

Research Officer at Malala Fund, Naomi Nyamweya (right), speaks during an event on women and girls: "Towards a Rights-centred Gender-transformative Economy, Including a New International Financial Architecture".
Photo: UN Photo/Paulo Filgueiras

Why domestic public resources are key to ending violence against women and girls

Overview

Adequate and sustained domestic public funding is essential to end violence against women and girls (VAWG) and advance gender equality. Yet, efforts to end VAWG remain globally under-resourced. Drawing on preliminary findings from a Spotlight Initiative-Dalberg study, this brief highlights how Spotlight Initiative – the United Nations High-Impact Initiative to end violence against women and girls – is helping to mobilise domestic public resources.

Factors that restrict budgets for gender equality

Domestic public funds offer a stable source of development finance, often surpassing private flows and foreign aid.¹ Domestic public spending not only supports sustained ownership of the issue but can attract additional resources to end VAWG. However, domestic public funding to end VAWG is often constrained by:

- conditionalities on aid, imposed austerity, debt servicing and geopolitical inequalities that limit development and human rights investments²;
- restricted access to finance in the Global South due to protectionism or trade barriers imposed by the Global North³;
- underfunding and deprioritisation of ministries focused on advancing women's rights;
- patriarchal norms, stigma against survivors and low political will – especially with changes in government – compounded by state policies that prioritise militarisation over social protection and human security, despite strong evidence that gender equality is key to peace and stability.⁴
- weak monitoring of VAWG-related spending that obscures the need for and benefits of domestic resource mobilisation.

How Spotlight Initiative supports domestic resource mobilisation

The Initiative has worked with governments and civil society to increase domestic public funding to end VAWG by:

Building government capacity for gender-responsive planning and budgeting (GRPB).

- In **Liberia**, amid rising VAWG during COVID-19 and public protests, Spotlight Initiative helped strengthen the Ministry of Finance's Gender-Responsive Budgeting Unit to finalise the national Anti-SGBV Roadmap. The government committed USD 2 million to its implementation, and the new administration

allocated around USD 500,000 more in the 2024 national budget – demonstrating continued commitment.

High-level champions and cross-sectoral support drives political will and visibility of VAWG on national agendas.

- In **Trinidad and Tobago**, the Minister of Gender and Child Affairs moved into the Office of the Prime Minister, which strengthened the Minister's platform to engage diverse stakeholders across government and push for the adoption of the National Strategic Action Plan on Gender-based Violence and Sexual Violence (NSAP) in 2023.
- In **Uganda**, the Initiative strengthened district-level coordination on VAWG by working with budget and technical leads across departments, helping to dispel the notion that VAWG is solely the responsibility of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. These efforts helped mobilise a total of USD 8,266 in local revenue across five local governments for GBV prevention and response in 2024–2025.⁵

The existence of laws and national (and local) action plans to end VAWG help hold governments accountable.

- A strengthened legislative environment and costed action plans (aligned with integrated national financing frameworks),⁶ better ensure political buy-in, ease of adoption and sustainability.
- Building on the earlier example in **Trinidad and Tobago**, Spotlight Initiative supported the Ministry of Gender and Child Affairs to align the NSAP with the integrated national financing framework, identifying costs that existing national funding could cover, costs that development partners could cover and the outstanding funding request to the government.
- In **Ecuador**, the recently passed Comprehensive Organic Law for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence Against Women created a legal basis for further government action and budget allocation, with the latter specifically detailed in the law. The law also helped foment civil society advocacy and pushed the country to adopt the law locally. This led to local budget allocations for efforts to end VAWG.

1 See: UNDESA, *Preparatory Process for the Third International Conference on Financing for Development: Briefing Note on Domestic Public Finance*, 2015.

2 See: Eurodad, *Financing Development? An Assessment of Domestic Resource Mobilisation, Illicit Financial Flows, and Debt Management*, 2024.

3 See: World Bank, *Why is Trade More Costly for Poor Countries? A New Database Gives Us Some Answers*, 2013.; UNCTAD, *Trade and Transport Dataset*, 2016.; UNCTAD, *Sparing the Vulnerable - The Cost of New Tariff Burdens*, 2025.

4 See: Stockholm International Peace Institute *The Human Security Case for Re-balancing Military Expenditures*, 2022; UN Women, *Comparing Military and Human Security Spending: Key Findings and Methodological Notes*, 2022.

5 See: Spotlight Initiative Joint Programme of the Gender For Development Uganda Annual Narrative Programme Report: 01 January 2024 - 31 December 2024.

6 INEFs are a planning and delivery tool to help countries strengthen planning processes and overcome obstacles to financing sustainable development and the SDGs at the national level.

Broad support to civil society organizations (CSOs) and women's rights movements – including in their ongoing advocacy and efforts to track and monitor budget allocations toward ending VAWG – improves accountability and sustained action.

- In **Papua New Guinea**, Spotlight Initiative helped convene diverse civil society organizations, youth and community members – together with the UN Deputy Secretary-General – in the first National Summit on Ending Gender-based Violence in November 2020, which helped catalyse a Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV and public hearings. Driven by public support and civil society advocacy, Papua New Guinea delivered its first national budget allocation for ending violence against women and children in 2021. In 2022, approximately PGK 7.9 million was allocated, and in 2023 the government increased this allocation by approximately 20 per cent.⁷

High-profile VAWG cases – coupled with strong public pressure – can further catalyse advocacy and political will.

- In **Ecuador**, Spotlight Initiative amplified civil society demands and demonstrations in the aftermath of a femicide in 2022. This placed public pressure on the government, increasing political will to act to end VAWG. Combined with a push to implement the recently passed Comprehensive Organic Law (discussed above), including at local level, it further accelerated momentum for resources to address VAWG.

Transparently track and report on efforts to increase DRM.

- Spotlight Initiative monitored and evaluated its efforts on domestic resource mobilisation to track progress and promote stakeholder accountability. Governments should systematically track their efforts to increase domestic public resources to end violence against women and girls. This includes ensuring that related budget allocations and any changes over time are clearly documented and made publicly accessible.



Urgently moving forward

From the outset, Spotlight Initiative embedded domestic resource mobilisation into its comprehensive model, recognising that sustainability depends on national ownership and long-term domestic public investment.

In four countries (Ecuador, Liberia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uganda), the Initiative's efforts can be reliably tied to allocations totalling nearly USD 50 million.⁸

In a time of shrinking fiscal space and decreased aid budgets, domestic public resources represent a critical avenue to maintain progress. Spotlight Initiative has demonstrated that investing in a range of efforts to increase DRM works. By improving gender-responsive planning and budgeting, increasing national and sub-national budget allocations, institutionalising action plans, and supporting civil society demands, Spotlight Initiative and its partners have sustainably supported countries to finance efforts to end VAWG.

We invite others to join Spotlight Initiative as we scale up to a \$1 billion fund, supporting catalytic programming in 60 countries and technical support to every interested partner, in line with the universal challenge of ending violence against women and girls.

Contact info@spotlightinitiative.org for additional information on partnership opportunities.

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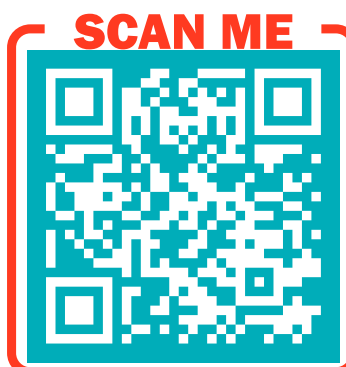
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⁷ Spotlight Initiative Papua New Guinea Final Narrative Report: 01 January 2020-31 December 2023.

⁸ This policy brief, developed for the FFD4 conference, is excerpted from a forthcoming study that presents a fuller picture of Spotlight Initiative's probable contribution to domestic resource mobilization (DRM), alongside government and civil society efforts; in four countries – Ecuador, Liberia, Trinidad & Tobago, and Uganda – the Initiative's efforts can be reliably linked to budget allocations totalling nearly USD 50 million.