

# Spotlight Initiative

**FINAL NARRATIVE PROGRAMME REPORT**

**PROGRAMME TITLE:  
SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE - MALAWI**

**PROGRAMME DURATION:  
JANUARY 2019-DECEMBER 2023**

**REPORTING PERIOD: 2019-2023**



<p><b>Programme Title &amp; Programme Number</b></p>	<p><b>Priority regions/areas/localities for the programme</b></p>
<p><b>Programme Title:</b> Spotlight Initiative Country Programme for Malawi</p> <p><b>MPTF Office Project Reference Number:</b> 00111640</p>	<p>Nationwide with a particular focus on six districts (Mzimba, Nkhata Bay, Ntchisi, Dowa, Nsanje and Machinga). Selection was based on performance and key indicators, as well as presence of other programmes and UN organizations.</p>
<p><b>Recipient Organization(s)</b></p>	<p><b>Key Partners</b></p>
<p><b>UNDP</b> - United Nations Development Programme  <b>UNFPA</b> - United Nations Population Fund  <b>UNICEF</b> - United Nations Children's Fund  <b>UN WOMEN</b> - United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.</p>	<p><b>UN Agencies: UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN WOMEN</b> <b>Government:</b> Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare, Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour, Youth Sports and Manpower Development, Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Malawi Police.  <b>Associated Agencies:</b> UNAIDS, UNESCO, UNHCR <b>CSO Partners (during 2021):</b> 39 CSOs: 22 are national CSOs, 12 are community-based organisations, and 5 are international CSOs  <b>Others:</b> Media, Academia, traditional leaders</p>
<p><b>Programme Cost (US\$)</b></p>	<p><b>Programme Start and End Dates</b></p>
<p><b>Total Budget as per the Spotlight CPD/RPD:</b> 30,115,741.00 USD</p> <p><b>Total Spotlight funding from the EU:</b> 28,571,430 USD</p> <p><b>Agency Contribution:</b> 1,544,311 USD</p> <p><b>Spotlight Funding and Agency Contribution by Agency:</b></p>	<p><b>Start Date:</b> (01.01.2019)</p> <p><b>End Date [as approved by the NSC]:</b> (30.12.2023)</p>



<b>Name of RUNO</b>	<b>Spotlight (USD)</b>	<b>UN Agency Contributions (USD)</b>
UNDP	<b>7,163,251.00</b>	<b>620,000</b>
UNICEF	<b>5,941,806.00</b>	<b>326,937</b>
UNFPA	<b>7,409,246.00</b>	<b>460,814</b>
UN Women	<b>8,057,127.00</b>	<b>136,560</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>28,571,430.00</b>	<b>1,544,311</b>

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## Acronyms List

<b>ADC:</b>	Area Development Committee
<b>AGYW:</b>	Adolescent Girls and Young Women
<b>CBO:</b>	Community Based Organisation
<b>CCPJ:</b>	Child Care, Justice, and Protection Act
<b>CMS:</b>	Case Management System
<b>COP:</b>	Community of Practice
<b>CSE:</b>	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
<b>CPW:</b>	Child Protection Worker
<b>CPD:</b>	Caring for Persons with Disability
<b>CSNRG:</b>	Civil Society National Reference Group
<b>CSO:</b>	Civil Society Organisation
<b>CVSU:</b>	Community Victim Support Unit
<b>DaO:</b>	Delivering as One
<b>DDP:</b>	District Development Plans
<b>DEC:</b>	District Executive Councils
<b>DPDs:</b>	Directors of Planning and Development
<b>ESP:</b>	Essential Services Package
<b>EUD:</b>	European Union Delegation
<b>ETR:</b>	End Term Review
<b>FGD:</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>EVAWG:</b>	Ending Violence Against Women and Girls
<b>FSWA:</b>	Female Sex Workers Association
<b>GBV:</b>	Gender Based Violence
<b>GBVIMS:</b>	Gender Based Violence Information Management System
<b>GoM:</b>	Government of Malawi
<b>GRB:</b>	Gender Responsive Budgeting
<b>GRL:</b>	Gender Related Laws
<b>GTWG:</b>	Gender Technical working Group
<b>GVH:</b>	Group Village Headmen
<b>HIV:</b>	Human Immo-deficiency Virus
<b>HLI:</b>	Higher Learning Institutions
<b>HOA:</b>	Heads of Agencies
<b>HP:</b>	Harmful Practice
<b>IMTF:</b>	Inter Ministerial Task Force
<b>IP:</b>	Implementing Partner
<b>IWD:</b>	International Women's Day
<b>JoL:</b>	Journey of Life
<b>LGBTIQ:</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Questioning
<b>LNOB:</b>	Leaving No One Behind
<b>MHRC:</b>	Malawi Human Rights Commission
<b>MHPSS:</b>	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services

## Executive Summary

The Spotlight Initiative (SI) Malawi throughout was implemented as Delivering as One (DaO) and an example of the United Nations (UN) Reform in practice under the leadership of the United Nations Resident Coordinator. Funded by the European Union (EU) to a tune of \$28,000,000, the programme was a unique example for commitment by the donor to end violence against women and girls (EVAWG). The role of Government in the implementation of SI was critical, with two-line ministries, the MoGCDSW and the MoLG. The MoLG was an important partner in ensuring the sustainability of the SI by mandating and empowering district and traditional authorities to steer the programme at the local level. Their active role was critical to ensure sustainability of the programme interventions as well as to anchor the SI in Malawi.

### Spotlight Initiative's Response

Four United Nations Agencies, the Recipient United Nations Organizations (RUNOs), namely UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, and UN Women, collaborated closely to achieve the joint vision to EVAWG and apply a multi-faceted approach. Furthermore, the UN agencies partnered with an extensive network of over 50 SI stakeholders, which included over 39 Civil Society Organizations. This approach highlights the indispensable role of civil societies as partners. The role of CSOs and their ownership was further enhanced by the establishment and work with the Civil Society National Reference Group (CS-NRG). The spirit of the LNOB Principle, which was consistently woven into the fabric of the SI partnerships, remained a driving force behind the Programme's interventions and processes.

### Key Results from Across the Years

Under **pillar 1** SI in Malawi advocated for and achieved significant advancements in the legal and policy framework aimed at safeguarding women and girls from violence. The taskforce on law reform co-chaired by the Ministry of Justice and MGCDSW reviewed and drafted a total of five prioritized laws and two policies- This led to the successful amendment of the Penal Code, passed by parliament in 2023 which was pivotal in addressing gaps related to the age of a child and sexual offenses against children and individuals with developmental disabilities. Under pillar 2 “**Institutions**”, the implementation of SI in Malawi brought about notable positive changes at national, district and community structures. By enhancing the capacities of various stakeholders and community members to respond effectively to Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), particularly SGBV and child marriage cases change took place at all levels.

**Under pillar 3**, there was significant shifts of gender equitable social norms, attitudes and behaviours. As a result of both in and out of school interventions, male engagement interventions and transformational work with the chiefs, there was improved knowledge and awareness about VAWG and existing services in the impact communities.

The safe space program **under pillar 3** proved significant in the reduction of GBV and improving access to services for women and adolescent girls. SI played a vital role **under pillar 4** in improving the quality and accessibility of SRHR services. The programme followed up on a substantial number of VAWG cases, leading to the annulment of numerous child marriages. It provided essential SRHR services to AGYW, marginalized adolescent girls, young mothers, and hence restoring the dignity of women. Additionally, the programme supported the economic empowerment of survivors for long-term recovery and re-integration.

In Malawi, SI played a crucial role in establishing a harmonized system for collecting and managing data related to SGBV and Harmful Practices (HPs) **under pillar 5**. Key stakeholders in data management established National and District Data Observatory Hubs to manage internationally comparable and disaggregated data on SGBV, HPs, and SRHR from the six SI districts. **Under Pillar 6**, SI in Malawi facilitated the formation and strengthening of six district-wide women's movements, each led by a steering committee consisting of women's rights activists. These movements played a central role in organizing activism events, engaging traditional leaders to address VAWG issues, sending girls back to school and promoting positive gender norms in their communities.

## Lessons Learnt

SI registered several lessons that can support implementation of future ERAW interventions. Implementing using already existing government structures is key to sustainability of any intervention as the structures will continue with the interventions after program closure. It was also discovered that registering women's groups/ movements with relevant district offices is key to sustaining their work and driving change as they would be key reference point for any ERAW related work in their communities beyond the lifespan of the SI. In addition, it was noted that developing standardized data collection tools enhances coordination and lessens the burden on survivors in regard to repetitive reporting.

## Challenges

During the inception of the program, the absence of economic educational and psycho-social support for girls withdrawn from child marriages posed a big challenge but these survivors were incorporated and prioritised in the survivor and community fund interventions under pillar 4. Additionally, the capacity of IPs, particularly Community Based Organisations were some of the notable challenges that affected the implementation of the initiative, to combat this challenge, Spotlight Initiative Malawi continuously provided capacity building trainings to build the capacity of community-based organisations for them to respond to the needs of SGBV survivors.

## Contextual Shifts and Implementation Status

Malawi remains a low-income country, one of the poorest countries in the world, and one of the most densely populated. The World Bank Poverty Assessment Report (2022) finds that just over half the Malawian population (50.7%) are poor-almost no change compared to a decade ago. Due to poverty and dire economic situations, women and girls living in poverty are more vulnerable to sexual exploitation, including trafficking. In addition, due to poverty and no economic options, women and girls who experience domestic or intimate partner violence have fewer options to leave violent relationships, due to lack of income and resources as well as a lack of existence of safe spaces and shelters. The economic situation also continues to be one of the major contributing factors to high incidences of child marriages in the country, where 46.7 % of girls get married before the age of 18. Malawi's pre-term birth rate is the highest in the world, at 13 %<sup>1</sup>.

A contextual shift in Malawi included the Parliament's vote to pass a Penal Code Amendment Bill (#26), which decriminalised consensual sexual relationships in workplaces. While there are other clauses in the Penal code that can ensure access to justice by survivors of sexual harassment, women's rights activists criticised the decision by Parliament, which was said to have been passed under pressure by men. In view this, the SI supported the development and validation of the Sexual Harassment Policy for the Public Sector services which is currently under use.

In 2020, most SI interventions were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The implementation of the programme delayed due to difficulties in accessing communities, the preoccupation of government counterparts, and concerns that SI interventions which brought together participants could contribute to the spread of COVID-19. The Covid-19 pandemic led to a situation in which government restrictions categorised other SGBV services as non-essential. The most impacted were schools, community victim support units, community policing units and child protection services. Furthermore, a lot of women and girls lost their source of livelihood due to restrictions of small-scale businesses. This led to a 150% increase in child marriages, child rape and an increase in gender-based violence cases being reported by the Malawi Police Service Annual Report of 2020.

During the implementation phase the prices of goods and services increased. For instance, in 2021, the price of fuel increased by more than 20%<sup>2</sup>, leading to price hikes in essential goods and services across the country, including fuel, cooking oil, and fertilisers. The devaluation of the Kwacha by 25% in 2022 was intended to stabilise dwindling foreign currency reserves and return to a market-determined exchange rate regime. However, inflation soared and reached 27% by October, compared to 10% in October 2021.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> UNICEF Situation Report, 2023

<sup>2</sup> MERA, Review of Prices of Petrol, Diesel and Paraffin for the month of October 2021

<sup>3</sup> UNDP Policy Brief: [https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-04/Policy%20Brief%20Summary\\_1.pdf](https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-04/Policy%20Brief%20Summary_1.pdf)

The costs of cooking oil and fertiliser doubled, and petrol and diesel prices increased at least twice during that year. High inflation affected women and girls disproportionately as the primary caregivers and providers of food in the family. For girls, those development and higher levels of poverty also posed a higher risk of being withdrawn from school and forced to marry at an early age in order to reduce household costs.

In early 2022, Malawi was hit by tropical Storm Ana and Cyclone Gombe and recently in 2023, Malawi was hit by Cyclone Freddy. According to the Malawi 2023 Tropical Cyclone Freddy Post Disaster Needs Assessment, approximately 2,267,458 people were affected and 679 people were killed with over 530 people declared missing, 1,308,064 affected were women and girls of reproductive age and approximately 100,297 were expectant women. The disasters exacerbated levels of poverty, pre-existing gender inequalities and caused disproportionate impacts on food security, health, education, social protection, livelihoods, infrastructure (including schools) and the overall physical and mental wellbeing of women and girls. Of the seven most affected districts, two were SI districts, namely Nsanje and Machinga. In Nsanje District, more than 659,278 people were relocated to temporary camps; among them approximately 336,252 were women. Forced to share latrines, and with little privacy, women and girls were at heightened risk of violence.

Adolescent girls were particularly affected due to limited access to education and Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) services. Floodwaters and electricity blackouts impacted these services, with the vast majority of health facilities unable to provide any services at all in turn increasing the vulnerability of adolescent girls to teenage pregnancies.

In March 2022, a cholera outbreak was declared in Malawi. By February 2023, a total of 36 943 cases, including 1210 deaths, were reported from all 29 districts in Malawi (overall case fatality rate (CFR) 3.3%) with active transmission ongoing in 27 of 29 districts.<sup>4</sup> This continued to overburden the health facilities, which often have limited facilities, as well as limited medication. Although the cholera outbreak affected men disproportionately, women and girls were facing increased risks of contracting cholera as with work as the primary caregivers.

While contextual developments required mitigation strategies, sustainability has been mainstreamed throughout programme implementation. Throughout the implementation period, the Malawi SI team accelerated its efforts around sustainability of the programme interventions. In-depth sustainability consultations were undertaken in all SI districts in close collaboration with SI Line Ministries, and with emphasis on obtaining inputs and recommendations from beneficiaries at community level. The findings of the consultations allowed the Malawi team to develop a sustainability strategy that was anchored within the communities, developed as part of the phase II Programme proposal.

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<sup>4</sup> WHO Disease Outbreak News 2022; <https://www.who.int/emergencies/disease-outbreak-news/item/2022-DON435>

## **Programme Governance and Coordination**

Programme governance and coordination played a crucial role in ensuring the successful implementation of SI interventions. Effective governance structures and coordination mechanisms helped to streamline efforts, align stakeholders' actions, and monitor progress towards achieving the desired outcomes. Evaluating the progress of implementation by outcome areas indicates significant advancements in most areas. However, some areas would enquire further attention and resources to meet the set targets.

### **A. National Steering Committee**

Throughout the implementation of the project, the SI team prioritised the strengthening of technical level governance mechanisms and government ownership. The National Steering Committee (NSC) officially met 4 times throughout the programme implementation phase. In addition, several meetings took place between the Co-Chairs, namely, the UN RC and the Minister of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare to discuss SI progress, challenges and the way forward. The National Steering Committee as part of the continuity of their existence, have been actively involved in the development of the successor programme which intends to leverage the existing governing structure. The UN, European Union (EU) and the SI Line Ministries undertook several joint missions throughout the project years to monitor implementation of SI Interventions on the ground. These missions proved highly strategic regarding joint advocacy for social behaviour change at all levels.

### **B. Inter-agency coordination, technical committees and other governance mechanisms**

The primary multilateral coordination mechanism for the SI Malawi was the **Inter-Ministerial-Taskforce (IMTF)**. Membership of the IMTF included several ministries, quasi-governmental entities, local authorities, the EU, UN and representatives of the Civil Society National Reference Group (CSNRG). This broad membership base was chosen in order to further strengthen the multidimensional nature of the SI, while enhancing national and local ownership in an efficient manner and ensure sustainability of the programme implementation by leveraging on already existing structures under the various government ministries and civil society organisations. Furthermore, the membership was broadened in order as a manifestation of the UN Agenda of Leave No Behind. The IMTF met at least once a year and undertook strategic discussions, resulting in important decisions regarding course direction of the SI. In the meetings, usually, the six SI district authorities presented progress updates, highlighted challenges in implementation. The meeting allowed district authorities to illustrate their leadership of the Programme, advocate for scaling up best practices, and brainstorm around how to resolve recurring challenges. The IMTF meetings also included relevant topics along the programme cycle- such as a presentation of the way forward in the last IMTF meeting that took place in June 2023.

In line with this the IMTF agreed on the SI's best practices that could be prioritised for continuation, including through targeted resource mobilisation and the design of an exit strategy. Furthermore, the IMTF agreed on key aspects related to the IMTF's operationalisation (meeting frequency, objectives, etc.).

At National level, SI was accountable to the National Gender Forum where quarterly progress reports were presented and solutions to gaps in programme implementation were mapped. At district level, the **SI Communities of Practice** remained a constant feature of the Programme. The COPs were instrumental in ensuring local ownership and engaging marginalised and rural communities- in keeping with the principle of LNOB. At district level the SI COP reported to the gender technical working groups (GTWG) which pre-existed in all SI targeted districts and are coordinated by the Ministry of Gender, as a standing agenda item, as well as to the District Executive Committees (DEC) through the GTWG. Members of the SI engaged in several GTWG meetings at both national and district levels. During the national GTWG meetings, SI was often invited to present its progress.

### **C) Civil Society National Reference Groups (CSNRG)**

SI Malawi worked with the CSNRG, a group of 10 experts (5 males, 5 females) on different topics related to Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG), SRHR and the Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) Principle. With the aim to ensure an inclusive and diverse group and promote the LNOB agenda, the membership of the group included women and girls with disabilities, marginalized women and girls, women and girls in rural communities, female sex workers and representatives of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Questioning (LGBTIQ) community. Throughout SI implementation period, CSNRG members attended 3 IMTF and 3 NSC meetings. These served as a platform for the CSNRG to engage with stakeholders and discuss programmatic progress and bottlenecks. It also provided an opportunity for CSNRG members to give strategic recommendations to enhance SI's impact and programme delivery. Despite some challenges that were encountered during implementation, to ensure their meaningful engagement, the CSNRG members were positioned to facilitate strategic discussions during the meetings. In addition, CSNRG representatives joined the SI monthly core team meetings as well as quarterly pillar coordination meetings. The participation of the CSNRG in these meetings was important to keep abreast of programmatic developments as well as to provide their insights on the same. For instance the CSNRG played a vital role in providing strategic recommendation addressing experienced gaps including the Covid-19 mitigation. In addition, there were instrumental in bringing forth current trends/ emerging issues for SI programming consideration.

## D) Use of UN Reform inter-agency tools

The SI Malawi team used the Delivering as One (DaO) Accountability Framework to measure and track progress on the cohesive and integrated delivery of SI. Having rolled out the framework in 2020, the Malawi SI core team had a mutual understanding on how to ensure the implementation of a joint programme approach, in line with UN Reform. This common understanding allowed the SI coordination unit to guide the inter-agency team, based on the milestones and targets established under the results framework which led to the development of a joint SOP for the recruitment of IPs, and maximisation of resources and prevented wasted efforts through joint implementation and monitoring. The Inter Agency principle of delivery ensured the adoption of common process to deliver frontline services, coordinated and built around the needs of women and girls.

## Programme Partnerships

### a) Government

In Malawi, SI partnered with the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare (MoGCDSW) and the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG) as its lead ministries. This dual leadership proved to be strategic, with the MoGCDSW acting as convener for other Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDA)s at the national level. At the same time the MoLG steered programme delivery in the six SI districts. Both of the ministries conducted regular monitoring visits, including high-level visits involving the Minister and Deputy Minister of the MoGCDSW and MoLG, respectively. At district level, Directors of Planning and Development (DPDs) were positioned to lead GTWGs, mobilise communities, chair SI Communities of Practice, and build capacities of local governance structures (e.g. ADCs, VDCs, Chief's Councils) in close collaboration with District Gender Officers. In addition to SI's Line Ministries, several other MDAs were engaged in the SI's implementation, in reflection of the multi-dimensional nature of the SI. The following MDAs were partners of SI and contributed, among other elements, on the following aspects:

**Ministry of Education (MoE):** The MoE supported school bursaries for survivors, supported school re-enrolment and retention of girls in 110 schools at district level for survivors of violence and teenage pregnancy.

**Ministry of Justice (MoJ):** The MoJ acted as co-lead of law reform task force and in support of DNA Forensic analysis training in SGBV matters.

**Ministry of Health (MoH):** The MoH partners with SI in ensuring access to SRHR and quality service delivery, as well as the development of a Mental Health and Psychosocial support (MHPSS) manual for schools during the COVID-19 pandemic period.

**Judiciary:** Si collaborated with the judiciary with field deployments and forensic analysis training for prosecution of SGBV cases.

**National Statistics Office (NSO):** The NSO was the lead and convenor of the SI SGBV Data Observatory hub and 6 district SGBV data hubs.

**Malawi Police Service:** The Malawi Police was a key SI Partner for service delivery and ensuring access to justice for survivors of violence.

**Malawi Human Rights Commission (MHRC):** The MHRC supported SI in capacitating police investigators with gender and human rights-based approaches in SGBV cases.

**National Council for Higher Learning (NCHL):** The NCHL supported the validation of the gender and anti-sexual harassment policies for 22 universities.

The engagement of this wide array of government entities ensured substantial national ownership, which in turn contributed to the continuity and sustainability of the results achieved under the Programme.

## **b) Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)**

Civil Society was a key partner for SI in Malawi. The SI was designed to safeguard full and transparent engagement with civil society throughout the programme cycle as implementing partners and as advisors, for instance as members of the CSNRG. Engagement of CSOs, which included women led and grassroots organizations, was critical and helped strengthened sustainability prospects. In addition, CSOs played a vital role to provide accountability mechanisms. One of the biggest challenges experienced with CSO as implementing partners was the limited capacities, especially of grassroots organizations, in programme management, including financial management, results-based monitoring and reporting, as well as programme design. As a result, capacity building of CSOs in programme management had been identified as a focus area for Recipient United Nations Organization (RUNOs) during phase II of the SI.

## **c) European Union Delegation**

The EUD has been a key partner throughout the Spotlight programme in Malawi, regularly participating in monthly core team meetings as well as quarterly pillar coordination meetings. Representatives from the EU also attended key SI high-level events, including commemorations, launches, workshops and multi-lateral meetings. These engagements helped strengthen communication and knowledge exchange between the EUD and the programme, and improved insight in SI progress and bottlenecks. By participating closely in the programme's work, the EUD was also better able to provide strategic recommendations for the advancement of the Spotlight programme.

#### **d) Cooperation with other (non-RUNO) UN agencies**

Throughout the years, besides working with RUNOs, SI collaborated with UN agencies that were not formally partners of SI. The UN agencies include UNAIDS, UNHCR, UNESCO and WHO. The level of engagement and cooperation varied from programme implementation, technical support to review and the provision of strategic guidance. The collaborations include the following aspects:

- SI collaboration with UNESCO centred around the training of both in-and out-of-school youths on Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE).
- The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) played a key role in the development and validation of SI supported 'Male Engagement Strategy', which was validated in 2022. UNAIDS was also an important partner to SI in advancing work under pillar 2 by mainstreaming HIV/AIDS into District Development Plans.
- SI collaborated with the World Health Organization (WHO) in holding the National GTWG meetings, a forum for coordination of gender and gender-based violence (GBV) interventions. Through the GTWG coordinated planning, review and implementation of gender-related interventions in Malawi was supported.
- SI continuously collaborated with UNHCR in line with the humanitarian response, for instance on the prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in Dzaleka Refugee Camp.

#### **e) Other Partners**

The Media was an instrumental ally of SI in promoting the elimination of harmful social norms, attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate VAWG. SI led the development and launch of a '**Survivor Centred Reporting Media Handbook**' in close collaboration with the MoGCDSW, Ministry of Information (MoI), Polytechnic University (Department of Journalism), Association of Women in Media Malawi, the Media Institute for Southern Africa Malawi Chapter, and the Malawi Police Service (MPS) (Public Relations Officers (PROs)). This followed an extensive training for journalists and Police Reporting Officers (PROs) in survivor centred reporting from across the country.

In rolling out policies against SGBV and sexual harassment, SI partnered with academia, namely **22 Universities**, through the National Council for Higher Learning (NCHE) to develop a Gender Policy for Tertiary Institutions. NCHE is currently enforcing this policy direction by directing that all higher learning institutions establish an implementation committee to oversee the effectiveness of the policy and implementation of the same.

SI build partnerships with people of influence to change norms and harmful practices across the country. This included a collaboration with Dancehall and Afro Pop Artist Eli Njuchi who joined SI in battling toxic masculinities. The work with traditional leaders and their spouses as advocates who speak out to EVAWG, is another important component in the work with people of influence.

SI was considered a key partner for other development partners and a resource related to EVAWG in the country. As a result, the World Bank featured SI prominently in its report on GBV in Malawi. The SI team was invited to present its best practices and provide recommendations to bridge the gap to ending VAWG in Malawi during a high-level panel discussion.

## **Results**

### **A. Capturing Broader Transformations Across Outcomes**

#### **Positioning VAWG on the Political Agenda**

Malawi's chairpersonship of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) in 2021 provided a unique opportunity to influence the region's approach towards gender mainstreaming and EVAWG. Making use of this strategic opportunity, SI supported the Malawi Government in its role in reviewing the SADC Gender Mainstreaming Resource Kit, with specific guidance on GBV and child marriage. This helped position VAWG on the political agenda not only in Malawi but also in the SADC region and beyond.

#### **Gender and EVAWG Responsive District and Village Development Plans**

Through SI's efforts, EVAWG has successfully been mainstreamed into District and Village Development Plans as well as Village Development Plans (DDPs and VDPs). This integration was achieved through capacity building of GTWG members, Area Development Committees (ADCs), and Traditional Leaders (TLs). To date, three districts finalized their gender-responsive DDPs, aligning them with the 10-year 'Malawi Vision 2063 Implementation Plan' (MIP-1) for sustainability.

#### **Legal and Justice Support**

Under pillars 2 and 5 of SI, legal and justice actors, including the Police and the Judiciary, received capacity building to handle cases of VAWG. Additionally, strategic documents like the 'Service Standing Orders' and the 'DNA Standard Operating Procedures' were developed to protect the rights of survivors and provide for their safety.

#### **Shifts in Attitudes, Perceptions, and Beliefs**

With Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PME), a cornerstone of the Malawi SI, the SI Secretariat regularly sought feedback from women, girls, and their communities on what they believed was working to EVAWG. The findings of these consultations<sup>5</sup>, consistently showed

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<sup>5</sup> For instance the joint IP assessments and the sustainability consultations, described in more detail under the next section on Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PME),

that VAWG was viewed as a criminal offence that hinders developmental progress. In particular, respondents noted that prior to SI, Harmful Cultural Practices were seen as an important part of culture and communities protected their application. Through partnering with community-based organizations, amplifying the voices of female activists and local leaders, this perception has since the implementation of SI been changing for example there was increased reporting in HP cases including child marriage cases and the support for community level transformation of social norms and practices. It was further noted that SI showcased that harmful cultural practices can be modified and harmful elements can be removed. The role of traditional leaders was particularly instrumental in these circumstances.

## **Child Marriage**

Child marriage was addressed comprehensively across all pillars of the SI program. This included prevention, identification, referral mechanisms, and support to survivors. Data on child marriages has been collected through the Data Observatory Hub which continues to be instrumental in evidence-based programming and decision-making. The DOH report indicates that in the six SI districts a total of 229 survivors of child marriages receiving services by the end of 2023.

## **Empowerment of Rural Women and Girls**

The majority of the SI program's beneficiaries were rural women and girls. District authorities played a crucial role in directing SI interventions to hard-to-reach areas based on community needs. SI provided among others, education opportunities, mentorship, access to information, SRHR services and entrepreneurship skills through collective economic groups. To enhance access to services for rural women and girls, infrastructure considerations were critical and the distribution of motorbikes and bicycles to frontline service providers was strategic in-service delivery to those areas.

## **Mainstreaming Disability**

Disability was mainstreamed throughout the six pillars of the SI program. This integration included the development of scorecards and data collection tools to ensure a comprehensive VAWG response for women and girls with disabilities. It also involved provision of disability aids, inclusive service delivery, mainstreaming disability in district development plans, awareness raising, community sensitization, and the engagement of women and girls with disabilities as rights holders. The safe space mentorship program prioritized the LNOB Principle by actively including girls and young women with disabilities. This program played a pivotal role in identifying and addressing cases of violence, marginalization, and issues affecting girls and women with disabilities, as well as other marginalized groups.

## Age and Sex-Disaggregated Data on VAWG

The SI's investment in the Data Observatory Hub (OH) advanced VAWG data management, enabling evidence-based planning and programming. This digitized system tracks and monitors trends and patterns of VAWG, SGBV/HP, and SRHR, enhancing accountability and improving access to justice for survivors.

## Movement and Cross-Movement Building

The SI's Theory of Change included a dedicated pillar for movement building (pillar 6). However, movement building had been mainstreamed under SI Malawi, and took place across multiple pillars. Through the collaboration with diverse stakeholders, including traditional leaders, youth- especially young women, male allies, community structures, and women's economic empowerment groups, contributed to movement building and an advancement of EVAWG beyond district levels.

## Leave No One Behind

The principle of "Leave No One Behind" has been implemented throughout SI interventions by targeting marginalized and vulnerable populations, including women and girls with disabilities, those living with or affected by HIV/AIDS, Female Sex Workers, and those women and girls in remote rural and hard-to-reach areas. As a result, the program made strides in creating a protective network of sex workers and mainstreaming disability across all its pillars.

### ***Implementation of Participatory Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (PMER).***

- Participatory Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (PMER) has been a salient feature of the SI from the programme's inception and design phase to the end. This principle ensures the deliberate inclusion of beneficiary voices and perspectives in the programme's implementation through various approaches and tools.
- One such approach was the regular multi-stakeholder monitoring visits of programme interventions. These were conducted by both district and national stakeholders and included community feedback sessions. This provided an entry point to gather community insights on how to strengthen interventions and learn about challenges. The main methodology applied was Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) divided by age and sex to ensure maximum participation and avoid power imbalances. The sessions enhanced ownership by beneficiaries and empowered them to lead and support community efforts to EVAWG.

- At district level, the SI Malawi's innovative COPs served as an inclusive governance structure that added to SI PMER objectives. In Machinga, for example, the COP was decentralized from the district to the Traditional Authority (TA) level, whereby communities organized themselves in a forum that closely monitored SI interventions. Members were comprised of IPs, community leaders and members, and programme beneficiaries. Members reported to the forum during monthly meetings and held each other accountable.
- Under Pillars 2 and 6, SI supported programme beneficiaries to develop scorecards and assess the performance of SGBV/ HP/ SRHR service providers. The scorecard assessments allowed both communities and service providers to identify bottlenecks and resolve various challenges.
- An End-Term Review (ETR) was conducted to gather feedback from rights holders on good practices and lessons learned, assess sustainability, and obtain recommendations on priorities for a potential successor programme. Like the MTR, the ETR used 3 tools for data collection: i) FGDs for community stakeholders, ii) key informant interviews (KII) for district authorities, and iii) anonymous surveys for district and national authorities. Over 300 individuals and approximately 100 Government of Malawi (GoM) stakeholders were consulted.
- The findings of the ETR, along with those of the MTR and sustainability consultations have proven essential components for the refinement of the sustainability strategy and the development of a SI exit strategy that was developed in 2022.
- Incorporating PMER throughout the programme cycle ensured the systematic and availability of information regarding the current views of programme beneficiaries. In this way, any decision made about SI was a reflection of the realities on the ground and was therefore well received by communities.

## **A. Capturing Change at Outcome Level**

### **Outcome 1: Legal and Policy Framework**

Throughout programme implementation, SI advocated for the amendment of 5 laws and 2 policies that had been identified as key for protecting women and girls from violence. The review and drafting of the 5 laws and 2 policies was led by the taskforce on law reform co-chaired by the MoJ and MGCDSW. As part of this process, the amendment of the Penal Code which was tabled and passed by parliament in 2022 and early 2023 took place.

The amendment of the Penal Code included the redefining of the age of a child, as a person under the age of eighteen years, and sexual offences against children and persons with mental disabilities. As such, the amended Penal Code has been applied in a strategic litigation case involving the rights of boys engaged in consensual non-exploitative sexual relations with their adolescent peers that stalled due to the lack of clear provisions on defilement of a male minor prior to the amendment. This strategic litigation case has been instrumental in the attitude change of lawmakers regarding the consensual nonexploitative adolescent sexual relationship. The project supported 3 litigation cases during the Programme implementation which facilitated access to justice for survivors of violence in 3 districts.

Other reviewed laws include the Gender Equality Act (2013), Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (2006), the Childcare, Protection and Justice Act (2010), the Marriage Divorce and Family Relation Act (2015). These aforementioned bills have been drafted and are pending tabling in parliament having been reviewed and presented to Parliament As part of the work on legal framework, the SI initiated the review and development of a successor SRHR Policy, Child Policy and National Gender Policy as the current policies expired. It is expected that the approval of the above mentioned bills and policies will lead to the advancement of women and girls' rights so that they benefit both women and men and do not increase inequality but enhance gender equity and equality in Malawi

The strategic role of traditional leaders in EAWG has been addressed through the development of the Chiefs Policy. The policy recognizes the roles and functions of the traditional leaders aligned to various legal frameworks such as the constitution, new laws, and relevant amendments to outdated laws. The policy that has been validated and will help guide the application and implementation of the chiefs' forums (COTLA/CONATA) at all levels. SI also enhanced the capacity of decision-makers, such as traditional and community leaders and enabled them to review existing frameworks and provide the needed amendments to end harmful practices. This included the training of 493 Chiefs and community leaders from 6 Districts who were trained to develop and review by-laws. As a result, 52 by-laws addressing VAWG were developed/reviewed and adopted in all six SI districts. The by-laws focus on SGBV, SRHR and early marriage and together they prohibit and/or amend 52 documented harmful practices. Chiefs have gone further taking a leading role in educating, engaging, and punishing parents who permit child marriage or cover up GBV incidents. The by-laws are aligned with the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, Gender Equality Act, Child Care, Protection and Justice Act, Marriage Divorce and Family Relations Act, and Deceased Estates Act. This work also resulted in deeper understanding by community members on the formal and informal legislation.

To further improve the understanding of the laws on EAWG among district level duty bearers, gender-related laws were simplified, translated into local languages, and used to orient district officials involved in SGBV case management. This led to improved communication and understanding of complex matters by building bridges to interlink the language barrier.

The simplification and translation also minimized the undermining of rights and obligations of marginalized women and girls, especially those living in rural areas, for them access essential quality services. These achievements represent substantial progress in strengthening the legal and policy framework for EVAWG and promoting gender equality in Malawi.

## Outcome 2: Institutions

Throughout the implementation of SI in Malawi, various positive changes at the institutional level were observed. This applies to institutions at district as well as community level and structures. Change includes enhanced capacities and coordination in responding to VAWG. The establishment and strengthening of chiefs' forums was a critical component to change and also played a pivotal role in educating and engaging parents regarding child marriage and addressing VAWG incidents, while supporting girls' re-enrolment in schools.

The SI Chief's Forums (CFs) was established in 2020 and as a result traditional leaders are now monitoring the implementation of EVAWG related interventions within their jurisdiction in a coordinated manner. Since 2021, the Chiefs continue to conduct VAWG patrols in collaboration with mentors, mother groups and child protection workers leading to the identification and referral of 1,075 SGBV related cases. Of these SGBV related cases, 44% were concluded through mobile and district courts, which now prioritise SGBV cases due to increased pressure through the GTWGs and community structures. Additionally, the CFs facilitated sharing of best practices on EVAWG across the 6 districts.

Through the commitment and dedication of Chiefs, child marriages and VAWG are increasingly viewed as harmful and negative practices that hinder developmental progress. At the national level the Chiefs Forums have supported the review and validation of the Chief's Policy which will be key to the operationalization of the chiefs' forums at all levels. The Chiefs' Policy is an act to make provision for the recognition, appointment and functions of chiefs in Malawi for aspects of administration and incidental matters at district level. The Chiefs' Policy is pending tabling in parliament. The SI review of engendering the Chief's Policy, (including related guidelines, and an M&E framework) aim at ensuring the quality of the work of traditional leaders. Chiefs also showed dedication and commitment to combat these issues by incorporating tougher punishments for perpetrators; coordinating utilisation of referral pathways for GBV Survivors, mobilizing resources for supporting girl child enrolment and re-enrolment for example using cultural masked dancers (*gule wankulu*) in community advocacy campaigns, and sharing best practices through learning visits across target districts.

Other critical aspects for institutional change enabled through SI are the revitalization of GTWGs, the harmonization of formal and informal referral pathways, and the inclusion of gender-related interventions in area development planning and district development planning sessions. Gender Technical Working Groups were instrumental in generating reports and influencing decisions at the district and national levels related to EVAWG.

The ability of GTWG to generate reports and interface with stakeholders facilitated their engagement in decision making processes and the development of strategies to address VAWG.

The enhancement of the quality and availability (efficiency and accountability) of services for VAWG survivors has been critical for SI. The interventions of SI included setting improved performance criteria for benchmarking the quality of SGBV services and strengthening local capacities to hold the public sector accountable. The performance criteria subsequently be used by community members or the government for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of services provided. Further to this, the program strengthened local capacities to hold public sector accountable and to engage effectively in public deliberations on priority issues.

District officials' capacities to integrate gender in humanitarian responses were strengthened in collaboration with the MoGCDSW. Strategic engagements were conducted, including the orientation of district officials on integrating gender in humanitarian response in their work. These engagements in the midst of major crises such as the Cyclone Freddy in 2023 and the Cholera outbreak in 2022 that affected the lives of thousands of women and girls were key to mapping best practices, identifying gaps and developing early warning systems.

Spotlight Initiative, in collaboration with the Malawi Police, also supported the integration of gender and SGBV into the Malawi Police Service Standing Orders, and the development of DNA forensic standard operating procedures to ensure the handling of forensic evidence in SGBV cases in line with international standards and victim-centred approaches.

District and community structures as well as traditional and religious leaders have improved capacities in responding to VAWG and are now more coordinated in handling VAWG and child marriage cases. These results owe to SI's continued support in the establishment and strengthening of chiefs' forums, revamping of GTWGs, harmonization of the formal and informal VAWG referral pathways, and inclusion of gender related interventions in area development planning and district development planning sessions. The SI programme also improved capacities of district and community structures and traditional leaders in responding to VAWG and are now more coordinated in handling GBV and child marriage cases, partly resulting from institutionalization of Chiefs' Forums.

SI also supported gender and SGBV integration of the Malawi Police Service Standing Orders (SSOs). The SSO is the main backbone of police service which guide all police policies and ethics. Furthermore, SI in collaboration with the police and the University of Malawi (Bio-medical sciences department), Kamuzu College of Health Sciences and other key stakeholders developed DNA forensic standard operating procedures (SOPs). The SOPs will be used to provide procedures for forensic facilities and handling of the DNA forensic evidence throughout the SGBV referral system from collection, storage, transportation, analysis, interpretation and presentation in court using internationally accepted standards.

### **Outcome 3: Prevention and Norm Change**

SI supported 624 girl survivors of violence to access their right to education through the provision of scholarships. Of the 624 scholarship recipients (all girls), 90% completed secondary education and 7% have enrolled in tertiary or higher learning institutions (HLI). An additional 10% of recipients are planning to complete secondary education during the 2023/2024 school year and express their intention to pursue tertiary education. Access to education for girls in schools lowers their risk of child marriage, teenage pregnancy and other forms of abuse, and improves their chance of leading healthy and productive lives. Consequently, education and scholarships also improve girls' prospects of earning a higher income and making valuable contributions to their community's socio-economic development. The SI scholarship complements the Malawi Government's updated policy of allowing girls to return to school after giving birth. The programme also supported awareness raising efforts of the government, such as the school re-enrolment campaign designed under SI. The campaign incentivized girls' re-enrolment in school by offsetting school related costs (e.g. school fees, uniforms, learning materials, sanitary pads and boarding fees).

SI has taken steps towards increasing access to boarding facilities for girls which is critical for prevention of violence. Girls living in rural areas that are hard to reach often face considerable risks on their way to and from schools. Consequently, girls may resort to staying in insecure lodgings close to the schools where they are at risk of sexual abuse and exploitation. In cooperation with MoE, SI conducted a needs assessment of 18 secondary schools which resulted in the construction and furnishing of three disability friendly girls' dormitories in Machinga and Nsanje districts respectively. A total of 220 girls can now be accommodated in the newly constructed SI dormitories. The dormitories, that are equipped with solar systems to improve light and safety, were formally handed over to the MoE. Besides improving access to education, this intervention provides a model of a conducive and gender and disability sensitive infrastructure at learning institutions, for further scale up by government authorities and in line with the LNOB principle. The opportunity for girls to stay on school premises, besides providing a safe space and contributing to girls school retention allows them to dedicate more time to their studies and increase their grades in secondary education. The SI believes that these dormitories will support access to education to over 2000 girls in the next 10 years.

The implementation of the Safe School Concept of the SI improved the quality of protection, security and justice services for women and girls, both within and outside of schools. The approach recognizes the role of service providers such, as the police, in the protection of children and hence integrates capacity building through strengthening technical knowledge and skillsets of police officers and relevant stakeholders. Since the beginning of the programme, the SI has enhanced the knowledge and skills of more than 750 police officers. Of these, 180 officers are part of the One School One Police Officer Initiative. The Initiative aimed at increasing the visibility of police officers in schools and communities as a deterrent to violence and improving the rapid and effective response to VAWG.

The officers are, as a result of the interventions, capacitated to provide VAWG prevention and response services and to contribute to creating a safe environment in schools.

The Safe School Concept and the One School One Police Officer Initiative trained over 601,504 learners (306,490 girls and 295,018 boys) across the 6 districts to detect report and access violence reporting mechanisms. In total, 52 survivors reported violence to the police through school complaints boxes placed in 135 schools by adolescent girls and boys. Of the above-mentioned 52 survivors (represented through 37 cases), 37 girls, survivors of SGBV and 1 woman accessed justice through mobile courts convened under the Safe Schools Program and its school-based reporting mechanisms. Of the 37 cases, 25 were completed, of which 17 resulted in convictions and 8 in acquittals; the remaining 12 are still being handled in court. A total of thirty cases were related to defilement and child marriage. The complaints boxes placed in 135 schools under the safe schools program led to the identification of over 941 cases of child marriage and their immediate referral to the appropriate authorities and other SI partners for additional services.<sup>6</sup> Linking mobile courts to schools enhanced access to justice for child survivors of violence and promoted a safe learning environment by facilitating police investigations and prosecution.

During the program period, significant efforts were made to increase behavioural change and empower girls to intervene and speak up when they witness violence through the Girls Empowerment and Boys Transformation Trainings. The SI Girls Empowerment Self Defence training programme empowered 16,129 girls to protect themselves from abuse and exploitation. Similarly, 1,394 boys participated in the Boys Transformation Training Programme that instils positive gender norms and supports boys to oppose violence and exploitation at school and in their communities. Participants at a later stage trained their peers in different schools and communities, creating a large network of girls that can speak up against violence. As a result of this approach, a total of 465,943 learners (229,634 boys/ 236,309 girls) from the 6 districts now have the skills and knowledge to condemn and report violence and protect themselves from the same.

In parallel, the SI improved knowledge on VAWG and HPs among school-associated groups responsible for protecting girls against all forms of abuse in and out of schools. This was achieved through legal literacy sessions on child and gender-related laws, mass media campaigns and the production and dissemination of 18,180 child-friendly legal literacy materials (e.g. comic books) to learners and to members of school structures in 180 schools.

Nearly 200 traditional and religious leaders and 275 members of District Social Mobilization Committees were mobilised to champion VAWG prevention awareness campaigns at school and community levels. Engaging local leaders to deliver key messages on gender equality has proven to be a key strategy in transforming negative social norms that perpetrate VAWG.

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<sup>6</sup> In 2021, 1,131 complaints were registered, including incidents of defilement, indecent assault, forced marriages, school dropouts due to teenage pregnancies and others. The MPS investigated 31 defilement cases reported, of which 19 were completed, and annulled 12 child marriages- thus providing youth with yet another avenue to report violence and access justice

As a result, 2,491 people (715 girls, 936 boys, 405 men and 435 women) were sensitized on VAWG through the door-to-door intervention. In line with this, teachers, youth club chairpersons, and mother groups were trained to support school-based awareness activities, while boys and girls were trained on social accountability and advocacy to hold duty bearers accountable.

Interlinkages between schools and community structures have led to greater cohesion in efforts to EAWG at the community level, as evidenced by the jointly developed community mobilization and awareness action plans to EAWG. Having received training in social accountability and advocacy, 249 male and female role models, with the support of 2,600 community leaders were actively raising awareness on VAWG and have educated an additional 750 fellow adolescents on VAWG prevention, reporting, and services. The growing cadre of youths are making strides to prevent VAWG/HPs and transform peer attitudes and behaviours, as well as engaging duty bearers to identify community solutions in addressing VAWG at the school and community level. The 'best friend strategy' is one such example, where learners are encouraged to support their friends and peers to report violence and access service should the need arise. Young girls were equipped with information on prevailing GBV issues that girls face in their daily lives through role modelling sessions. Conversations were used to help the students reveal practices that are exposing them to child abuse and harmful practices at school and at home. The students were also sensitized on reporting mechanisms and available support services and undertook self-defence training to equip them with techniques to employ to prevent abuse. As a direct result, 35 girls were re-enrolled in school.

The SI programme set up Ifenso Tingathe (We too Can) Platforms (ITPs) targeting in-and out-of-school adolescent girls and boys support to effectively report VAWG and provide a platform for dialogue around issues affecting adolescent wellbeing, life skills and livelihoods. The SI established 305 ITPs (246 in primary schools, 29 in secondary schools, and 29 at the community level). As a result, over 20,400 youngsters (12,000 girls and 8,400 boys) are empowered with knowledge about their rights, SGBV case reporting, as well as on how to say no to child marriage and other HPs and behaviours. The ITP also strengthened accountability, as the girls are actively engaging duty bearers, demanding their rights and contributing to EAWG solutions at school and community level. As an example of social behavioural change promoted through of the ITPs, 251 community members, including 173 children (95 girls and 78 boys), organized a march to demand social accountability on EAWG in Nkhata-Bay. This action led to a commitment by government district stakeholders to continue supporting EAWG youth-led interventions, such as district level youth clubs and the ITPs. The ITPs also enabled girls to support 30 other girls to return to school after they left because of pregnancy and an additional 30 girls to return to school after being withdrawn from child marriages. Through ITPs, 6,000 learners (3,600 girls, 2,400 boys) participated in art activities aimed at increasing awareness and reporting of violence. This was done using the SI developed child-friendly and art-based reporting mechanisms, such as drawings, paintings, and anonymous letters called 'Kalata ya nkhawazanga' (A letter of my anxieties).

As evidenced by the mentioned high number of reports of violence, these methodologies make it safer and friendlier for children to report abuse. It further helps to track SGBV at school level and facilitates alerts to the responsible duty bearers to ensure cases are reported and referred to SGBV services.

SI established the safe space mentorship programme which has proven influential in the reduction of VAWG and improving access to services for women and girls who experienced violence. Through consistent weekly mentorship sessions where girls were taught life skills and human rights including SRHR and how to refrain from negative social behaviour, the beneficiaries' capacity to report violence. These continued to bring about positive results for the communities as the girls were able to speak out and wherever necessary challenge negative social norms that promote SGBV and harmful practices such as child marriages. A total of 968 safe space mentees have been selected to various secondary schools including community, district and national secondary schools. This is a milestone achievement considering the low performance of girls in SI. <sup>6</sup>

During SI implementation, a total of 37,292 mentees graduated from the 473 safe spaces. Mentors continued their work and even had the motivation to lead safe spaces in the absence of a stipend which was paid to them on a monthly basis while mentoring the first and second cohorts. The mentors' readiness to continue with mentorship without stipend led to recruitment of the third cohort of mentees to see the continuation of the safe space mentorship programme. Safe space girls demonstrated their leadership skills by obtaining positions at the community level. As a result of SI, a total of 1,455 girls were in leadership positions in various capacities out of whom 259 girls were holding positions in VDCs and ADCs which were previously no go zones for women and girls.

#### **Outcome 4: Quality Services**

In supporting the scale-up of integrated quality SRHR and SGBV essential services for survivors, including the most vulnerable, SI has worked with partners to strengthen referral mechanisms and a total of 78,765 cases related to VAWG including 1,994 child marriages were followed up and 1,572 cases of child marriages were annulled. A total of 108,554 adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) accessed essential services such as including SRHR, Psychosocial Support and Counselling, VIA, STI screening, and fistula services. A total of 227 women with obstetric fistula have been treated. A total of 58 fistula patient ambassadors were trained and supported with push bikes to be reach out to communities and mobilize patients for repair treatment. To this end SI managed to bring back dignity to a total of 179 Fistula survivors. OF patients were mobilized, assessed and referred to the Fistula centre for repairs and social reintegration into the communities. The impact that SI brought is restoration of dignity to the woman following years of suffering due to the debilitating nature of the condition and stigma and discrimination suffered by the woman. Once repaired and reintegrated in communities, survivors contribute to development through engaging in economic empowerment activities .

In line with this, 60 Fistula survivors were equipped with solar charging and barbering units, 50 women were trained in tailoring and provided with sewing machines for income generation. The solar facilities were also being used for domestic lighting. Their success stories on how they have been rehabilitated back into their communities showed that indeed their dignity has been restored. Additionally, 12 district based nurses and clinicians trained earlier were also supporting survivors in their respective districts and only referring the acute cases requiring referral to the fistula centre. As a result, only acute cases requiring referral are transferred to the fistula centre.

In ensuring that GBV survivors access quality and essential services and that the survivors are empowered to defend themselves and move out of abusive relationships and environments, the SI established Community and survivor funds in the six districts to support mobility and upkeep for AGYW who are visiting service provision points that are far from their communities such as the health facilities and courts. The support was also extended to witnesses to GBV and SGBV cases in courts to facilitate access to justice. A total of 5,569 cases have been supported through community fund to access services from one stop Centre, police and court. The funds supported survivors to access medication and transportation of witnesses to provide evidence in court. This resulted to 3,035 cases concluded in courts with the help of community funds. The survivors are then supported to start Income generating activities to restore their dignity. The survivors have shown that their lives have changed including seeing improvements in shelters as most of them can afford iron sheets to roof their homes. Some are able to support their siblings and children to access education, thereby breaking the cycle of poverty and violence in their homes.

Through the Community and survivor funds, girls and women at risk of violence were able to access quality, integrated essential services that include SRH, justice, prosecution, and psychosocial support. Remoteness and long travel distances, which prevent access to quality integrated SRHR and SGBV services was also addressed with a special focus on strengthening the provision of the essential services package and on awareness raising to create demand for women and girls so that they are informed and empowered to exercise their rights. As a sustainability measure, communities were empowered to effectively establish committees to manage the funds as a revolving fund for sustainability to support poor/at-risk women and adolescent girls to access an essential package of services.

Access to essential GBV services was also strengthened with the provision of mobility for the community service providers with motorcycles and fuel provision which eased mobility in hard to reach areas. More cases were followed up and by the Protection workers and referred to other service points; and concluded at the courts; for instance in one district there was a 41.2% increase in the cases which were followed up by the CPWs in a space of 6 months due to the presence of mobility. This has aided in provision of social services and case referrals. The referral pathways have also been strengthened as now service providers were able to refer and attend to cases on time due to improved mobility.

In addition to ensuring that no one is left behind, an assessment of the main gaps and barriers that are faced by the most left behind populations, including those with disabilities and albinism, was done to inform strengthening and scaling up of existing services to be more accessible to women and girls with disabilities; and strengthening community facility linkages for integrated support to ensure that they are reached by life skills programmes that build their health, social, and economic assets. To this end 668 Girls and women have received disability aides assistance that includes wheelchairs, tricycles, sunscreens, canes, adoptive chair, standing frame and MAP sandal to promote their access to SRHR services and participation in development activities. In addition, 102 rumps and handrails constructed in Sexual reproductive health service points, OPD, Pharmacy and sanitation facilities in some health facilities across the spotlight districts. Records showed that in the past 6 months, 1,376 women and girls with disabilities have accessed SRHR services in the Health facilities.

SI supported awareness raising activities for young women and adolescent girls on available SGBV and SRH services across the 6 districts through 68 demand creation activities. A total of 45,841 people (of whom 22,344 were female) were reached with the intervention. The targeted audience had access to counselling, SGBV, SRHR and youth-friendly services, among other services.

Through SI support the Essential Service Package (ESP) Handbook, SGBV Guidelines; Clinical Management of Rape; GBV Registers and the One Stop Centre guidelines have been revised and aligned to the ESP standards and protocol. The resources are to be used by service providers in order to further guide effective provision of Integrated Essential Service Provision (IESP).

Capacity building on VAWG and essential services for service providers has been conducted targeting health care providers, the police, social workers and the judiciary. To date, 466 service providers have been trained in ESP.

SI facilitated the development of a Community Level Scorecard on Integrated Essential Services and orientated 48 community level trainers. Participants included male champions, Community Victim Support Unit (CVSU) members, IP staff, safe space mentorship girls, among others, with the aim to build their capacity to administer and apply the community level scorecard and consequently hold service providers accountable in the provision of IESs. At the district and community level, an additional 175 service providers and 253 community members across the 6 districts have been trained. A total of 710 (273 female and 401 male) police officers<sup>7</sup> have gained knowledge and skills on the provision of quality SGBV child and gender-sensitive services to survivors of violence. This included knowledge on investigation and prosecution of cases of SGBV and capacity building related to SGBV case management.

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<sup>7</sup> Constituting Police Victim Support Units Officers, Child Protection Officers, Community Policing Officers and newly specialized Criminal Investigation Officers

As a result, the officers gained a clear understanding of the concepts of SGBV. Prior to the training 57 per cent of the officers attending the Criminal Investigator Course did not understand the concept of SGBV. After the sessions, 100 percent of officers reported to have gained knowledge and clarity on SGBV issues.

The absence of complaints regarding community policing members during 2022 compared to 5 received in 2021 is indicative of their improved services through knowledge and skills building interventions. District officials in all 6 districts have also observed stricter sentences on cases of sexual violence; it is envisioned this will act as a deterrent against committing these crimes.

The SI program improved access to justice for survivors of violence, through improvement of police capacities to respond to SGBV, through the improved Basic Recruit Curriculum of the Malawi Police Training School that now incorporates protection and SGBV modules. This has provided newly recruited police officers with knowledge and skills to effectively handle SGBV cases. In order to address the challenge of high turnover in among police officers, a TOT was conducted to 30 police officers (21 men, 9 women) which equipped them deliver the trainings on the new topics of the curriculum.

SI successfully built the capacity of judicial officers in handling SGBV cases, leading to an improvement in case completion rates. A total of 146 judicial officers including court personnel, magistrates, court clerks, probation officers were capacitated to effectively handle cases of VAWG. In line with this, a total of 176 data clerks (126 men, 50 women) were trained and are now able to prioritize and report SGBV cases through the court systems.

During the implementation of SI there has been improved provision of MHPSS to survivors of SGBV. This result has been achieved through enhanced knowledge of service providers through a developed capacity building programme entitled *MHPSS services (Government of Malawi and its partners) for SGBV survivors*. The training also included a ToT component. The training built on a baseline study on mental health needs at community level. Based on the rapid *Needs and Gap Assessment of MHPSS Services* conducted in all the SI districts, corresponding capacity building tools were developed, and capacity building of 1281 service providers<sup>8</sup> took place. As a result, SI has increased the availability and quality of psychosocial care for survivors in SI districts leading to <sup>43, 428</sup> vulnerable women and girls receiving MHPSS and PFA services - a substantial achievement towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)<sup>3</sup>.

MHPSS service delivery was further enhanced through the leadership of the MHPSS Task Team which was established by the MoGCDSW and will be retained by the government beyond the SI program completion.

Unexpectedly, a large number of men have benefitted from SI supported GBV services that initially targeted women and girls only.

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<sup>8</sup> Social Welfare, Health, CSO/FBOs, District Council staff including Gender officers, Health Surveillance Assistants and Clinicians, Police Victim Support officers, and magistrates. Qualifications include certification of Interpersonal Group Therapy (IPGT) and trainers in Psychological First Aid (PFA)

A total of 2,585 cases of GBV against men and boys were identified and referred. Psychological First Aid (PFA) capacity building led to 26,230 men and boy receiving support services. While the SI Malawi remains true to its goals and objectives to protect women and girls from violence, it is possible that the massive spread of information about GBV are also encouraging men and boys to seek support. SI is operating with the assumption that by providing mental health support for men, VAWG can be prevented, and it will lead to a safer and healthier environment for women and girls.

Through SI, 50 operationalized CVSU's and their committees are providing services to survivors in remote areas. A total of 13 rehabilitated CVSUs are now operational in all six SI districts and are staffed with volunteers with the required skills. Following a gender-sensitive assessment of CVSUs, the SOPs for all CVSUs were revised and the SI successfully reactivated and reconstituted 50 CVSU committees to better manage SGBV/HP cases. This included the training of 457 CVSU members and 35 CPWs on handling VAWG incidents, including in times of COVID-19 and natural disasters. Further, SI mitigated the risks of school-based violence by strengthening referral mechanisms between primary schools and CVSU's. Overall, SI established linkages between 197 schools and CVSUs.

A total of 450 CVSU members are now better able to provide services related to SGBV, child protection, and Psychosocial First Aid (PFA) following their capacity building in SGBV service provision. This contributes to the enhancement of service provision, including effective referrals to other key service providers. Service provision through CVSUs was additionally expanded through the formation of partnerships with 20 community-based organisations (CBOs). The 20 CBOs were trained to provide similar and complementary services to those provided by CVSUs. As a result, service delivery coverage has improved considerably. There was emphasis on communities living in hard-to-reach areas and with limited possibilities of accessing CVSUs. Case referrals by CBOs and community social welfare workers were improved considerably following the training of 510 case managers and 960 case workers in child protection case management, including SGBV. The training led to the identification and referral of 3,159 cases of VAWG.

SI has further enhanced the capacity of 839 Child Protection Workers (464 F ,375 M) and 783 Children's Corner facilitators (423 F, 360 M) to address SGBV against children, which will benefit approximately 408,000 girls in SI districts. As a result of the capacity building of the child protection workers in handling cases of VAWG it is estimated that 145,447 beneficiaries (89,081 girls, 48,885 boys) have benefited from improved services.

## **Outcome 5: Data**

The SI laid important groundwork for a harmonised SGBV/HPs and SRHR Information Management Systems (IMS) in Malawi. Based on an SI assessment of SGBV information framework in Malawi, dialogue among key stakeholders from the Police, Judiciary, National Planning Commission, National Statistics Office, Ministry of Gender, Ministry of Health,

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Ministry of Local Government, SI District Councils and SI RUNOs to disseminate and validate the assessment report that was developed. This resulted in advocacy for a harmonised data management system. The key recommendation on the assessment report was for SI to focus on enhancing data collection by the community police, health and social workers at the village level where cases typically go unnoticed and unreported. A ground-breaking outcome of the above mentioned dialogue and consultations was the agreement of the Malawi police, village health workers, and courts to collaborate with the National Statistics Office (NSO) in SGBV/HPs information gathering and sharing.

Based on this, SI supported the establishment of a National Data Observatory Hub (NDOH) as well as District Observatory Hubs (DOH) under the leadership of the NSO. This also resulted in the standardization of data collection tools and the establishment of the GBV Observatory Hub, hosted by the National Statistics Office. Since its establishment, the hub has recorded over 5,000 cases ([www.nsogbv.mw](http://www.nsogbv.mw)). The Hubs are a repository and reference point for all SGBV/HP and SRHR related information shared from a range of stakeholders. Malawi now has official internationally comparable and disaggregated data on SGBV/ HPs and SRHR from the six SI districts which is contributing towards tracking and understanding the sex-differentiated impacts of SGBV, HP and SRHR and is further enabling a richer analysis of programs targeting women and girls for the line Ministries and Civil Society Organisations.

SI also supported the roll out of SGBV integrated police and judiciary digital case management systems. The approach will improve transparency and accountability, while curbing corruption that hinders access to justice for most VAWG matters. In 2022, the police SGBV integrated Case Management System (CMS) was incorporated into the crime record system. The combined data management system piloted in the six SI districts. This was a vital step towards ensuring the sustainability of the system by creating one single system; thereby easing the burden of work on police officers who previously were entering data into 2 different systems. The CMS dashboards generate reports and evidence regarding the progress of SGBV cases registered and as well as information about challenges and delays. The CMS will ensure accountability and transparency within the Malawi police and judiciary.

SI supported the upgrading of the web-based GBV information management system for the MoGCDSW. The system was initially established in 2015, through the Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE) Programme with financial support from the European Union. A consultant was engaged to undertake a functional and technical review of the web-based GBV information management system in order to inform the upgrading process which was successfully accomplished. The upgraded IMS provided space for contribution from relevant sectors, such as the police, social welfare and health. A total of 24 participants were trained to cascade the training to the six SI districts. During the implementation of SI, the trained central level officers have cascaded the training to 584 service providers at the district and community level improving their performance and productivity as evidenced by improved data collection and management in the Spotlight Districts.

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As part of SI, the mobile data collection system RapidPro was upgraded. This led to critical improvements in data collection and information sharing by the Malawi police. RapidPro enabled the production and dissemination of quarterly bulletins containing SGBV data analysis, facilitating evidence-based decision-making and programming. The upgraded system significantly improved data reporting from approximately 10% to 95%, demonstrating the positive impact of the initiative.

U-Report community polls were effectively utilized to conduct periodic polls, enhancing community understanding and awareness of key SGBV/HPs issues. Notable findings from these polls were shared with stakeholders and used to inform programming and awareness raising efforts within the community. During the lifespan of SI three sets of polls were conducted, focusing on topics such as HPs, access to and quality of SGBV services, gender and SGBV norms, and female empowerment. These polls provided valuable insights for behavioural change efforts. SI successfully introduced the Kuwala Knowledge Management Platform across the six SI districts. The platform facilitates exchanges among stakeholders related to VAWG at district and community levels.

## **Outcome 6: Women's Movement**

SI supported the formation and strengthening of six district wide women's movements. Each women's movement was coordinated by a steering committee that pulled together women's rights activists in all SI Traditional Authorities. In 2021, SI emphasised the inclusion of women from diverse backgrounds, specifically targeting women and girls with disabilities, sex workers, and women and girls living with HIV/AIDS in line with the LNOB principle. Throughout SI implementation, women joined the women's movements creating a ripple effect of transformation towards the EVAWG. The women movements organised activism events which brought concerns on VAWG before traditional authorities and promoted positive gender norms within their communities.

In order to establish feedback and complaint mechanisms for SI beneficiaries, SI supported the development of community scorecards, opinion polls, grievance, and redress structures for SGBV and SRHR across the six SI districts. These mechanisms provided a platform for discussion with duty bearers, thus increasing accountability and transparency by service providers and decision makers. Throughout SI implementation those reporting and accountability mechanisms supported the increased reporting of VAWG cases and enabled women to bring those to the attention of relevant service providers.

The capacity enhancement provided to women groups on community scorecards, opinion polls and grievance and redress structures and other social accountability mechanisms has resulted in 4 assessments and reflection meetings with service providers on SGBV/HP and SRHR quality essential services have been conducted. Utilizing the standard charters for SGBV/SRHR service provision, the women movement members assessed police, health facilities, district education

department, chiefs and courts. The work of women movements results in review and resolution of issues affecting women and girls in the communities. Collective organising which boosted the knowledge and confidence in advocating for their rights, autonomous decision making and speaking out, contributed to the deployment of clinical officers at Sibande Health centre in T/A Kampingo Sibande to address the challenge of shortage of staff. Thus, community scorecards have been critical for social accountability in the programme on SGBV/HP, SRHR related reporting and monitoring putting duty bearers to task in their communities.

Women movements have been a critical channel to amplify the voice of women and girls at district and community level across all SI districts. The strengthened coordination of women groups has resulted in the rescuing of 229 girls from early forced and child marriages who have now been re-enrolled in schools. The SI established women's movement worked in collaboration with HeForShe Champions, Chiefs Forums, ADC, and other structures in conducting back to school campaigns to promote girls' education and awareness raising campaigns on SGBV, reporting and referral pathways, among others.

The women's movements prioritized child marriages as a key advocacy issue. The scorecards served as a key advocacy tool for the women's movements in order to advocate for the improvement of the quality of SGBV and SRHR services. Some of the areas of concern raised by the women's rights advocates included service providers' attitudes towards survivors, the availability of private spaces to ensure confidentiality, unavailability of drugs and pregnancy testing kits at hospitals, and unavailability of trained personnel- resulting in cleaning staff dispensing drugs, for instance. These concerns were discussed with service providers and were elevated to district officials for handling.

In 2022, SI finalized and validated the 'Movement Building Toolkit' and translated it to Tumbuka, a language spoken in the Northern region of Malawi. The toolkit provides practical guidance on movement building principles, concepts and approaches with an intersectionality lens. The kit was used to revamp and/or establish 116 women's groups, and 11 girls' groups - with 1,426 women and girls members- who developed work plans to guide their work. To date, 20 leaders of 20 groups have been trained on the toolkit. In Machinga District, female sex workers were among the groups revamped, and as part of their work plan they conducted an activity to remove under-age girls from sex work venues- 16 girls benefitted from this exercise.

In line with the LNOB principle and in addressing intersecting forms of discrimination, SI created and strengthened networks of Female Sex Workers (FSWs), and Women Living with HIV and AIDS. A total of 278 women belonging to these groups received training on SGBV and SRHR, and are consequently able to develop community-based advocacy campaigns, establish alliances with other marginalized groups of women. This approach also facilitated movement building and advocacy campaign during COVID-19.

SI mobilised 1,275 women to EVAWG by establishing and/or re-activating 51 women's rights groups at grassroots level. Community-based movement building was further bolstered by SI through the creation of 6 Women's Assemblies, one in each district. The Women Assemblies are a result of the cooperation of 180 women representing 180 women's groups (30 per district). The Assemblies are an important mechanism to coordinate, galvanise, and support women's movement building at grassroots level. The Women assemblies have supported women to become community leaders in community structures like Area Development Committees, Area Executive Committees, Community Victim Support Units and Village Development Committees just to mention a few. In addition, the women assemblies have supported the formation of income generating collectives, reduction of child marriages, support for girls re-enrolling in schools and providing support to Community Based Child Centres in the communities.

### **Rights Holders (Spotlight programme “beneficiaries”).**

Indicative numbers	Direct	Indirect	Comments / Explanations
<b>Women (18 yrs. and above)</b>	<b>1,382,963</b>	<b>6,914,815</b>	<p>Direct beneficiaries include women reached through advocacy meetings on harmful practices, women and adolescent girls who accessed GBV and SRH services including referrals, women supporting women movements, Mother groups, women who accessed counselling, pregnancy test, PEP, contraception, STI test, protection, women who accessed accountability sessions, judicial services, communication messages, trainings, U-reporting, women in VSLs, SMEs, Women traditional leaders, women rights advocates, government officers from various departments, justice sector, higher education institutions, CSOs, Community members attending interface and Accountability Sessions, YFHS, Headteachers, Teachers, Parents and Religious leaders.</p> <p><b>How calculation was done:</b>            In line with the guidance for counting beneficiaries, the estimated indirect reach calculation assumed that for any women directly reached, they reached 5 more people. Each teacher or head teacher is assumed to have reached 72 more children (based on average school figures), and the formula for calculating indirect reach for service providers was used counting staff from the courts, child protection workers, police. The total population reached covered more than the total population of the area and the assumption is that some people were reached more than once.</p>

Indicative numbers	Direct	Indirect	Comments / Explanations
Girls (5-17)	1,418,685	7,093,425	<p>Direct beneficiaries were reached during the commemoration of the International Day of the Girl Child (IDGC), girls given scholarships, girls cases of violence reported through police, CVSUs and Ifenso platforms, girls rescued from child marriages, girls who were in safe spaces (mentors and mentees), girls who underwent legal literacy sessions, girls supported through mobile courts, martial arts training, and girls who were reached with SI communication services,</p> <p><b>How calculation was done:</b>            In line with the guidance for the beneficiaries counting, the estimated indirect reach calculation assumed that the areas of operation for the girls directly reached is the community and for every one girl reached directly, 5 additional people were reached indirectly through the girl. Therefore, the total direct reach for all the girls was multiplied by 5 to get the estimated indirect reach figure. The total population reached covered more than the total population of the area and the assumption is that some people were reached more than once throughout implementation.</p>
Men (18 yrs. and above)	1,089,354	5,446,770	<p>The data include, Men traditional leaders, Community members attending interface and Accountability Sessions, Service providers including Police Officers, Court Clerks, magistrates, Education advisors, Head teachers, Teachers, PFA providers, CSO's, Faith community, School and community structures, Parent associations, Members of School Management Committees, barbershop tool kit groups, HeforShe champions, male champions and religious leaders.</p> <p><b>How the calculation was conducted:</b>            The calculation for indirect beneficiaries assumed that for any young and older men directly reached, 5 more people received the information. For each teacher or head teacher, the assumption is that an additional 72 people were reached (based on average number of students in a school).</p>

Indicative numbers	Direct	Indirect	Comments / Explanations
			<p>The formula for calculating indirect beneficiaries for service providers was used counting staff from courts, CPWs, police. The total population reached covered more than the total population of the area and the assumption is that some people were reached more than once.</p>
Boys (5-17 yrs.)	1,275,746	6,378,730	<p>The data comprises cases of violence reported by boys through police, CVSUs and Ifenso platforms, boys participating in EVAWG campaigns, boys who participated in the Transformation Training Programme, boys who underwent legal literacy sessions, boys who underwent martial arts program, boys who participated in</p> <p>mentorship sessions, boys in children corners, HeforShe male champions (role models), boys who were reached through barbershop toolkit, boys who were reached with SI communication services, including boys directly reached during the commemoration of the IDGC.</p> <p><b>How calculation was done:</b>            In line with the guidance for the beneficiaries count, the estimated indirect reach calculation assumed that the areas of operation for the boys directly reached is the community and for every boy reached directly, 5 more people were reached indirectly. Therefore the total number of direct boy beneficiaries was multiplied by 5 to get the estimated number of indirect beneficiaries. The total population reached covered more than the total population of the area and the assumption is that some people were reached more than once.</p>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,166,748</b>	<b>25,833,740</b>	

## Challenges and Mitigating Measures

**Deceleration in implementation:** The majority of SI funds were allocated to phase I of the SI and hence there was a natural deceleration in the pace of activities in phase II. This caused authorities to believe that the programme's commitment had decreased, while some even believed that the SI was phasing out. This erroneous perception was mitigated by the engagement of district authorities in the framework of the IMTF meetings, where the programme status was explained, and a clear exit strategy was jointly outlined.

**Sustaining the LNOB Principle:** Following the devaluation of the local currency and the subsequent inflation, SI stakeholders struggled to reach marginalized and remote communities as prices for transport and fuel increased. Not only did the cost of fuel increase considerably, there were also extended periods during the year where fuel was entirely unavailable. Similarly, floods made some districts almost entirely inaccessible due to damage to critical infrastructure, such as roads and bridges. Monitoring missions and programme implementation had to be cancelled, reduced and/ or delayed, as stakeholders were unable to travel long distances to reach remote areas, as prioritized by the SI. Finding mitigating measures turned out to be difficult, and stakeholders had to accelerate efforts once roads became accessible and fuel became available.

Efforts to uphold the principle of LNOB were often thwarted due to the unavailability of key populations, whose stigmatization and the legal framework made it difficult for this section of the community to come forward. Similarly, the absence of a database for people with disabilities meant their limited representation. The SI lobbied district authorities to develop tools to measure and track the inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in particular.

**Humanitarian Crises:** In 2022 and 2023, Malawi faced three emergencies, Polio, floods, and cholera while still recovering from the global COVID-19 pandemic. While all SI districts were affected, not all were affected by all three emergencies. However, these crises affected the well-being of communities, especially women and girls. In addition, the crises also affected the availability of human resources, such as critical staff from all stakeholders (UN, GoM and CSOs), and prevented access to project sites. Local government priorities shifted due to a hierarchy of needs. Mitigation measures included establishment of safe spaces in camps for IDPs (for the flash floods) and remote coordination of activities during the covid pandemic.

**Staff Turnover:** Frequent transfer of trained service providers (such as police officers) disrupted SI supported service delivery. As a response, advocacy efforts are ongoing to have trained service providers transferred to duty stations where their newly obtained skills can be applied and utilized.

**Infrastructure:** Infrastructure challenges and transport challenges were often used as a justification not to travel to locations and to justify limited-service provisions by stakeholders.

The programme is piloting using community policing structures to lead the opening of the complaints boxes with the police providing support and quality assurance. The development of the SOPs for safe schools by the Malawi Police Service institutionalized support towards safe schools interventions in the Malawi Police and enhanced ownership.

**The effects of COVID-19:** While SI scholarships improved access to education for girls, the closure of schools due to COVID-19 in 2021, resulted in setbacks for girls' education. Due to school closures, girls fell behind academically, missed opportunities for social interaction with their peers and teachers, and for psychosocial support. The returning girls received support through small group tutoring and individualized self-learning to recover lost learning. Teachers also adjusted their instruction to individual students' learning needs and provided printed paper-based materials.

**School Based GBV Prevention & Response:** School platforms were an invaluable entry point for SGBV prevention and responses due to the direct link to girls and boys. However, there is no formal coordination system for the provision of SGBV-related information and support to survivors in schools. To address this gap, SI identified School Health and Nutrition (SHN) teachers as focal points for i) coordinating referrals with Child Protection Workers at the community level; and ii) reporting SGBV matters through the District School Health and Nutrition Coordinators, who are members of the District GTWGs.

**Community Leadership:** Various SI interventions experienced challenges due to a lack of community leadership. In Dzaleka Refugee Camp, for instance, community leaders focused on personal benefits from the programme rather than advancing the empowerment of AGYW.

**Poor management of community fund:** Poor management of funds by some management committees has affected their success. In response, the UN team increased monitoring of these interventions and the involvement of relevant government personnel at the district council.

**Delayed disbursement of funds:** The delayed disbursement of funds from RUNOs to IPs led to delays in implementation and results. Financial reporting was done every two months besides spot checks with partners to fast-track implementation and facilitate timely liquidation of funds.

**Management of IPs due to large size:** The first phase of SI worked with large numbers of IPs which in return required substantial management and monitoring. In order to address this, phase II of SI worked with limited numbers of IPs to ensure quality implementation and monitoring of activities.

More information on challenges and mitigating measures is further outlined in Annex B on Risk Mitigation.

## Lessons Learned and New Opportunities

### **A. Lessons Learnt:**

During the implementation of the SI a number of key lessons have been learnt at various levels.

Overall, a key learning has been the need for government ownership, mainstreamed sustainability efforts and anchoring of interventions within the target communities.

This includes that SI supported **registering women's groups/ movements with relevant district offices** to sustaining their work and driving change. For instance, safe spaces were registered with the district youth office and ensured that they would be a key reference point for any youth work related to VaWG beyond the lifespan of the SI. Similarly, women's movement groups have been also registered with gender officers; thus, ensuring they remain primary stakeholders and influences in matters related to VaWG.

**Mobile Outreach Services are critical** for both service delivery and behavioural change. Mobile courts, for instance, are an effective strategy for raising awareness amongst community members on the dangers and consequences of VAWG. Mobile courts facilitated access to justice for women and girls in hard-to-reach areas. Likewise, mobile GBV and SRHR services contribute to deconstructing perceptions by communities who normalised VAWG.

**Standardized data collection** enhances coordination and lessens the burden on survivors in regard to repetitive reporting. Bringing together service providers as data collectors has provided an important platform for coordination and can ease the stress on survivors that comes from having to repeat their traumatic story to different service providers.

A strong multi-lateral technical governance structure laid the foundation for a successful National Steering Committee (NSC). The SI team focused much of its attention on operationalizing an NSC, before ensuring the establishment of technical level governance structure. In the case of Malawi, having a RUNO tasked with technical coherence (UN Women), co-lead the IMTF together with the Permanent Secretary for the line Ministry (MoGCDSW) from the onset would have been a strategic starting point. The co-leads in turn could have then galvanized high-level support and participation from the NSC.

**Joint Monitoring Visits.** The joint monitoring visits were critical for coordination, information sharing as well as to advance progress of SI activities. Monitoring activities together with various stakeholders including government officers improved coordination and facilitated enhanced conclusion of outstanding cases and issues.

**Long-term support for survivors:** In order to build on the potential and opportunities gained through the scholarship bursaries for SGBV survivors, future programming should include

support towards their tertiary education and economic empowerment interventions to ensure sustainability of their education, which many vulnerable families are unable to financially support. Long-term support should also ensure the availability of psycho-social support to survivors as VAWG can have long-term traumatic consequences that require long-term assistance and support.

**Community Structures are key:** Community structures are key service delivery points in Malawi as the majority of people in Malawi rely on these structures and mechanisms at the community level to access protection and SGBV services. It is important to enhance the capacities of community structures and support with infrastructural development. In line with this, community child protection workers are an important cadre for linking survivors to services, but they also tend to have limited resources and are often overloaded with tasks with minimal support. There is need to lobby for inclusion of more child protection workers on government payroll. In addition, an increase in the collaboration and partnerships with CBOs could help in ensuring sustainability of social behavioural change interventions at community level.

**Collaboration to manage data:** The importance of collaboration and partnerships is highlighted in order to successfully implement SGBV case management system, especially at the community and district levels. The operationalization of the hub has required collaboration from health personnel, traditional leaders, law enforcement and legal personnel for it to reposit holistic data. Its development further requires continuous monitoring and adaptation to ensure its effectiveness.

### **A. New Opportunities:**

The closure of SI in Malawi provides a number of strategic opportunities of re-directing interventions and building on lessons learnt.

The collaborative drafting of an exit strategy enhanced national and local ownership of SI. The SI team engaged both national and local authorities in determining how interventions would be sustained beyond the end of the programme. This has promoted ownership and encouraged authorities to prioritise which interventions should be sustained. Additionally, this has sparked the debate and an advocacy campaign (led by the NSC) on why the government does not fulfil its obligation on allocating 1% of the National budget to the Ministry of Gender as the current allocation of 2023-2024 National budget was at 0.2%.

Greater ownership of school-based complaints boxes and mindset change by the Malawi Police Service and MoE are essential. Using community policing structures and integrating safe school activities into the activities of the police and the MoE presents an opportunity for community policing structures and full primary schools to adapt the local standards for practical use in their community schools.

A recent joint mapping of high impact SI interventions provide the basis for joint resource mobilisation efforts. In 2022, the SI team sat together and outlined which activities should be prioritised for continuation beyond the SI. The team agreed that the complementarity of these activities and their RUNO implementers are a key factor in their success and have agreed to rally under the Resident Coordinator and raise funds for a successor programme.

## **Innovative, Promising or Good Practices**

The below practices are only briefly outlined; for further information please see Annex D.

### **A. Good Practices**

#### **i. Unified National SGBV Observatory Hub**

The SGBV Observatory Hub is a unified digitalized system that collects SGBV relevant data. As a digital system, it unifies and standardizes data from various stakeholders such as the police, judiciary and social welfare, amongst others.

The SGBV Observatory Hub has drawn commitments of key justice and social services sectors under the SI and aligns existing information and data platforms, such as the Kuwala Platform and Ministry of Gender GBVMIS. This enables users to develop reports with data disaggregated by location, disability status, literacy level, and other categories and to improve information sharing across sectors at various levels.

#### **ii. Community and Survivor Fund Initiative**

The Community Fund addresses the long travel distances which often prevent women and girls with low to no income to access quality integrated SRHR and SGBV services. The Fund also has a special focus on strengthening the provision of the essential services package and on awareness raising to create a demand of women and girls for service provision and accountability, with the aim that they are informed and empowered to exercise their rights.

The Survivor Fund supported Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW) who have experienced SGBV with women's economic empowerment (WEE) activities. The fund supports survivors to engage in economic activities towards their long-term recovery and social reintegration in the community.

Management of the funds is facilitated through existing community committees at each TA and linked to structures of the ADCs. The committees also oversee the revolving fund intervention.

## **B. Innovative Practices**

### **i) Zayela Digital Finance Program**

The 'Zayela Digital Finance Programme' for survivors of SGBV is a gender transformative, SGBV risk mitigation and recovery programme that seeks to strengthen women's economic empowerment opportunities through digital finance.

Many women still face challenges in accessing financial services. The reasons are multifaceted, such as a lack of identification documents, mobile phones, digital skills, and financial capabilities. To improve access to financial services of survivors of SGBV, the Zayela programme uses model digital financial products and services to accelerate the financial inclusion of women and girls. The initiative has empowered the women and girls economically and socially enabling them to attain financial independence thereby reducing their vulnerability and those around their households. They are now better placed to prevent and respond to SGBV through conducting of sensitization, awareness, and advocacy campaigns within their communities.

### **ii) Court Circuits**

Court Circuits is one of the innovative practices that is ensuring access to justice to community members within their localities. With this innovation, cases on child protection and GBV are held with communities where the offences were committed. Access to justice is in most cases hampered by geographical barriers, social stigma, biases in the justice system, gaps in policy, psychological trauma, poverty, harmful cultural practices and discrimination just to mention a few. Hence, taking this service closer to community members ensured many women and girls could access the services. It also enhances multisector response to cases of child protection and SGBV.

## **C. Promising Practices**

### **Ensuring Sustainability and Responsible Handover as part of Programme Closure**

The Malawi SI Sustainability Strategy was developed following a series of in-depth community-based consultations dedicated to the topic of sustainability. The process is a promising practice because of the highly participatory approach employed that ensured ownership by both communities and district and national authorities. Commitments were made at all levels starting from the community level where chiefs committed to disseminating, popularising and implementing EVAWG bylaws stipulated in the district and community level bylaws, women groups committed to continue collectively advocating for their rights including introducing community relevant economic empowerment interventions, contesting for community

leadership positions and mobilising resources for young women and girls enrolling and re-enrolling in school. Mentors including mentor mother committed to continue supporting safe spaces including the introduction of new safe spaces as was evidenced in most SI districts before the closure of the program.

## **Communication and Visibility**

### **A. Overview:**

Throughout the programme, as regards to communication and visibility, the SI had four objectives that aimed to promote behavior change and drawing visibility to the SI at all levels: to raise awareness on VAWG: to illustrate and promote the impact and results of SI interventions: to provide communication for development support to strengthen SI's and to ensure visibility for the Spotlight Initiative, its donors, and partners. Through these objectives, SI reached over 12 million people through national radio shows community radio stations, networking events, television and through numerous awareness campaigns. Special content for different formats was developed to promote behaviour change and increased visibility of the SI and its interventions at all levels.

### **B. Messages**

The SI disseminated several messages throughout its implementation on EVAWG through social media, radio, television and newspapers; targeting all sectors of Malawian society. The effectiveness of these messages was enhanced through their frequent reiteration by all SI IPs and stakeholders via the various media platforms. Their success is evidenced by the feedback given by SI communities during the 52 FGDs conducted as part of the MTR and District and Community Exit meetings.

Message 1: “Violence against women and girls is not normal. It is wrong and harmful. It affects their physical and mental health and prevents them from fully participating in activities to develop themselves, their families, and their communities”. This message was effective as evidenced by the development/review and enforcement of over 52 community EVAWG by-laws led by the traditional leaders.

Target audience: traditional leaders, community members, community structures and parents

Message 2: “EVAWG begins with you, Report all forms of violence to the relevant authorities. This message was very effective as evidenced by increased reporting of SGBV and HP cases to the relevant service provider and community structure as indicated in our results section.

Target audience: Women, girls, communities

Message 3: “Everyone has a role to play in E-VAWG. Let's all work together to ensure that women and girls are protected and access justice,” This message was relevant for all community members and pushed women and girls to assume leadership positions in various community structures to become a voice for all women and girls to spotlight the issues that exacerbate violence against women and girls.

Target audience: Traditional leaders, community members, community structures, district authorities, Service Providers.

Message 4: Men and boys are allies in the fight against VaWG; Men and boys engage! This message was effective as evidenced by the development and validation of the Malawi Male engagement strategy (2023).

Target audience: Men and Boys, male community leaders

Message 5: Girls' education is a right, when girls stay in school they live healthy prosperous lives and contribute to their communities. This message was effective as evidenced by prioritisation of women movement members on supporting the enrolment and re-enrollment of girls in schools.

Target audience: Traditional and Community Leaders, girls and parents of girls

Message 6: The Media is a powerful ally in driving social behaviour change and gender equality; their reports can increase or reduce incidents of violence. This message was effective as it led to the development and launch of the Media handbook for survivor centred reporting under the Spotlight Initiative. This handbook is being utilised in all media houses.

Target Audience: Media actors

### **C. Media and Visibility Events**

1. Women Lawyers Association-WLA networking breakfast (2020): SI supported the WLA networking breakfast attended by the Vice President and UN RC. The event sought to improve the protection of women's rights movements and women human rights defenders by the GoM. (Pillar 6)

2. Engagement with Traditional leaders on EVAWG (2020): The SI supported consultations with Malawi's most senior Chiefs towards the establishment of national, district and community forums for traditional leaders in Malawi. The event was graced by the former Minister of Local Government. (Pillar 2)

3. SI@2 years (2021): 2 years of SI implementation was marked in Malawi during the Africa Gender Equality Conference. Besides showcasing impact, the event featured a high-level panel

discussion on EVAWG with the Minister of Gender, RC, EU Chargé D'affaires, the CEO of the COMESA Federation of Women in Business and a Paramount Chief.

4. Launch of girl's hostels (2022): This high-level event (described above) was attended by the EU ambassador, UN RC a.i, Recipient United Nations Organisation (RUNO), Heads of Agencies (HoAs), Minister of Gender and senior officials from the MoE.

5. Launch of Media Hand Book for Reporting on Sexual and Gender-based Violence - A survivor-centred Approach (2023). SI supported the launch of the handbook attended by the Minister of Gender, Minister of Local Government, UN RC, EU Ambassador, German Ambassador, Irish Ambassador, UN HoAs, CSNRG, Representatives from all Media Houses.

## **D. Campaigns**

1. During the 16 days of Activism in EVAWG in 2020, the SI initiated a high-level panel discussion aligned to the global theme “orange the world; fund; respond; collect”, involving the RC, EU Chargé d’Affaires, a High Court Judge, and member of the CS-NRG. The discussion aired on TV reaching 10,566,000 people, a further 10,206,000 by radio reaching, and 592,565 people via Facebook live streaming. The objective was to raise awareness on the role every Malawian can take to respond to GBV and HP issues in Malawi.

2. 16 Days 16 Activists Campaign 2022: Under the localised theme “UNITE! Activism to end gender based violence”!, The SI engaged 16 community-based activists who shared their stories about how they have supported their communities to end VaWG throughout the 16 days. The 16 activists were interviewed for 15-20 minutes on community and national radio in support of grassroots activism, The objective of this campaign was to promote their work and elevate their voices at community level. On the day of persons with disabilities, a woman activist with disabilities gave her interview, a woman survivor living with HIV Aids spoke on World AIDS Day, while on International Human Rights Day the renowned High Court Judge Justice Fiona Mwale gave an interview on national radio<sup>19</sup>.

3. Inter-Generational Women's Dialogue (2022): As part of the 16 Days of Activism against GBV campaign, the SI mobilized female university students to stimulate activism in other girls and women, motivate their involvement in movements and promote feminist civic participation and leadership. Eighty students from the biggest three universities in the northern region led the campaign. As an outcome of the dialogue, various women's groups developed action plans on transitioning from groups to movements in their communities<sup>20</sup>.

4. HeForShe Campaign (2022/2023): The objective of this campaign was to raise awareness and promote positive masculinities, Sexual Reproductive Health Rights in fighting against violence against women and girls in the 6 SI districts. The campaign was done through Creative Arts on HeForShe messages and animations, music festivals, mobile theatre, sports

tournaments, and the HeForShe sponsorship song. Approximately 124,606 community members were reached directly through the campaign. Below is one of the photos taken during the campaign.

## **E. Human Interest Stories**

### **1. Safe Spaces helping to end Child Marriages**

Emily Saka (18) nearly became a victim of the tradition. When she was 17, Emily was 'offered' to a man working in South Africa for marriage. She had not even met him. "I heard so many stories about South Africa," says Emily. "So, when I heard that someone staying there wanted to marry me, I was so excited. I was ready to go even when I didn't know the person who wanted to marry me." The safe space was an eye opener. I came to know that early marriage was a violation of my rights. If I had accepted, this could also have spelled the end to my education. So, I am glad I listened to the advice given by the mentor.

### **2. Spotlight Initiative helping VAWG survivors with loans for businesses**

Emily, a survivor of SGBV managed to access a MK20,000 (approx. US\$20) loan from the survivor fund. The fund, which is managed by the Community Victim Support Unit (CVSU), helps survivors of gender-based violence with capital to start small businesses. Having survived a traumatic ordeal, she still worked hard in school and was selected to one of the top universities in Malawi (Mzuzu University). Emily made enough money to repay the loan and was left with MK60,000 (approx. US\$60) as profit. "I used part of the money to pay my school fees, rent a small room since I was doing self-boarding and gave my mother MK30,000 so that she continues with the business while I was at school," she says. During weekends, Emily would come back to help her mother with the business. Their capital grew and she made enough money to pay fees for her siblings and support her mother.

### **3. Laws that protect the rights of Women and Girls**

Loopholes in Malawi laws and policies as well as a lack of law enforcement provided a window for perpetrators of VAWG to escape justice. Despite making advances in ending gender-based violence and ending harmful cultural practices, laws and policies still lacked harmonization which in turn hampered the enforcement of newly developed gender related laws. These persisting legal gaps reversed gains achieved by CSOs, the women's movement and the Government in combating VAWG and HP. Spotlight Initiative however successfully supported the amendment of Malawi Penal Code in February 2023. The amendment required was to raise the age of marriage from 16 years to 18 years in line with the Constitution of Malawi. As a result, the Malawi Penal Code and amendments have been updated to include an elevated age in the definition of the child from 16 years to 18 years.

## F. Testimonials



**Jean Muonaowauza Sendeza, MP - Minister of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare**

*“Overall, what has been successful and unique about Spotlight Initiative was its multi-dimensional approach that included prevention as well as urgent and long-term responses to VAWG.”*



**Inkosikazi M'mbelwa IV (Chief's wife)**

*“Spotlight Initiative has empowered us (Chiefs wives) to have a voice which we are using to empower women and girls in our communities and to encourage them to report against any forms of abuse that they face. The knowledge and skills that we have also received from Spotlight Initiative has also enabled us to realise our economic potential that has led to the independence of women.”*



**EUD in Malawi**

*“Understanding that investing in the fight against VAWG is both a moral and an economic imperative, the EU has invested substantially in the Spotlight Initiative, which in partnership with the UN strives to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, still one of the most widespread, persistent and devastating human rights violations in our world today. Therefore, the EU in Malawi will continue the efforts started under the Spotlight Initiative”.*

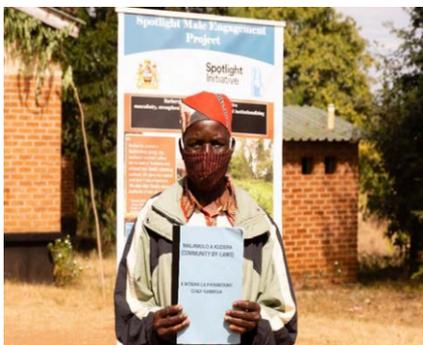
## G. Photos



**Bertha Brazizi**, a GBV survivor and an empowered farmer. Picture taken by Faith Mvula.



**Emily** with one of her mentors from the safe space. Picture taken by Joseph Scott.



A traditional leader showcasing a copy of their reviewed and validated community by-laws. Picture taken by Faith Mvula.



Nkhata-bay District Gender Officer Wyson Bonongwe showcasing the district mini-hub, which collects and consolidates data at the district level before it is sent to the national hub: Picture taken by Limbani Ngwata

## Looking forward - ensuring Spotlight's contributions are sustained

The Spotlight Initiative Malawi sustainability strategy was initially developed in 2021 and had 5 primary components. Throughout implementation of the initiative, sustainability consultations were prioritised alongside resource mobilisation for phase III of the initiative. The sustainability consultations always included a thorough participatory exercise which obtained views and recommendations of all relevant community stakeholders like women, men, boys, girls, traditional leaders, community leaders, community structures, district authorities, National level partners and Implementing partners on how best to sustain the results post Spotlight Initiative. Community voices and perspectives were carefully considered, along with recommendations from national and district authorities. Based on the sustainability strategy, in November 2022 an exit strategy was developed in collaboration with district and national authorities, as well as representatives of the CSNRG. The exit strategy took the form of a results framework, with milestones and timelines, which guided the specificities of handing over/ phasing out of the SI Programme.

### 1. Capacity Building of District Officers

Ensuring strong institutional capacity to respond to VaWG was critical. SI ensured that capacity building was integrated into relevant institutions' teaching curriculum, for instance, the Essential Services Package and forensics trainings. SI also placed district coordinators and GBV services officers in district authorities which ensured smooth transition of the interventions to the district councils.

### 2. Increased Budgetary Allocation to VAWG

The programme facilitated the development of indicators to track the inclusion of GBV in Minimum data requirements for Socio Economic Profiles and the District Development Plans. These plans are being implemented for the next 3-5 years, and the enhanced capacity of district officials, as well as the availability of tools to ensure that plans are gender transformative and disability sensitive supported the development of subsequent gender/ disability responsive plans.

### 3. Strengthening Local Structures & Mechanisms

The SI ensured that relevant government institutions and departments were taking lead on SI activities, which was key for the transition after program closure. All key coordination mechanisms and community-based structures related to E-VAWG were effective, functional and handed over to the authorities- both formal and informal. The structures included local Gender Technical Working Groups, Chief's Forums, Area and Village Development Committees, Safe Space Mentorship, women's assemblies, and more.

### 4. Survivor and Women Economic Empowerment

Linkages between GBV and poverty are clear, as many women experiencing abuse have raised the impossibility of leaving abusive partners because of their financial dependence on them.

Empowering women to challenge harmful social norms can only be sustained if the women are economically empowered. Income Generating Activities (e.g. survivor and community funds, WEE activities) were highly relevant to sustaining behaviour changes achieved under the SI.

#### **5. Transforming Harmful Social Norms: Male Engagement**

Considering that most VAWG is perpetrated by men and boys, it was vital that men and boys were engaged as champions of gender equality and e-VaWG. The engagement of high-level men, such as traditional and religious leaders was key to driving and sustaining behaviour change. Their commitment and leadership resulted in the reduction of many harmful practices, and it is expected that they will continue to do this work in their communities. Their work will be facilitated by the Chiefs Act and Chiefs Policy, which mandate their role in e-VaWG.

## **Annexes**

**Annex A: Results Framework**

**Annex B: Risk Matrix**

**Annex C: CSO Engagement Report**

**Annex D: Innovative, Promising or Good Practices Report**

**Annex F: Assets/Equipment/Major Supplies**

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry should be supported by a valid receipt or invoice. This not only helps in tracking expenses but also ensures compliance with tax regulations. The document further outlines the steps for recording these transactions, from identifying the nature of the expense to entering it into the accounting system.

Next, the document addresses the process of reconciling bank statements. It explains how to compare the bank's records with the company's internal records to identify any discrepancies. Common reasons for these differences include timing issues, bank errors, or unrecorded transactions. The document provides a detailed guide on how to investigate and resolve these discrepancies, ensuring that the company's books are always in balance.

The third section focuses on the preparation of financial statements. It describes the various types of statements, such as the balance sheet, income statement, and cash flow statement, and explains how they are derived from the accounting records. The document also discusses the importance of these statements for management decision-making and for providing information to external stakeholders like investors and creditors.

Finally, the document touches upon the role of internal controls in ensuring the accuracy and reliability of financial information. It highlights key control points, such as segregation of duties, authorization requirements, and regular audits. By implementing strong internal controls, a company can minimize the risk of errors and fraud, thereby enhancing the integrity of its financial reporting.