



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



Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund Annual Narrative Progress Report

2024

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Acronym List and Abbreviations

DG INTPA	Directorate-General for International Partnerships
EOSG	Executive Office of the Secretary-General
EU	European Union
EVAWG	Ending violence against women and girls
IFI	International financial institutions
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
RC	Resident Coordinators
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
The Fund	Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund
The HIVE Programme	Spotlight Initiative's High-Impact Programme for Violence Elimination by 2030
UGX	Ugandan Shilling
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UN Reform	UN Development System Reform
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization

1. Executive Summary

Background and Context

The Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund (the Fund), established in April 2024, is a United Nations Secretary-General Fund set up as a continuation of the first-generation Spotlight Initiative Fund (2017-2024) and aims to amplify the results and impact achieved under the first-generation portfolio of global- and country-level programmes. Spotlight Initiative was established as a model Fund for UN Development System Reform and to demonstrate acceleration across the Sustainable Development Goals. During its first phase of programming, the Initiative achieved [unprecedented results](#), contributing to efforts to ensure that every woman and girl is able to live a life free from violence. The results in this report – together with the [final evaluation of the first phase of Spotlight Initiative](#) – provide further evidence that large-scale investments in rights-based, comprehensive programming to end violence against women and girls that engage all, and place civil society and women’s rights movements at the centre of efforts, work.



United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed and world leaders call for greater investment to end violence against women and girls. Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown

Notably, the operations of the Fund are complemented by those of the Spotlight Initiative’s High-Impact Programme for Violence Elimination by 2030 (the HIVE Programme) and two associated stand-alone joint programmes in Ecuador and Uganda, all three of which are funded by the European Union and administered outside of the Fund yet operate in full complementarity to, and coordination with, it. This publication focuses on results achieved under the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund, it’s launch on 8 April 2024 to 31 December 2024 and

will reference, wherever relevant, achievements made in collaboration and complementarity with other elements of the overarching umbrella framework of Spotlight Initiative, including the two associated stand-alone country programmes and the HIVE Programme.

Throughout 2024, the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund operated in an increasingly challenging global environment, marked by high rates of violence against women and girls, shrinking civic space, a rollback on women's rights, significant shifts in the donor funding landscape, growing attacks on human rights and gender equality, and protracted crises worldwide. In 2024, international aid declined for the first time in five years, with only a fraction allocated to gender equality or violence prevention, despite escalating needs driven by conflict, climate change, economic instability, and a widespread rise of far-right movements. These challenges have been further intensified by regressive trends that lead to growing uncertainty and instability, such as threats to multilateralism and the targeting of human rights defenders, progressive civil society organizations, and activists.

In response to this, Spotlight Initiative continued to advance a whole-of-society, rights-based approach to end violence against women and girls and counter gender inequality. Through its work under the Fund, the Initiative supported multi-stakeholder collaboration across United Nations (UN) agencies, civil society and governments to deliver integrated programming while concurrently advancing the goals of the United Nations Development System's Reform (UN Reform) under the leadership of Resident Coordinators (RCs) at the country level. In line with its whole-of-UN system approach, the Initiative facilitated effective inter-agency programming, with thirteen (13) UN agencies signing the Fund Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), as follows: the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Spotlight Initiative Model and Theory of Change

The Fund's Theory of Change is rooted in the evidence that a comprehensive, whole-of-society approach with mutually reinforcing interventions best advances efforts to end violence against women and girls (EVAWG). Spotlight initiative works to pass progressive laws and policies, strengthen institutions, and support the generation and use of data on violence against women and girls. It also helps prevent violence by addressing harmful social norms, beliefs, and attitudes, increasing access to quality essential services, and engaging deeply and directly with civil society organizations and women's rights movements.

In response to evidence gathered over the Initiative's first phase, the Fund champions a highly adaptable and localized approach to ending violence against women and girls, guided by country-level assessments and situational analyses, to ensure highly contextualized, needs-based interventions that build on and complement existing efforts by national and local government, civil society, the United Nations and other stakeholders in-country.

Moreover, Spotlight Initiative's rights-based, research-driven model is grounded in the evidence that investing in ending violence against women and girls effectively accelerates progress across the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By centring interventions around stronger, more resilient and representative institutions, the Initiative is contributing to building more peaceful, inclusive societies, expanding democratic rights and strengthening civic space. Furthermore, research has shown that gender-equitable societies [are more peaceful and resilient](#), and societies that address violence against women and girls are more [democratic](#), with the links between women's status and human rights and equality and democracy [well established](#).

The Initiative's approach is also anchored in the evidence that the autonomous mobilization of feminists (and progressive movements, including feminist movements) is critical to sustainable change. Accordingly, civil society and grassroots movements remain at the heart of Spotlight Initiative and are a key driver of its success. In 2024, the Fund collaborated with the structures of the broader Spotlight Initiative framework, outlined in Figure 1 below, to deepen its partnership with civil society.

Key Achievements of the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund

Establishing the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund

As noted above, the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund builds on the success and lessons of the Initiative's first phase to deliver more responsive, streamlined, and inclusive programming to end violence against women and girls. Designed through an extensive, consultative process with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG), UN agencies, the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, and civil society, the Fund retains the key features that made Spotlight Initiative a successful, results-driven initiative during its first phase, while broadening the donor base, further strengthening the ability of the Initiative to adapt to local contexts, and reinforcing technical excellence. The foundational processes rolled out throughout 2024 – including the establishment of the Fund on 8 April 2024 following signature of the Memorandum of Understanding and terms of reference by the Deputy Secretary-General – are critical to continue driving impactful programming and realizing Spotlight Initiative's ambition of becoming a USD 1 billion fund, programming across 60 countries, over the next five years.

Scaling up Resourcing and Financial Support to End Violence against Women and Girls

In 2024, through its HIVE Programme, Spotlight Initiative established a dedicated resource mobilization and partnerships function to strengthen its efforts to expand its funding base and deepen partnerships in response to an ever-challenging funding landscape and aid environment, and shifting donor priorities. The Initiative secured new contributions from **Belgium, the Netherlands, the United States, and Ireland**, channelled to the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund, while maintaining strong support from the **European Union (EU)**. Strategic partnerships – including a new collaboration with the **World Bank** – and high-level engagements at global forums elevated the Fund’s visibility, fostered dialogue, and strengthened political and financial commitments to end violence against women and girls.

Associated Programmes

Over the reporting period, Spotlight Initiative continued to advance efforts to end violence against women and girls through joint programmes in Ecuador and Uganda funded by the respective European Union Delegations, established under the Initiative’s broader umbrella framework and rolled out before the Fund was constituted. Building on the results achieved in the two countries under Spotlight Initiative’s first phase, these programmes were able to sustain and expand on the Initiative’s impact through a more localized, context-specific approach. Section 4.4 provides further details on associated programme results achieved in 2024.



Indigenous women leaders unite in Ecuador to help prevent gender-based violence under the first-generation Spotlight Initiative programme in Ecuador. Efforts to further localize the approach to ending VAWG continued under the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 associated programme in Ecuador, over the reporting period. Puyo, March 2022. Photo: Johanna Alarcón.

Implemented in close coordination with the Fund, these programmes contributed meaningfully to enhancing the overall reach of the Initiative’s wider mechanism to end violence against

women and girls. Additional investments to complement and scale up work in these two countries will be rolled out under the Fund in 2025, allowing programmes to continue building on results while leveraging the added value of the Fund's pooled funding mechanism. By collaborating closely, the Fund, the HIVE Programme, and the associated Spotlight Initiative programmes in Ecuador and Uganda have been able to realize the synergistic effect of an integrated approach to preventing and ending violence against women and girls.



'Making a difference in the lives of women and girls' - Spotlight Initiative launch in Uganda. Photo: UN Women/Eva Sibanda

Setting the Stage for a New Generation of Programmes

In 2024, the Fund – in close collaboration with the HIVE Programme – worked with UN Country Teams led by Resident Coordinators to conceptualize and develop a new portfolio of Spotlight Initiative 2.0 programmes, with nearly 60 countries expressing interest in adopting the Spotlight Initiative model. Throughout the reporting period, several programmes were developed through country-driven, participatory processes in **Liberia**, **Sierra Leone**, and **Zambia**, and for an **Africa Regional Programme**, as well as complementary investments to existing programmes in **Ecuador** and **Uganda**, all with existing financial commitments by donors and all expected to launch in 2025.

Looking Ahead

In 2025, the Fund will collaborate with the HIVE Programme and the two associated programmes to:

- Expand its country and regional programme portfolio to deepen the scope and reach of programming to end violence against women and girls, advance UN Reform, and build momentum towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals
- Broaden its partnership base to diversify funding sources to scale impact, as well as deepen collaboration with existing partners
- Enhance knowledge management and results monitoring to strengthen results-based programming and further a participatory approach to monitoring and evaluation
- Drive strategic communication and advocacy to amplify results, mobilize additional support and elevate the positioning of ending violence against women and girls in the political and donor funding agenda
- Deepen engagement with civil society to strengthen ownership, sustainability, and impact
- Position Spotlight Initiative's model as one that is fit for purpose to respond to today's evolving context and challenges, and as a key driver of change for driving system-wide efficiency, ending violence against women and girls, and achieving 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development targets.

Guided by the achievements and lessons learned under the first generation of Spotlight Initiative programming, the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund presents an opportunity to capitalize on the gains made to prevent and end violence against women and girls. Through an unprecedented and innovative model, Spotlight Initiative continues to deliver for women and girls around the world.

2. Background and Context

2.1 Spotlight Initiative Programming and Fund Overview

Launched in 2017, Spotlight Initiative is the United Nations high-impact initiative to end violence against women and girls (EVAWG). Over its first six years of implementation, Spotlight Initiative delivered comprehensive interventions in 34 country, regional, and grant-giving programmes across five regions, achieving transformative results. By engaging in a whole-of-society, whole-of-UN system approach, the Initiative helped the United Nations harmonize efforts to end violence against women and girls and drive progress across all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Rooted in development priorities of national governments and civil society, the effectiveness of the Initiative's model exceeded expectations, delivering proof of concept and strong results across its programmes. The [Spotlight Initiative Final Narrative Report](#) and preceding [annual reports](#) offer more information on the impact achieved under the first-generation Spotlight Initiative Fund.

Building on these results, the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund (the Fund) presents a renewed commitment to this multi-stakeholder effort to end violence against women and girls. The Fund's design reflects lessons learned and good practices gathered throughout first-generation programming. It enhances operational efficiency by fulfilling its triple mandate to drive UN Reforms, end violence against women and girls, and build momentum towards achieving the 2030 Agenda. Concurrently, it increases responsiveness to local contexts while continuing to uphold the key principles that have underpinned Spotlight Initiative's success to date. This has upheld the integrity of the Initiative's comprehensive model and Theory of Change, which has been shown [to be more effective than traditional, siloed approaches](#) to addressing violence against women and girls.

2.2 Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund Umbrella Framework

Guided by the leadership of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General in partnership with the UN Development Cooperation Office, Spotlight Initiative's umbrella framework comprises a set of complementary elements operating in synergy at global, regional and national levels to effectively prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls.

Under this framework, the operations of the Fund are complemented by those of the HIVE Programme and associated stand-alone joint programmes in Ecuador and Uganda, all administered outside of the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund yet operating in full complementarity to, and coordination with, it. By harmonizing these efforts and engaging in one coherent approach, the Initiative is able to capitalize on the synergistic value generated from connecting the components of the wider Spotlight Initiative effort. Through this, the Fund has been able to leverage a wider array of partnerships, resources, knowledge bases, technical expertise, and results, allowing it to scale impact and broaden its scope and reach. Figure 1 below illustrates the components of the Spotlight Initiative umbrella framework.

This umbrella approach responds to the universality of violence against women and girls, which remains a pervasive issue in every country. It is designed to allow Spotlight Initiative – and each of its components – to hone its needs-based, highly contextualized approach in order to maximize impact across diverse contexts and build momentum around ending violence against women and girls and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

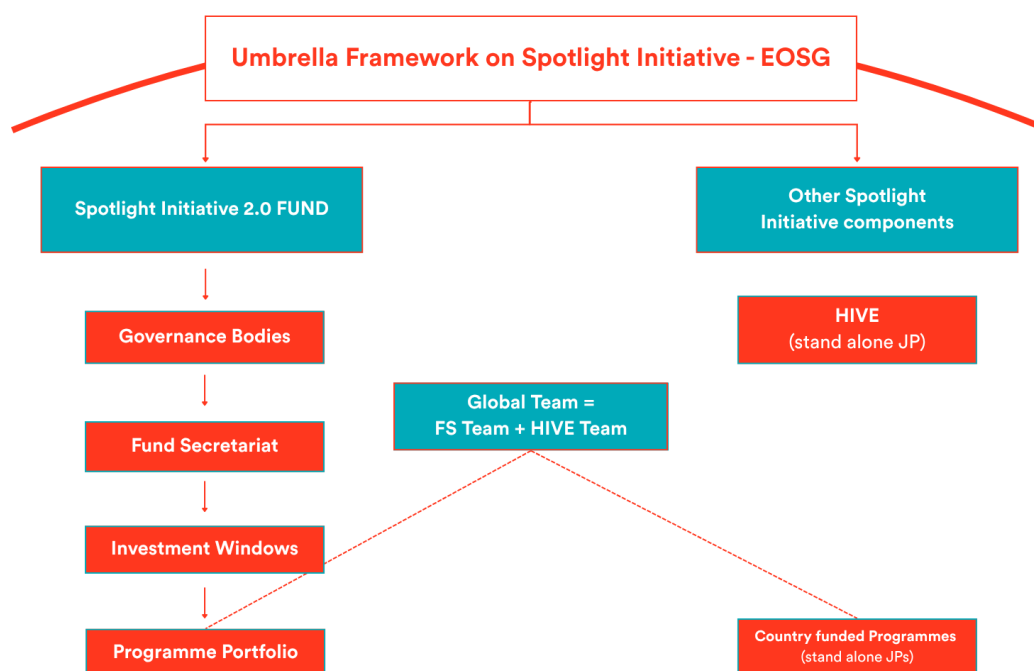


Figure 1 Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Umbrella Framework

2.3 Current Context

Spotlight Initiative is operating in an increasingly challenging environment. Human rights – and the very concept of gender – are [under attack](#) in many parts of the world. Rates of violence against women and girls remain high, with at least [one in three](#) women experiencing violence in their lifetime.

Adding to this, civic space is shrinking in many places. Women’s rights organizations, which are at the forefront of addressing violence, remain severely underfunded. This regression continues to intensify, fuelled by rising authoritarianism and well-funded anti-rights movements, making it more difficult for activists, advocates and service providers to operate safely and effectively.

In 2024, international aid fell by [7.1 per cent](#) compared to 2023 – the first drop after five years of consecutive growth. Latest [estimates](#) suggest that investment in violence prevention was just 0.2 per cent of global aid spending, and [only 4 per cent](#) of aid was directed toward programmes where gender equality was the principal objective. Funding for gender equality and ending violence remains insufficient to meet the scale of needs.

Over the reporting period, armed conflicts, climate change, and economic instability continued to generate new risks of violence against women and girls, who continue to bear the brunt of global crises. At national levels, the rollback of legal protections, alongside the rise of

harassment targeting human rights defenders and activists, underscored the urgent need for large-scale and comprehensive interventions to end violence against women and girls.

The Fund is set up to counter these trends by furthering the Initiative's collaborative, multi-stakeholder approach, working across society – including with civil society, government, and local communities – to drive long-term change. It is designed to effectively advance UN Reform by leveraging the collective expertise and comparative advantages of over 12 UN entities to deliver integrated and comprehensive programming.

3. Fund Governance and Coordination

The Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund's governance structure aims to engender effective, inclusive, and efficient decision-making and oversight. Reflecting good practices, lessons learned and feedback from the first-generation of Spotlight Initiative programming, these governance arrangements bring together multiple stakeholders to foster transparency, accountability, and technical excellence of fund management and programming.

As a UN Secretary-General Fund, the governance structure operates under the strategic direction of the United Nations' Deputy Secretary-General, the operations of the Fund are supported by the Fund Secretariat (FS) and the Fund is administered by the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, as Administrative Agent. Global-level Fund governance comprises three complementary tiers: the Advisory Board, the Operational Steering Committee and the Programme Appraisal Committee. The Advisory Board serves to provide strategic advice and suggestions to the Deputy Secretary-General on the direction and priorities of the Initiative; the Operational Steering Committee facilitates investment planning and programme approvals; and the Programme Appraisal Committee provides technical peer reviews of programme design in order to ensure technical excellence in programming.

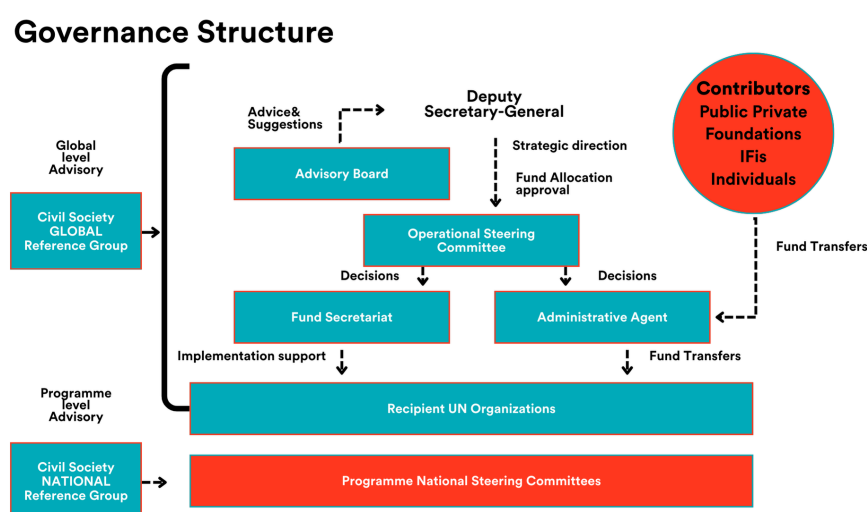


Figure 2 Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund Governance Structure

The composition of all Fund governance structures reflects the Spotlight Initiative's inclusive, multi-stakeholder model, its commitment to a coordinated UN-wide response to ending violence, and the principle of leaving no one behind. The Advisory Board is co-chaired by the UN Development Coordination Office's Assistant Secretary-General and the UN Women Executive Director, and its membership comprises one head of agency from a Spotlight Initiative Recipient UN Organization¹ (representing all others), the five largest donors to the Fund, and Civil Society Global Reference Group representatives (ensuring 20 per cent representation through self-nomination).

Similarly, the Operational Steering Committee comprises representatives from the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, Spotlight Initiative Recipient UN Organizations, the UN Development Coordination Office, and the Civil Society Global Reference Group in an advisory capacity. The Programme Appraisal Committee is chaired by a representative of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and includes members from Spotlight Initiative Recipient UN Organizations – some serving on a rotating basis to ensure broad participation – alongside civil society representatives and members of the Spotlight Initiative Global Team.

Additional details on the composition and procedures of the Fund governance bodies can be found in the [Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund Terms of Reference](#).

Over the reporting period, several foundational governance processes took place, including the official appointment of members and the development of dedicated terms of reference to guide each mechanism. Thereafter, in Quarter 4 of 2024, the Fund launched two proceedings of the Operational Steering Committee and one of the Programme Appraisal Committee to approve the Fund-managed component of the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 programme in Ecuador (sourced through the investment by the United States to complement the investment by the European Union (EU) administered as a stand-alone associated joint programme), to be rolled out in 2025, as well as the establishment of the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund Secretariat.

Additionally, the first meeting of the Advisory Board, the Fund's highest tier of governance, was held in December 2024, with the Deputy Secretary-General in attendance, to discuss the vision for the Fund and take stock on progress made, as well as to plan for the years ahead in order to ensure that the Initiative remains well positioned to respond to changing needs and an evolving donor funding landscape.

Civil society is represented in all global- and programme-level governance mechanisms of Spotlight Initiative. Reflecting learning from the Initiative's first phase, the Civil Society Global

¹ As noted above, Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund Recipient UN Agencies include: the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS).

Reference Group was launched in partnership with the HIVE Programme, acting as an advisory body responsible for advising and advocating for women and girls, and holding the Initiative accountable to its commitments. Guided by these principles, national and regional civil society reference groups are also established at the programme level.

Fund implementation is carried out by Recipient UN Organizations. The selection of a Recipient UN Organization for each country or regional programme is led by the UN Resident Coordinator based on its complementary added value, relevance, and expertise in each particular context (beyond its global mandate), ensuring context-driven, collaborative programming, under the Resident Coordinator's leadership, in the spirit of UN Reform. Throughout 2024, the Fund leveraged Spotlight Initiative's convening role to foster inter-agency collaboration across 13 UN agencies – the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the World Health Organization (WHO) – and capitalize on the expertise of UN agencies to drive well-coordinated change.

Programme-level governance structures safeguard the integrity of Spotlight Initiative's model, key principles, and comprehensive approach. The Fund's programmes, to be rolled out in 2025, will be led by a national or regional steering committee, which will be under the oversight of the Resident Coordinator in partnership with governments, and with the participation of UN agencies, civil society, and other partners. The programme steering committees will respond to and align with national or regional priorities. In alignment with the Initiative's core principles, all programmes will have a civil society reference group to advise, advocate and hold the programme accountable to its commitments. Meaningful participation of civil society has been critical to Spotlight Initiative's success, ensuring that the Initiative remains responsive, while building ownership across stakeholder groups and safeguarding rights-based programming and the sustainability of results.

The Fund Secretariat (established in late 2024) supports Fund operations and governance. More specifically, the Secretariat plays a crucial role in facilitating effective and efficient Fund and programme management, and provides high-quality technical and operational support to its governance mechanisms and programmes. The Fund Secretariat operates closely with the HIVE Programme team to cross-fertilize efforts in programme design and implementation, knowledge management, communications, advocacy, monitoring, evaluation and reporting, partnerships and more.

3.1 Driving UN Reform

Spotlight Initiative is a model Fund for UN Development System Reform. As such, the Initiative has furthered a whole-of-UN system approach to end violence against women and girls and advance the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Through integrated programming, the Fund has been able to capitalize on existing capacities and resources in UN teams to foster system-wide coherence, increase efficiency, and demonstrate accountability (including through streamlined reporting mechanisms). The Fund is also working to further streamline operational processes for more effective and coordinated delivery, given lessons from its first phase, including those highlighted in the [final evaluation of the Initiative's first phase](#). In addition, by furthering a more localized approach to programme design, implementation and governance, the Fund aims to better support local institutions and strengthen national ownership, improving the sustainability of interventions and results.

Led by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, Spotlight Initiative is housed within the Development Coordination Office, with the Development Coordination Office's Assistant Secretary-General acting as co-chair of the Fund's Advisory Board, facilitating opportunities for joint strategic decision-making and collaboration at the highest level. The Spotlight Initiative and Development Coordination Office leadership meet for monthly director-level meetings to foster alignment, and leverage synergies across teams and portfolios. Throughout 2024, the Fund Secretariat also participated regularly in the Development Coordination Office's weekly Programme and Policy branch meetings, improving information flow and knowledge for stronger programming and results. Collaboration at the highest level has also helped advance the Fund's goals and objectives to scale up system-wide reforms and drive more coordinated and impactful programming to end violence against women and girls.

Close collaboration with the Development Coordination Office has allowed the Initiative to further leverage the Resident Coordinator's strategic leadership at the country level. Capitalizing on the Resident Coordinator's role – a critical driver of success for Spotlight Initiative – has facilitated: the implementation of better integration mechanisms within UN Country Teams; stronger, context-responsive coordination structures; a more elevated position of the issue in national agendas; and increased coordination across UN agencies by leveraging their existing partnerships and experience.

3.2 Coordination with the HIVE Programme to Amplify Impact and Results

Spotlight Initiative's High-Impact Programme for Violence Elimination by 2030 (the HIVE Programme), funded by the European Union, was designed to amplify the achievements of the Initiative's first phase, working in close coordination with the Fund and its Fund Secretariat to complement and amplify system-wide efforts to end violence against women and girls.

Throughout 2024, the HIVE Programme built on impacts achieved thus far by consolidating, scaling up, and refining evidence-based, comprehensive approaches to ending violence against women and girls, while fostering global advocacy and policy reforms. The HIVE Programme helped onboard new Spotlight Initiative 2.0 programmes and mobilize additional resources and new donors to the Fund and the Initiative more broadly. By sharing new data, evidence, and tools – and ensuring lessons from the first phase of the Initiative shape the next – the HIVE Programme is also expanding and enhancing the quality and comprehensiveness of programming to end violence against women and girls globally. Close coordination across the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund, the HIVE Programme, and the associated joint programmes helps amplify efforts to end violence against women and girls and significantly expand the scale of impact.

Throughout 2024, the work of the HIVE Programme – including high-visibility global engagements and events such as the 68th Commission on the Status of Women, the High-Level Political Forum, and the UN General Assembly – continuously communicated and supported best practices in comprehensive programming on ending violence against women and girls, and urged donors to scale up support to comprehensive EAWG programmes, including Spotlight Initiative, through its Fund. Further details are provided in Section 4.2.

3.3 Leveraging the Agency Focal Point System and Civil Society Global Reference Group

Agency Focal Point System

In 2024, the Fund in partnership with the HIVE Programme continued to foster inter-agency collaboration and strengthen coordination, efficiency and cross-sectoral approaches to programming (aligned with UN Reform principles). To that end, global-level mechanisms were used to strengthen partnerships with agency focal points across all Spotlight Initiative Recipient UN Organizations at the UN headquarters level, including **ILO, IOM, OHCHR, PAHO, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNODC, UNOPS, UN Women, and WHO**. Stronger coordination with agency focal points resulted in more successful joint action and advocacy, including by generating interest in (and funding for) Spotlight Initiative programming at the country level, streamlining programme development and strategies, and more relevant and responsive research and knowledge production.

In 2024, agency focal points met regularly. In Quarter 1, agency representatives co-hosted a retreat that reaffirmed the Initiative's strategic coordination mechanism and its role in uniting the UN system to drive impactful, collective action. Monthly inter-agency discussions at the headquarters level followed, enhancing timely and effective communication and knowledge sharing, fostering alignment with evolving priorities. This, in turn, helped improve coordination with regional- and country-level agency representatives in programme development and implementation, including by streamlined communication of all decisions made by the Fund governance structures.

Over the reporting period, agency focal points provided critical support to Fund governance processes, including through their participation in the Programme Appraisal Committee, where they offered their technical expertise to assess programme quality. Focal points were actively involved in programme development as well, reviewing Spotlight Initiative programme documents and budgets, attending strategic in-country workshops, coordinating with their respective country or regional offices, and supporting joint resource mobilization efforts to end violence against women and girls. This allowed the Fund, and Spotlight Initiative more broadly, to further coordinate efforts with a wide range of stakeholders and galvanize the system into action on EVAWG. The continued engagement of UN agencies has underscored their commitment to system-wide collaboration in support of ending violence against women and girls, improving operational efficiency, scaling up good practices, leveraging their mandates and context-specific expertise, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Additionally, agency focal points have been actively involved in building the Fund's responsiveness to current needs and evolving contexts, as well as integrating lessons learned in order to continue honing the Initiative's approach to ending violence against women and girls. To that end, agency focal points actively participated in the revision process for Spotlight Initiative's Global Results Framework, launched in Quarter 4, to iteratively generate a more responsive and relevant Global Results Framework that is better able to capture meaningful change across the diverse contexts in which the Initiative works.

Underpinned by strong coordination across the agency focal point structure, the Fund, and the HIVE programme, support from agency focal points helped expand and improve programming, learning, partnerships, and resource mobilization.



SVRI Forum 2024: Panellists L-R: UNICEF Kyrgyzstan Gender Programme Officer Jipara Turmamatova; UNFPA Malawi Gender Programme Officer Beatrice Kumwenda; Director of Communications at the ALDEA Foundation, Ecuador Nicoletta Marinelli; Director of Forensic Services at the Uganda Police Force Andrew Mubiru and moderator Nancy Yu, Chief Impact Officer at ImpactMapper. Photo: Spotlight Initiative.

For instance, agency focal point collaboration with the HIVE Programme in the production, roll-out and dissemination of the Spotlight Initiative Learning Centre improved wider uptake and awareness among UN agency stakeholders working to end violence against women and girls. Moreover, focal points supported the dissemination of the [Compendium of Innovative and Good Practices and Lessons Learned](#), and provided critical feedback to the Spotlight Initiative Research and Learning Agenda, enhancing the quality of system-wide interventions and helping to strengthen the Initiative's learning priorities and partnerships. Agency focal points also supported efforts to broaden the Fund's partnership base by providing valuable insights into the Initiative's resource mobilization strategy, which led to the establishment of the partnerships focal point network. The section below on **Fund Resourcing: Scaling up Financial Support for Spotlight Initiative** provides more detail on this collaboration.

Civil Society Global Reference Group

Civil society engagement has been a foundational element of Spotlight Initiative from its inception and a key contributor to its success. Civil society organizations play a vital role in shaping, implementing, monitoring, and holding the Initiative accountable at the national, regional, and global levels.



Several Civil Society Global Reference Group members pictured with Spotlight Initiative staff at the SVRI Forum in Cape Town. Photo: Spotlight Initiative.

Civil society helped shape the design of the Fund through an ambitious co-design process with the engagement of over 700 civil society stakeholders from across the globe. This process surfaced recommendations for the Fund and Spotlight Initiative more broadly with regard to inclusive funding mechanisms, programme quality, the protection of human rights, and the meaningful engagement of civil society within UN initiatives. In June 2024, with the support of the HIVE Programme, a civil society-led selection process successfully constituted the new

Global Reference Group, with 17 individuals from 16 countries across all regions of the world. With expertise in social justice, human rights, and feminist advocacy, the Global Reference Group members are mandated to advocate for and advise the Initiative while also holding it accountable, ensuring that women's movements remain central partners in ending violence against women and girls. The newly selected Global Reference Group, in place until 2026, will continue to steer and strengthen civil society engagement throughout the coming years and contribute to the governance of the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund.

This year marked the beginning of the collaborative implementation of the principles co-designed in 2023 by a diverse range of civil society partners. Monthly meetings with the Spotlight Initiative Global Team ensured continuous alignment, information-sharing, and coordinated representation in governance spaces, including in Fund governance. In coordination with the HIVE Programme, the Global Reference Group also strengthened civil society representation at key UN platforms such as the Commission on the Status of Women, the High-Level Political Forum, and the United Nations General Assembly. At the 68th Commission on the Status of Women in 2024, Global Reference Group members led workshops and high-level engagements, advocating for a rights-based approach to ending violence against women and girls and reinforcing the critical role of feminist movements within the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund.

4. 2024 Results

4.1 Fund Set-Up: Leveraging Lessons Learned to Establish Fund Foundations for Continued Spotlight Initiative Programming

Following the closure of the first-generation Spotlight Initiative Fund, 2024 saw the establishment of the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund through a multi-stakeholder consultation process, reflecting lessons learned and best practices gathered to date. This comprehensive process ensured that Spotlight Initiative was even more equipped to prevent and end violence against women and girls, including by integrating findings and recommendations from a wide range of studies, reviews, evaluations, and stakeholders into Fund design.

The Fund was established on 8 April 2024 through the signature by the UN Deputy Secretary-General of the Memorandum of Understanding establishing the Fund with the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office. Guided by its [terms of reference](#), the Fund was designed to retain the signature features that made Spotlight Initiative a flagship UN programme and contributed to its success to date, while integrating lessons learned emerging from the implementation of the first-generation Spotlight Initiative Fund (2017-2024) and ensuring a further localized approach led by civil society and in line with national priorities. As such, Spotlight Initiative key features include:

- A whole-of-society, whole-of-government approach, including at the highest levels
- A central, meaningful role for civil society, supported by significant investments, as well as community coordination and accountability mechanisms with meaningful authority and voice
- A comprehensive Theory of Change addressing the holistic nature of violence against women and girls and a common results framework
- Alignment to the UN Reform principles and a pooled funding mechanism, under the leadership and accountability of an empowered Resident Coordinator
- Alignment with Spotlight Initiative's Global Communications and Visibility Strategy
- Participation in Global Knowledge Exchange activities

The Fund was constituted through a consultation process with representatives of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, Recipient UN Organizations, civil society, and the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, furthering a highly participative approach to Fund design that ensured improved programming and strategic alignment across stakeholders. Fund design was aimed at further strengthening responsiveness to country contexts, donor priorities, and an evolving funding landscape, as well as to improve operational efficiencies and inclusivity of partnerships.

Notably, the Fund has been broadening its donor base and has evolved into a fully pooled funding instrument, moving beyond its previous single-donor model characterized by the European Union's USD 530 million investment. Efforts to achieve this are detailed in the following section. Moreover, the Fund setup reaffirms the leadership role of the UN Deputy Secretary-General in leading the Initiative, while introducing enhanced governance structures to ensure more inclusive strategic direction-setting, as well as improved programme quality. As mentioned in Chapter 3, these include: the Advisory Board, the Operational Steering Committee, and the Programme Appraisal Committee. These governance structures continue to play a key role in all stages of programme development and implementation.

In this regard, a key milestone was the establishment of a new Civil Society Global Reference Group, mandated to advocate, advise, and uphold accountability across the Initiative. Meaningful engagement with civil society has remained critical to the success of the Fund, and Spotlight Initiative at large, allowing for an inclusive, participatory approach to programme implementation while furthering the principle of leaving no one behind. In 2024, the Global Reference Group produced a new advocacy strategy focused on protecting women human rights defenders and a roadmap to guide the Spotlight Initiative's efforts in sustaining meaningful civil society engagement. This alignment laid a strong foundation for continued civil society collaboration and influence. Serving through 2026, the Global Reference Group will play a key role in advancing civil society engagement and contributing to the governance of the Fund.

At the country level, the Fund reaffirms and amplifies the central role of UN Resident Coordinators in strategically coordinating UN agencies implementing Spotlight Initiative programmes and driving decision-making, including as co-chairs of the programme-level steering committee. It also reinforces the critical partnership with civil society, not only as partners in programme implementation, but also as active participants in decision-making and in holding the Initiative accountable to its commitments.

In response to evolving trends in official development assistance and increasingly decentralized donor funding patterns, the Fund is designed to accept both global and unearmarked resources, as well as country or region-earmarked funding for specific geographical areas. This flexibility has enhanced the Fund's ability to manage diverse investments and strengthen strategic partnerships, as outlined below.

4.2 Fund Resourcing: Scaling up Financial Support for Spotlight Initiative

With the establishment of the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund in 2024, the Initiative invested in strengthening its partnerships through donor engagement, bringing on new donors and deepening its partnership with the European Union, which remains Spotlight Initiative's largest donor. Engagement with the HIVE Programme and the Initiative's 13 UN partner agencies in joint resource mobilization activities were critical to this approach, providing opportunities to coordinate efforts in support of relationship building, thereby expanding the scope and depth of outreach to prospective partners.

2024 saw political instability, resulting in backsliding of donor support for human rights and gender equality, including efforts to end violence. In response to the changing landscape, the Initiative worked to identify new approaches to funding and financing, engaging a wider set of stakeholders as key actors supporting efforts to end violence against women and girls. This new approach is defined in a resource mobilization and partnerships strategy, scheduled to launch in 2025.

The Initiative's approach to resource mobilization and partnerships resulted in an expanded donor base, including a fully flexible contribution from **Belgium** at the global level, and earmarked contributions from **the Netherlands** for Uganda, **the United States** for Ecuador, and **Ireland** for Zambia. The **European Union** remains the Initiative's largest donor, supporting the global HIVE Programme and with earmarked contributions for the Initiative's associated programmes in Ecuador and Uganda. Additional contributions from the European Union and other partners are in the pipeline for 2025.

Within the context of the UN General Assembly high-level week in September 2024, Spotlight Initiative, the **European Union**, and the **World Bank** committed to working together to end violence against women and girls. Announced by the UN Deputy Secretary-General, the EU International Partnerships Commissioner, and the World Bank Managing Director for Operations, the collaboration aims to leverage Spotlight Initiative's comprehensive model to

advance shared objectives, including advancing global policy dialogue on ending violence against women and girls, shared research, high-visibility events, and collective investment in countries with established Spotlight Initiative programmes. In addition to the partnership with the World Bank, the Initiative engaged with regional multilateral development banks to explore additional avenues of cooperation. Beyond expanding support for Spotlight Initiative and ending violence against women and girls, these collective efforts are also aimed at driving new partners and resources to the Fund.

Finally, a number of high-visibility events in support of fundraising efforts to end violence against women and girls were organized throughout the year under the HIVE Programme, and to complement efforts under Spotlight Initiative and the Fund more broadly. These included: the launch of the Initiative's Impact Report at the High-Level Political Forum in New York with co-sponsors Belgium and the European Union; participation in the Summit of the Future, adjacent to the UN General Assembly high-level week; engagement in the Sexual Violence Research Initiative Forum in Cape Town; and participation in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Gender Equality Forum in Paris. Each of the events generated visibility for the Initiative and its partners, fostered dialogue on the Initiative's work, and encouraged political commitments to advance gender equality efforts as a shared priority among member states, UN agencies, civil society, and the private sector.

4.3 Setting the Stage for a New Generation of Country and Regional Programmes

In 2024, after the closure of the first-generation programme portfolio, UN Country Teams, led by Resident Coordinators, continued to express interest in developing Spotlight Initiative programmes. The new generation of programmes under the Fund continues to integrate the key features of the model, while working to ensure greater operational flexibility to adapt quickly to shifting contexts and deliver more effective, context-driven responses.

Recognizing that violence against women and girls is a multifaceted issue and highly context-specific, the Fund's revised guidance and frameworks (including its forthcoming revised Global Results Framework and guidance on inclusive situational analyses) prioritize adaptive, responsive programming from the onset. Additionally, a bespoke Programme and Operations Manual, to be launched in 2025, will further foster effectiveness and efficiency of programming, adaptability, and contextualization by ensuring more responsive programmatic and operational systems.

In support of building the programme portfolio managed by the Fund, the HIVE Programme team delivered targeted strategic and technical support to UN Country Teams in raising interest in Spotlight Initiative programming and ideating and designing a new generation of programmes, leveraging the knowledge and expertise from the first iteration of Spotlight Initiative, in alignment with the core features that characterize the added value of the model. Over the reporting period, over 60 UN Country and Regional Teams expressed interest in adopting the Spotlight Initiative model in their national or regional contexts. In response, the

Spotlight Initiative Global Team collaborated closely to provide tailored support to UN Country Teams on programme design and resource mobilization. Specific support activities included:

- Briefing UN Country Teams on the key features and added value of the Spotlight Initiative programming model
- Providing donor mapping and tailored resource mobilization tools for Resident Coordinator's Offices and UN Country Teams
- Delivering technical and logistical support to host donor roundtables in **Angola, Cameroon, Guatemala, Haiti, Madagascar, Malawi, Mongolia, Sierra Leone, Zambia** and the **Southern Africa sub-region**
- Providing technical expertise and substantive accompaniment to draft concept notes and programme documents, including through the Compendium of Innovative and Good Practices and Lessons Learned, the Spotlight Initiative Learning Centre, the revised Technical Guidance and Global Results Framework and the SHINE Hub
- Integrating new evidence and expanding guidance on cross-cutting issues and interactions across outcomes, through an updated Technical Guidance Note on the Four Outcomes of the Theory of Change.



Homes for women-headed households and vulnerable Ivorian refugees in Liberia. Princess Kouadio and children in front of their newly received house. Photo: UNFPA Liberia/Calixte Hessou.

This targeted support has contributed to the development of the following:

- Four new Fund programmes throughout 2024 (**Liberia, Sierra Leone, Zambia** and an **Africa Regional Programme**), expected to launch in the first half of 2025.
- Two complementary programmatic components, in **Ecuador** and **Uganda**. Both programmes will receive additional donor investments through the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund that are expected to roll out in early 2025. See Section 4.4 for further details on associated programmes.
- **30+ UN Country Teams** engaged in early-stage discussions, exploring feasibility and momentum for launching Spotlight Initiative programmes in their countries.
- **20+ UN Country Teams** advancing programme design, with concept notes or full programme documents developed and currently seeking funding to resource interventions.

UN Country Teams engaged in programme ideation or development, in need of funding	Initial conversations with UN Country Teams on interest and feasibility
• Afghanistan • Angola • Argentina • Belize • Bhutan • Cameroon • Costa Rica • Côte d'Ivoire • Dominican Republic • Ghana • Guatemala • Haiti • Kyrgyzstan • Madagascar • Malawi • Mali • Mongolia • Samoa • Southern Africa Region ◦ Botswana ◦ Eswatini ◦ Lesotho ◦ Namibia ◦ South Africa) • Tunisia.	• Azerbaijan • Bangladesh • Brazil • Cabo Verde • Cambodia • Central African Republic • Chad • Comoros • Ethiopia, • Grenada • Guinea • Guyana • India • Jamaica • Kenya • Lao PDR • Mexico • Nicaragua • Nigeria • Pakistan • Peru • Philippines • Rwanda • Sri Lanka • State of Palestine • Syria • Tanzania • Türkiye • Vanuatu • Venezuela • Vietnam.

Note: This list of countries is non-exhaustive, owing to rapidly evolving discussions with UN Country Teams.

Through strengthened advocacy, outreach, and resource mobilization, Spotlight Initiative has established a financial pipeline of USD 82.5 million by December 2024 for country and regional programming (through the Fund and the associated programmes in Ecuador and Uganda). Out of this amount, USD 34.1 million have been contracted within the reporting period, with USD 48.4 million of committed financial investments expected to be contracted in 2025.

Investment	Amount in USD million		Donor	Status	Duration
Uganda	22.1		EU (Delegation)	Contracted	2023-2026
Uganda	8		Netherlands (Embassy)	Contracted	2025
Ecuador	1.1		EU (Delegation)	Contracted	2024-2025
Ecuador	1		United States (USAID)	Contracted	2025-2026
Zambia	1.9		Ireland (Embassy)	Contracted	2025-2027
Liberia	14.6		EU (Delegation)	Committed	2025-2028
Sierra Leone	11.4		EU (Delegation)	Committed	2025-2028
Africa Regional Programme	20.8		EU (Delegation)	Committed	2025-2028
Uganda	1.6		Austria (ADC)	Prospective	2025+

Figure 3 Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund financial pipeline, as of December 2024

Spotlight Initiative, through its HIVE Programme as well as the Fund, will continue to support UN Country Teams in strengthening capacities to design and implement comprehensive EAWG programmes, mobilize resources, and establish strategic partnerships. Moreover, programmes will receive tailored support throughout inception and implementation to ensure continued alignment with the Spotlight Initiative model and drive transformational change for women and girls.

4.4 Associated Programmes

Throughout 2024, Spotlight Initiative continued to advance efforts to end violence against women and girls through two associated programmes in **Ecuador** and **Uganda funded by the respective European Union Delegations**. These programmes were designed and approved prior to the formal establishment of the Fund in April 2024, yet remained fully aligned with its model and key features. As such, the progress and achievements of these two programmes contribute meaningfully to the broader results and objectives of the Fund, and help sustain impact achieved and ensure it feeds into future programming and results.

Snapshot of Results: Ecuador

Building on the success of the first Spotlight Initiative programme in Ecuador, **Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Programme in Ecuador** continued to drive systemic and transformative progress towards ending violence against women and girls. In 2024, notable advancements were made in strengthening laws, policies, institutional capacities, and data systems to address gender-based violence and femicide. A key milestone was the approval of the Organic Law on Reparations in July 2024, which established a legal framework for comprehensive reparations for femicide victims and their families. Additionally, the further development of the Early Warning System for Femicide positioned Ecuador as a regional leader in the prevention of extreme forms of violence against women and girls.

The Ecuador programme also supported prevention strategies targeting harmful norms, beliefs and practices, while promoting equality and inclusion. Building on the highly successful “#EseTipoNo” communication campaign targeting normative change launched during the first phase of programming, the programme launched “#EseTipoSí” in 2024, reaching millions of people and helping to raise awareness, build capacity to recognize and prevent violence, and engage men and boys in embracing positive masculinities, furthering normative change.

Efforts to improve access to rights-based, survivor-centred essential services continued with a particular focus on marginalized communities, including Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian women. The programme also enhanced the capacity of the justice and security sectors to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls: more than 200 police officers and prosecutors were trained in the Femicide Investigation Protocol and the application of urgent protection measures, and over 52,000 police officers received training to improve gender-based violence case management.

The programme made significant strides in strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations, enhancing their active role in the prevention of gender-based violence and expanding women’s economic rights, with the goal of reducing recurrent cycles of violence. This was achieved through a series of coordinated efforts, including capacity-building workshops and strategic dialogues with key stakeholders.

Notably, a high-visibility media visit to Ecuador was carried out during the [16 Days of Activism](#) with UN Global Advocate for Spotlight Initiative, Cecilia Suárez. The visit, conducted under the HIVE Programme in service of raising awareness and visibility for Spotlight Initiative and the Fund more broadly, helped amplify the Initiative’s impact in-country and deepen its connection with the Government, programme donors, and local civil society organizations.

Snapshot of Results: Uganda

Further amplifying the results of the Initiative's first programme in Uganda, in 2024, the **Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Programme in Uganda** catalysed meaningful, wide-ranging advancements in addressing and eliminating violence against women and girls. The programme achieved key outcomes by strengthening laws, policies, and institutional capacity on the issue of gender-based violence, enhancing coordination mechanisms, and promoting gender-responsive budgeting.

To more effectively prevent and respond to violence against women and girls, the programme supported a multisectoral, coordinated response across the Government, through the establishment of district-level child well-being committees. Working with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, the Ministry of Local Government, and the Ministry of Education and Sports, the programme helped to harmonize and streamline coordination mechanisms to combat gender-based violence at the national and district levels.

Additionally, the programme supported the Government of Uganda in implementing gender-responsive budgeting to better ensure resourced efforts to end violence against women and girls. This work resulted in the allocation of Ugandan Shillings (UGX) 31 million² from local revenue (from district local governments) and social sector grants for gender-based violence prevention and response in the fiscal year 2024-2025. The programme also contributed to improved knowledge of gender-responsive budgeting among 141 district local government personnel, further strengthening the Government's capacity to allocate resources to end gender-based violence.

Collaborations such as the Elgon Half Marathon, with the Joshua Cheptegei Foundation, and mass campaigns reaching 10,000 people helped raise awareness of violence against women and girls and the intersections between gender equality and climate action. Creative platforms like the Music, Dance and Drama Festival in schools expanded the programme's reach to more than 4.4 million people, furthering behavioural change. The programme also engaged over 150 men and boys to drive normative change, including promoting girls' education and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Furthermore, the programme promoted the economic rights of over 100 women and girls across 11 districts, resulting in additional support towards the long-term recovery of survivors. By supporting gender-transformative parenting, life-skills training for adolescents, and engaging cultural and religious leaders, the programme fostered sustainable shifts in community attitudes throughout 2024.

² Equivalent to **USD 8,481.53**, based on exchange rates as of Q1 2025.

Spotlight Initiative Uganda furthered access for survivors by implementing wide-ranging capacity-building efforts for service providers. Over 790 health workers, 375 local council personnel, and 116 case workers at national and district action centres improved their knowledge of how to deliver comprehensive, survivor-centred services for gender-based violence. This investment in human resources translated into more responsive and accessible services for survivors across the country. As a result, nearly 79,000 people benefited from case management and a continuum of services on sexual and gender-based violence and violence against children through call centres, while an additional 21,897 accessed these services in refugee settlements.

Data on gender-based violence is critical for a targeted response, and the programme strengthened national data systems by training 144 community development officers to improve case reporting on gender-based violence, resulting in over 2,800 entries into the national gender-based violence dashboard. Furthermore, it addressed new and emerging forms of violence against women and girls by enhancing the capacity of the police cyber unit to investigate technology-facilitated cases of gender-based violence and violence against children. Officers were trained in advanced digital forensic techniques, improving their ability to work with encrypted platforms, recover data from the dark web, collaborate across jurisdictions, uphold survivor-centred practices, and manage the psychological demands of cyber investigations.

The Fund's collaboration with the HIVE Programme in support of these associated programmes was instrumental in achieving these results, providing technical and management support in programme implementation that ensured alignment with the Fund model. Through strategic guidance, coordination, and capacity strengthening, it fostered collaboration and streamlined implementation, translating the Initiative's vision into tangible impact.

5. Challenges and Mitigating Measures

While the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund is positioned to build on and amplify the contributions and results achieved under the Initiative's first phase, the global environment for advancing gender equality and ending violence against women and girls is facing significant challenges. Shifting funding priorities and significant funding cuts as well as operational complexities related to fragmented funding modalities and the ascent of authoritarian, regressive ideologies, all continue to require adaptive action. In 2024, the Fund put in place a series of strategies to mitigate a range of challenges and ensure continued delivery.

Launch of the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund

The Fund was officially established in April 2024, following exhaustive consultations and negotiations to ensure all legal, financial, and other requirements were duly adhered to given its nature as a United Nations Secretary-General Fund, while upholding the principles of Spotlight Initiative (including inclusive governance and meaningful engagement with civil

society). This process required UN system-wide coordination, sustained commitment, and collaborative discussions, including intensive engagement at the highest levels (high-level support from the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, and from the Initiative's leadership). The development took longer than expected but yielded constructive results.

Funding Landscape and Shifting Political Priorities

Funding for development – including for gender equality and efforts to end violence against women and girls – has been grossly eroded. Escalating geopolitical crises, conflicts, and humanitarian needs have led to a reprioritization of resources. At the national level, [debt servicing](#), [tax avoidance and evasion](#), illicit financial flows, and other exogenous factors erode the ability of governments to finance sustainable development, including efforts to end violence against women and girls and advance gender equality.

At the same time, a growing backlash against gender equality and the rise of anti-rights, authoritarianism globally ([as detailed here](#), for example) further weakened political will and impacted funding for this work at all levels. Shrinking civic space added an additional barrier and funding for gender equality decreased for the first time in a decade, compounding chronic underinvestment in women's rights organizations and survivor-centred gender-based violence programming.

To mitigate these challenges, the Fund – leveraging the work of the HIVE Programme – champions robust resource mobilization efforts aimed at diversifying its donor partner portfolio. Throughout 2024, the Fund worked closely with UN agencies and Resident Coordinators to advocate for increased allocations from both traditional and emerging donors. This included joint donor engagement strategies and mobilization, mapping funding opportunities, fostering diverse partnerships, and facilitating country-level resource mobilization. High-visibility events – including complementary efforts driven under the HIVE Programme – helped generate interest, build both momentum, and expand partnerships, including with Spotlight Initiative's global champions and the newly launched UN-EU-World Bank tripartite partnership. Civil society continues to be centred and elevated through structured engagement at national, regional, and global levels (including in governance structures), helping drive advocacy and momentum for ending violence against women and girls.

Earmarked and Decentralized Funding: Implications for Streamlined Operations and Programme Quality

In light of shrinking official development assistance for gender equality and increasingly fragmented donor funding patterns, the Fund continued to adapt to evolving needs at country, regional, and global levels. This included exploring diverse funding modalities such as earmarked and decentralized investments under the Initiative's broader umbrella. While such models have expanded the Initiative's reach and flexibility – including through joint programming directly resourced at the country level – they have also introduced operational and programmatic risks that can undermine efficiencies typically gained through unearmarked pooled funding arrangements, such as the global aggregation of indicators and results, and the

added value of pooling donor resources in service of more comprehensive and impactful programming.

In response, the Fund is working to ensure that programmatic integrity, coherence, and shared accountability are maintained across all levels of the Initiative while funding patterns are becoming increasingly decentralized. To do so, the Fund – in collaboration with the HIVE Programme – has provided direct support to UN Country Teams and Spotlight Initiative programmes throughout 2024, including tailored technical support and guidance, standardized programme templates, and capacity-building tools. Complementing the work of the HIVE Programme, the Fund is working to allow for the integration of context-specific indicators while ensuring alignment with global indicators to capture and communicate global impact, with structured quality assurance, capacity building, and learning sessions used to support coherent yet adaptable frameworks, and leverage a more country-driven programme design in full ownership of the country stakeholders.

A new portfolio management approach has also been introduced to enable more proactive and consistent engagement across the Fund’s expanding programming base. Moreover, leveraging and amplifying the work of the HIVE Programme, the Fund has continued to advocate for core funding towards pooled instruments working to end violence against women and girls and advance women’s rights. This funding is more effective and efficient, as it better allows for comprehensive rights-based programming, and for programmes to adapt and continue to be responsive in shifting contexts, which can be undermined by short-term, decentralized or earmarked funding.

Operational and Financial Considerations

In response to demands for better tracking of financial resource use against programmatic achievements, Spotlight Initiative 2.0 has introduced outcome-level financial reporting (informed by lessons learned and various assessment recommendations). While this demonstrates the Fund’s commitment to enhanced transparency and strengthened accountability, it has required close coordination between recipient UN agencies, and the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office. To support the roll-out of this enhanced outcome-level financial reporting, the Fund Secretariat has adapted guidance and support to UN Country Teams particularly at the inception stage. These improvements aim to minimize delays, improve cash flow, and reinforce upward accountability to donors by linking spending to results.

UN Reform and Coordination

UN Reform principles underpin the Fund’s model, with a strong emphasis on Resident Coordinator leadership, inter-agency collaboration, and streamlined joint operational processes. However, staffing and resource constraints (and the type of funding for programming received) at the country level can lead to challenges with integrated programming.

The Fund Secretariat – together with the HIVE Programme team – worked closely with the Development Coordination Office and UN agencies to elevate the role of Resident Coordinators and amplify integrated, joint UN programming at the country level. Technical templates, targeted support to programmes and teams, and an evolving Programme and Operations Manual, (set to launch in 2025), have all reinforced UN Reform principles and helped foster multi-agency collaboration under the Resident Coordinator’s leadership.

Learning from the Experiences of Spotlight Initiative's First Phase

The first years of implementation of Spotlight Initiative generated a wealth of knowledge, learning and promising practices. However, capacity constraints that limit deep engagement with available resources can present challenges related to ensuring this knowledge is fully integrated into new programmes. To address this, the Initiative worked with the HIVE Programme to launch targeted, curated capacity-building initiatives, including a new webinar series and induction training. A dedicated knowledge engagement and dissemination strategy is also under development, which will outline ways to measure uptake and tailor learning resources to better meet the diverse needs of Spotlight Initiative teams.

6. Next Steps and the Way Forward

Building on the foundation laid in 2024, the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund is entering a critical phase of expansion and consolidation. The focus for 2025 and beyond will centre on building a new programme portfolio, amplifying the Fund’s impact at country and regional levels, strengthening systems, results generation and reporting, and mobilizing new resources and broadening its partnership base to drive sustainable change.

The UN Deputy Secretary-General will continue to provide the Fund with strategic leadership, with the Fund Secretariat responsible for its day-to-day management, complemented by the HIVE Programme’s technical expertise in support of a growing portfolio of Spotlight Initiative programmes. Country- and regional-level implementation will continue to be led by an assortment of context-specific Recipient UN Organizations under the Resident Coordinator’s leadership, and governance mechanisms will further reinforce participatory, transparent, and results-driven oversight.

This integrated architecture positions Spotlight Initiative to sustain a coherent, adaptable, and high-impact approach to ending violence against women and girls, while contributing to broader UN Reform and Sustainable Development Goal acceleration efforts.

Next Steps in 2025

Scaling Country and Regional Programmes for Impact

The Fund Secretariat will continue to operationalize the Fund and support the roll-out of high-quality country and regional programmes aligned with the Spotlight Initiative’s

comprehensive model. From initial expressions of interest and concept note development to programme design, resource mobilization, and funding approval, the HIVE Programme and the Fund Secretariat will provide targeted capacity development, facilitate technical coordination, and mobilize expertise across the Initiative to ensure strategic coherence and quality. This support will continue throughout 2025 to strengthen country readiness and align new programmes with the Fund's results framework and co-designed principles. The Fund Secretariat will then work to process programmatic approvals through the governance bodies of the Fund and support initiation of implementation on the ground.

In 2025, implementation is expected to begin (or scale up) in **Ecuador, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Zambia**, and the **Africa Regional Programme**. A multi-stakeholder process will be launched and managed by the Fund Secretariat to secure necessary approvals by Fund governance structures ahead of programme roll-out. These new investments will build momentum toward broader country engagement and implementation across all regions. In addition, to guide programme teams and streamline implementation of the Initiative's model, the Fund will launch a Programme and Operations Manual to be disseminated widely as a critical operational tool for enhanced operational effectiveness and efficiency.



Advancing gender equality with signature on the implementation of the Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme 2.0. [L-R] Mr. John Villiers, EUD to AU; Dr. Jeanne Flora Kayitesi, AUC; Dr. Olubusayo Akinola, AUC; Mr. Yacoub Ali El-Hillo, Regional Director, UNDCO Africa; H.E. Ambassador Minata Samate, outgoing Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development, AUC; H.E. Ambassador Javier Niño Pérez, EUD to AU; Ms. Laila Omar Gad, UNICEF Liaison Office to AU and ECA; Mr. Saturnin Epie, UNFPA Representation Office to AU and ECA; Ms. Nena Thundu, AUC; Mr. Robert Kasenene, UNDCO. Photo: UN DCO Regional Office for Africa/Marline Bos.

Moreover, the Fund Secretariat will continue to steward and coordinate global-level mechanisms that foster integrated collaboration and ensure accountability. To that end, two

meetings of the Advisory Board are anticipated to take place in 2025, as stipulated in the Fund's terms of reference, to specify in greater detail the strategic direction of the Fund and that of Spotlight Initiative more broadly. Furthermore, in order to continue strengthening a deepening inter-agency collaboration, a retreat will take place with all Spotlight Initiative agency focal points around Quarter 2 of 2025.

Strengthening Resource Mobilization and Strategic Partnerships

The Fund Secretariat and the HIVE Programme team will operationalize the new resource mobilization and partnerships strategy, targeting the expansion of the donor base and diversification of funding sources. This includes deepened collaboration with new partners, including the **World Bank**, the Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf, bilateral donors, private sector partners, and multilateral development banks. The Fund's objective is to grow toward the USD 1 billion target, ensuring the long-term sustainability and scalability of EVAWG programming across diverse contexts.

Enhancing Knowledge Management and Results Monitoring

The HIVE Programme will lead efforts to expand the Initiative's knowledge management and learning platforms, including the [SHINE](#) hub, and will support the finalization and roll-out of the revised Global Results Framework of the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund. These actions will strengthen evidence generation, improve data quality and comparability, and facilitate participatory monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning across all Fund-supported programmes.

Driving Strategic Communications and Advocacy

The Fund Secretariat, in close collaboration with the HIVE Programme and country-level stakeholders, will advance a unified communications and advocacy strategy. Strategic visibility efforts will amplify Spotlight Initiative's results, mobilize public support, and position the elimination of violence against women and girls as a priority investment area for donors and policymakers, contributing to increased political will and financing.

Deepening Civil Society's Engagement for Sustainability

Civil society engagement will continue to be a cornerstone of the Spotlight Initiative and the Fund's partnership and programming approach, contributing directly to the relevance, quality, and sustainability of EVAWG interventions. Through the strengthened Global Reference Group and national civil society reference groups and the co-implementation of the co-designed principles, the Fund will foster greater national ownership, strengthen participatory governance, and support safeguarding civic space, particularly in contexts where rights-based activism is under threat. Civil society will remain a key partner in the Initiative's decision-making through the Global Reference Group's representation in the Fund's governance bodies.

Civil society partners will also continue joining global advocacy spaces supported by the Initiative to share their demands, and the Global Reference Group is expected to meet with the

UN Deputy Secretary-General in the first half of 2025, to continue engaging in a participative, collaborative approach to setting and advancing Spotlight Initiative's strategic vision.

The Way Forward

As the United Nations approaches its 80th anniversary, Spotlight Initiative exemplifies the transformative potential of UN Reform: demonstrating how coherence, collaboration, and comprehensive, rights-based programming can drive lasting system change. The Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund is not only fit for purpose in this evolving context, but it is also positioned to serve as a model for the wider UN system under the "UN80 Initiative" vision, advancing efficiency, cost effectiveness, and sustainable impact. Proof of concept actions to meaningfully localize programmes, mobilize domestic resources, and ensure sustainability have been documented and codified into 2.0 to ensure the Fund is fit for purpose in this evolving global landscape.

With a growing portfolio of comprehensive programmes, expanded strategic partnerships, and an ambitious, country-oriented resource mobilization agenda, the Fund will continue to drive forward the global effort to end violence against women and girls, promoting peace, security and safe futures for current and future generations.



CONSOLIDATED ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT

of the Administrative Agent

Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund

for the period 08 April 2024 to 31 December 2024

UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office
United Nations Development Programme
GATEWAY: <https://mptf.undp.org>

May 2025

DEFINITIONS

Allocation/Total Approved Budget

Amount approved by the Steering Committee for a project/programme. The total approved budget represents the cumulative amount of allocations approved by the Steering Committee.

Approved Project/Programme

A project/programme including budget, etc., that is approved by the Steering Committee for fund allocation purposes.

Contributor Commitment

Amount(s) committed by a contributor to a Fund in a signed donor agreement with the UNDP Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTF Office), in its capacity as the Administrative Agent. A commitment may be paid or pending payment.

Contributor Deposit

Cash deposit received by the MPTF Office for the Fund from a contributor in accordance with a signed donor agreement.

Delivery Rate

The percentage of funds that have been utilized, calculated by comparing expenditures reported by a Participating Organization and Non-UN Organization against the 'net funded amount'. This does not include expense commitments by Participating Organizations.

Donor Agreement

Standard Administrative Arrangement and/or European Commission contribution agreement between contributor/donor and MPTF Office.

Net Funded Amount

Amount transferred to a Participating Organization less any refunds transferred back to the MPTF Office by a Participating Organization.

Participating Organization

A UN Organization or other inter-governmental Organization that is a partner in a Fund, as represented by signing the applicable legal agreement with the MPTF Office for a particular Fund.

Project Expenditure

The sum of expenses and/or expenditure reported by all Participating Organizations for a Fund irrespective of which basis of accounting each Participating Organization follows for donor reporting.

Project Financial Closure

A project or programme is considered financially closed when all financial obligations of an operationally completed project or programme have been settled, and no further financial charges may be incurred. MPTF Office will report a project financially closed once the financial report(s) has been received and any balance of funds refunded.

Project Operational Closure

A project or programme is deemed operationally closed once all activities funded for Participating Organization(s) have been concluded, and the Steering Committee has approved the final narrative report.

Project Start Date

Project/ Joint programme start date as per the programmatic document.

US Dollar Amount

The financial data in the report is recorded in US Dollars.

Transferred Funds

Funds transferred to Participating Organizations by the Administrative Agent in accordance with the Steering Committee's request.

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INTRODUCTION

This Consolidated Annual Financial Report of the **Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund** is prepared by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTF Office) in fulfillment of its obligations as Administrative Agent, as per the terms of Reference (TOR), the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between the UNDP MPTF Office and the Participating Organizations, and the donor agreement signed with contributors/donors.

The MPTF Office, as Administrative Agent, is responsible for concluding an MOU with Participating Organizations and donor agreements with contributors/donors. It receives, administers and manages contributions,

and disburses these funds to the Participating Organizations. The Administrative Agent prepares and submits annual consolidated financial reports, as well as regular financial statements, for transmission to stakeholders.

This consolidated financial report covers the period 08 April 2024 to 31 December 2024 and provides financial data on progress made in the implementation of projects of the **Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund**. It is posted on the MPTF Office GATEWAY (<https://mptf.undp.org/fund/sit00>).

2024 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

This chapter presents financial data and analysis of the **Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund** using the pass-through funding modality as of 31 December 2024. Financial information for this Fund is also available on the MPTF Office GATEWAY, at the following address: <https://mptf.undp.org/fund/sit00>.

1. SOURCES AND USES OF FUNDS

As of 31 December 2024, 4 contributors deposited US\$ 11,780,018 and US\$ 177,703 was earned in interest.

The cumulative source of funds was **US\$ 11,957,721**.

No transfers were made to Participating Organizations in 2024. The Administrative Agent fee has been charged at the approved rate of 1% on deposits and amounts to **US\$ 117,800**. Table 1 provides an overview of the overall sources, uses, and balance of the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund as of 31 December 2024.

Table 1 Financial Overview, as of 31 December 2024 (in US Dollars)

	Prior Years up to 31 Dec 2023	Financial Year Jan-Dec 2024	Total
Sources of Funds			
Contributions from donors	-	11,780,018	11,780,018
Sub-total Contributions	-	11,780,018	11,780,018
Fund Interest and Investment Income Earned	-	177,703	177,703
Total: Sources of Funds	-	11,957,721	11,957,721
Use of Funds			
Administrative Agent Fees	-	117,800	117,800
Bank Charges	-	172	172
Total: Uses of Funds	-	117,972	117,972
Change in Fund cash balance with Administrative Agent	-	11,839,748	11,839,748
Closing Fund balance (31 December)	-	11,839,748	11,839,748

Table 2 provides information on cumulative contributions received from all contributors to this fund as of 31 December 2024.

The Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund is currently being financed by 4 contributors, as listed in the table below.

The table includes financial commitments made by the contributors through signed Standard Administrative Agreements with an anticipated deposit date as per the schedule of payments by 31 December 2024 and deposits received by the same date. It does not include commitments that were made to the fund beyond 2024.

2. PARTNER CONTRIBUTIONS

Table 2 provides information on cumulative contributions received from all contributors to this fund as of 31 December **2024**.

The **Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund** is currently being financed by **4** contributors, as listed in the table below.

The table includes financial commitments made by the contributors through signed Standard Administrative Agreements with an anticipated deposit date as per the schedule of payments by 31 December **2024** and deposits received by the same date. It does not include commitments that were made to the fund beyond **2024**.

Table 2. Contributions, as of 31 December 2024 (in US Dollars)

Contributors	Total Commitments	Total Deposits
Government of Belgium	2,143,718	2,143,718
Government of Ireland	636,300	636,300
Government of Netherlands	8,000,000	8,000,000
USAID	1,000,000	1,000,000
Grand Total	11,780,018	11,780,018

3. INTEREST EARNED

Interest income is earned in two ways: 1) on the balance of funds held by the Administrative Agent (Fund earned interest), and 2) on the balance of funds held by the Participating Organizations (Agency earned interest) where their Financial Regulations and Rules allow return of interest to the AA.

As of 31 December **2024**, Fund earned interest amounts to US\$ **177,703**.

Details are provided in the table below.

Table 3. Sources of Interest and Investment Income, as of 31 December 2024 (in US Dollars)

Interest Earned	Prior Years up to 31-Dec-2023	Financial Year Jan-Dec-2024	Total
Administrative Agent			
Fund Interest and Investment Income Earned	-	177,703	177,703
Total: Fund Interest Earned	-	177,703	177,703
Participating Organization			
Total: Agency Interest Earned	-	-	-
Grand Total	-	177,703	177,703

4. TRANSFER OF FUNDS

Allocations to Participating Organizations are approved by the Steering Committee and disbursed by the Administrative Agent. As of 31 December 2024, the AA has not been requested to make any transfers to Participating Organizations.

Table 4 provides additional information on the refunds received by the MPTF Office, and the net funded amount for each of the Participating Organizations.

Table 4. Transfer, Refund, and Net Funded Amount by Participating Organization (in US Dollars)

Participati ng Organizati on	Prior Years up to 31-Dec-2023			Financial Year Jan-Dec-2024			Total		
	Transfers	Refunds	Net Funded	Transfers	Refunds	Net Funded	Transfers	Refunds	Net Funded
Grand Total	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

5. EXPENDITURE AND FINANCIAL DELIVERY RATES

All expenditures reported are submitted as certified financial information by the Headquarters of the Participating Organizations. These were consolidated by the MPTF Office.

Joint programme/ project expenditures are incurred and monitored by each Participating Organization, and are reported to the Administrative Agent as per the agreed upon categories for inter-agency harmonized reporting. The expenditures are reported via the MPTF Office's online expenditure reporting tool. The **2024** expenditure data has been posted on the MPTF Office GATEWAY at <https://mptf.undp.org/fund/sit00>.

5.1 EXPENDITURE REPORTED BY PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATION

As shown in table below, no transfers were made to Participating Organizations in 2024.

Table 5.1 Net Funded Amount and Reported Expenditures by Participating Organization, as of 31 December 2024 (in US Dollars)

Participating Organization	Approved Amount	Net Funded Amount	Expenditure			Delivery Rate %
			Prior Years up to 31-Dec-2023	Financial Year Jan-Dec-2024	Cumulative	
Grand Total	-	-	-	-	-	-

5.2. Expenditures Reported by Category

Project expenditures are incurred and monitored by each Participating Organization and are reported as per the agreed categories for inter-agency harmonized reporting. In 2006 the UN Development Group (UNDG) established six categories against which UN entities must report inter-agency project expenditures. Effective 1 January 2012, the UN Chief Executives Board (CEB) modified these categories as a result of IPSAS adoption to comprise eight categories.

Table 5.2. Expenditure by UNSDG Budget Category, as of 31 December 2024 (in US Dollars)

Category	Expenditures			Percentage of Total Programme Cost
	Prior Years up to 31-Dec-2023	Financial Year Jan-Dec-2024	Total	
Programme Costs Total	-	-	-	-
¹ Indirect Support Costs Total	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	-	-	-	-

1 Indirect Support Costs charged by Participating Organization, based on their financial regulations, can be deducted upfront or at a later stage during implementation. The percentage may therefore appear to exceed the 7% agreed-upon for on-going projects. Once projects are financially closed, this number is not to exceed 7%.

6. COST RECOVERY

Cost recovery policies for the Fund are guided by the applicable provisions of the Terms of Reference, the MOU concluded between the Administrative Agent and Participating Organizations, and the SAAs concluded between the Administrative Agent and Contributors, based on rates approved by UNDG.

The policies in place, as of 31 December 2024, were as follows:

- **The Administrative Agent (AA) fee:** 1% is charged at the time of contributor deposit and covers services provided on that contribution for the entire duration of the Fund. Cumulatively, as of 31 December 2024, US\$ **117,800** has been charged in AA-fees.
- **Indirect Costs of Participating Organizations:** A general cost that cannot be directly related to any particular programme or activity of the Participating Organizations. Participating Organizations may charge 7% indirect costs based on UNSDG policy, establishing an indirect cost rate as a percentage of the programmable costs for interagency pass-through pool funds. In the current reporting period no funds were deducted for indirect support cost.

8. DIRECT COSTS

The Fund governance mechanism may approve an allocation to a Participating Organization to cover costs associated with Fund coordination covering overall coordination, and fund level reviews and evaluations. These allocations are referred to as 'direct costs'. Cumulatively, as of 31 December 2024, no funds have been charged as Direct Costs.

7. ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

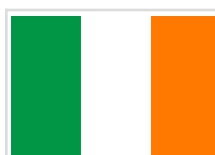
In order to effectively provide fund administration services and facilitate monitoring and reporting to the UN system and its partners, the MPTF Office has developed a public website, the MPTF Office Gateway (<https://mptf.undp.org>). Refreshed daily from an internal enterprise resource planning system, the MPTF Office Gateway has become a standard setter for providing transparent and accountable trust fund administration services.

The Gateway provides financial information including: contributor commitments and deposits, approved programme budgets, transfers to and expenditures reported by Participating Organizations, interest income and other expenses. In addition, the Gateway provides an overview of the MPTF Office portfolio and extensive information on individual Funds, including their purpose, governance structure and key documents. By providing easy access to the growing number of narrative and financial reports, as well as related project documents, the Gateway collects and preserves important institutional knowledge and facilitates knowledge sharing and management among UN Organizations and their development partners, thereby contributing to UN coherence and development effectiveness.

Contributors



Government of
Belgium



Government of
Ireland



Government of
Netherlands



USAID

UN Participating Organizations



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 spotlightinitiative.org

 [@GlobalSpotlight](https://twitter.com/GlobalSpotlight)

 [@TheSpotlightInitiative](https://www.facebook.com/TheSpotlightInitiative)

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*To eliminate violence
against women and girls*

