring systems report on disaggregated data to highlight the programme reach to vulnerable groups. Expand on and systematize utilization of qualitative approaches to capture a richer and more holistic picture of programme results on the ground. Integrate a value-for-money framework to guide data collection and monitoring during implementation and to serve as a key input for value-for-money assessments. Develop stronger systems to enable real-time learning and knowledge sharing to drive the scaling-up of good practices and innovative approaches.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Accepted</p> <p>The Initiative recognizes the value and importance of continuous improvement and will strengthen and simplify its monitoring, reporting, and learning systems in its next phase. Specifically, Spotlight Initiative will further enhance real-time learning and knowledge sharing to help scale-up successful practices. It will also revise its global results framework and methodological notes (as noted), and update its reporting system to ensure the Initiative’s M&E and reporting architecture can capture a richer and more accurate picture of the results its programmes have achieved, particularly for marginalized groups.</p> <p>Spotlight Initiative Secretariat will explore approaches to assess the extent to which the Initiative’s programmes deliver value, operate efficiently, and prioritize equity and the inclusion of marginalized groups. It will also continue to collaborate with UN Agencies and the MPTF Office on the analysis of workplans and budgets to better understand how specific investments contribute to results.</p>

<i>Timeline: Immediate (within one year as part of 2.0 design)</i>	Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat
<p>Sub-recommendation 4a</p> <p>Develop streamlined and simplified annual reporting formats with inputs from users at country and regional levels to ensure relevance and reduce time and effort spent. Where possible generate reports that serve various purposes for reporting requirements set forth (for example, entities, donors).</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Accepted</p> <p>While maintaining all applicable MPTF Office and donor requirements, reporting templates and guidance will be revised and streamlined with learning from previous Spotlight Initiative programmes, and input from users in new Spotlight Initiative programmes.</p>
<i>Timeline: Immediate (within one year as part of 2.0 design)</i>	<p>Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat with key stakeholders, including Spotlight programme teams (users).</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Early 2025</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Implemented</p> <p>Follow-up reporting: As of 31 December 2025, this recommendation has been completed. Informed by feedback from country and regional programme teams, the Initiative streamlined annual reporting templates.</p> <p>Separate templates were developed to accommodate different funding arrangements, including multi-donor and non-commingled funding, supported by annotated guidance on how to complete them.</p> <p>Templates were also developed in multiple languages. These updates to the reporting templates and guidance were complemented by webinars, targeted Q&A support, and practical checklists, as well as a consolidated guidance pack bringing all reporting requirements and deadlines into one place. Together, these measures aimed at reducing the reporting burden by communicating expectations clearly, and providing targeted guidance to support results-based reporting.</p> <p>The Initiative also revised its 2-page template of its annual report. This format presents reporting data in an easy to digest format, and allows it to be more readily packaged and re-packaged for multiple purposes.</p>	
<p>Sub-recommendation 4b</p> <p>Build on and expand participatory monitoring approaches. Complement quantitative results monitoring with qualitative models such as outcome harvesting and most significant change. Socialize donors on the value of alternatives for the measurement of results to predetermined quantitative indicators.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Accepted</p> <p>The Initiative will revise existing guidance on participatory monitoring, evaluation and reporting, and launch a series of knowledge exchanges to build capacity on and further encourage the use of participatory approaches.</p> <p>The Initiative will help strengthen the capacity of programmes (and the UN system more broadly) by embedding guidance on participatory approaches in system wide courses (like those offered by UNSSC).</p>
<i>Timeline: Immediate (within one year as part of 2.0 design)</i>	<p>Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat, in consultation with RUNOs, civil society, and other key stakeholders.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">2025 onwards</p>

Follow-up reporting: Throughout 2025, Spotlight Initiative continued to advance participatory monitoring at both programme and global levels.

Spotlight programme inception webinars, revised guidance, and technical support encouraged country and regional programmes to adopt participatory approaches and to complement quantitative monitoring with qualitative methods.

At the global level, these frameworks, tools and guidance were themselves revised through participatory approaches, improving their relevance.

Additionally, Spotlight programmes are asked to systematically document their experience with (and the upshot of) participatory monitoring, evaluation, and reporting in their annual report, encouraging their use and capturing key learnings.

The revised methodological notes that accompany the new Initiative-wide results framework further guide programmes on applying participatory approaches when measuring progress.

In parallel, the Initiative held knowledge exchanges to promote and expand the use of participatory approaches, build capacity, and share good practice. In this, the Initiative continued to engage with the UN System Staff College, ensuring participatory approaches are increasingly embedded in institutional (system wide) courses and guidance.

Sub-recommendation 4c

Introduce mandatory disaggregation of data within monitoring and reporting, including in the global results framework, to better assess how the principle of leaving no one behind is being implemented.

Spotlight Initiative programmes will work to more fully disaggregate data, including to better assess programme reach to structurally marginalized groups.

Actions:

The Initiative will ensure that the revised global results framework and its accompanying methodological notes support Spotlight Initiative programmes to better disaggregate monitoring and reporting data.

The global reporting system (SMART) will also be updated to ensure it further facilitates the capture of disaggregated data.

Reporting templates and guidance will include additional guidance (and examples) on how to disaggregate data for reporting.

Timeline: Immediate (within one year as part of 2.0 design)

Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat with key stakeholders, particularly UN Agency Focal Points.

Follow-up reporting: The Initiative implemented this recommendation by expanding disaggregation categories in its online reporting system and ensuring Spotlight programmes are prompted to disaggregate population-based data as fully as possible, in line with ethical standards and the principle of “do no harm.”

Guidance notes and reporting templates have been updated with examples and annotations to reinforce this level of disaggregation.

The newly revised Initiative-wide Results Framework and accompanying methodological notes more explicitly support programmes in systematically capturing disaggregated data, as well, strengthening the Initiative’s ability to track and assess its commitment to the principle of “leaving no one behind”.

Sub-recommendation 4d

Accepted

Integrate a value-for-money framework at the time of design of the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 based on the framework utilized by the value-for-money assessment of the Spotlight Initiative undertaken during the final evaluation. The framework should include a comprehensive definition of value for money, as well as criteria, sub-criteria, standards, and indicators to guide monitoring and collection of data during implementation of the Initiative to serve as a key input for future value-for-money assessments and to inform investment decisions.

(See management response to 1C as well.)

The Initiative is deeply committed to delivering value, operating efficiently, and prioritizing equity and inclusion, particularly for marginalized groups.

As such and in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders, including the MPTF Office as the Administrative Agent, the Initiative will further reflect on how best to take forward this recommendation.

Actions:

Together with relevant stakeholders –including MPTF Office and UN Agencies (particularly UNFPA given the agency’s work to build an investment case to address VAWG) – Spotlight Initiative will reflect on how to take forward this recommendation.

The Initiative will explore various approaches to the development of a VFM framework (based on the approach used in the VFM assessment) with consideration to feasibility of developing such a framework given the constraints of outcome and impact level data at country level, data availability at activity level, and of the standardized financial reporting architecture. The Initiative will also reflect on the ethical, rights-based concerns of doing this for a global EVAWG programme.

The MPTF Office will collaborate with Spotlight Initiative (and others) to reflect on the implications of this recommendation, as well, including by considering what’s required to take it forward.

Timeline: Immediate (within one year as part of 2.0 design)

Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including MPTF Office and UN Agency Focal Points. **Q3 2025**

Closed/not implemented

Follow-up reporting: The Initiative, together with relevant stakeholders, further reflected on this recommendation, and have concluded that the development of a “value for money framework” is currently not feasible given the constraints outlined in the “management response” column. These include the methodological limitations of value-for-money analyses for complex, rights-based GBV programming and constraints in the current financial reporting architecture.

However, as noted above, the Initiative has focused on strengthening the foundations required for any credible assessment or evaluation of value, including refining the Initiative-wide results framework and indicators, strengthening monitoring systems, and improving reporting templates for strengthened programme data.

Sub-recommendation 4e

Accepted

Embed plans for cross-learning and sharing of experiences within the country, particularly within locales where the programme is not implemented, while also including systems for global cross-learning to extend reach and to better capture evidence of influence and impact.

The Initiative will revise existing and develop new programme guidance on knowledge management and learning to uptake of lessons from Spotlight Initiative 1.0, and support incoming programmes to effectively capture learning and innovations, with a view to scaling successful practices and innovations.

The Initiative will convene cross-regional knowledge exchanges to foster learning across the country, regional and global levels.

The Initiative will launch a capacity building series for new Spotlight Initiative programmes to enhance real time learning (and adaptations).

Timeline: Immediate (within one year as part of 2.0 design)

Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat together with relevant stakeholders, **2025 onwards** including Spotlight programme teams.

In progress

Follow-up reporting: In 2025, Spotlight Initiative strengthened knowledge management, learning, and capacity at programme and global levels.

Knowledge Management guidance and planning tools were updated, while established platforms such as the Learning Centre and SHINE continued to support cross-learning and online exchanges.

To further expand outreach, Spotlight Initiative launched a LinkedIn page to promote online information sharing and improve access to resources and research. Spotlight Initiative now has more than 2,460 followers.

The Initiative launched a series of Inception Webinars and Concept Note Development Webinars. These helped Spotlight programme teams (and interested UNCTs) learn about programme governance, evidence-based approaches to ending VAWG, and technical principles to support high quality, sustainable programming.

These are complemented by ongoing, targeted technical support in response to programme needs, including an in-country mission to Uganda in October focused on sustainability planning and knowledge management.

The Initiative prioritised outreach to UN Country and Regional Teams to ensure broader access to lessons and best practices in delivering the Initiative’s model. Concept Note webinars reached more than 190 UN colleagues across regions and agencies, fostering peer exchange and cross-regional learning.

In 2025, Spotlight Initiative participated in a range of knowledge sharing events, promoting global cross-learning. This included global public webinars on the role of ending GBV in sports and an Africa-region focused webinar on technology facilitated gender-based violence with UNFPA.

<p>In addition, Spotlight Initiative, together with partners, convened a webinar promoting cross-learning on participatory monitoring, evaluation, and reporting.</p> <p>To strengthen learning and innovation, Spotlight programmes are asked to systematically document, analyse, and reflect on innovative, promising and good practices through annual reporting. The information reported is then used for cross-learning and to support the identification and potential scale up of effective approaches across the Initiative.</p>	
<p>Sub-recommendation 4f</p> <p>Consolidate knowledge products and communication channels to ensure greater accessibility and clearer platform usability. Disseminate good practices from the Spotlight Initiative 2018–2023 to inform wider uptake of innovative approaches and key learnings, building on the Compendium of Innovative and Good Practices and Lessons Learned (2024).</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Accepted</p> <p>Spotlight Initiative will further develop its Global Knowledge Product Tracker, which consolidates all knowledge products produced by the Initiative in a single repository.</p> <p>The Tracker will also be linked to the Initiative’s Learning Center and on relevant platforms across the UN system, as feasible.</p> <p>The Initiative will further disseminate good practices from Spotlight Initiative 1.0 through knowledge exchanges and other mediums to encourage wider uptake.</p> <p>The Compendium of Innovative and Good Practices and Lessons Learned (2024) and the Spotlight Initiative Learning Centre (2024) will be shared widely through a capacity development series.</p>
<p><i>Timeline: Immediate (within one year as part of 2.0 design)</i></p>	<p>Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat, with all relevant stakeholders. 2025 onwards</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Implemented</p> <p>Follow-up reporting: Spotlight Initiative developed a dissemination action plan, including leveraging existing platforms and launching a new presence (on LinkedIn) to improve access and use of knowledge products, research and tools, including the Compendium of Innovative and Good Practices and Lessons Learned.</p> <p>Spotlight Initiative’s concept note webinars also showcase knowledge and learnings from its first phase (including through the Compendium and the Learning Centre).</p> <p>The Initiative is currently revising its Global Knowledge Product Tracker to ensure it is a more visual, user friendly tool for practitioners and available on the Learning Centre. This is expected by mid- 2026.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 5</p> <p>Strengthen and extend models of expanded stakeholder engagement in programme governance, while establishing systems that facilitate bi-directional communications across levels. Build on good practice models to support positive momentum for enhanced civil society organization and non-traditional actor engagement in</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Accepted</p> <p>Spotlight Initiative reaffirms that the engagement of civil society remains a top priority. Building on successful models, the Initiative will enhance CSO engagement, including by ensuring civil society reference groups are well resourced and supported.</p> <p>More broadly, the Initiative is committed to expanding stakeholder engagement in governance (by enhancing the role of civil society organizations and non-traditional actors), and facilitating improved communication flows. This will be done in line with the accountability requirements of a</p>

governance structures, including formalizing, expanding and adequately resourcing the civil society reference group structure. Share and expand on good practice models for enhanced civil society organization engagement, including setting budgetary targets, building capacities and facilitating joint and simplified financing and reporting structures to reach grassroots and civil society organizations.	UN Secretary-General Fund as laid out by the Office of Legal Affairs. This requires that all decisions on the strategic direction of the Fund and financial allocations must be made by UN officials consistent with Article 100 of the Charter of the United Nations, limiting the participation of non-UN stakeholders in decision making.
<i>Timeline: 2-3 years</i>	Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat
<p>Sub-recommendation 5a</p> <p>Maintain multisectoral governance bodies, while establishing mechanisms for bi-directional communications and feedback loops across the different levels of governance structures.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Accepted</p> <p>The Initiative will codify communication flows and feedback loops in the respective ToRs of the various governance bodies, and through updates to its Programme and Operations Manual.</p> <p>The Initiative will encourage relevant decisions to be shared between programme and global level governance bodies, as well as among global bodies, including the Advisory Board (responsible for strategic advice), the Operational Steering Committee (responsible for investment planning and programmatic approvals), as well as the Global CS Reference Group (advice and accountability).</p>
<i>Timeline: 2-3 years</i>	<p>Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat with all relevant stakeholders.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">2025</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Implemented</p> <p>Follow-up reporting: Multisectoral governance bodies have been maintained. The Fund 2.0 Terms of Reference includes relevant information on governance structures and communication among governance mechanisms.</p> <p>Throughout 2025, information was shared, as relevant, among governance bodies.</p> <p>The development of the Programme and Operations Manual is underway and is expected to be finalized in Q2 2026. The Manual will further clarify communication flows and feedback loops, building on the respective Terms of Reference of the Initiative's individual governance bodies.</p>	
<p>Sub-recommendation 5b</p> <p>Maintain a focus on civil society organizations as a core component of the design within a mandatory pillar and cutting across all pillars with associated funding targets.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Accepted</p> <p>The Initiative is revising its global results framework. It will retain a dedicated pillar on CSO engagement, and mainstream engagement across all other pillars.</p> <p>Technical and programming guidance will be revised to reinforce focus on civil society.</p>

	<p>Associated funding targets will be maintained, with the Initiative committed to delivering 30-50% of funding to civil society. Advocacy to ensure civil society reference groups are adequately resourced and supported will continue, and guidance on roles and responsibilities will be reinforced.</p> <p>The Initiative will advocate for and, to the extent possible, simplify financing and reporting processes to better engage grassroots groups. These efforts will align with and complement ongoing work of the UN Interagency Task Force for Advancing a UN-wide Funding Framework for Women’s Organisations and Civil Society Organisations and the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan.</p>
<p><i>Timeline: 2-3 years</i></p>	<p>Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat with the Global Civil Society Reference Group, in collaboration on with implementing UN Agencies. By 2025</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Implemented</p> <p>Follow-up reporting: The revised Initiative-wide results framework maintains a dedicated pillar on civil society engagement, while also mainstreaming civil society engagement across all other pillars.</p> <p>Newly revised technical guidance further sets out best practice for CSO engagement as well, including how to deliver Pillar D focused on women’s movements and civil society well, while reinforcing the meaningful engagement of civil society as partners and stakeholders across all aspects of programming.</p> <p>The Initiative has maintained its commitment to directing 30–50 per cent of funding to civil society.</p> <p>Advocacy to ensure civil society reference groups are adequately resourced and supported is ongoing, alongside clearer guidance on roles and responsibilities. The Civil Society National Reference Groups in Liberia, Zambia, Ecuador and Uganda – as well as the Civil Society Global Reference Group – have allocated budgets and workplans.</p> <p>In parallel, the Initiative continues to advocate for and, where feasible, simplify processes to better enable engagement of grassroots organisations. These efforts are aligned with and complement broader UN system-wide initiatives, including the work of the UN Interagency Task Force on an UN-wide Funding Framework. A Framework has been developed and launched.</p>	

<p>Sub-recommendation 5c</p> <p>Work with the Civil Society Global Reference Group (or its equivalent under the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund) to develop and disseminate a good practice compendium, highlighting mechanisms (for example, small grants, human resource development, institutional funding, etc.) to reach a broader group of civil society organizations engaged in EVAWG as implementing partners, including grassroots groups, women’s organizations, and non-traditional partners in line with LNOB principles.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Accepted</p> <p>The Initiative will develop and disseminate a good practice compendium together with the Civil Society Global Reference Group.</p> <p>The compendium will be informed by the findings of the thematic assessment (on the Initiative’s contributions to LNOB, CSO engagement and movement building), insights from the Grassroots Action Plan (GAP), and the recommendations from the 2.0 codesign process.</p> <p>The compendium will highlight mechanisms that have fostered more meaningful engagement with diverse CSOs.</p>
<p><i>Timeline: 2-3 years</i></p>	<p>Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat with the Global Civil Society Reference Group.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Q1 2026</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Implemented</p> <p>Follow-up reporting: While a single good practice compendium on this topic was not developed, the Initiative instead integrated and disseminated good practices on engaging a diverse range of civil society organizations across several products. This approach aimed to embed these lessons within several resources that are widely used and accessed, including the Compendium of Good Practices, the Civil Society 2.0 Co-Design Principles, the Sustainability Report, and in the analysis paper that informed the development of a new UN Funding Framework (that focuses on lessons learned in funding diverse civil society well). These resources have been shared by the Secretariat, the Initiative’s Civil Society Global Reference Group, and others across various fora. Furthermore, and building on this, the Initiative will develop a dedicated brief on the civil society reference group mechanism, including a comparative analysis of the mechanism under the first and second phases of the Initiative, to identify good practices and further strengthen this mechanism going forward.</p>	
<p>Sub-recommendation 5d</p> <p>Identify and share good practice models on civil society organization engagement to promote learning on integrating these approaches across UNCTs and UNDCO guidance and common processes for UNCTs.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Accepted</p> <p>The Initiative will work with key stakeholders, including the Global Civil Society Reference Group and DCO, to share learnings and good practice models for civil society engagement.</p> <p>Learnings will be shared across platforms, including the UNSDG knowledge portal (a one stop shop for RCs and UNCTs).</p> <p>DCO has agreed to disseminate learnings via the UNDSG knowledge portal, while the Initiative will focus on surfacing these.</p>
<p><i>Timeline: 2-3 years</i></p>	<p>Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat with DCO, in consultation with the Global Civil Society Reference Group.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">2025 and beyond</p>

Follow-up reporting: The Initiative has shared good practice models on civil society engagement with Spotlight programmes, interested UN Country Teams (UNCTs), and with the Development Coordination Office (DCO). This has included sharing learning emerging from the Initiative’s Sustainability Report, which highlights lessons on civil society engagement, including the role and value of Civil Society Reference Groups.

Further engagement with DCO to support the integration of these approaches will begin in Q1 2026.

Recommendation 6

Accepted

Develop a holistic funding strategy for consideration of UNSDG to step up joint UN programming at country, regional and global levels for EVAWG and to expand approaches to resource mobilization in line with the Spotlight Initiative comprehensive model, the principals of UN Development System reform and the commitments of the Funding Compact.

Spotlight Initiative will develop a holistic funding strategy to support joint UN programming to end violence against women and girls (EVAWG) at country, regional and global levels.

However, it is important to acknowledge the complexity of the current funding landscape. Securing adequate and sustainable funding for initiatives focused on advancing gender equality and women’s human rights is challenging and, as donor priorities shift further away from human rights and gender-related initiatives, is likely to be even more so.

It is therefore critical to expand collaborative resource mobilization efforts, aligning with the comprehensive Spotlight Initiative model, the principles of UN Development System reform, and the commitments of the Funding Compact.

A coordinated approach will help ensure that gender equality, human rights, and efforts to end violence against women and girls remain at the forefront of global development agendas and receive the attention and resources they urgently require.

Timeline: 2 years

Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat

Sub-recommendation 6a

Accepted

In line with the Spotlight Initiative comprehensive approach, the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat, with engagement of UN entities and in consultation with development partners, should develop a holistic funding strategy to support joint UN programming for EVAWG for the consideration by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG), taking into account:

- I. Models from UN multi-partner trust funds, local trust funds and other mechanisms overseen by the UN Resident Coordinator in line with the principles of UN Development System reform.

Spotlight Initiative will finalize and further disseminate its partnerships strategy, having consulted it widely.

The strategy takes into consideration existing UN multi-partner trust funds and innovative approaches to financing, including leveraging the private sector, to support system-wide response, including institutional and programmatic support to civil society actors.

The strategy will include key performance indicators to measure progress, and considers incentives for inter-agency collaboration, aligned with the comparative advantage of individual agencies.

<p>II. Innovative approaches and linkages with private sector funding for investing “seed money” in middle and higher-income countries with enabling environments (via either global or regional programme reach) to capitalize on opportunities to support fast-tracked good practices that may be replicable in other countries.</p> <p>III. Performance measurement and incentive structures of UN entities to support joint resource mobilization to address complex development challenges including ending VAWG and gender-based violence.</p> <p>IV. The importance of both institutional and programmatic funding for civil society organizations within UN EAWG programming, particularly for grassroots and women’s organizations, recognizing the vital role of civil society in combating VAWG and supporting sustainability and LNOB principles.</p>	
<p><i>Timeline: 2 years</i></p>	<p>Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat, with UN agencies partner governments, multilateral partners, civil society, and global fund secretariats.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Q1 2025</p>
<p>Implemented</p>	
<p>Follow-up reporting: The strategy is now finalized, with inputs received from a diverse group of stakeholders, including member states, UN agency partners, other UN trust funds, international financial institutions (IFIs), and civil society. The strategy focuses on leveraging a mix of bilateral contributions from OECD-DAC and emerging donors, domestic resource mobilization, along with contributions from IFIs and the private sector, with civil society and grassroots organizations remaining at the core of Spotlight Initiative’s work.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 7</p> <p>To further support UN Development System reform objectives, incorporate learning from the operationalization of the Spotlight Initiative to inform UN system-wide and entity-level efforts to harmonize practices and processes to deliver coherent, integrated support and maximize collective results on EAWG at country and regional levels.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Accepted</p> <p>Spotlight Initiative is committed to modelling the principles of UN Development System reform. There is strong momentum for the Initiative to share its learning (on harmonization of operational and programmatic practices and processes, partnership agreements, and technical approaches to drive more coherent and integrated EAWG programming) with the broader system.</p> <p>The Initiative will advocate with UN leadership and entities driving the reforms to integrate these lessons into existing system wide reform efforts (including related groups, processes, guidance,</p>

<p>Key elements for consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The development and dissemination of a good practice compendium to capture Spotlight Initiative learning on harmonizing UN entity-level operations at the country level (for example, joint procurement, collective peer review of terms of reference, joint expressions of interest and calls for proposals, joint trainings for implementing partners, and joint monitoring activities). ii. The envisaged review of the Management and Accountability Framework (2021) and Cooperation Framework Guidance could be entry points to further delineate the accountabilities and responsibilities for UN Resident Coordinators and Heads of Agencies for integrated and joint programming. iii. Future updates to the Guidance Note on a New Generation of Joint Programmes (2022) could include the operational dimensions of programme design and delivery, such as those related to joint procurement, recruitment and financial reporting. iv. Clarifying roles for Resident Coordinator’s Office coordination for integrated programming (with reference to the UN Peacebuilding Fund model and UNSDG Joint Programming Guidance) (action point directed at UNDCO). v. Giving increased attention to programmatic and operational risks, including the potential impact of operational issues associated with the processes and procedures of UN entities, as part of risk management in joint and integrated programmes, particularly programmes to EVAWG where such risks may affect service delivery and support to survivors of violence. 	<p>and frameworks). Operational alignment with existing UNCT tools and processes is essential to improving the Initiative’s efficiency at country level, as well.</p> <p>Actions that Spotlight Initiative together with all key stakeholders, including UNDCO, will collaboratively take forward include the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop and disseminate a good practice compendium highlighting Spotlight Initiative learning (including from this Final Evaluation) on harmonizing UN entity-level operations at the country level. This could include learning on collective peer review of terms of reference, joint expressions of interest and calls for proposals, joint procurement, joint training for implementing partners, and joint monitoring activities. 2. Share the Initiative’s lessons to date via relevant reform processes and forums. This could include UNSDG associated forums and groups working to revise existing UNSDG policy guidance and accountability frameworks on, for example, pooled funds, joint programmes, and cooperation frameworks. This could also include the MAF revision process, the UN-SWAP 3.0 exercise, and through processes related to the implementation of the gender equality acceleration plan (GEAP). 3. Increase attention to programmatic and operational risks, including the potential impact of operational issues associated with the processes and procedures of UN entities, as part of risk management in future Spotlight Initiative programmes.
<p><i>Timeline: 2 years</i></p>	<p>Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat, United Nations Development Coordination Office (UNDCO)</p>

Follow-up reporting: The above actions began in 2025 and continue through 2026. While the UN reform context has evolved significantly since the management response was drafted – culminating in the UN80 reform exercise – the Initiative has proactively engaged in ongoing reform processes to promote the uptake of lessons learned and risk management strategies despite the challenges posed by multiple, parallel consultations and compressed timelines for reform proposals.

1. Good practices on harmonizing UN entity level operations at country level

Spotlight Initiative has shared lessons on streamlining operational processes (in line with the reforms) with new Spotlight programmes (at country and regional level) through programme inception webinars and guidance. These lessons, including concrete examples, have also been disseminated at the global level, including contributions to UN reports and reform processes. In addition, the Initiative’s recently launched Sustainability Report captures the transformative potential of One UN approaches, including good practices on harmonizing UN operations and the importance of the RC’s leadership in delivering lasting change. The Initiative will continue to leverage the report’s findings to inform broader discussions on improved programming and operational coherence. Relatedly, the Initiative has developed “Ways of Working” (WoW) metrics to track alignment with UN reform objectives and inform improved operational processes at country and regional levels.

2. Sharing lessons through relevant UN reform processes

The Initiative has maintained active engagement with UNDCO – including through DCO 2.0 consultations focused on DCO HQ and RCO reconfiguration – to promote the Spotlight model and lessons learned. The Initiative has also contributed to UN80 Action Plan Working Streams, including for the pooled funding review, sharing evidence, framing, and talking points with review group leads. Additionally, the Initiative has engaged with the Secretariat of the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan (GEAP) highlighting how the Initiative’s model can offer a blueprint to operationalize the GEAP. In Q1 2026, the Spotlight Secretariat will aim to inform key reform processes, including revisions to the Cooperation Framework guidance and other forthcoming UNSDG guidance.

3. Programmatic and operational risk management

Spotlight programmes are guided to systematically identify and manage a broad range of risks, including financial, operational, and contextual risks. Programmes are required to develop risk matrices aligned with recipient UN agency procedures and to update them regularly, with increased attention to monitoring, mitigating, and managing identified risks.

Recommendation 8

Embed the comprehensive Spotlight Initiative approach to EVAWG (‘Spotlight Standard’) into the implementation of the UN System-Wide Gender Equality Acceleration Plan (2024), UN-SWAP (entity level) and the UNCT-SWAP (country level) and other common UN Development System processes such as common country analyses and UN cooperation frameworks to serve as driving forces for collective UN work to prioritize a comprehensive approach

Spotlight Initiative – together with all key actors – will work to embed relevant components of its comprehensive model to EVAWG into applicable UN system-wide processes and frameworks. These could include processes to implement the UN System-Wide Gender Equality Acceleration Plan (2024), processes to revise the UN-SWAP and UNCT-SWAP, and other common processes, such as the development of the UN common country analysis (CCA) and the UN Cooperation Frameworks (the latter two as primary entry points for UNCT action on ending violence against women and girls).

Accepted

<p>to EVAWG. This will support extended geographical reach and coverage of comprehensive EVAWG programming across the UN development system and expand resource mobilization opportunities.</p> <p>Key Opportunities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The development of a branded “Spotlight Standard” for UNCT comprehensive approaches to EVAWG to provide benchmarks to support processes needed for UN EVAWG integrated programming, working within existing tools and mandatory processes for UNCTs, including common country analyses, UNSDCFs, and linking to UNCT-SWAP requirements. ii. The development of capacity-building initiatives of UNCTs to support integration of the Spotlight Standard in common country analyses and UNSDCFs for an integrated UN system approach reinforced by linkages to UNCT-SWAP requirements. iii. The establishment of linkages to embed the Spotlight Initiative model and standards into UN systems to implement the UN System-Wide Gender Equality Acceleration Plan such as 1.3. coordinated and joint activities result in the reversal of systemic gender inequality across all sectors; 2.2. adoption of entity plans to operationalize the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan; 3.3. biennial gender equality reviews of UN activities with the UN leadership in all UN Member States. <p>The articulation and integration of a Spotlight Standard into new iterations or updates of mandatory gender accountability frameworks for the UN, specifically the UN-SWAP (entity-level framework) and the UNCT-SWAP (country-level framework).</p>	<p>By doing so, the Initiative can help expand evidence-based, comprehensive EVAWG programming globally, strengthen system wide coherence and coordination across UN entities to do the same, and create new opportunities for resource mobilization to collectively address VAWG. It can also further inform the UN reforms (as detailed further above in the response to Recommendation 7), by highlighting how coordinated processes, operational efficiencies, and RC leadership drive better programming to end violence against women and girls and results.</p> <p>To take this recommendation forward, the Initiative will build on and learn from existing successful evidence-based interventions and continue to advocate with a wide-range of UN actors and bodies to embed this approach.</p> <p>Actions that Spotlight Initiative together with all key stakeholders, including UN DCO and UN Women, will collaboratively take forward include the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Share key elements of the Initiative’s model with UNCTs through an advocacy document to help promote a comprehensive approach to EVAWG at country level. 2. Continue to advocate with a wide-range of UN actors and bodies to embed this approach, including into updates or revisions of gender accountability frameworks such as the UN-SWAP (entity-level framework) and the UNCT-SWAP (country-level framework). 3. Develop benchmarks for UN EVAWG integrated programming and reflect these in existing analyses, tools, and common processes for UNCTs, including common country analyses, the development of UN cooperation frameworks, and relevant requirements or actions related to implementing the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan (2024). As relevant, other entry points can be considered, as well. 4. Design capacity-building initiatives to help UNCTs to integrate this approach in common country process and programming. 5. Consider further opportunities for collaboration with the UN System Staff College (building on the Initiative’s previous engagement) as another entry point to embed or institutionalize relevant elements of the Initiative’s model (including its participatory approach to monitoring, evaluation and reporting).
<p><i>Timeline: 2 -3 years</i></p>	<p>Action Lead: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat in consultation with: UNDCO, UN Women (UN System Coordination Division)</p>

Follow-up reporting:**1. Share key elements of the Initiative's model with UNCTs**

In 2025, key elements of the Initiative's model were consolidated and shared with Spotlight programmes and interested UN Country Teams (UNCTs) through targeted briefings, guidance, webinars, and technical support. These efforts – together with others – supported the roll out of comprehensive, evidence-based programming to end VAWG at country level.

2. Advocate for embedding the Initiative's approach across the UN System

The Initiative maintained active engagement with a wide range of UN actors to promote uptake of its model, including through system-wide accountability and coordination mechanisms, such as the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan (GEAP). Regular coordination with UN DCO has supported orientation of the RC system toward this approach, as well. The Initiative has also provided advice, evidence, framing, and talking points to UN80 reform processes and directly to the RC system to encourage uptake of its model.

3. Develop and reflect benchmarks for integrated UN EAWG programming

Progress was made in developing benchmarks and good practice for integrated UN programming to end VAWG. The Initiative developed “Ways of Working” (WoW) metrics to track alignment with UN reform objectives and improve alignment with reform objectives (including more integrated, coherent programming at country level). As noted above, in Q1 2026, the Spotlight Secretariat will aim to inform key reform processes, including revisions to the Cooperation Framework and forthcoming UNSDG guidance, for more integrated and coherent EAWG programming aligned with the Initiative's model.

4. Capacity-building for UNCTs

The Initiative continued to design and deliver capacity-building webinars to support Spotlight programmes and interested UNCTs in rolling out the Initiative's model of comprehensive EAWG programming. Through concept note development and inception webinars, over 190 UN colleagues from country and regional teams received tools and guidance on conducting intersectional situational analysis to inform comprehensive EAWG programmes and broader UNCT action.

5. Collaboration with UN system learning platforms

In parallel, the Initiative continued to explore opportunities to further institutionalize elements of its model – including participatory monitoring, evaluation, and reporting– through engagement with UN system learning platforms, including ongoing collaboration with the UN System Staff College.