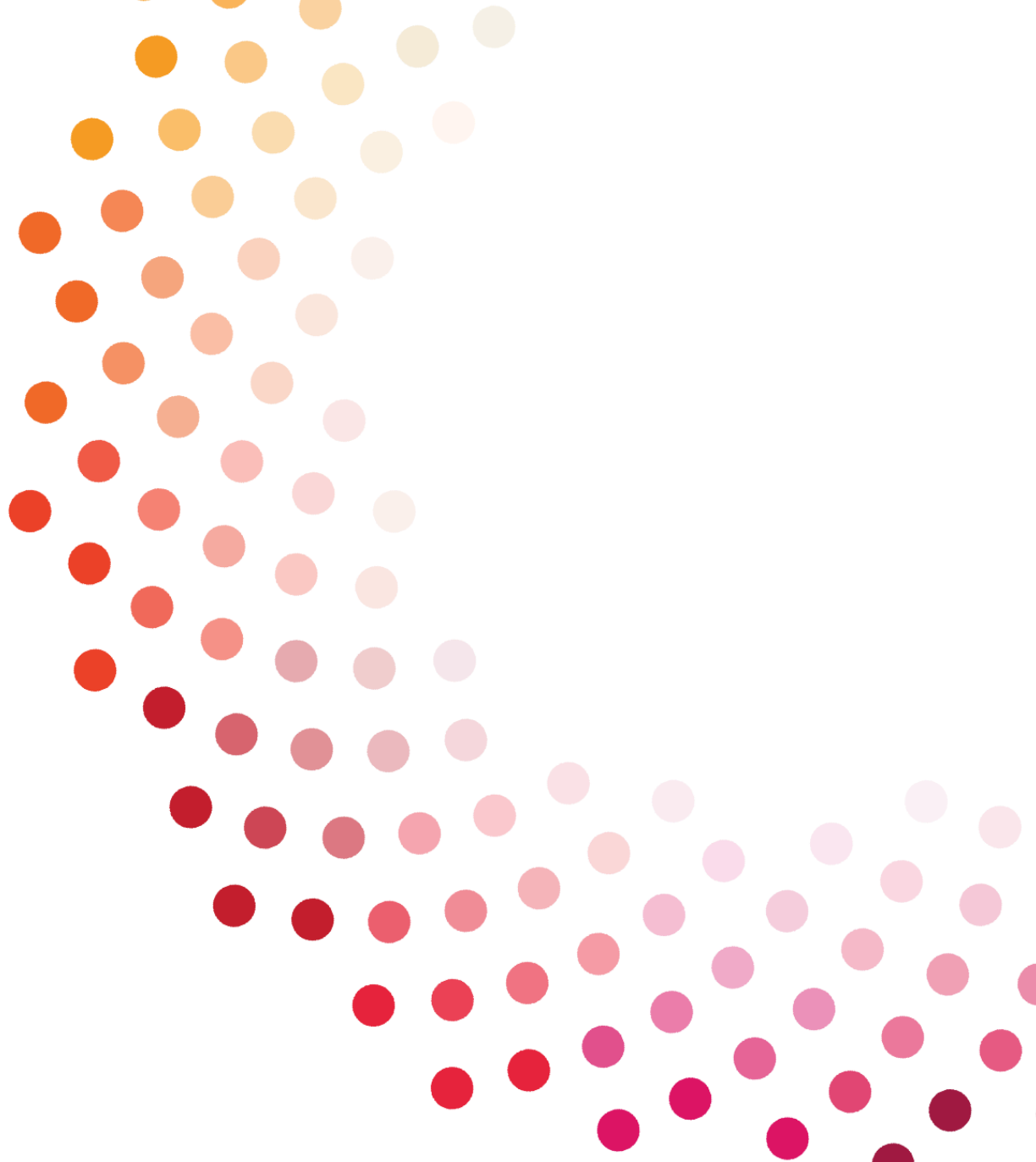




Global

Spotlight Initiative 2025 Annual Narrative Progress Report

01 January 2025–31 December 2025



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



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Glossary of Acronyms

AFP – Agency Focal Point
BOS – Business Operations Strategy
CPIMS+ – Child Protection Information Management System Plus
CSO – Civil Society Organization
CSRG – Civil Society Reference Group
CS-GRG – Civil Society Global Reference Group
CSW – Commission on the Status of Women
DCO – Development Coordination Office
EOSG – Executive Office of the Secretary-General
EU – European Union
EVAWG – Ending Violence Against Women and Girls
FGM – Female Genital Mutilation
GBV – Gender-Based Violence
GBVIMS+ – Gender-Based Violence Information Management System Plus
HIVE Joint Programme – High-Impact Programme for Violence Elimination by 2030
ILO – International Labour Organization
IOM – International Organization for Migration
JP – Joint Programme
MPTFO – Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization
NSC – National Committee
ODA – Official Development Assistance
OHCHR – Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PAHO – Pan American Health Organization
PMER – Participatory Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting
RC – Resident Coordinator
RUNO – Recipient United Nations Organization
SASA! – Start, Awareness, Support, Action
SDG – Sustainable Development Goal
SGBV – Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SRHR – Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SVRI – Sexual Violence Research Initiative
TFGBV – Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence
UN – United Nations
UN Women – United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNCT – United Nations Country Team
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
UNOPS – United Nations Office for Project Services

UNODC – United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSCR – United Nations Security Council Resolution
VAC – Violence Against Children
VAWG – Violence Against Women and Girls
WHO – World Health Organization
WPS – Women, Peace and Security
WROs – Women’s Rights Organizations

Special Acknowledgements

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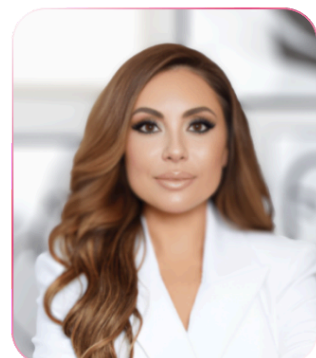
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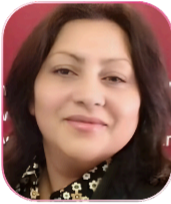
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Yasmina Benslimane
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Donors and strategic partnerships



The European Union



Kingdom of the Netherlands

The Netherlands



Belgium



Ireland



The United States of America



WORLD BANK GROUP

Recipient UN Organizations



International
Labour
Organization



IOM
UN MIGRATION



UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER



PAHO
Pan American
Health Organization
World Health
Organization
Americas



UN
WOMEN



UN
DP



unesco



UNFPA



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency



unicef



UNODC
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



UNOPS



World Health
Organization

Administrative Agent



UN Multi-Partner
Trust Fund Office

1. Executive Summary

Launched in 2017, Spotlight Initiative is the United Nations high-impact initiative to end violence against women and girls. It operates as a United Nations Secretary-General's Fund, a multi-donor, inter-agency platform anchored in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General that brings together the UN system to deliver coordinated, large-scale action. Taking a rights-based, comprehensive, whole-of-society approach, the Initiative works with a broad range of partners to address the root causes of violence. As a landmark UN Reform fund, the Initiative has demonstrated how coordinated action across UN agencies under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator can accelerate progress to end violence against women and girls, and advance the Sustainable Development Goals more broadly.



UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed launched Spotlight Initiative in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea on International Women's Day 2020. Photo: UN/Andrew Hau.

Throughout 2025, Spotlight Initiative – together with its partners – worked to scale and deepen the impact of its first phase (2017-2023) by building on lessons learned to strengthen the quality and coherence of its comprehensive model to end violence against women and girls globally. To do this, Spotlight Initiative operates through an integrated umbrella framework, bringing together its 2.0 Fund, the “High-Impact Programme for Violence Elimination by 2030” (the HIVE Joint Programme) and stand-alone joint programmes that collectively drive results for women and girls across diverse contexts.



Women's Forum Sierra Leone (WFSL) starts training for women's rights groups in Moyamba, Sierra Leone under Spotlight Initiative 2.0. Photo: Women's Forum Sierra Leone.

At present, the Initiative has a portfolio of five active country programmes in Ecuador, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zambia. One new programme – the Africa Regional Programme – is set to begin in early 2026. These programmes are implemented by 8 out of the 13 UN agencies that are currently part of the Fund: IOM, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, and UN Women, with UNOPS administering the Fund Secretariat.¹ Donor investments to the Initiative's overarching umbrella amount to USD 103 million,² with USD 83.4 million earmarked for country and regional programmes and USD 19.6 million for the HIVE Joint Programme and the 2.0 Fund. USD 62.3 million is administered under the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund and USD 40.7 million through the stand-alone joint programmes in Uganda and Ecuador and the HIVE Joint Programme.

Report scope and structure

This report presents Spotlight Initiative's progress and results from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025 across global, regional and country levels. It outlines the evolving context and demonstrates how the Initiative's comprehensive model is responding to current challenges, building on results and lessons from its first phase of programming. The report also details the Initiative's governance architecture, its contribution to UN Reform and its partnership approach,

¹ A full list of all 13 Spotlight Initiative Recipient UN Organizations (RUNOs) can be found further below.

² This also includes the Africa Regional Programme, contracted in late 2025 with a start date of 1 January 2026.

including the central role of civil society. It also features the Initiative's key results by outcome (or pillar), as well as cross-outcome (or cross-pillar) results. Innovative, promising and good practices are also highlighted, as are challenges with accompanying mitigating measures. The report rounds out with the Initiative's communications and visibility efforts, sustainability approaches, and an overview of the work ahead in 2026.

Responding to a complex global context: The Spotlight Initiative model

In 2025, women and girls faced intensifying risks, with violence remaining widespread and progress on gender equality under strain from shrinking civic space, reduced financing and political backlash. Fragility, conflict and climate-related crises further heightened vulnerabilities, while technology-facilitated violence emerged as a growing threat. With UN-wide resources having fallen [30 per cent since 2023](#), programming to advance [human rights and gender equality faces disproportionate pressures](#), with direct implications for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Against this backdrop – and as the United Nations advances the Secretary-General's UN80 initiative to strengthen the institution's effectiveness, agility and country-level impact – Spotlight Initiative continues to demonstrate how integrated approaches backed by pooled funding can deliver on these ambitions in practice, and at scale. By working across laws and policies, institutions, data, prevention, services and civil society engagement, the Initiative's comprehensive approach addressed the structural drivers of violence while strengthening systems to prevent and respond to it. Evidence continues to show that this integrated approach is significantly more effective than siloed interventions, enabling mutually reinforcing and sustained results.

Partnerships are foundational to the Initiative's model. By bringing together 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 on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the World Health Organization (WHO) – under a coherent inter-agency framework, Spotlight Initiative drives coordinated action. This is complemented by a whole-of-society approach, working with governments, civil society, communities, traditional and faith leaders, media, academia and the private sector to expand reach and impact. These partnerships also underpin strengthened resource mobilization efforts. In 2025, the Initiative prioritized engagement beyond traditional donors – including international financial institutions and emerging partners – to broaden the financing base and diversify funding streams.



Youth in Uganda trained on skills development, youth empowerment, and gender equality under Spotlight Initiative. Photo: Smart Girls Uganda.

Meaningful engagement of civil society remains fundamental to the Initiative's model. As implementing partners, advocates, accountability actors and advisors (including through civil society reference groups), diverse civil society organizations – particularly grassroots and women's rights groups – play a critical role in reaching marginalized populations, ensuring programming is context-specific and responsive, and sustaining results. To support this, the Initiative has established an aspirational target to channel 40 to 50 per cent of programme funding directly to diverse civil society organizations. In 2025, the Initiative has made steady progress toward this benchmark (currently at nearly 33 per cent) with further efforts underway to strengthen alignment, as outlined in Chapter 3 below.

Delivering results through a comprehensive model

Across contexts, Spotlight Initiative demonstrated the added value of a comprehensive model, with coordinated action across pillars generating catalytic, mutually reinforcing results. In 2025, overarching results included strengthened national ownership through the elevation of ending violence against women and girls within national priorities, more efficient implementation through a "United to Deliver" approach across the UN system, and more inclusive and equitable results through the systematic application of the leaving no one behind principle. Chapter 6.1 presents more details on cross-cutting results achieved.



Men who are part of a growing movement of male advocates for gender equality in Uganda. Photo: Spotlight Initiative.

Global-level results reflect strong progress towards ending violence against women and girls, including through strengthened data systems, expanded access to essential services, and wider reach of efforts to shift harmful social norms. In 2025, with Spotlight Initiative's support, over 1.3 million women and girls had access to essential services for gender-based violence (GBV). At the same time, prevention efforts reached scale: Over 1 million men and boys were engaged in education on gender-equitable norms, attitudes and behaviours, including on positive masculinity, while more than 2 million young people participated in in- and out-of-school programmes – including community programmes – promoting the same. Complementing these efforts, 53 civil society organizations – including women's rights organizations – strengthened their ability to work to end violence against women and girls.³ The Initiative also contributed to strengthening the GBV data ecosystem: with the Initiative's support four countries made progress in establishing a national, multisectoral administrative data system to collect and share information on violence against women and girls and harmful practices.⁴

Together, these aggregated results reflect cumulative progress across programmes. The examples that follow provide selected pillar-specific illustrations of results achieved across

³ As of 15 May 2026, the aggregated number of civil society organizations with strengthened capacity has been corrected from 46 to 53. This figure supersedes all previously reported results, and should be considered the official result.

⁴ As of 15 May 2026, the aggregated number of countries that made progress on administrative data systems was corrected from three to four. This figure supersedes all previously reported results, and should be considered the official result.

programmes. Under Pillar A, programmes advanced legal and policy reforms aligned with international standards. For example, in **Sierra Leone**, the review of the Matrimonial Causes Act laid the foundation for stronger protections against economic and psychological violence and reinforced women's rights to marital property, particularly in rural contexts, in the spirit of leaving no one behind.



Secretariat Chairperson at Kawaza chiefdom in Katete, Zambia, Theresa Mumba, speaks at a community meeting on ending GBV.
Photo: IOM/Lighton Nyirongo.

Additionally, across countries, prevention efforts contributed to measurable shifts in attitudes and behaviours under Pillar B. The community-based prevention model (SASA! Together) in **Uganda** mobilized nearly 27,000 people⁵ around positive masculinity and GBV prevention, while a flagship national campaign engaging men as allies in preventing violence in **Ecuador** reached approximately 2 million people.⁶ At the same time, school-based interventions in **Sierra Leone** and **Zambia** reached tens of thousands of educators and young people,^{7,8} embedding prevention within education systems and fostering long-term change.

Programmes also strengthened survivor-centred response systems under Pillar C. In **Uganda**, mobile legal clinics and specialized court sessions resulted in increased case resolution and conviction of perpetrators of violence, strengthening access to justice for survivors. In **Ecuador**

⁵ Spotlight Initiative Uganda Programme Annual Report 2025.

⁶ Spotlight Initiative Ecuador Programme Annual Report 2025, “Ese Tipo Sí” Nation-wide Campaign.

⁷ Spotlight Initiative Sierra Leone Programme Annual Report 2025.

⁸ Spotlight Initiative Zambia Programme Annual Report 2025.

and **Zambia**, institutional reforms and capacity-building for police, justice and frontline actors improved the quality, timeliness and accessibility of services. Moreover, economic empowerment initiatives – from entrepreneurship support in **Ecuador** to vocational training and livelihood programmes in **Uganda** and **Zambia** – further enabled survivors to rebuild their lives and reduce vulnerability to future violence.

Across all contexts, under Pillar D, engagement with civil society strengthened accountability and inclusion. Women's rights organizations shaped programme priorities, influenced policy processes and drove community-level change, demonstrating the centrality of feminist movements to achieving sustainable results.

Communications and visibility

Communications and visibility efforts strengthened the Initiative's reach and positioning while highlighting the contributions of donors, governments and participating UN agencies. Strategic engagement at high-level events – including the Commission on the Status of Women and the UN General Assembly – elevated its profile within key multilateral discussions. Media presence increased substantially, with expanded coverage across international, regional and national outlets, alongside a stronger digital footprint, partner-led communications and strategic activations like “Mind Your Moves,” aimed at reaching men and boys with messaging on prevention.



'Uplifting women in STEM' event in New York, USA, February 2025. Photo: Spotlight Initiative/Radhika Chalasani.

Sustaining results and looking ahead: A call to invest at scale

Sustainability is central to the Initiative's design, with 97 per cent of the Initiative's first phase programmes reporting sustained achievements, activities or outcomes following closure. Building on this, current programmes are embedding interventions within national systems from the outset, while strengthening domestic financing, reinforcing institutional capacity and supporting civil society engagement to sustain impact and more nimbly navigate a constrained funding environment.

Looking ahead, Spotlight Initiative will focus on scaling results and consolidating the gains by diversifying financing beyond traditional donors, prioritizing high-impact programme development opportunities and advancing coordinated action under UN Reform. As violence against women and girls remains pervasive and the response underfunded, accelerating progress will require renewed political commitment and increased investment in proven, comprehensive approaches. Now is the time to invest at scale in what works to end violence against women and girls.

2. Background and Context

2.1 The Context

Throughout 2025, women and girls faced intensifying challenges. Inequalities deepened and vulnerability to violence increased, while regressive trends in gender equality and women's rights grew, with [one in four](#) countries reporting that backlash on gender equality hampered implementation of gender equality commitments.

New global data from the [World Health Organization](#) indicated that nearly one in three women – around 840 million women – have experienced intimate partner or sexual violence in their lifetime, a figure that has remained largely unchanged since 2000. In the past year alone, 316 million women were subjected to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner. At its most extreme, this violence is fatal: In 2024, [137 women and girls](#) were killed every day by a partner or close relative.

Harmful practices, including female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage, remained entrenched in certain contexts, while technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) continues to emerge as a growing global threat, requiring new and adaptive responses. A [2025 UN Women](#) report found that seven out of ten women human rights defenders, activists and journalists experienced TFGBV or online violence in the course of their work, and 41 per cent reported offline harm linked to digital abuse.



Ruth Jeffrey uses her community radio station to speak to audiences about gender-based violence.
Photo: Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme.

Risks of violence have intensified in fragile, climate and crisis-affected settings, including in countries where the Initiative operates. In Zambia, severe drought displaced more than 200,000 people by December 2024,⁹ disrupting livelihoods and increasing the risk of child marriage, teenage pregnancy and intimate partner violence,¹⁰ with women disproportionately affected. In Uganda, displacement, driven in part by instability in eastern regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, increased refugee populations and exacerbated socioeconomic stressors in hosting communities, weakening informal protection mechanisms.

A more hostile global political environment also shaped the operating context. Civic space continued to shrink, democracy eroded in places, rates of overseas aid went down, while restrictions on women's rights organizations and advocates intensified. Strikingly, the world spent nearly 5,000 times more on [military expenditure](#) in 2024 than it invested in [ending violence against women and girls](#) between 2021 and 2022.

Funding cuts have [disproportionately affected civil society organizations](#) and frontline service providers, undermining service delivery and negatively affecting global feminist ecosystems by hollowing out networks, coalitions and movements built over decades. This decline in [official development assistance \(ODA\)](#) has coincided with a deepening crisis within the UN system itself, with UN-wide resources having [fallen 30 per cent since 2023](#), and programming to advance human rights and gender equality [disproportionately](#) affected. Increasing unmet needs and growing risks have direct implications for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 3 (health and well-being), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) and SDG 16 (peace, justice and institutions).

⁹ [IOM 2024 Displacement Tracking Matrix \(DTM\) in Zambia](#).

¹⁰ Spotlight Initiative Zambia Programme Annual Report 2025.

Yet, amid intersecting global crises and escalating violence, 2025 also reaffirmed the importance of the global women's rights agenda and the power of progressive – including feminist and women's rights – movements. From global, regional and grassroots levels, women's rights organizations have continued to navigate increasingly complex political environments to provide life-saving services and stand up for human rights. The year also marked three decades since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and 25 years since UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. At the 80th UN General Assembly, world leaders came together and made [191 commitments](#) under the Beijing+30 Action Agenda, a third of which focused on ending violence against women and girls.

Political commitment to advancing gender equality was also evident across contexts and countries in which Spotlight Initiative works. In Liberia, for example, the President made a landmark public commitment at the UN General Assembly to end FGM, described further below in Chapter 6, while, in Zambia, constitutional amendments introduced a mixed member proportional representation system, guaranteeing women a percentage of parliamentary seats and marking progress for women's formal political participation. Notably, women's rights organizations have been integral to securing these gains.

2.2 Responding to the Context: Spotlight Initiative's Model

In this context, Spotlight Initiative continued to drive coordinated, cross-sectoral action to end violence against women and girls. The Initiative remained focused on transformative change and on ensuring that no one is left behind.

Spotlight Initiative addresses the root causes of violence against women and girls and widening inequalities through a rights-based, evidence-driven model grounded in the recognition that violence is preventable. Launched as a flagship demonstration fund for UN Reform, the Initiative promotes system-wide coherence and efficiency, bringing together UN agencies – alongside governments, civil society and others – to deliver integrated, multisectoral programming. Inter-agency collaboration is coordinated through joint work plans, a common results framework, integrated programme delivery and backend operations (wherever possible) with efforts to end violence against women and girls elevated as a priority across the UN country or regional team.

As the United Nations advances the Secretary General's [UN80 initiative](#) to strengthen the institution's effectiveness, agility and country-level impact, Spotlight Initiative continues to demonstrate how integrated approaches – backed by pooled funding – can deliver on these ambitions in practice.

In a global context marked by increasing fragmentation, the Initiative's model moves beyond siloed, project-based interventions to advance progress across mutually reinforcing pillars or intervention areas: strengthening laws and institutions, and enhancing GBV data (Pillar A), shifting harmful social norms (Pillar B), expanding survivor-centred services (Pillar C) and supporting civil society and progressive movements, including women's rights organizations and feminist movements in their critical work (Pillar D).

By embedding interventions across multiple pillars and working with diverse actors across society, Spotlight Initiative's model reduces reliance on a single entry point, offering a more resilient framework for change. Central to this model is the meaningful engagement and resourcing of civil society – particularly women's rights organizations and feminist movements – which partner with the Initiative to drive sustained, transformative impact. The [final evaluation of the Initiative's first phase](#) underscored this, noting that the engagement with civil society organizations across the model – *and* through a dedicated area of work (Pillar D) – was a key strength and an important feature of the Initiative's design.

[Modelling suggests](#) that this approach is 70 to 90 per cent more effective at reducing violence against women and girls (VAWG) than traditional single-focus projects or siloed approaches, while contributing to broader Sustainable Development Goals. [97 per cent of Spotlight Initiative first phase programmes reported sustained achievements](#) following programme closure, revealing that the Initiative's model helps generate lasting benefits for women, girls and all survivors in a range of contexts.

The Initiative's model also recognizes that violence against women and girls manifests differently across contexts and intersects with other forms of inequality. This has allowed programmes to respond to shifting political, economic and humanitarian conditions while sustaining progress. In fragile settings affected by displacement or climate change, such as Uganda, interventions prioritized integrated, survivor-centred efforts that bridged development and humanitarian response, expanding access to psychosocial support, clinical management of rape and information on sexual and reproductive health and rights in displacement-affected communities. The Initiative also supported One-Stop Centres and harmonized referral pathways to enable case management for both refugee and host community populations.

In Ecuador, the programme adapted to political transitions, changes in ministerial leadership and rising criminal violence by anchoring implementation at the community level and strengthening institutional systems, including the expansion of the Unified Violence Registry – a centralized national administrative data system that consolidates information from multiple institutions to track, monitor and inform responses to violence against women and girls – to additional institutions.

Spotlight Initiative operates through an integrated umbrella framework, bringing together the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund and its portfolio of country and regional programmes, the High-Impact Programme for Violence Elimination by 2030 (the HIVE Joint Programme) and stand-alone joint programmes in Ecuador and Uganda, formally administered outside of the Fund, that collectively drive results for women and girls across diverse contexts. The achievements of the Initiative as a whole in 2025 – across this umbrella framework – are presented in this global annual report.

3. Spotlight Initiative's First Phase Achievements (2017-2023) and the Path to Spotlight Initiative 2.0

As noted above, Spotlight Initiative was launched with a dual objective: to end all forms of violence against women and girls and to advance UN Reforms. From the onset, the Initiative

brought UN agencies together under the leadership of UN Resident Coordinators to drive coordinated action across countries and regions. This approach remains central to how the Initiative works today.

Coupled with meaningful and diverse partnerships – including with government and civil society – this joint way of working helped drive a [range of transformative results](#) for women and girls during the Initiative's first phase. With the Initiative's support, 548 laws and policies were signed or strengthened to end violence against women and girls or advance gender equality, and 50 countries strengthened their National Action Plans, reinforcing institutional capacity to drive change.

Shifting gender norms is crucial to addressing the underlying drivers of violence. During the Initiative's first phase, nearly 8 million young people participated in programmes promoting gender-equitable attitudes and behaviours, and close to 6 million men and boys were engaged in dialogue on positive masculinity and non-violent conflict resolution. Society-wide campaigns reached an audience of nearly 384 million people globally. Close to 3 million women and girls accessed gender-based violence services, and the conviction rate for gender-based violence doubled across 13 countries, with over 13,000 convictions recorded. [Evidence shows](#) that progress to end violence against women and girls not only advances gender equality (SDG 5) but also drives advances across all Sustainable Development Goals, as illustrated in the [Spotlight Initiative Global Final Report \(2017–2023\)](#).



Alfonsina Sankhulani is part of the fistula survivors in Malawi. Photo: UNFPA East and Southern Africa.

Additionally, as mentioned throughout this report, feminist and women's rights movements have and continue to be at the vanguard of efforts to end violence and are [uniquely](#) important to doing so. Accordingly, during its first phase, the Initiative delivered USD 195 million to diverse civil society organizations, around 49 per cent of its activity funds. This contributed to an estimated 5,000 women's rights organizations reporting greater ability to do their critical work of ending gender-based violence.

Now, in its second phase, Spotlight Initiative is building on and working to expand these achievements. Three new programmes launched in 2025 in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Zambia. These programmes joined existing programmes in Uganda and Ecuador. A second-generation Africa Regional Programme is set to launch in January 2026. The Initiative has also adapted and evolved, actioning the [recommendations from the final evaluation](#) of its first phase to ensure current programming is informed by the latest evidence, and responsive to identified gaps. The chapters below detail this ongoing work, demonstrating how the lessons and achievements of the first phase are being carried forward and amplified.

4. Governance and UN Reform

4.1 Fund Governance

The Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund's multi-stakeholder governance mechanisms are designed to enable effective, inclusive and accountable decision-making, while ensuring strong oversight and high-quality programming to end violence against women and girls. As a UN Secretary-General Fund, overall strategic direction is provided by the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General, while day-to-day operations are supported by the Fund Secretariat, with the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office serving as Administrative Agent.

At the global level, governance is structured across three complementary bodies: the Advisory Board, the Operational Steering Committee and the Programme Appraisal Committee. Together, these bodies provide strategic guidance and advice, oversee investment planning and programme approvals, and ensure technical excellence through assessment of programme proposals. Civil society remains represented across all three groups, reinforcing the Initiative's commitment to inclusive governance. Membership across these bodies also includes recipient UN agencies serving on a rotational basis to ensure fair and balanced representation. In 2025, UN agencies represented across the Advisory Board, Operational Steering Committee and Programme Appraisal Committee were UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNODC, UN Women and WHO.

Over the reporting period, the Fund's governing bodies continued to convene regularly to ensure effective decision-making, strategic oversight and sound stewardship of the Fund. In June 2025, the Advisory Board held its second meeting, taking stock of progress achieved to date and providing strategic guidance on the way forward, including in the context of [UN80](#). Discussions also focused on strengthening the Initiative's resource mobilization in an increasingly constrained global funding landscape. In parallel, seven Operational Steering Committee proceedings and three Programme Appraisal Committee proceedings took place to facilitate high-quality programme development and timely approvals. These included a joint hybrid meeting of the 2.0 Fund Operational Steering Committee and the HIVE Joint Programme Steering Committee, which strengthened and cultivated synergies and coordination across the Spotlight Initiative umbrella. Alignment between the two bodies has supported efficiency and effectiveness in advancing shared priorities.

The Fund Secretariat provides technical and operational support to the governing bodies. It also facilitates effective Fund and programme management to ensure compliance, and

implements the strategic decisions of these bodies while ensuring coherence and accountability across the Initiative. In 2025, the Fund Secretariat, in close collaboration with the HIVE Joint Programme, also strengthened the Initiative's technical foundations by enhancing monitoring and evaluation, deepening knowledge management, updating global technical guidance, and fostering engagement with civil society to inform evidence generation and programme delivery.

Alongside the Initiative's governing bodies, the Civil Society Global Reference Group (CS-GRG) – an independently-selected group of global experts and advocates working to end violence against women and girls, and advance gender equality and women's rights – plays a critical role in advising, advocating and holding the Initiative accountable to its commitments. Additional information on the CS-GRG can be found in Chapter 5 below.

At the programme level, governance is anchored in multi-stakeholder national or regional Steering Committees. Co-chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator and the government at national level, national Steering Committees provide strategic direction and endorse programme documents, plans, strategies (including risk mitigation strategies) and budgets. By bringing together government, the UN, donors, and civil society, Steering Committees also help ensure alignment with national (or regional) priorities, promote transparency and accountability, and foster the meaningful engagement of civil society within the highest level of governance at the programme level. Similarly, regional programmes are governed through multi-stakeholder regional Steering Committees that bring together regional institutions and bodies, the UN, donors and civil society to provide strategic direction and ensure alignment with regional priorities. In addition, as detailed in Chapter 5 below, all programmes have established national Civil Society Reference Groups (CSRG) as institutional mechanisms to harness civil society expertise to strengthen the Initiative's effectiveness and accountability to the women's movement at the programme level.

Further details on the composition and procedures of the Fund governance bodies at global and programme level are available in the [Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund Terms of Reference](#) and the [Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund 2024 Annual Narrative Report](#).

4.2 A Model Built on Collaboration: Advancing UN Reform

Anchored in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and operationally hosted within the UN Development Coordination Office (DCO), the Initiative is strategically positioned to reinforce UN coherence and accountability at both global and programme levels.

At the global level, the Assistant Secretary-General of DCO serves as co-chair of the Fund's Advisory Board, anchoring strategic alignment at the highest level. This is reinforced through regular coordination meetings between Spotlight Initiative and DCO, which have strengthened coherence across shared priorities and deepened engagement with Resident Coordinator Offices. At the working level, and as noted above, ongoing engagements have ensured the Initiative remains aligned with UN Reform guidance, including the adoption of common approaches, tools and services to enhance programme efficiency. Bimonthly meetings with UN liaison offices have further fostered UN cohesion and coordination with the European Union, the Initiative's largest donor.

This system-wide alignment extends to UN inter-agency coordination. Monthly meetings with UN agency focal points – HQ-level representatives to Spotlight Initiative – provide a regular forum for addressing technical and operational issues, while quarterly director-level meetings enable joint decision-making and strengthened programme design and oversight. Together, these structures promote system-wide coherence in efforts to end violence against women and girls, while aiming to reduce fragmentation across the UN system.

At the programme level, Spotlight Initiative programmes are implemented by a context-responsive mix of UN Agencies, selected by UN Resident Coordinators on the basis of comparative advantage and contextual relevance. Resident Coordinators oversee the Initiative and convene UN agencies and partners around a shared vision, leveraging agency expertise to accelerate joint, integrated action to end violence against women and girls.

Through programme-level Steering Committees and related coordination structures, RC leadership further strengthens joint planning and responsive programming, while enhancing accountability. RC leadership and oversight also help strengthen existing (and build new) national partnerships reinforcing national ownership and sustainability.

By shifting from fragmented project-based EVAWG programming to coordinated, comprehensive, large-scale programming, Spotlight Initiative has demonstrated the transformative potential of joint programming delivered coherently through multiple UN agencies for more impact for women and girls, as described in the chapters that follow.

5. Partnerships with Diverse Stakeholders

Partnerships are central to Spotlight Initiative’s ability to deliver transformative, lasting change. The Initiative unites a diverse range of society’s stakeholders – governments, UN agencies, civil society organizations, communities and donors, among others – around a shared, evidence-based commitment to ending violence against women and girls. This chapter explores how those partnerships work in practice, across three mutually reinforcing dimensions: partnerships that drive resource mobilization and financing; whole-of-society partnerships that advance implementation; and, within that, a closer look at civil society’s distinctive role as a core partner of the Initiative.

5.1 Partnering to Deliver Impact: Donor Contributions to Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG)

Spotlight Initiative’s results are made possible through the Initiative’s partnerships, including importantly its donor partners. Contributions from Belgium, the European Union, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United States have enabled the Initiative to roll out and scale comprehensive, country-driven programmes, strengthen partnerships, including with civil society, amplify knowledge and learning, and generate momentum to end violence against women and girls.

In 2025, the Initiative continued to advance a diverse partnership base to mobilize resources at the global and country levels, engaging governments, civil society, the UN system, international

financial institutions, the private sector and philanthropies. This work centred on consistent and targeted outreach, supported by UN agency and civil society partners, to deepen relationships with both established and non-traditional donors.

This reflects the Initiative’s comparative advantage in convening diverse actors around a shared, evidence-based framework, enabling coordinated action and aligned investments. These efforts proved particularly critical in the current global funding context – referenced throughout this report – marked by shrinking aid budgets and the evolving UN80 reform agenda, all of which underscore the need for more integrated, efficient and catalytic models of cooperation.

In 2025, three new country programmes launched in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Zambia, joining existing programmes in Ecuador and Uganda, with an Africa Regional Programme set to launch in early 2026. As noted above, by year’s end, the Initiative’s capitalization reached USD 103 million.¹¹

Spotlight Initiative — donor funding by modality and programme

Donor contributions flow through two SI funding modalities — Standalone Joint Programmes and the 2.0 Fund — to country and regional programmes. Total: \$103.0M.

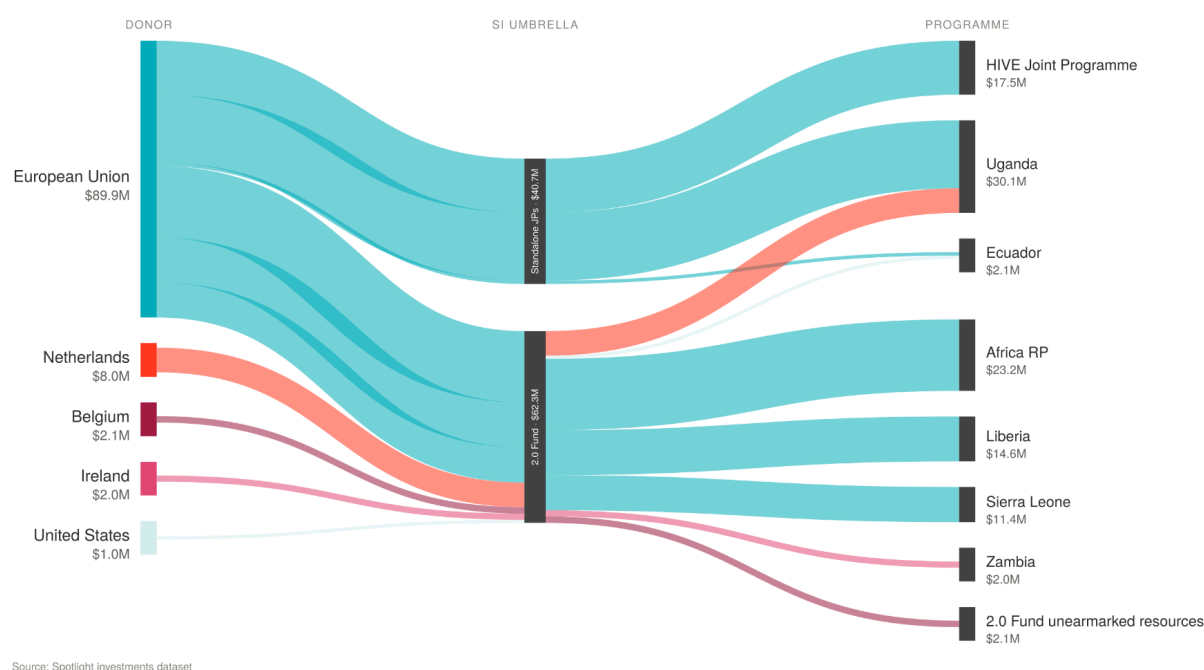


Figure: Donor contributions to the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 umbrella: Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund and stand-alone joint programmes.

As noted throughout this report, amid funding constraints and growing backlash against women’s rights and gender equality, strategic partnerships and resource mobilization – demonstrating the value of the Initiative’s evidence-based approach – remained central to the Initiative’s success in 2025. Throughout 2025, Spotlight Initiative led a number of strategic global engagements that positioned the Initiative as a credible, high-impact model for

¹¹ This includes USD 62.3 million administered through the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund and USD 40.7 million through the stand-alone joint programmes in Uganda and Ecuador and the HIVE Joint Programme.

coordinated action. Engagements at the Africa Regional Sustainable Development Forum in Kampala; the European Humanitarian Forum in Brussels; and the ODA-Development Assistance Committee GenderNet Conference in Paris, as well as high-level participation at the Sixty-Ninth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the 80th Session of the UN General Assembly in New York reinforced the Initiative's relevance within global policy and financing debates.

Additionally, the launch of the [Domestic Resource Mobilization Study](#) at the [Fourth Financing for Development Conference](#) in Sevilla, Spain together with participation in the World Summit for Social Development in Doha, generated new entry points to engage international financial institutions and Gulf-based partners, further diversifying the Initiative's financing landscape.



UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed and Spotlight Initiative Global Coordinator Erin Kenny at the launch of Spotlight Initiative's latest impact report in November 2025. Photo: Spotlight Initiative/Nivedha Meyyappan.

Building on this momentum, the Initiative convened a series of global briefings with a diversity of donors to maintain visibility and reinforce its value proposition. Meetings were held with European Union entities, as well as Member State partners: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Qatar, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Arab Emirates. Additionally, the Initiative met with regional authorities, including the Government of Catalonia. These engagements were complemented by exchanges with international financial institutions, opening pathways for future financing and partnerships. Notably, progress was made in advancing the tripartite partnership with the World Bank and the European Union – a critical opportunity to scale impact by aligning policy, technical expertise and financing. Building off productive country-level workshops held in partnership with the Bank and UN in Ecuador and Chad, further work is planned in 2026 to fully realize the potential of the partnership, with plans to mobilize financing at a greater scale.

Simultaneously, the Initiative sought to expand its engagement with other EU actors, particularly the Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf, and the Directorate-General for Enlargement and the Eastern Neighbourhood. At the same time,

Spotlight Initiative pursued private sector partnerships, particularly with the International Olympic Committee, to deliver joint programming on preventing violence in and through sports, with a focus on the African continent. Engagement with philanthropic foundations also provided important insights into evolving funding priorities and opportunities for diversification.

At the country level, strengthening resource mobilization efforts was prioritized as well. In response to increased donor earmarking and shifting financing modalities, Spotlight Initiative intensified its support to UN Country Teams and Regional Offices, engaging with over 20 teams in 2025 alone to strengthen resource mobilization strategies to support the development of new programmes. This reflects the Initiative's approach, aimed at enabling coordinated, context-specific responses that are anchored in national priorities and strengthened through partnerships with governments and civil society.

Spotlight Initiative further sharpened its fundraising approach by aligning country-level engagement with donor priorities, reinforcing this through targeted outreach to decision-makers at headquarters and capital levels. The Initiative is also driving coherent messaging across governments, international financial institutions and UN partners, making the case for comprehensive, evidence-based programming as the most effective way to deliver change at a societal level to end violence against women and girls.



UNFPA Executive Director Ms. Diene Keita at a Spotlight Initiative high-level event on the sidelines of the Eightieth Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA 80), New York, USA, September 2025. Photo: Spotlight Initiative/Nivedha Meyyappan.

5.2 Partnering to Deliver Impact Across Society, Including with Governments, with Civil Society at the Core

Whole-of-Society Approach: Partnering for Change

In addition to the Initiative's partnerships with diverse donors described just above, Spotlight Initiative's impact is driven by its whole-of-society, including whole-of-government, approach across countries and regions. Recognizing that ending violence against women and girls requires coordinated action, the Initiative works cross-sectorally with governments, including at the highest political level, to foster national ownership and political commitment. The Initiative's inter-agency, whole-of-UN-system model enables this work, by aligning the mandates and technical expertise of UN agencies to deliver coherent, multisectoral responses that address the structural drivers of violence against women and girls.

The Initiative also promotes broader multi-stakeholder collaboration, bringing together legislatures, judiciaries, civil society, traditional and faith leaders, communities, the media, academia and the private sector under a shared, locally driven framework aligned with national priorities. As highlighted in the [Imperative to Invest study](#) – an independent modelling study – a distinctive feature of this approach is its ability to foster collaboration beyond traditional silos, including by creating structured, joint spaces for engagement between governments and civil society – often bridging divides that would not otherwise exist – and strengthening dialogue, accountability and collective action. Working across the socioecological model in this way enables the Initiative to catalyse sustained change.

This approach is evident across Spotlight Initiative programmes. As one example, in **Liberia**, lawmakers held dedicated consultations on the Women and Girls Protection Act (2025) with traditional leaders from all 15 counties, civil society, and communities, to build momentum for the country's most comprehensive FGM legislation to date. Reinforced by a national petition signed by more than 1,000 women and girls, the process demonstrates how coordinated multi-stakeholder engagement can translate into broad-based support for legal and social change.

Whole-of-society approaches help enable collaboration among stakeholders that had not previously worked together, helping to build collective momentum on ending VAWG.

Zooming In: The Critical Role of Civil Society for Sustained Action and Impact

Within this broader ecosystem of partnerships, civil society is indispensable to the success, sustainability and credibility of Spotlight Initiative's mission, and its ability to deliver transformative, locally anchored results. Throughout 2025, the Initiative systematically strengthened its partnership with civil society, including women's rights organizations as well as local and grassroots groups.

Civil Society Reference Groups: An Innovative and Effective Mechanism

Beyond implementation, civil society engagement is institutionalized through the Civil Society Reference Groups, identified by [the final evaluation of the Initiative's first phase](#) as innovative

and effective mechanisms. Operating at global, regional and country levels, reference groups serve advisory, advocacy and accountability roles for the Initiative, advancing the shared objective of ending violence against women and girls. As part of their mandate, Civil Society Reference Groups are meant to act as a bridge to the broader civil society ecosystem, helping further strengthen alignment with national priorities, reinforcing accountability, and fostering ownership.

At the global level, the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Civil Society Global Reference Group, established in 2024 through a civil society-led selection process, is composed of 17 members (listed [here on the Initiative's website](#)) from 16 countries across all regions. Bringing together expertise in social justice, human rights and feminist advocacy, the Global Reference Group played a key role in advancing advocacy and strategic positioning across major international fora throughout 2025, including at the sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, in which all Reference Group members engaged, the International Conference on Family Planning, the Fifth World Conference on Women's Shelters, the United Nations General Assembly and the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development. Through these engagements, civil society remained a critical partner in advancing global momentum to end violence against women and girls.

Collaboration with the Initiative's Global Team on strategic priorities has been further strengthened through the CS-GRG Coordinator role. Among its contributions, this role co-developed the UN-wide Funding Framework – under the joint leadership of Spotlight Initiative and the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women and Girls – and is now helping to promote it systemwide. The establishment of four thematic working groups within the CS-GRG (covering human rights, monitoring and evaluation, research and learning, and communications) has driven more focused and effective contributions.

Across Spotlight Initiative programmes, establishing a Civil Society Reference Group is a core requirement, ensuring that civil society engagement is embedded from the outset. Mirroring the structure of the Global Reference Group, these mechanisms carry a three-fold mandate: to advise Spotlight Initiative programmes, hold them accountable, and advocate jointly with the Initiative for an end to violence against women and girls.

The reference groups have demonstrated their value in practice. In **Uganda**, for example, the Civil Society Reference Group played a strategic oversight role by coordinating monitoring missions and consolidating field-level evidence, strengthening programme accountability. In **Liberia**, Civil Society Reference Group members engaged directly in national policy dialogues, providing feedback to Spotlight Initiative's programme to ensure continued alignment between programming and government action and relevance and responsiveness, including to the needs of marginalized communities.

Representation of local and grassroots organizations in Civil Society Reference Groups is crucial to meaningfully reach structurally marginalized individuals and groups, in line with the principle of leaving no one behind. On average, across the reference groups in **Ecuador**, **Liberia**, **Uganda**, and **Zambia**, 24 of 33 members – 73 per cent – represent local or grassroots organizations. Because these groups are often closest to their communities, including to marginalized populations, they are best placed to reflect community priorities and ensure that

programming decisions are grounded in local experience and expertise, reinforcing the Initiative's commitment to local, inclusive ownership.



In Ecuador, the Initiative is helping support women's economic autonomy to combat gender-based violence. Photo: Spotlight Initiative.

Additionally, Civil Society Reference Groups nominate members to the National (or Regional) Steering Committee – the highest governance body at programme level, co-chaired by the government and the UN – where Civil Society Reference Group members represent a minimum of 20 per cent of membership. This helps to create meaningful dialogue between civil society, government, and the United Nations, strengthening oversight and alignment of the Initiative's interventions to country priorities.

As evidenced in Spotlight Initiative's [Thematic Assessment](#) – and the [final evaluation of the Initiative's first phase](#), as noted above – Civil Society Reference Groups are identified as a highly relevant and valued mechanism, enhancing the quality and inclusiveness of programme governance, and improving programme delivery through participatory approaches. As a mechanism across all programmes, the Civil Society Reference Group helps ensure that programme-level decision-making remains grounded in lived realities.

Civil Society Financing: Commitments, Progress, and Challenges¹²

Sustained, predictable, core financing for civil society's critical work is a prerequisite for contextually responsive, transformative change. As noted, women's rights organizations and feminist movements [are at the vanguard of that change](#) – driving prevention, service delivery, advocacy, and accountability – yet [remain chronically underfunded](#).

¹² Each year, Spotlight Initiative programmes report on their CSO funding through "Annex C" of their Programme Annual Report; this data – alongside approved programme budgets in programme documents – is then analysed and presented here in the Global Annual Report to capture progress against the Initiative's funding commitments to civil society. All figures are cumulative from the start of the programmes and are not limited to a single reporting year.

Rooted in this evidence, Spotlight Initiative has established clear funding targets: 40-50 per cent of programme activity budgets¹³ should be channelled through diverse civil society organizations, and at least 15 per cent of programme activity budgets should be dedicated to Pillar D, which focuses on strengthening civil society organizations, women's rights organizations, and movements. To date, the Initiative has allocated nearly 33 per cent of overall activity budgets to civil society organizations and nearly 12 per cent to Pillar D.¹⁴ This reflects good progress toward the set targets. Several programmes are still in their early months of implementation, with budgets yet to be fully aligned. The Initiative will work closely with programmes and donors to ensure budget allocations reflect these commitments, as reaching – and exceeding – these targets remains a top priority.

Consistent with the evidence that local organizations and movements are best placed to reach marginalized groups and advance sustainable solutions, 79 per cent of total awarded funding to civil society to date (USD 5,404,496)¹⁵ went to national, local, and grassroots organizations, with 11 per cent (USD 718,162) going specifically to local and grassroots organizations. While there is more to do to ensure the Initiative is reaching and resourcing local and grassroots organizations, Spotlight Initiative is making progress on this dimension, reflecting the Initiative's long-standing commitment to prioritizing access to resources to local groups (an ongoing challenge for the UN), including by intentionally trying to engage CSOs with whom the UN has not previously partnered.¹⁶

To help close the [chronic funding gap](#) facing feminist and women's rights organizations in particular, the Initiative awarded 85 per cent of all civil society funding (USD 5,811,785) directly to women's rights organizations.

The Initiative continues to try to expand the provision of core funding to civil society, as well. Long advocated for by women's rights and feminist organizations, core funding enables locally led, flexible and sustained action, an approach that is particularly critical in contexts marked by backlash and the rise of anti-rights movements.

To date, 63 of the 81 civil society awards (nearly 78 per cent) across Spotlight Initiative programmes included a core funding component. In total, nearly USD 740,000 (USD 738,517) – or approximately 11 per cent – of all civil society funding awarded has been delivered as core support. While still a relatively modest share, this marks a meaningful shift toward more flexible

¹³ Activity budgets/funding (or outcome budgets) are programme direct-cost budgets that are dedicated to activities under each of Pillars A-D. These are budgeted amounts embedded in programme documents and include both donor funding and UN agency contributions. They do not include direct programme coordination costs and indirect costs. Activity budgets are foreseen allocations for the entirety of programmes' duration, and are not expected to increase, nor is progress reported against them linearly or proportionally each year. Their achievement should be assessed for the programme as a whole.

¹⁴ Pillar D analysis does not include the Uganda country programme which does not feature a dedicated Pillar D in its structure.

¹⁵ Awarded funds to civil society are contractual engagements with civil society organizations as implementing partners, grantees, and vendors for delivery of activities and/or services. Awarded funding is self-reported by Recipient UN Organizations annually as a cumulative figure from the start of the programme to the end of the respective reporting period. Awarded funding can be considered as the implementation of funding allocations (budgets); in simple terms, "budgets" = funding commitments while "awards" = delivery of those commitments.

¹⁶ Priority laid out in the [Grassroots Action Plan](#).

financing modalities.

Notably, five awards in Ecuador were provided entirely as core funding, demonstrating what more ambitious approaches can look like in practice. Building on this progress, the Initiative continues to advocate for increased core support to civil society, including through its system-wide advocacy for core support outlined in [the UN-wide Funding Framework](#).

The following table presents an overview of funding allocations to civil society – including specifically under Pillar D – for each Spotlight Initiative programme. For accountability purposes, the Ecuador and Uganda programmes are disaggregated by each of their components (the 2.0 Fund and the stand-alone joint programmes (JPs), respectively). The figures in the table include both donor and UN Agency contributions.

Programme	Spotlight Initiative umbrella component	Amount budgeted for civil society (USD)	Amount budgeted for civil society, as a share of the total programme activity budgets (%)	Amount budgeted for Pillar D (USD)	Amount budgeted for Pillar D, as a share of the total programme activity budgets (%)	Total budget for the Civil Society Reference Group (USD)	Total funding awarded to civil society to date (USD)
Sierra Leone	2.0 Fund	\$4,369,313	45.44%	\$1,394,587	14.50%	\$60,000	\$256,297
Africa RP ¹⁷	2.0 Fund	\$5,715,330	31.82%	\$2,195,378	12.22%	\$521,672	N/A
Liberia	2.0 Fund	\$3,624,107	31.99%	\$517,727	4.57%	\$68,400	\$8,150
Zambia	2.0 Fund	\$581,100	35.72%	\$384,683	23.65%	\$7,500	\$174,114
Uganda	Standalone JP	\$4,409,850	25.79%	N/A ¹⁸	N/A	\$60,485	\$4,406,304
Uganda	2.0 Fund	\$2,282,657	37.08%	N/A	N/A	\$0 ¹⁹	\$1,545,270

¹⁷ The Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Africa Regional Programme was designed and approved by the Fund's Operational Steering Committee in 2025, with a start date of 1 January 2026. No awards to CSOs have therefore been reported in 2025.

¹⁸ The Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Programme in Uganda does not include a stand-alone Outcome D; activities typically associated with this outcome are integrated across the three other outcome areas in its results framework and are reported in the narrative report.

¹⁹ The CSRG budget for the Uganda programme is covered through the stand-alone JP component of the programme.

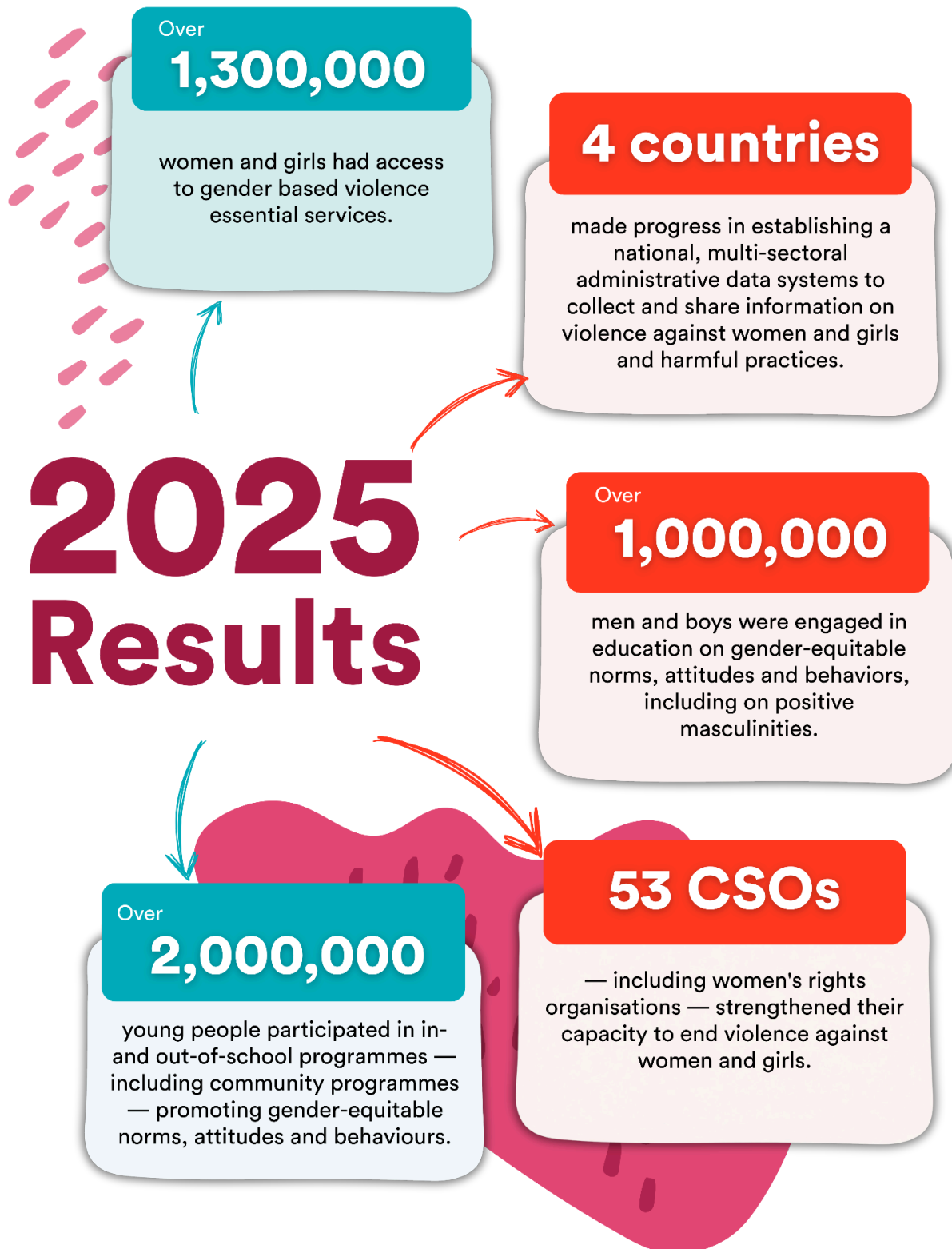
Ecuador	Standalone JP	\$237,654	30.13%	\$167,370	21.22%	\$0 ²⁰	\$421,274
Ecuador	2.0 Fund	\$155,628	20.67%	\$256,637	34.09%	\$3,000	\$0 ²¹
Total		\$21,375,638	32.72%	\$4,916,382	11.7%	\$721,057	\$6,811,410

While the Initiative is deeply committed to resourcing diverse civil society – including women's rights organizations and movements – navigating the current financing landscape has been challenging. Rising donor earmarking and fragmented funding, shifting financing modalities, and competing political priorities have constrained the Initiative's ability to fully meet its targets. This is explored further below in Chapter 8 (Challenges and Mitigating Measures). As the chapters that follow demonstrate, by partnering meaningfully with diverse stakeholders – including with governments and civil society – the Initiative made important progress in 2025 to end violence against women and girls.

²⁰ The CSRG budget for the Ecuador programme is covered through the stand-alone JP component of the programme.

²¹ The USAID-funded component of the Ecuador programme was on hold until Q1 2026 due to uncertainties around the use of USAID funding. The component will be implemented from 2026 onwards. No awards to CSOs have therefore been reported in 2025.

6. 2025 Results: Contributing to Change in Ending Violence against Women and Girls



6.1 Overarching Results: The Importance of Investing in a Comprehensive Model

Evidence across Spotlight Initiative programmes shows that comprehensive, coordinated approaches outperform siloed interventions in addressing violence against women and girls. There are currently seven UN Agencies actively implementing Spotlight Initiative programmes – as mentioned above, these are: IOM, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, and UN Women. By working simultaneously across mutually reinforcing pillars – laws and policies, institutions, prevention, services, data and civil society partnerships – the Initiative generates results that single sector intervention cannot achieve alone, with progress in one area actively reinforcing and accelerating change in others. Notably, in Uganda and Ecuador, after the initial budget allocation and launch of the countries' respective Spotlight Initiative programmes, the programmes successfully mobilized an additional USD 9 million from the Netherlands and the United States (USAID). This suggests strong partner and donor confidence in the Initiative's comprehensive approach enabling both country programmes to broaden and deepen the scope of their existing programmes.

The following section outlines key cross-cutting results that demonstrate the added value and impact of this model.



UNFPA Executive Director Diene Keita speaks at the 'A Sustainable Legacy' event in Brussels, Belgium. December 2025. Photo: Spotlight Initiative.

Result: Working comprehensively across mutually reinforcing pillars generated catalytic effects, amplifying impact and driving transformative change.

In Uganda, investments in strengthening policies, institutions and GBV data (Pillar A) – including through gender-responsive planning and budgeting – helped embed EVAWG priorities across development plans and national-level frameworks. This in turn created an enabling environment for prevention (Pillar B), increasing rights awareness and resulting in greater willingness to report violence. Simultaneously, strengthened multisector response systems (Pillar C) improved access to justice, strengthened survivor-centred care, referral pathways and case management. Civil society engagement reinforced community-level accountability and ensured the meaningful inclusion of marginalized groups.

In Ecuador, the Initiative strengthened cross-sectoral coordination and helped build more sustainable national systems. Further institutionalization of the Unified Registry of Violence and the National Observatory strengthened evidence-based decision-making (Pillar A), while prevention work on positive masculinities helped shift attitudes, and engaged men and youth in prevention efforts (Pillar B). Improved police and judicial protocols enhanced coordination across institutional providers and strengthened service quality (Pillar C), while support to grassroots organizations – particularly among Indigenous, rural and marginalized communities – strengthened social accountability and advocacy, and improved trust (Pillar D). Notably, increased community engagement fed back into national data systems (Pillar A), improving monitoring, planning and policy design.

Result: Elevated efforts to end violence against women and girls within national priorities for strengthened national ownership and results.

In 2025, the Initiative continued to elevate ending violence against women and girls as a high-level national priority, deepening political commitment and strengthening institutional engagement and action.

Across all programmes, Spotlight Initiative engaged at the highest levels of government, with senior political leaders publicly affirming commitment to end violence against women and girls. Such high-level engagement helps anchor EVAWG firmly on national development agendas and supports sustained political will. In Liberia, an ad hoc joint legislative committee was established to review the Women and Girls Protection Act of 2025, further described below. Backed by large-scale civic action, this helped to translate the President's UN General Assembly commitment to end FGM into concrete legislative action.

In Uganda, Spotlight Initiative's engagement with a range of national ministries and district governments helped ensure ownership and accountability for GBV interventions – including by introducing dedicated district-level budget lines and deepening political commitment and ownership – at all levels.

Regionally, the process of designing Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Africa Regional Programme (to be officially launched in January 2026) further strengthened engagement with the African Union, and amplified the importance of ending violence against women and girls and harmful practices across the continent.

Result: A whole-of-UN approach strengthened coordination, improved efficiency and helped ensure more effective programme delivery and results.

Spotlight Initiative programmes demonstrated how a whole-of-UN approach enables coherent and coordinated implementation by leveraging UN agencies' expertise and comparative advantages to deliver integrated, holistic responses to violence against women and girls.

In Liberia, harmonized planning, joint technical reviews and regular coordination mechanisms strengthened inter-agency coordination to reduce duplication across agency efforts and drive collective accountability. In Zambia, unified UN leadership under the Resident Coordinator deepened mutual accountability and donor engagement, including through regular meetings to review progress and joint monitoring visits with the Embassy of Ireland. In Sierra Leone and Ecuador, common coordination structures, cost-sharing arrangements, joint procurement and shared tools such as the [Business Operations Strategy](#) and long-term agreements with vendors improved inter-agency coherence, reduced administrative delays and reinforced alignment with subnational planning processes.

Result: Embedding "leave no one behind" in programming ensured more meaningful inclusion of structurally marginalized communities.

The Leave No One Behind principle remained central to the Initiative's ability to address structural inequalities and reach those furthest from services and support. In Ecuador, for example, assessments of access to services in Amazonian cantons identified deep structural barriers to justice and health services for Indigenous and rural women. These findings subsequently informed programme planning and targeted capacity strengthening, increasing resources at the subnational level. Partnerships with Indigenous, rural and community-based women's organizations, alongside the active engagement of the programme's Civil Society Reference Group, ensured the inclusion of historically excluded voices in programme decisions, improved community trust, and strengthened the responsiveness of interventions, including service delivery.

In Uganda, data-informed approaches and investments in disaggregated data systems and participatory community platforms strengthened accountability and expanded reach to populations at heightened risk of exclusion or living in hard-to-reach areas. This included increased access to integrated services for refugees and host communities, and strengthened referral pathways, for adolescent girls, rural populations and displaced communities. Women and girls with disabilities were prioritized across prevention, justice and livelihood interventions, as well. Concurrently, the Civil Society Reference Group played an active role in operationalizing this principle, leading monitoring missions and ensuring implementation remained grounded in community realities.

6.2 Driving Change Across Pillars

Pillar A: Laws, policies, institutions and data

Spotlight Initiative interventions focus on strengthening the legal, policy and institutional foundations required to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls. By aligning frameworks with international standards and reinforcing data, coordination and accountability systems, programmes support more coherent, evidence-based action.

The main results achieved under this pillar are:

- **Strengthened legal and policy frameworks aligned with international standards and national priorities.**
- **Enhanced institutional capacity and strengthened coordination mechanisms to deliver accountable and coherent responses.**
- **Improved data systems and monitoring frameworks to support evidence-based decision-making.**

Result: Strengthened legal and policy frameworks aligned with international standards and national priorities.

Robust legal and policy frameworks are foundational to advancing gender equality and eliminating violence against women and girls. When national legislation is aligned with international standards and grounded in inclusive, participatory processes, it strengthens protections, clarifies institutional responsibilities and creates budgeted and enforceable pathways for accountability. Ensuring that these frameworks are both responsive and operationalized is essential to translating commitments into tangible outcomes for women and girls.

In 2025, programmes supported significant progress in advancing legal and policy reforms throughout. In Sierra Leone, for example, the programme supported the review of the Matrimonial Causes Act (1960) – now in the consultation stage – through a nationwide participatory process engaging 752 participants, alongside technical working group sessions to revise discriminatory provisions. This process has informed proposed amendments to strengthen protections against economic and psychological violence and to reinforce women’s rights to marital property – particularly for women in rural areas – aligning the Act more closely with lived realities and human rights standards.²²

Similarly, in Zambia, the revision of the Gender Equity and Equality Act was successfully initiated in coordination with the Zambia Law Development Commission, the Gender Division and women’s rights organizations. The revision aims to update and strategically align national legislation with international standards, including the Sustainable Development Goals and ILO Convention 190, and to identify (and address) gaps in the Act, strengthening the enabling environment for gender-based violence prevention and response. In parallel, the Zambia National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 was finalized and costed, providing a clear, actionable roadmap – with defined responsibilities and budget allocations – to advance women’s participation in peace and security, and strengthen implementation of gender equality commitments.

Result: Enhanced institutional capacity and strengthened coordination mechanisms to deliver accountable and coherent responses.

Strengthening institutional capacity and coordination mechanisms is critical to ensuring laws and policies are effectively implemented, programmes are consistently delivered, and public

²² Spotlight Initiative Sierra Leone Programme Annual Report 2025.

resources are strategically allocated to end violence against women and girls. When government institutions are equipped with the skills, knowledge and coordination structures needed to act, responses are more consistent, responsive and impactful across sectors and administrative levels.

In Uganda, the Initiative drove institutionalization of EVAWG priorities across government planning, budgeting and data systems. Capacity strengthening of nearly 3,500 government officials in gender-responsive planning and budgeting has expanded gender-responsive planning and budgeting from 8 to 17 districts. All 17 districts developed Gender-Based Violence Action Plans and have mainstreamed gender-based violence priorities across health, education, justice and community services departments. Strengthened coordination mechanisms across districts supported the adoption of the National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons, while improved data systems built government capacity for evidence-based decision-making at national and subnational levels. This significant achievement is also featured as an innovative practice in Chapter 7 below.

In Zambia, the Initiative supported a government-led participatory review of the Anti-GBV Act No. 1 of 2011, working alongside the Gender Division to coordinate nationwide consultations engaging government, civil society, and local actors. By strengthening institutional alignment, reducing duplication and identifying gaps in the legal framework, the Initiative contributed to a more coordinated and evidence-based reform process, with the review continuing into 2026 to support more effective implementation of the Act. Furthermore, high-level government commitments in Zambia translated into a costed, nationally owned National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, while revitalized gender subcommittees at the subnational level strengthened coordination and service delivery.

In Sierra Leone, the Initiative strengthened coordination between statutory and customary governance institutions, building the capacity of paramount chiefs, elders and community leaders across nine communities to understand, uphold and enforce key legal frameworks, including the Devolution of Estates Act (2007), the Registration of Customary Marriage Act and the Sexual Offenses Act. By equipping traditional leaders and communities with legal knowledge and ensuring alignment with formal systems, the Initiative strengthened the overall institutional architecture for the protection and promotion of women's rights, including through public commitments from traditional leaders to uphold women's inheritance rights.

Result: Improved data systems and monitoring frameworks to support evidence-based decision-making.

Reliable, harmonized data systems are essential for tracking progress, showing who is being reached and who is not, highlighting which forms of violence persist, and whether responses are effective. High quality GBV data is also crucial to inform policy and financing decisions to end violence against women and girls. In 2025, across the Initiative's programmes, more than 800 service providers, government officials, and civil society staff were trained to collect, manage, analyse, and report administrative data on violence against women and girls and harmful practices.

Four countries – Ecuador, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Uganda – have already made progress establishing national, multisectoral administrative data systems to collect and share this information.²³

In Uganda, the Initiative trained over 700 district personnel (331 female, 372 male) in gender-based violence data management, strengthening data harmonization, system interoperability, and the quality and timeliness of reporting across 12 districts to the database.²³ This included aligning GBV data with refugee protection data systems – by standardizing indicators and improving data sharing – to address persistent gaps and better capture marginalized populations. Concurrently, the Harmonized GBV Data Portal, developed with the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, was finalized and showcased during Africa Statistics Week 2025, advancing multisectoral data integration. This result is also further described below in Chapter 7 within the Innovative, Promising and Good Practices section.

In Ecuador, the Initiative strengthened the government's ability to track and respond to violence against women and girls by enhancing the National Prevention Plan's monitoring system. For the first time, institutions reported against a unified set of indicators and produced a multi-year implementation report, enabling the assessment of progress and institutional compliance, the identification of gaps, and more informed decision-making, including on resource allocation. This shift improved coordination and accountability across 23 public entities, reinforced national leadership and fostered coherent implementation.²⁴

Collectively, these investments in data are transforming the response to GBV, enabling governments to move from fragmented GBV data systems toward more coordinated, transparent frameworks that strengthen accountability, challenge impunity, and drive more targeted prevention and response.

Pillar B: Prevention

Across all programmes, Spotlight Initiative's prevention work rested on a core premise: Ending violence against women and girls requires transforming social norms and shifting power relations, not just individual behaviour. Despite different country contexts, common threads emerged – deep-rooted patriarchal norms, the influence of traditional and religious authorities on community attitudes, and heightened vulnerability among adolescent girls and out-of-school youth. In contexts of rising insecurity and political instability, prevention efforts required careful, context-sensitive approaches to remain constructive and impactful.

²³ Spotlight Initiative Uganda Programme Annual Report 2025.

²⁴ Spotlight Initiative Ecuador Programme Annual Report 2025.

The main results achieved under this pillar are:

- **Prevention initiatives – including campaigns and community programmes – reached millions of people, driving self-reflection and measurable shifts in social norms, including among men and boys.**
- **Prevention approaches integrated into school systems, building pathways to reach young people and teachers over the long term.**
- **Traditional leaders engaged as active champions of social norms change, grounding prevention efforts in community and cultural values.**
- **Strengthened peer networks and community mobilization to drive prevention and collective action.**

Result: Prevention initiatives – including campaigns and community programmes – reached millions of people, driving self-reflection and measurable shifts in social norms, including among men and boys.

Spotlight Initiative programmes drew on the existing evidence base to implement high-impact prevention initiatives at both community and national levels. In Uganda, over 26,958 community members were engaged through the SASA! Together model, supported by more than 2,200 trained activists working on gender-based violence prevention and positive masculinities.²⁵ These efforts contributed to observable shifts in community practices, including increased reporting of violence, strengthened trust in referral systems, and greater collective responsibility for prevention – evidenced, for instance, by community reports of declining violence and increased school attendance.

Across the Initiative, more than one million men and boys were engaged in educational efforts to promote gender-equitable norms, attitudes and behaviours – including positive masculinities – in 2025 alone.

In Ecuador, for example, prevention interventions focused on promoting responsible, non-violent masculinities, supporting men to act as allies in driving positive normative change. The country also rolled out its flagship prevention campaign, “Ese Tipo Sí” (referenced above), which reached an audience of over two million people with messaging promoting gender-equitable norms, attitudes and beliefs.²⁶

These efforts are designed to go beyond raising awareness, contributing to sustained shifts in attitudes and behaviours related to gender equality and the prevention of violence against women and girls.

²⁵ Spotlight Initiative Uganda Programme Annual Report 2025.

²⁶ Spotlight Initiative Ecuador Programme Annual Report 2025.



Young performers lead a public dance activation in Ecuador, using art and movement to raise awareness and promote gender equality with the support of Spotlight Initiative. Photo: UN Women/Karen Toro.

In Sierra Leone, Spotlight Initiative rolled out the Positive Deviant model at community level, featuring six intergenerational dialogues led by survivors and those who have abandoned harmful practices. The programme also established a Peer Champion Network, to train and equip out-of-school adolescent girls as local health advocates to highlight the public health impacts of female genital mutilation and HIV.²⁷

Taken together, Spotlight Initiative's efforts have helped promote positive normative change and deeper prevention work, building the broad-based stakeholder buy-in required for long-term impact.

Result: Prevention approaches integrated into school systems, building pathways to reach young people and teachers over the long term.

Working with schools and young people has proven to be effective in disrupting harmful norms and championing values related to respect, inclusion and equality.

Across Spotlight Initiative programmes, over 2 million young people participated in in- and out-of-school programmes, including community programmes, that promote gender-equitable norms, attitudes and behaviours.

²⁷ Spotlight Initiative Sierra Leone Programme Annual Report 2025.

Engaging with young people especially in educational settings offers an opportunity to break cycles of violence early. In Sierra Leone, for example, the roll-out of life skills curricula reached 72,000 learners nationwide, contributing to the integration of gender-based violence prevention across the education sector. Through the Initiative's support, teachers across 80 schools were trained to deliver the Child and Adolescent Health and Life Skills curriculum. Learners engaged with structured content on GBV prevention, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and gender norms, strengthening their knowledge, skills and agency.²⁸

Similarly, in Zambia, Spotlight Initiative-supported teacher training helped reach over 24,000 learners through the Connect with Respect methodology, creating safe spaces for dialogue on topics like respect and equality. Concurrently, out of school adolescent girls participated in a range of “Safe Space” programmes, with evidence pointing to increased agency in decision-making as a result.²⁹



In Zambia, adolescent girls from a football club in Chinsali take part in a “Safe Space” session, building knowledge and positive behaviours to prevent GBV. Photo: Spotlight Initiative Zambia Programme Annual Report 2025.

In Uganda, nearly 21,000 (20,900) adolescents gained knowledge related to rights, consent and gender equality through life-skills and peer-led outreach, with over 1,700 girls participating in empowerment clubs focused on building skills, strengthening confidence to report violence and seek support, and participate more actively in household and community discussions. Community engagement successfully reinforced protective peer networks and translated into action including in Terego District where 87 gender-based violence cases were referred to authorities, suggesting improved understanding of referral pathways and positive shifts in norms around reporting violence. Through these efforts, Spotlight Initiative helped promote

²⁸ Spotlight Initiative Sierra Leone Programme Annual Report 2025.

²⁹ Spotlight Initiative Zambia Programme Annual Report 2025.

positive norms and behaviours from an early age, with ripple effects expected across communities.³⁰

Result: Traditional leaders engaged as active champions of social norms change, grounding prevention efforts in community and cultural values.

Spotlight Initiative has worked closely with community leaders, including traditional and religious leaders, for ending violence against women and girls, recognizing their critical role in shaping social norms. Building on best practices and what works, the Initiative scaled up approaches, leveraging community networks and the position of local leaders in driving change.

In Zambia, Spotlight Initiative supported faith and traditional leaders to adopt proactive roles as anti-GBV champions, using sermons, ceremonies and community gatherings to discourage child marriage and denounce harmful practices. As part of this, 238 traditional and faith leaders were engaged on gender-transformative tools and knowledge. In addition, two exchange visits between Chiefdom leaders and government authorities, including Permanent Secretaries, Members of Parliament, and District Commissioners took place. These visits led to public commitments to end gender-based violence, and joint prevention plans in Eastern and Muchinga Provinces,³¹ generating momentum for coordinated action. Similarly, in Liberia, the programme is strengthening the accountability of traditional leaders in ending GBV, including through the introduction of the Council of Traditional Leaders of Africa (COTLA) at the First National Assembly of Chiefs and Tribal Governors. This engagement is expected to bolster long-term efforts to prevent gender-based violence, female genital mutilation, and child marriage.³²

Result: Strengthened peer networks and community mobilization to drive prevention and collective action.

The Initiative expanded engagement across diverse groups – including youth, community members, and members of marginalized groups – to strengthen collective action and public engagement to end violence against women and girls.

In Uganda, structured peer networks reached thousands of adolescents through school-based clubs and out-of-school groups. These networks built leadership skills, deepened rights awareness, and increased young people's confidence to report violence and engage in community advocacy, strengthening accountability and prevention efforts at the community level. In Liberia, communities were engaged through nationwide mobilizations and digital campaigns during the 16 Days of Activism in November 2025 and the launch of Spotlight Initiative's programme. These efforts promoted positive messages on gender equality and non-violence and – together with other interventions – are expected to contribute to more gender-equitable attitudes, behaviours and social norms over time.

³⁰ Spotlight Initiative Uganda Programme Annual Report 2025.

³¹ Spotlight Initiative Zambia Programme Annual Report 2025.

³² Spotlight Initiative Liberia Programme Annual Report 2025.

Pillar C: Response (Services)

Spotlight Initiative focuses on strengthening the acceptability, availability and accessibility of services to ensure women and girls can access high-quality, survivor-centred essential services.

By reinforcing provider capacity, enhancing multisectoral coordination and improving case management, programmes supported more effective and integrated responses. Through this, over 1.5 million people had access to gender-based violence services across the Initiative in 2025, 1.3 million of whom were women and girls.

The main results achieved under this pillar are:

- **Strengthened access to quality services for survivors of violence against women and girls through improved coordination and harmonized procedures.**
- **Enhanced the capacity of frontline service providers to deliver quality, survivor-centred care.**
- **Expanded legal mechanisms, harmonized case management tools, and strengthened referral pathways to improve access to justice.**
- **Supported the economic empowerment of GBV survivors as a component of holistic recovery, with measurable gains in survivor autonomy and resilience.**

Result: Strengthened access to quality services for survivors of violence against women and girls through improved coordination and harmonized procedures.

Evidence shows that fragmented service delivery remains one of the most significant barriers to a survivor-centred response. Integrated, multisectoral services ensure that survivors can access critical health and psychosocial care while simultaneously being connected to justice and legal services, creating a seamless continuum of support.

In 2025, Spotlight Initiative programmes prioritized reducing fragmentation in service delivery. In Uganda, for example, multisectoral coordination was embedded at the local level through regular district meetings and subcounty coordination forums. This was further supported by the development of an Integrated Case Management Compendium – a unified framework harmonizing guidance across gender-based violence, violence against children, sexual and reproductive health rights violations, and harmful practices response.

In Sierra Leone, Standard Operating Procedures for One-Stop Centres were revised to align with the Sexual Offences Act 2012 (amended in 2019) and the National Referral Protocol (2022). A range of key stakeholders – including Family Support Unit officers, nurses, and

midwives – participated in the review to ensure protocols were both practical and survivor-centred, helping to standardize a minimum package of survivor-centred care.

Similarly, in Liberia, an ongoing assessment of One-Stop Centres across six counties is generating a robust evidence base that will directly inform the operations of centres in three new target counties in 2026, supporting more equitable access to services nationwide. Taken together, these efforts strengthened coordinated and coherent service delivery, which will lead to improved and more equitable access to quality services.



In Liberia, health workers received hands-on training in trauma-informed care, forensic evidence collection and survivor-centred GBV services, including a visit to a One-Stop Center. Photo: UNFPA Liberia/George Y. Sharpe.

Result: Enhanced the capacity of frontline service providers to deliver quality, survivor-centred care.

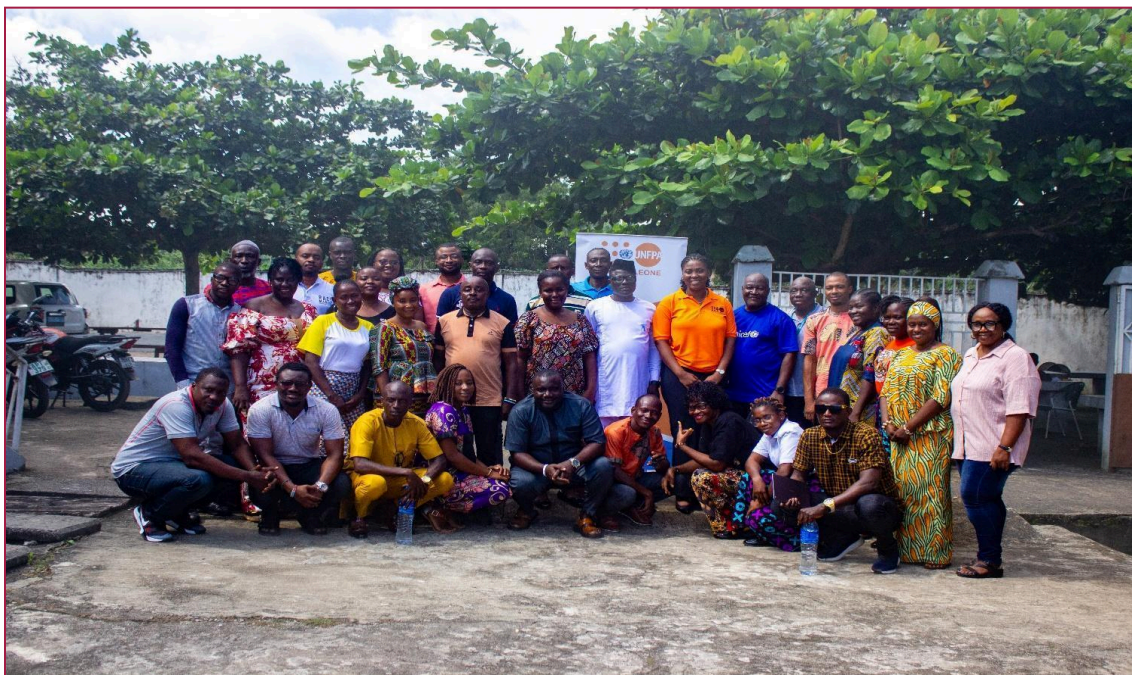
Investing in the capacity of frontline service providers is critical to ensuring effective, survivor-centred responses. When those closest to survivors are equipped to respond well, outcomes improve, response times shorten, and survivors are better able to consistently access quality care. To drive this, the Initiative trained more than 10,000 service providers – from frontline health and psychosocial workers, justice personnel, law enforcement, and community actors – to deliver quality services to end violence against women and girls and harmful practices.

Country-level results illustrate the breadth of this progress. In Liberia, health personnel from the Ministry of Health's Family Health Division were trained in the clinical management of rape, establishing a foundational cohort of national trainers to cascade competencies across

healthcare facilities, directly addressing understaffing and the inconsistent application of clinical protocols at One-Stop Centres.

In Sierra Leone, the Initiative strengthened service provider capacity by expanding the use of the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System Plus (GBVIMS+) platform beyond emergency settings, enabling real-time data collection that allows the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs to identify service gaps and drive continuous quality improvement.

In Zambia, frontline border, health, and justice officials were trained alongside sustained engagement with the Gender Division, Provincial Gender Officers, and district coordination structures, leading to improved case management and more effective referral pathways. These efforts enabled structurally marginalized groups – including migrants, border communities, and mobile populations – to access migration-sensitive, survivor-centred services.



GBVIMS+ training in Makeni, Sierra Leone. Photo: UNFPA.

Result: Expanded legal mechanisms, harmonized case management tools, and strengthened referral pathways to improve access to justice.

Gender-responsive justice mechanisms are critical to ensuring survivors can safely report and navigate legal systems, promoting timely access to justice, while addressing impunity and fostering accountability.

In Uganda, targeted innovations – including mobile legal clinics, strengthened paralegal networks, case management subcommittees, and the use of video conferencing – improved timeliness and judicial efficiency. These efforts enhanced the performance of the sector overall and also enabled survivors to secure restitution and property recovery. As a result, survivor access to justice was particularly notable in Uganda, where Special High Court sessions in

Kitgum resulted in 198 SGBV cases being heard, with 59 convictions, representing a 15 per cent increase from 2024.³³

In Zambia, a comprehensive community assessment in two towns (Chinsali and Isoka) identified entrenched patterns of gender-based violence and persistently low reporting rates. Findings from this assessment are now directly informing the refinement of community awareness strategies and strengthening linkages between communities and the justice sector, with the aim of improving the responsiveness and accessibility of justice services for survivors.

In Ecuador, as noted above, pioneering tools for gender-sensitive disciplinary investigations within the police improved institutional responses to violence against female police officers. Officials were subsequently trained to replicate these approaches under the National Protocol for the Investigation of Femicides, embedding gender-responsive standards and improving access to justice for the overall population.

Result: Supported the economic empowerment of GBV survivors as a component of holistic recovery, with measurable gains in survivor autonomy and resilience.

Economic insecurity remains a significant barrier to survivors breaking free from cycles of abuse and rebuilding their lives. Without financial autonomy, survivors are often left with limited options and heightened risk of revictimization. Investing in the economic resilience and economic rights of survivors – through resources, skills, and opportunities – helps promote long-term recovery and prevention.

In 2025, Spotlight Initiative programmes made meaningful progress in integrating initiatives that promote economic rights and resilience into holistic gender-based violence responses. In Ecuador, a comprehensive model combining training, seed funding and technical assistance supported survivors of violence – particularly in rural contexts – to develop viable business proposals, resulting in 25 sustainable economic initiatives that received seed funding and technical support.³⁴ These efforts strengthened income generation and economic autonomy, while also supporting women’s reintegration into local economic and social networks through their participation in community-based enterprises and markets, with particularly significant benefits for Indigenous, Montubia and mestizo women.

In Zambia, gender-based violence survivors were trained in entrepreneurship and business skills and received start-up support for goat rearing and poultry farming, helping to reduce vulnerability to repeat violence, and fostering psychosocial healing and resilience. In Uganda, vocational training and savings groups engaged over 4,000 adolescents and youth (2,998 female, 1,054 male), reducing vulnerability to exploitation and early marriage.³⁵

³³ Spotlight Initiative Uganda Programme Annual Report 2025.

³⁴ Spotlight Initiative Ecuador Programme Annual Report 2025.

³⁵ Spotlight Initiative Uganda Programme Annual Report 2025.

Pillar D: Women's Movements and Civil Society

The main results achieved under this pillar are:

- **Civil society organizations – including women's rights organizations – strengthened their engagement with policy, legislative and accountability processes.**
- **Strengthened protection approaches for women human rights defenders to sustain and advance accountability efforts to end violence against women and girls.**
- **Strengthened the capacity and impact of women's rights organizations, including at the local level, to end violence against women and girls.**

Result: Civil society organizations - including women's rights organizations – strengthened their engagement with policy, legislative and accountability processes.

The Initiative strengthened civil society's capacity to engage with accountability mechanisms and to participate more effectively in policy and legislative processes, including through targeted training and accompaniment to support advocacy, agenda-setting and engagement with decision-makers.

In Liberia, for example, the Initiative supported the National Coalition Against Harmful Practices – representing over 300 civil society organizations and more than 5,000 advocates – to lead coordinated advocacy efforts, contributing to more than 1,000 citizens formally petitioning the Legislature to pass the Women and Girls Protection Act.³⁶ In Zambia, capacity-strengthening support enabled women's rights organizations to identify and advance context-specific advocacy priorities, including addressing inequities in allocations and access of the government's Constituency Development Fund. The Initiative also supported women's participation in political leadership: in Chipangali and Katete Districts, 5 of the 30 women leaders trained from remote areas are now preparing to stand as area councillors in the 2026 General Elections.³⁷

Result: Strengthened protection approaches for women human rights defenders to sustain and advance accountability efforts to end violence against women and girls.

As noted throughout this report, diverse civil society organizations – including women's rights organizations – are key partners of the Initiative in driving change and demanding accountability. The Initiative also supports the critical role of women human rights defenders in sustaining and amplifying progress to end violence against women and girls. To strengthen this support, the Initiative is refining and operationalizing its approach to protection through the contextualization of the [Spotlight-Specific Integrated Protection Approach](#), developed in close

³⁶ Spotlight Initiative Liberia Programme Annual Report 2025.

³⁷ Spotlight Initiative Zambia Programme Annual Report 2025.

collaboration with civil society actors and guided by the [co-design principles of Spotlight Initiative 2.0](#).³⁸

In Ecuador, for example, Spotlight Initiative applied this approach by prioritizing preventive protection measures, including the creation of safe spaces for training and dialogue, promotion of self-care practices, and close accompaniment during public advocacy actions. These measures help mitigate risks in an increasingly insecure context and support defenders to continue their work with greater safety and confidence.

Result: Strengthened the capacity and impact of women's rights organizations, including at the local level, to end violence against women and girls.

The Initiative supports women's rights organizations at all levels to design and lead advocacy, use social accountability tools, and engage more effectively with local and national authorities.

In 2025, 53 civil society organizations – including women's rights organizations – strengthened their capacity to end violence against women and girls, including by reinforcing their influence and advocacy and their ability to hold authorities accountable.³⁹

In Ecuador, the Initiative supported locally adapted collaboration models, including contextualized calls for proposals, in-person assessments, and continuous accompaniment through Spotlight Initiative local focal points at decentralized levels. This strengthened trust and reduced barriers to participation, including for Indigenous Shuar organizations supported through intercultural mediation and translation. Civil society organizations strengthened their capacity to design advocacy strategies, define social accountability agendas, build alliances, and engage with government, with a notable shift from isolated actions toward more coordinated advocacy on issues such as victim support, implementation of the Comprehensive Organic Law to Prevent and Eradicate Violence against Women, and prevention of femicide. This was evidenced by CSOs leading public advocacy actions and establishing new links with local authorities and citizen participation mechanisms.

Similarly, in Zambia, the Initiative engaged diverse women's rights organizations throughout 2025 in capacity-strengthening activities. Participants reported increased capacity to use social accountability tools to promote gender-responsive governance, and collectively supported community members to report gender-based violence cases to the Zambia Police.³⁹

³⁸ In 2024, the Civil Society Global Reference Group to Spotlight Initiative led a large-scale consultation to develop high-level principles and recommended actions to inform the co-design of the Initiative's second phase. The process engaged 700 civil society representatives from 60 countries.

³⁹ Spotlight Initiative Zambia Programme Annual Report 2025.

By strengthening capacities, improving coordination, and fostering more inclusive engagement with government, the Initiative is contributing to more resilient civil society organizations – particularly women’s rights organizations – and networks, essential to sustaining progress on ending violence against women and girls across diverse contexts.

6.3 Enabling Impact at Scale: Driving Global-Level Results

In addition to the contribution of Spotlight Initiative programmes outlined above, the Initiative continued to drive global-level progress. As detailed in [the 2025 HIVE Joint Programme Annual Report](#), and the [Fund Secretariat 2025 Report](#), the Initiative played a critical role in strengthening the global evidence base, reinforcing programme quality and coherence, fostering partnerships and mobilizing resources to sustain efforts to end violence against women and girls.

A central pillar of the Initiative’s global team’s work in 2025 was the generation and amplification of knowledge and evidence to inform EVAWG policy and programming. A major milestone was the publication of a seminal [report on the sustainability of the Initiative’s](#) model and results from its first phase, which found that 97 per cent of Spotlight Initiative programmes during the Initiative’s first phase reported sustained achievements two years after programme closure. The report identified 18 critical enabling factors, offering a practical road map for governments, the UN system and partners to design programmes that deliver lasting change.

This work was complemented by a series of high-impact knowledge products, including a [global brief on the intersections between violence against women and girls and the climate crisis](#). This analysis elevated understanding of how climate change intersects with existing systems of inequality and exacerbates risks of violence, while underscoring the need for integrated and responsive interventions. In parallel, the Initiative disseminated [learning on domestic resource mobilization](#) to end violence against women and girls, reinforcing the importance of nationally owned and sustained investment as a cornerstone of long-term efforts to end VAWG.

Together, these efforts not only supported Spotlight Initiative’s current programmes, but also the broader ecosystem of actors working to end VAWG, ensuring that knowledge and evidence generated through the Initiative continue to inform action beyond its portfolio.

Following a highly consultative process, the Initiative also launched a [revised Initiative-wide results framework](#). The revised results framework improves the ability of Spotlight Initiative programmes to track meaningful change across diverse contexts, while enabling cross-regional and global aggregation. Accompanied by detailed methodological notes, this represents an important advance in addressing long-standing measurement challenges, including through improved disaggregated GBV data in the spirit of leaving no one behind.

Alongside this, the Global Team continued to support the Initiative’s five ongoing programmes through targeted technical and programmatic advice, rolling out a range of webinars and guidance to help ensure alignment with the Initiative’s evidence-based model and ways of working. Concurrently, the Initiative is developing the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund’s Programme

and Operations Manual, which will offer a comprehensive reference for Spotlight Initiative programmes, bringing together core guidance on governance, programme design and implementation, financial management, civil society engagement, monitoring and evaluation, knowledge management, and risk management. It is expected to be launched in mid-2026.

The Initiative also strengthened its digital tools and platforms to support survivor-centred, evidence-based programming. The Initiative expanded its [Learning Centre](#), updated the [Compendium of Good Practices and Lessons Learned](#), refined technical guidance and templates with updated learning, and enhanced the Initiative's bespoke data system, improving the ability of programmes to generate, use, and report high-quality programme data for decision-making, learning, and accountability. At the same time, the HIVE Joint Programme continued to foster a dynamic global community of practice. Through platforms such as the [SHINE Hub](#), as well as global events and webinars, the Initiative facilitated peer learning, knowledge exchange, and collaboration across stakeholders working to end violence against women and girls.

These efforts have also contributed to growing global demand for Spotlight Initiative's programming model. Over 80 UN Country and Regional Teams to date have expressed interest in bringing Spotlight Initiative programmes to their countries, and 24 of them have developed concept notes for new programmes in 2025 alone and are seeking funding (36 have developed notes since the start of Spotlight Initiative 2.0).

7. Innovative, Promising and Good Practices

Across contexts, Spotlight Initiative continues to generate innovative, promising, and good practices that address the structural barriers to ending violence against women and girls. Grounded in local realities and aligned with national systems, these approaches strengthen survivor-centred responses while contributing to more institutionally embedded solutions for scale and sustainability. They demonstrate how targeted investments can catalyse systems change and offer clear pathways for replication.

As mentioned above in the Results Chapter, in Uganda, a particularly promising practice lies in the integration of EVAWG priorities into government planning, budgeting, and data systems. Strengthening government officials' capacity for gender-responsive planning and budgeting enabled districts nationwide to embed gender-based violence and anti-trafficking priorities into development plans and increase domestic resource allocations, while also strengthening coordination, referral mechanisms, and data use. This approach offers a replicable model for translating national policy commitments into sustained, government-owned implementation and financing. Complementing this, a mobile, voice-based platform delivers local-language information without requiring Internet access or literacy, offering a scalable solution for reaching populations excluded from traditional services, including young people in Gulu and Kampala who accessed critical SRHR and GBV information through this platform.

In Liberia, the introduction of a trauma-informed interviewing model – known as Preparation and Planning, Engage and Explain, Account, Closure, and Evaluation (PEACE) – has demonstrated how survivor-centred practices can be embedded within justice systems to strengthen the quality of police investigations into sexual and gender-based violence. Its

effectiveness lies in practical, scenario-based training and a coordinated, multisectoral approach that aligns police, health, and justice actors around shared standards. Ongoing efforts to integrate the model into formal curricula and standard operating procedures indicate strong potential for institutionalization and sustained impact for strengthened survivor-centred justice systems.

In Zambia, collaboration with traditional leaders to establish village-level marriage registers highlights the potential of community-owned accountability mechanisms. By documenting marriages and integrating anti-GBV messaging into community events, the approach strengthens local monitoring and prevention of child marriage while reinforcing referral linkages with service providers. While still in an early phase, this approach illustrates how leveraging community-owned accountability structures can extend reach beyond formal systems.

In Ecuador, a gender-responsive disciplinary framework within the National Police provides a practical pathway for strengthening internal accountability in hierarchical security institutions. The framework establishes procedures to protect female police officers from gender-based violence by identifying and addressing gender-related misconduct by police personnel, and applying timely protective measures. Police and Ministry of the Interior staff have been trained, and a draft Ministerial Agreement has been prepared to support mandatory institutionalization. This approach shows how targeted, internally driven reforms – supported by political will and multi-stakeholder engagement – can deliver meaningful institutional change to advance gender equality.

In Sierra Leone, significant investments in data systems strengthened partner coordination, cross-ministry collaboration, and survivor-centred service delivery. A Power BI dashboard integrating the programme's GBVIMS+ and Child Protection Information Management System Plus (CPIMS+) mechanisms enabled transparent, real-time data access for government and civil society, fostering greater collective ownership of prevention and response efforts. Enhanced interoperability between GBVIMS+, the electronic referral pathway workflow, and the Health Facility Registry established cross-ministry linkages between the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs and the Ministry of Health, strengthening referral pathways from case workers to service providers. At the national level, the government-led roll-out of GBVIMS+ successfully transitioned the platform from humanitarian to development contexts, dismantled data silos across police, ministries, and NGOs, and enabled a unified "One Stop Dashboard" tracking survivor pathways.

Collectively, these practices illustrate how Spotlight Initiative's comprehensive, partnership-driven approach enables solutions that are not only effective in specific contexts, but also adaptable and scalable across settings.

8. Challenges, Mitigating Measures and Lessons Learned

8.1 Challenges and Mitigating Measures

Throughout 2025, Spotlight Initiative delivered high-quality EVAWG programming in the midst of intersecting global crises, including climate, food, energy, economic instability and conflict.

These dynamics heightened risks of violence, increased demand for services and intensified pressure on already constrained national systems. As mentioned throughout the report, programmes operated within a challenging global environment, shaped by:

- Shrinking civic space and growing backlash against gender equality, constraining the operating environment for women's rights organizations and advocacy efforts.
- Increased political sensitivity surrounding EVAWG programming, particularly during electoral cycles.
- Declining, and increasingly fragmented, official development assistance, including reduced and short-term funding commitments, significant cuts to human rights and gender equality programming, and to civil society in particular.⁴⁰
- Political transitions and institutional restructuring in various contexts, affecting continuity and relationship building.
- Rising technology-facilitated gender-based violence, creating new and evolving risks requiring adapted responses and limiting women's participation in public and political spheres.

These challenges unfolded within a broader context of increasing pressure on the multilateral system and evolving expectations of the United Nations to deliver more integrated, efficient and results-oriented support. Ongoing reform efforts, including those under UN80, reflect this context and aim to strengthen system-wide coherence, effectiveness and responsiveness. At the same time, these dynamics have required continued adaptation across programmes to ensure alignment, maintain momentum and deliver results in a rapidly shifting global landscape.

[Shrinking civic space and backlash against women's rights](#) continued to constrain the operating environment to end violence against women and girls, particularly for civil society. Across contexts, women's human rights defenders faced heightened risks of harassment, severe funding cuts, and, in some cases, the criminalization or delegitimization of work on ending violence against women and girls. In certain settings, gender equality issues became more politically contested around electoral cycles, affecting how interventions could be framed, communicated and implemented. These pressures were exacerbated by a [historic contraction in foreign aid](#) affecting all programme countries, as well as institutional shifts that deprioritized equality, human rights and multilateralism in favour of national security priorities, which created additional challenges for the positioning and continuity of EVAWG efforts.

Additionally, [the increasing fragmentation of aid](#) underscores the importance of pooled funding mechanisms designed to provide flexible, strategic resources. Shorter funding cycles, tighter earmarking and reduced allocations to gender equality and civil society limited partners' ability to respond to evolving risks and opportunities. These trends constrain the effectiveness of collective, portfolio-level investment strategies that enable adaptive, country-driven responses to be directed where needs are greatest and impact potential is highest. They also placed increased responsibility on UN Country Teams to mobilize resources at country level, often within highly competitive and decentralized funding environments.

⁴⁰ [OECD, ODA for gender equality is plummeting: How can we protect it?](#)

At the same time, technology-facilitated gender-based violence continued to hinder women's participation in public and political life. [Recent evidence shows](#) that a majority of women human rights defenders, activists and journalists experience online violence, often linked to offline harm, underscoring the growing intersection between digital abuse and physical harm.

Operationally, the Initiative continued to support programmes at different stages of implementation, requiring tailored technical assistance, sequencing and prioritization across the portfolio. This involved ensuring consistent, high-quality support across diverse contexts – including a growing number of UN Country Teams – reinforcing the importance of flexible and adaptive approaches.

Across the countries in which the Initiative works, these pressures presented in different ways – testing programme delivery, institutional partnerships and financing models – and required sustained adaptation to maintain continuity of results. The examples below illustrate how selected challenges played out in practice across Spotlight Initiative programme countries and the measures taken to mitigate them.

In Uganda, pre-election sensitivities and heightened caution around human rights discourse required careful positioning of EVAWG interventions. The programme maintained close engagement with key ministries, and aligned advocacy and communication with nationally endorsed legal and policy framework, enabling activities to proceed while upholding UN human rights and normative standards.

In Liberia, sourcing national technical specialists, particularly for highly specialized tasks such as establishing the GBV Information Management System (GBV IMS), has been challenging. A capacity transfer and development model has been adopted, pairing national and international consultants to ensure effective delivery of the programme's activities while also strengthening national capacities for long-term sustainability.

In Ecuador, institutional restructuring materialized in the absorption of the Ministry of Women and Human Rights into the Ministry of Government created leadership vacuums and validation delays. In response, the programme responded by anchoring operations at technical working levels and systematizing documentation of tools and agreements, preserving institutional capacity and enabling the transition to new authorities. Similarly, in regional contexts, transitions in leadership and institutional arrangements required additional time to ensure strong ownership, alignment with regional priorities, and optimal conditions for programme roll-out.

Despite these constraints, programmes demonstrated resilience and adaptability. Across contexts, Spotlight Initiative programmes adjusted delivery modalities, strengthened coordination mechanisms, and sustained momentum despite shifting political and financial conditions. These efforts were also supported from the global level through strengthened system-wide coordination, updated technical guidance and system-wide support, practical tools for fragile settings, a revised results framework that balances global coherence with contextual flexibility, and enhanced resource mobilization support and tools to navigate

constrained funding environments. Together, these measures have strengthened the Initiative's capacity to respond to evolving risks while maintaining quality and consistency across the portfolio, ensuring continuous impact and results.

8.2. Lessons Learned for Improved Programming

Across diverse programme contexts, implementation in 2025 reinforced a consistent set of lessons on what drives results in efforts to end violence against women and girls, building on the evidence from the Initiative's first phase. Below are some key lessons learned over the reporting period.

Community engagement delivers deeper and more sustainable results when it is locally led, contextually grounded, and designed with communities rather than for them.

In Zambia, using multiple platforms – school open days, Parent Teacher Association meetings, and learner assemblies – to share life skills and health education helped improve parent-teacher understanding and strengthened teacher-learner relationships. The active involvement of traditional leaders helped address initial resistance and reinforced local ownership, underscoring the importance of sustained, inclusive dialogue.

Effectively shifting social norms requires trusted local actors, culturally resonant approaches and sustained engagement. In Sierra Leone, dialogues facilitated by "Positive Deviants" – survivors and former practitioners who had abandoned harmful practices – achieved significantly higher engagement and lower resistance than standardized approaches, while peer-led Story Circles in local dialects expanded reach further.

In Ecuador, adapting prevention messaging on positive, non-violent masculinities improved receptivity in communities affected by high levels of criminal violence. Integrating economic co-incentives also proved critical for sustaining participation among marginalized groups where engagement carries real opportunity costs. These experiences reaffirm that community ownership and social accountability are central to durable norm change.

Working comprehensively across sectors and stakeholders – through a coordinated whole-of-UN and whole-of-society approach – drives more coherent, efficient, and impactful results.

As demonstrated in the first phase of the Initiative, integrated programming across legal frameworks, prevention, services, and civil society engagement generates mutually reinforcing effects that cannot be achieved through siloed interventions. Experience in 2025 reaffirmed that coordinated UN engagement, aligned with national systems and supported by strong partnerships with governments, civil society, and development partners, enhances efficiency, reduces duplication, and strengthens national ownership. Approaching government engagement through a unified UN interface has also proven critical in elevating ending violence against women and girls as a policy priority and ensuring more coordinated and sustainable implementation, as reflected in Chapter 6 on Results.



UN Women Executive Director Ms. Sima Sami Bahous at a Spotlight Initiative high-level event on the sidelines of the Eightieth Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA 80), New York, USA, September 2025. Photo: Spotlight Initiative/Nivedha Meyyappan.

Sustainability is not an end-stage consideration, but a process embedded from the onset and throughout implementation.

Programmes that integrate EVAWG priorities into national and subnational systems from the outset – *and* invest in the capacities required to sustain them – are more likely to generate lasting impact. In Uganda, embedding GBV and SRHR priorities into district development plans and budget frameworks strengthened institutional ownership and increased domestic budget allocations, as described above. In Sierra Leone, the establishment of the GBV information management systems (GBVIMS) demonstrated the importance of pairing national with international expertise early on to build, transfer and retain technical capacity within national systems. Similarly, in Liberia, investments in long-term national capacity to EVAWG – particularly in highly specialized areas such as GBV information management – highlighted the need to strengthen systems alongside the human resources required to operate them sustainably. These examples align with the Initiative's 2025 "[A Sustainable Legacy](#)" report which found that 97 per cent of first-phase programmes sustained results beyond closure, underscoring the importance of early investment in institutional capacity, public financing, and national systems.

The Initiative's continuous approach to learning, adaptation and knowledge sharing delivers strong value for money.

Spotlight Initiative 2.0 builds on a robust foundation of tested models, tools and partnerships developed under its first phase. A continuous global support architecture enables lessons to be captured, adapted, and transferred across contexts, while participatory monitoring, evidence generation, and cross-country learning strengthen programme relevance and effectiveness. This approach allows investments to compound over time, extending reach and impact beyond

individual programmes and contributing to a growing global evidence base on what works to end violence against women and girls.

9. Amplifying our Work: Communications and Visibility

9.1 Global-Level Communications

The Initiative's communications and visibility efforts serve as a strategic enabler by shaping compelling narratives, amplifying evidence and results, and engaging the public in ways that strengthen policy influence, mobilize resources, and catalyse the social norm change required to end violence against women and girls. They also bring in recognition for the Initiative's donors and partners (see Section 9.3). In 2025, Spotlight Initiative's primary communications and visibility priorities focused on delivering a new global activation for the #WithHer campaign, and on supporting new and existing country programmes with their outreach efforts.

Spotlight Initiative's [website](#) published 48 pieces of content in 2025, generating 474,000 page views (an 82 per cent increase from the previous year) and 390,000 sessions (an increase of almost 180 per cent). Notably, in 2025 the Initiative reached 88,665 followers across Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn, reflecting a 28.5 per cent increase compared to 2024. Across platforms, the Initiative achieved approximately 28.7 million views and impressions, marking an 86 per cent increase from 2024.

These results were achieved organically, primarily through collaborations with other UN partners and influencer accounts. During significant events throughout the year – such as UNGA, CSW, HLPF and FFD4 – social media content was strategically planned to leverage the traction and social media presence of partners and attendees.



H.E. Stavros Lambrinidis, Ambassador of the European Union to the United Nations, speaking at 'Getting the SDGs Back on Track – co-sponsored by Spotlight Initiative – on the margins of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2025. Photo: Spotlight Initiative/Marina Roman.

More than 1,200 Spotlight Initiative-specific articles and stories were published in 2025 by 710 media outlets across 93 countries, reaching an audience of 1.2 billion people. Stories were published in top-tier media outlets including: *AllAfrica*, *El Pais*, *Infobae*, *MSN*, *POLITICO Europe*, *RFI*, *The Associated Press*, *The Guardian*, *UN News*, *Yahoo! News*, among others.

The legacy of Spotlight Initiative's #WithHer campaign's groundbreaking and successful series of engagements with digital creators and social media influencers continued in 2025. High impact examples include Career Ladder Ep. 377: "[Her purpose needs to be talked about more](#)" with @maxklymenko (2.3 million views), "[What is image-based sexual violence?](#)" with @Uldouz, and actor Terry Crews' [speech on masculinity](#), (9.8 million views). Spotlight Initiative partnered with the Social Good Club to develop "The Creator Playbook", a step-by-step guide for development practitioners to activate impactful, creator-led campaigns. The #WithHer campaign also developed a new activation provisionally titled "Mind Your Moves". The activation is a planned video game experience on the Roblox platform, designed to reach boys and young adolescents with messages and actions to prevent violence.

In May, Spotlight Initiative undertook a story-gathering mission to Samoa to learn about the legacy of Spotlight Initiative and promote its impact on both Spotlight Initiative-owned and partner channels. Civil society, United Nations, government, and implementing partners were interviewed to learn from their experiences and knowledge about the legacy of Spotlight Initiative two years after the programme's closure. Several stories were published on UN websites and social media channels and were covered by the media. Content from the mission also contributed to "[A Sustainable Legacy](#)", mentioned above.

Through creative messaging, storytelling and digital campaign activations, communications efforts effectively supported the Initiative's objectives to raise awareness and catalyse global action and advocacy towards ending violence against women and girls.

9.2 High-Visibility Events



'Uplifting women in STEM' event in New York, USA, February 2025. Photo: Spotlight Initiative/Radhika Chalasani.

Communications and advocacy cut across the Initiative's work, elevating Spotlight Initiative's influence, visibility and positioning across the global EVAWG ecosystem, as well as amplifying results and the support of its donors and partners. In 2025, Spotlight Initiative leveraged high-level policy moments, global and regional convenings, and strategic partnerships to position the Initiative as a leader in comprehensive, evidence-based and feminist approaches to ending violence against women and girls. These efforts expanded the Initiative's reach and supported broader uptake of its model. The engagements outlined below illustrate the scope of this influence and contributed to deepening and amplifying the results reflected in earlier sections:

- [“Uplifting women in STEM’ event in New York”](#), New York, USA, February 2025.
- girls”, high-level event during the sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, New York, USA, March 2025.
- [“The light within”](#) exhibition on the sidelines of the sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, New York, USA, March 2025.
- [“Ending violence against women and girls: a feminist global approach”](#), side event during the sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, New York, USA, March 2025.
- [“Sustaining progress toward eliminating violence against women and girls through enhanced economic opportunity”](#), high-level event during the Eleventh Session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, Kampala, Uganda, April 2025.

- [“Meeting the moment: Investment in long-term programming to address violence against women and girls in fragile contexts”](#), high-level event on the sidelines of the European Humanitarian Forum, Brussels, Belgium, May 2025.
- [“Care in fragile contexts: the lifesaving role of civil society organizations in delivering survivor-centered services in conflict-affected settings”](#), panel discussion at Justice Denied: Fighting Widespread Impunity for Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) conference, Melbourne, Australia, June 2025.
- [“Increasing momentum for ending violence against women and girls”](#), side-event at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FFD4), Seville, Spain, July 2025.
- [“Full speed ahead: A global partnership to eliminate violence against women and girls”](#), high-level events on the sidelines of the Eightieth Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA 80), New York, USA, September 2025.
- Series of side-events during the Second World Summit for Social Development, Doha, Qatar, November 2025:
 - [Solutions Studio conversation](#) to highlight strategies for addressing gender-based violence and to share best practices.
 - [Panel discussion](#) to underscore the urgent need to strengthen universal, inclusive and gender-responsive social protections as a foundation of sustainable development
 - [Press briefing](#), delivered by UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed, to promote the Initiative’s 2024-2025 results and launch its Impact Report, [“Beyond Progress: Securing gains to end violence against women and girls.”](#)
- [“A sustainable legacy”](#), launch of Spotlight Initiative’s “A Sustainable Legacy”, Brussels, Belgium, December 2025.

Collectively, these engagements raised awareness, strengthened political commitment, deepened partnerships and sustained momentum for investment in ending violence against women and girls at a time of increasing backlash and financial constraint.



Leaders from the United Nations, Member and Observer States, and civil society attend the Group of Friends Event on the sidelines of the sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Photo: Ryan Brown/UN Women.

9.3 Donor Visibility

Ensuring visibility for the Initiative's donors and partners is one of Spotlight Initiative's four communications objectives. In 2025, this was achieved through consistent and coherent partner branding, and top-tier media placements during publicity events and campaigns.

Across media and press outlets, the European Union was mentioned in relation to the United Nations Spotlight Initiative 395 times, from 258 sources in 55 countries, with a total potential reach of 470 million people. At the highest levels of the United Nations, UN Secretary-General António Guterres highlighted the partnership during his [International Women's Day speech](#) (March), while Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed recognized the European Union's leadership in public statements at the "[Commission on the Status of Women](#)" (March) and the "[World Social Development Summit](#)" (November).



A [Donor contribution](#) page was added to the website to highlight the generous contributions of the Initiative's partners – Belgium, the European Union, Ireland, the Netherlands and USAID. Country and regional pages were launched or revamped for new and second-generation programmes (Africa Regional Programme, Ecuador, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zambia).

Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Uganda, H.E. Frederieke Quispel, said that in Uganda, huge strides had been made in legal frameworks to address violence against women and girls, but that the need was large: "We have to keep in mind that 70 per cent of the criminal cases prosecuted by the Ugandan Director of Public Prosecutions are gender-based violence cases." Ms. Quispel also emphasized the need to involve religious and cultural leaders in changing norms and behaviours at community level.



Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Uganda, H.E. Frederieke Quispel. Photo: UN Uganda

10. Sustainability

Sustainability is a core design feature of Spotlight Initiative, embedded from the outset through the Initiative's overall systems-based approach. Rather than creating parallel structures, the Initiative works through existing government systems, civil society networks and community mechanisms to strengthen institutions, foster broad-based national ownership, and sustain results beyond programme life cycles. This chapter draws on selected examples presented throughout the report to illustrate how sustainability is being operationalized across programmes. While these examples are referenced in other sections, their inclusion here highlights the cross-cutting nature of sustainability and how results, lessons learned and partnerships collectively contribute to sustaining impact over time.

Evidence from the Initiative confirms the effectiveness of this approach. The 2025 study referenced above – ["A Sustainable Legacy: Insights and evidence from seed investments to end violence against women and girls"](#) – found that 97 per cent of the Initiative's first phase programmes reported sustained achievements two years after programme closure. Enduring impacts were particularly notable in essential services and legal and policy reforms, while governance structures – including Civil Society Reference Groups – continued to support collaboration on gender equality. These findings have directly informed how programmes in the new phase are approaching sustainability.

Programmes continued to advance national ownership by embedding EVAWG priorities within institutional frameworks. In Ecuador, tools, methodologies and models were designed from the start to be absorbed into partner institutions, with strengthening the capacity of public officials, justice stakeholders, and local government staff, deliberately reducing reliance on external technical assistance. In Uganda, the programme continued to work through government systems and frameworks to institutionalize EVAWG gains for the long term, contributing to increased domestic financing at both national and district levels. In Liberia, survivor-centred practices were embedded into national training structures across justice, health, and policing sectors. In Zambia, interventions aligned with government systems and national planning cycles, including long term prevention in schools through the Life Skills and Health Education curriculum.

Financial sustainability remains central to the Initiative's approach. Programmes have embedded EVAWG priorities within national and subnational budgets and existing development investments from the outset. In parallel, Spotlight Initiative programmes are actively trying to diversify their funding base through engagement with Team Europe partners, bilateral donors, and other development actors, supported by coordinated global outreach. Together, these efforts are laying the foundation for future financing.

11. Looking Ahead: Next Steps and the Way Forward

Looking ahead, Spotlight Initiative will build on its achievements to scale coordinated, evidence-based efforts to end violence against women and girls, advance women's rights, and accelerate progress across the Sustainable Development Goals.

Sustaining and Scaling Programme-Level Results

At country level, programmes will build on 2025 achievements to sustain progress, with a shared focus on strengthening national ownership. This includes embedding prevention and response within government systems, financing frameworks, and accountability mechanisms; advancing gender-responsive planning and budgeting; and supporting the implementation (and enforcement) of national and subnational action plans. For example, in Uganda, the programme will continue to prioritize integrating gender-based violence into government budgets and expenditure tracking, while Liberia will operationalize a national GBV Accountability Framework and advance legal reforms to support long-term, government-led change.

Programmes will also deepen cross-sector coordination and strengthen the quality and accessibility of services for survivors by improving referral systems, enhancing the capacity of service providers, and expanding delivery models, particularly in underserved areas. In Zambia, this includes scaling Village-Led One Stop Centres and strengthening frontline services, while Sierra Leone will focus on interoperability across data and referral systems, and scaling capacity building, including for the justice sector. In Uganda, the programme will continue to strengthen integrated, survivor-centred GBV and sexual and reproductive health and rights services, with a focus on improving referral pathways and expanding access for women and girls.

Prevention efforts will remain central, with greater emphasis on locally anchored and sustainable approaches. Programmes will continue to scale community-based models and structured engagement with women's rights organizations, youth, traditional and religious leaders, and men and boys to shift norms and behaviours. For instance, Zambia will expand school- and community-based engagement, including work with adolescent boys as allies for gender equality, while Liberia is expected to roll out SASA! – a widely recognized, evidence-based model designed to prevent violence against women, developed by the Uganda-based NGO [Raising Voices](#) – and strengthen community-led platforms.

Strengthening data systems, evidence generation, and learning will also remain as key priorities. Programmes will invest in administrative data systems, enhanced interoperability, and knowledge generation to drive evidence-based decision-making and accountability. Liberia will roll out a national GBV information management system and embed analytical capacity within the government, while Sierra Leone will strengthen district-level data systems and inclusive monitoring approaches. Ecuador is prioritizing the systematization and uptake of knowledge products to support sustainability.

At the regional level, the Africa Regional Programme – set to launch in January 2026, as mentioned above – will strengthen coordination across continental and subregional actors, support implementation of legal and policy frameworks, and advance prevention, essential service delivery, and civil society engagement to address violence against women and girls.

Advancing Global Priorities and System-Wide Coherence

Globally, a central priority in 2026 will be fundraising to support UN Country and Regional

Teams and national partners in resourcing and rolling out new Spotlight Initiative programmes, building on the strong interest received and programme ideation done with UN Country Teams in 2024-2025. This will include diversifying beyond traditional donors by engaging bilateral partners, international financial institutions, the private sector, and philanthropic actors. Engagement with UN Teams will be more targeted, prioritizing high-impact programme opportunities with strong feasibility and partner commitment.



'Full Speed Ahead' on the sidelines of UNGA80. Photo: Spotlight Initiative/Nivedha Meyyappan.

In this context, Spotlight Initiative's Global Team will sharpen its strategic focus to ensure impact in a more constrained and competitive environment. Priorities will centre on attracting new investment, strengthening the Initiative's visibility and positioning in key global and policy spaces, and consolidating its role as a centre of technical excellence on ending violence against women and girls. This will involve prioritizing high-impact programme opportunities, reinforcing quality assurance and accountability across the portfolio, and strategically packaging evidence, results and learning to strengthen partner confidence and mobilize resources. A more selective and targeted approach will guide engagement across programmes and partnerships, focusing efforts where the Initiative can deliver the greatest value and advance uptake of its model.

These efforts will also advance [UN80 reform objectives](#) by strengthening coordination, reducing fragmentation, and driving more joined-up approaches, including for resource mobilization, across the UN system. Beyond implementation, the Initiative is uniquely positioned to shape the reform agenda itself. The final evaluation of its first phase found the Initiative to be "a standard" for ways of working within the UN, a recognition that places it at the forefront of relevant UN80 processes, including reviews of pooled funding mechanisms and the gender architecture, contributing its experience and evidence base to inform system-wide efforts.

In 2026, the Initiative will prioritize strengthening its global positioning and influence, including through targeted engagement in high-profile events such as the 70th session of the “Commission on the Status of Women”, “Women Deliver”, the “Eighty-First Session of the UN General Assembly”, and the 2026 “Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) Forum” to build momentum and advocate for action to end violence against women and girls.

A focused learning and evidence agenda will underpin these efforts, with an emphasis on high-impact initiatives that demonstrate value and support uptake across the system. Strategic dissemination at key global convenings will ensure that evidence and tools reach practitioners, policymakers, donors, and activists. Targeted and bespoke learning exchanges will further support uptake of flagship knowledge products, including *A Sustainable Legacy*, and the Initiative's online [Learning Centre](#). This will be complemented by the delivery of the “Leaving No One Behind” research study and associated capacity-building, as well as strengthened partnerships for joint learning and evidence generation, including with the World Bank.



Assistant Secretary Clement Chilembo (front, second from left), representatives from the UN, the Gender Division and civil society organizations during a visit to the Provincial Administration in Eastern Province. Photo: IOM/Lighton Nyirongo.

Communications and advocacy efforts will further support the Initiative's visibility and influence, prioritizing innovative, high-impact approaches to reach new audiences and promote prevention, including through flagship global campaigns and tools such as the “Mind Your Moves” video game advancing prevention, and “The Creator Playbook”, a practical, step-by-step guide for the United Nations to activate impactful, creator-led campaigns.

In parallel, the Global Team will continue to strengthen programme quality, coherence and delivery across the portfolio, including through technical support, quality assurance and system-wide improvements and the onboarding of the Africa Regional Programme in Q1 2026. This will include advancing more consistent and robust data on ending violence against women and girls, supporting the roll-out of a revised Initiative-wide Results Framework, and

strengthening the aggregation and use of results across programmes.

The Initiative will also continue to advance inclusive and effective governance, safeguarding accountability while optimizing processes to support timely and high-quality programme delivery. The forthcoming Programme and Operations Manual will further consolidate guidance and strengthen alignment with the Initiative's principles and model.

Spotlight Initiative is a proven model of UN effectiveness and reform, demonstrating sustainable and impactful results. At a time when investment in gender equality programming is more critical than ever, the Initiative invites all partners to join in advancing a shared vision of a world free from violence against women and girls.



CONSOLIDATED ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT of the Administrative Agent

Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund

for the period 08 April 2024 to 31 December 2025

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

May 2026





DEFINITIONS

Allocation/Total Approved Budget

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

Approved Project/Programme

A project including budget, etc., that is approved by the Steering Committee for funds' allocation purposes.

Contribution Agreement

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

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 Recipient Organization or Non-UN Organization against the 'net funded amount'. This does not include expense commitments by Recipient Organizations.

Net Funded Amount

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

Project Expenditure

The sum of expenses and/or expenditure reported by all Recipient Organizations for a Fund irrespective of which basis of accounting each Recipient 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 Recipient Organization(s) have been concluded, and the Steering Committee has approved the final narrative report.

Project Closure

Projects that have surpassed the project end date but have not yet submitted the final narrative report.

Recipient Organization

A UN Organization or other inter-governmental Organization that is a partner in a Fund, as represented by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the MPTF Office for a particular Fund.

US Dollar Amount

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

Transferred Funds

Funds transferred to Recipient 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 Recipient Organizations, and the donor agreement signed with contributors/donors.

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

and disburses these funds to the Recipient 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 2025 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>).



2025 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 **2025**. 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 **2025**, **5** contributors deposited US\$ **22,589,546** and US\$ **316,723** was earned in interest.

The cumulative source of funds was US\$ **22,906,269**.

Of this amount, US\$ **21,926,851** has been net funded to **8** Recipient Organizations, of which US\$ **8,124,807** has been reported as expenditure. The Administrative Agent fee has been charged at the approved rate of 1% on deposits and amounts to US\$ **124,775**. Table 1 provides an overview of the overall sources, uses, and balance of the **Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund** as of 31 December 2025.

Table 1 Financial Overview, as of 31 December 2025 (in US Dollars)

	Prior Years up to 31 Dec 2024	Financial Year Jan-Dec 2025	Total
Sources of Funds			
Contributions from donors	11,780,018	10,809,528	22,589,546
Sub-total Contributions	11,780,018	10,809,528	22,589,546
Fund Interest and Investment Income Earned	177,703	139,020	316,723
Total: Sources of Funds	11,957,721	10,948,548	22,906,269
Use of Funds			
Transfers to Recipient Organizations	-	20,341,351	20,341,351
Transfers to Recipient Organizations for Direct Cost - Fund Secretariat etc	-	1,585,500	1,585,500
Sub-Total Transfers	-	21,926,851	21,926,851
Administrative Agent Fees	117,800	6,975	124,775
Bank Charges	172	75	247
Other Expenditures	-	101,120	101,120
Total: Uses of Funds	117,972	22,035,021	22,152,993
Change in Fund cash balance with Administrative Agent	11,839,748	(11,086,473)	753,276
Opening Fund balance (1 January)	-	11,839,748	-
Closing Fund balance (31 December)	11,839,748	753,276	753,276
Net Funded Amount (Includes Direct Cost)	-	21,926,851	21,926,851
Recipient Organizations Expenditure (Includes Direct Cost)	-	8,124,807	8,124,807
Balance of Funds with Recipient Organizations	-	13,802,044	13,802,044



2. CONTRIBUTIONS

Table 2 provides information on cumulative contributions received from all contributors to this fund as of 31 December **2025**.

The **Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund** is currently being financed by **5** 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 **2025** and deposits received by the same date. It does not include commitments that were made to the fund beyond **2025**.

Table 2. Contributions, as of 31 December 2025 (in US Dollars)

Contributors	Total Commitments	Total Deposits
European Union	10,112,028	10,112,028
Government of Belgium	2,143,718	2,143,718
Government of Ireland	1,333,800	1,333,800
Government of the Netherlands	8,000,000	8,000,000
Government of the United States of America (USAID)	1,000,000	1,000,000
Grand Total	22,589,546	22,589,546



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 Recipient Organizations (Agency earned interest) where their Financial Regulations and Rules allow return of interest to the AA.

As of 31 December **2025**, Fund earned interest amounts to US\$ **316,723**.

Details are provided in the table below.

Table 3. Sources of Interest and Investment Income, as of 31 December 2025
(in US Dollars)

Interest Earned	Prior Years up to 31-Dec-2024	Financial Year Jan-Dec-2025	Total
Administrative Agent			
Fund Interest and Investment Income Earned	177,703	139,020	316,723
Total: Fund Interest Earned	177,703	139,020	316,723
Recipient Organization			
Total: Agency Interest Earned	-	-	-
Grand Total	177,703	139,020	316,723



4. TRANSFER OF FUNDS

Allocations to Recipient Organizations are approved by the Steering Committee and disbursed by the Administrative Agent. As of 31 December **2025**, the AA has transferred US\$ **21,926,851** to **8** Recipient Organizations (see list below).

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

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

Recipient Organization	Prior Years up to 31-Dec-2024			Financial Year Jan-Dec-2025			Total		
	Transfers	Refunds	Net Funded	Transfers	Refunds	Net Funded	Transfers	Refunds	Net Funded
IOM	-	-	-	327,134	-	327,134	327,134	-	327,134
UNDP	-	-	-	5,562,490	-	5,562,490	5,562,490	-	5,562,490
UNESCO	-	-	-	324,682	-	324,682	324,682	-	324,682
UNFPA	-	-	-	5,828,507	-	5,828,507	5,828,507	-	5,828,507
UNHCR	-	-	-	1,006,171	-	1,006,171	1,006,171	-	1,006,171
UNICEF	-	-	-	3,075,665	-	3,075,665	3,075,665	-	3,075,665
UNOPS	-	-	-	1,585,500	-	1,585,500	1,585,500	-	1,585,500
UNWOMEN	-	-	-	4,216,702	-	4,216,702	4,216,702	-	4,216,702
Grand	-	-	-	21,926,851	-	21,926,851	21,926,851	-	21,926,851



5. EXPENDITURE AND FINANCIAL DELIVERY RATES

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

Joint Programme/ project expenditures are incurred and monitored by each Recipient 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 **2025** expenditure data has been posted on the MPTF Office GATEWAY at <https://mptf.undp.org/fund/sit00>.

5.1 EXPENDITURE REPORTED BY RECIPIENT ORGANIZATION

In **2025**, US\$ **21,926,851** was net funded to Recipient Organizations, and US\$ **8,124,807** was reported in expenditure.

As shown in the table below, the cumulative net funded amount is US\$ **21,926,851** and cumulative expenditures reported by the Recipient Organizations amount to US\$ **8,124,807**. This equates to an overall Fund expenditure delivery rate of **37.05** percent.

Table 5.1 Net Funded Amount and Reported Expenditures by Recipient Organization, as of 31 December 2025 (in US Dollars)

Recipient Organization	Approved Amount	Net Funded Amount	Expenditure			Delivery Rate %
			Prior Years up to 31-Dec-2024	Financial Year Jan-Dec-2025	Cumulative	
IOM	457,685	327,134	-	54,878	54,878	16.78
UNDP	11,288,576	5,562,490	-	1,645,869	1,645,869	29.59
UNESCO	469,951	324,682	-	43,748	43,748	13.47
UNFPA	9,901,543	5,828,507	-	2,994,103	2,994,103	51.37
UNHCR	1,006,171	1,006,171	-	1,006,171	1,006,171	100.00
UNICEF	4,032,285	3,075,665	-	1,159,951	1,159,951	37.71
UNOPS	2,117,052	1,585,500	-	576,143	576,143	36.34
UNWOMEN	9,524,241	4,216,702	-	643,944	643,944	15.27
Grand Total	38,797,504	21,926,851	-	8,124,807	8,124,807	37.05



5.2. Expenditures Reported by Category

Project expenditures are incurred and monitored by each Recipient Organization and are reported as per the agreed categories for inter-agency harmonized reporting. Effective 1 January 2012, the UN Chief Executives Board (CEB) established eight budget categories against which UN entities must report inter-agency project expenditures.

Table 5.2. Expenditure by UNSDG Budget Category, as of 31 December 2025 (in US Dollars)

Category	Expenditures			Percentage of Total Programme Cost
	Prior Years up to 31-Dec-2024	Financial Year Jan-Dec-2025	Total	
Staff & Personnel Cost	-	1,514,200	1,514,200	20.57
Supplies, commodities and materials	-	131,593	131,593	1.79
Equipment, vehicles, furniture and depreciation	-	330,977	330,977	4.50
Contractual Services Expenses	-	1,057,774	1,057,774	14.37
Travel	-	287,660	287,660	3.91
Transfers and Grants	-	1,923,727	1,923,727	26.13
General Operating	-	2,115,718	2,115,718	28.74
Programme Costs Total	-	7,361,649	7,361,649	100.00
¹ Indirect Support Costs Total	-	763,158	763,158	10.37
Grand Total	-	8,124,807	8,124,807	-

1 Indirect Support Costs charged by Recipient 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 is 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 Recipient 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 2025, were as follows:

- The Administrative Agent (AA) fee:** 1% is charged at the time of the contributor deposit and covers services provided on that contribution for the entire duration of the Fund. Cumulatively, as of 31 December 2025, US\$ **124,775** has been charged in AA fees.
- Indirect Costs of Recipient Organizations:** A general cost that cannot be directly related to any particular programme or activity of the Recipient Organizations. Recipient 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 US\$ **763,158** was deducted in indirect costs by Recipient Organizations. Cumulatively, indirect costs amount to US\$ **763,158** as of 31 December 2025.

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 Recipient 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.

8. DIRECT COSTS

The Fund governance mechanism may approve an allocation to a Recipient 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 2025, US\$ 1,585,500 has been charged as Direct Costs.

Recipient Organization	Approved Amount	Net Funded Amount	Expenditure			Delivery Rate %
			Prior Years up to 31-Dec-2024	Financial Year Jan-Dec-2025	Cumulative	
UNOPS	2,117,052	1,585,500	-	576,143	576,143	36.34
Grand Total	2,117,052	1,585,500	-	576,143	576,143	36.34



Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund

Annexes to Financial Report



Annex 1. EXPENDITURE BY PROJECT GROUPED BY THEME

Annex 1 displays the net funded amounts, expenditures reported and the financial delivery rates by Outcome by project and Recipient Organization

Annex 1 Expenditure by Project within Outcome

Outcome/ Project No. and Project Title	Recipient Organization	Project Status	Total Approved Amount	Net Funded Amount	Total Expenditure	Delivery Rate %
A: Laws, policies, institutions						
00141110 SI 2.0 Uganda Outcome A	UNDP	On Going	698,710	698,710	505,843	72.40
00141110 SI 2.0 Uganda Outcome A	UNFPA	On Going	854,717	854,717	729,292	85.33
00141110 SI 2.0 Uganda Outcome A	UNICEF	On Going	571,393	571,393	516,620	90.41
00141110 SI 2.0 Uganda Outcome A	UNWOMEN	On Going	1,102,546	1,102,546	217,691	19.74
00141126 SI 2.0 Ecuador Outcome A	UNDP	On Going	142,109	142,109	-	-
00141126 SI 2.0 Ecuador Outcome A	UNFPA	On Going	39,440	39,440	-	-
00141126 SI 2.0 Ecuador Outcome A	UNWOMEN	On Going	94,899	94,899	6,208	6.54
00141130 SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome A	UNDP	On Going	127,437	81,427	6,850	8.41
00141130 SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome A	UNESCO	On Going	5,350	5,350	-	-
00141130 SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome A	UNFPA	On Going	40,714	27,874	685	2.46
00141186 SI 2.0 Sierra Leone Outcome A	UNDP	On Going	989,750	492,200	14,032	2.85
00141186 SI 2.0 Sierra Leone Outcome A	UNICEF	On Going	238,610	149,800	44,285	29.56
00141198 SI 2.0 Liberia Outcome A	UNDP	On Going	1,460,338	488,527	41,733	8.54
00141198 SI 2.0 Liberia Outcome A	UNFPA	On Going	542,113	288,684	60,294	20.89
00141198 SI 2.0 Liberia Outcome A	UNWOMEN	On Going	1,029,060	259,995	19,747	7.60
A: Laws, policies, institutions: Total			7,937,186	5,297,671	2,163,280	40.83

Outcome/ Project No. and Project Title	Recipient Organization	Project Status	Total Approved Amount	Net Funded Amount	Total Expenditure	Delivery Rate %
B: Prevention						
00141111 SI 2.0 Uganda Outcome B	UNHCR	On Going	779,959	779,959	779,959	100.00
00141125 SI 2.0 Ecuador Outcome B	UNDP	On Going	20,972	20,972	-	-
00141125 SI 2.0 Ecuador Outcome B	UNFPA	On Going	139,139	139,139	-	-
00141131 SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome B	IOM	On Going	214,255	152,409	7,458	4.89
00141131 SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome B	UNDP	On Going	92,020	66,340	28	0.04
00141131 SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome B	UNESCO	On Going	332,323	230,264	39,196	17.02
00141131 SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome B	UNFPA	On Going	118,877	79,287	26,054	32.86



00141187	SI 2.0 Sierra Leone Outcome B	UNFPA	On Going	1,050,172	594,636	170,751	28.72
00141187	SI 2.0 Sierra Leone Outcome B	UNICEF	On Going	2,189,647	1,507,051	-	-
00141187	SI 2.0 Sierra Leone Outcome B	UNWOMEN	On Going	331,700	160,500	12,413	7.73
00141199	SI 2.0 Liberia Outcome B	UNDP	On Going	28,348	7,087	-	-
00141199	SI 2.0 Liberia Outcome B	UNFPA	On Going	558,141	111,177	-	-
00141199	SI 2.0 Liberia Outcome B	UNWOMEN	On Going	3,914,845	1,051,660	70,267	6.68
B: Prevention: Total				9,770,398	4,900,481	1,106,126	22.57

Outcome/ Project No. and Project Title		Recipient Organization	Project Status	Total Approved Amount	Net Funded Amount	Total Expenditure	Delivery Rate %
C: Response							
00141112	SI 2.0 Uganda Outcome C	UNDP	On Going	588,500	588,500	495,316	84.17
00141112	SI 2.0 Uganda Outcome C	UNFPA	On Going	1,526,770	1,526,770	1,396,531	91.47
00141112	SI 2.0 Uganda Outcome C	UNHCR	On Going	65,112	65,112	65,112	100.00
00141112	SI 2.0 Uganda Outcome C	UNICEF	On Going	333,239	333,239	304,036	91.24
00141124	SI 2.0 Ecuador Outcome C	UNFPA	On Going	32,039	32,039	-	-
00141124	SI 2.0 Ecuador Outcome C	UNWOMEN	On Going	32,100	32,100	2,100	6.54
00141132	SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome C	IOM	On Going	146,068	109,949	20,884	18.99
00141132	SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome C	UNDP	On Going	8,560	-	-	-
00141132	SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome C	UNESCO	On Going	70,620	47,962	4,553	9.49
00141132	SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome C	UNFPA	On Going	117,165	75,435	31,137	41.28
00141188	SI 2.0 Sierra Leone Outcome C	UNDP	On Going	1,225,615	624,880	5,344	0.86
00141188	SI 2.0 Sierra Leone Outcome C	UNFPA	On Going	1,300,050	658,050	154,237	23.44
00141188	SI 2.0 Sierra Leone Outcome C	UNICEF	On Going	374,500	240,750	71,477	29.69
00141200	SI 2.0 Liberia Outcome C	UNDP	On Going	1,195,699	323,566	-	-
00141200	SI 2.0 Liberia Outcome C	UNFPA	On Going	2,478,860	769,335	23,375	3.04
C: Response: Total				9,494,897	5,427,688	2,574,102	47.43

Outcome/ Project No. and Project Title		Recipient Organization	Project Status	Total Approved Amount	Net Funded Amount	Total Expenditure	Delivery Rate %
D: Strengthened women’s movement							
00141123	SI 2.0 Ecuador Outcome D	UNDP	On Going	52,965	52,965	-	-
00141123	SI 2.0 Ecuador Outcome D	UNWOMEN	On Going	221,637	221,637	14,500	6.54



00141133	SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome D	UNDP	On Going	210,450	147,660	5,237	3.55
00141133	SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome D	UNFPA	On Going	168,525	109,131	59,962	54.94
00141189	SI 2.0 Sierra Leone Outcome D	UNWOMEN	On Going	1,365,948	641,282	58,663	9.15
00141201	SI 2.0 Liberia Outcome D	UNWOMEN	On Going	553,968	161,022	10,534	6.54
D: Strengthened women's movement: Total				2,573,493	1,333,697	148,895	11.16

Outcome / Project No. and Project Title		Recipient Organization	Project Status	Total Approved Amount	Net Funded Amount	Total Expenditure	Delivery Rate %
Direct coordination costs							
00141113	SI 2.0 Uganda Outcome DCC*	UNDP	On Going	511,631	511,631	452,389	88.42
00141113	SI 2.0 Uganda Outcome DCC*	UNFPA	On Going	257,995	257,995	233,304	90.43
00141113	SI 2.0 Uganda Outcome DCC*	UNHCR	On Going	161,100	161,100	161,100	100.00
00141113	SI 2.0 Uganda Outcome DCC*	UNICEF	On Going	221,969	221,969	221,480	99.78
00141113	SI 2.0 Uganda Outcome DCC*	UNWOMEN	On Going	246,359	246,359	175,178	71.11
00141122	SI 2.0 Ecuador Outcome DCC*	UNDP	On Going	31,983	31,983	-	-
00141122	SI 2.0 Ecuador Outcome DCC*	UNFPA	On Going	37,411	37,411	-	-
00141122	SI 2.0 Ecuador Outcome DCC*	UNWOMEN	On Going	145,306	145,306	9,506	6.54
00141134	SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome DCC*	IOM	On Going	97,362	64,776	26,536	40.97
00141134	SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome DCC*	UNDP	On Going	64,789	60,455	22,354	36.98
00141134	SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome DCC*	UNESCO	On Going	61,658	41,106	-	-
00141134	SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome DCC*	UNFPA	On Going	153,545	121,020	39,904	32.97
00141190	SI 2.0 Sierra Leone Outcome DCC*	UNDP	On Going	1,954,095	928,868	39,214	4.22
00141190	SI 2.0 Sierra Leone Outcome DCC*	UNFPA	On Going	102,926	51,463	17,796	34.58
00141190	SI 2.0 Sierra Leone Outcome DCC*	UNICEF	On Going	102,927	51,463	2,054	3.99
00141190	SI 2.0 Sierra Leone Outcome DCC*	UNWOMEN	On Going	102,927	51,463	3,367	6.54
00141202	SI 2.0 Liberia Outcome DCC*	UNDP	On Going	1,884,605	294,611	57,529	19.53
00141202	SI 2.0 Liberia Outcome DCC*	UNFPA	On Going	382,944	54,904	50,782	92.49
00141202	SI 2.0 Liberia Outcome DCC*	UNWOMEN	On Going	382,946	47,933	43,770	91.32
Direct coordination costs: Total				6,904,478	3,381,815	1,556,262	46.02

*Direct Coordination Costs

Outcome/ Project No. and Project Title		Recipient Organization	Project Status	Total Approved Amount	Net Funded Amount	Total Expenditure	Delivery Rate %
Direct Cost Budget							



00141022	Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund	UNOPS	On Going	2,117,052	1,585,500	576,143	36.34
Direct Cost Budget: Total				2,117,052	1,585,500	576,143	36.34
Grand Total				38,797,504	21,926,851	8,124,807	37.05



Annex 2. EXPENDITURE BY PROJECT GROUPED BY COUNTRY

Annex 2 displays the net funded amounts, expenditures reported and the financial delivery rates by Country by project/ joint programme and Recipient Organization

Table Annex 2 Expenditure by Project, grouped by Country

Country / Project No. and Project Title		Recipient Organization	Total Approved Amount	Net Funded Amount	Total Expenditure	Delivery Rate %
Ecuador						
00141122	SI 2.0 Ecuador Outcome DCC*	UNDP	31,983	31,983	-	-
00141122	SI 2.0 Ecuador Outcome DCC*	UNFPA	37,411	37,411	-	-
00141122	SI 2.0 Ecuador Outcome DCC*	UNWOMEN	145,306	145,306	9,506	6.54
00141123	SI 2.0 Ecuador Outcome D	UNDP	52,965	52,965	-	-
00141123	SI 2.0 Ecuador Outcome D	UNWOMEN	221,637	221,637	14,500	6.54
00141124	SI 2.0 Ecuador Outcome C	UNFPA	32,039	32,039	-	-
00141124	SI 2.0 Ecuador Outcome C	UNWOMEN	32,100	32,100	2,100	6.54
00141125	SI 2.0 Ecuador Outcome B	UNDP	20,972	20,972	-	-
00141125	SI 2.0 Ecuador Outcome B	UNFPA	139,139	139,139	-	-
00141126	SI 2.0 Ecuador Outcome A	UNDP	142,109	142,109	-	-
00141126	SI 2.0 Ecuador Outcome A	UNFPA	39,440	39,440	-	-
00141126	SI 2.0 Ecuador Outcome A	UNWOMEN	94,899	94,899	6,208	6.54
Ecuador: Total			990,000	990,000	32,314	3.26
Global and Interregional						
00141022	Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund	UNOPS	2,117,052	1,585,500	576,143	36.34
Global and Interregional: Total			2,117,052	1,585,500	576,143	36.34
Liberia						
00141198	SI 2.0 Liberia Outcome A	UNDP	1,460,338	488,527	41,733	8.54
00141198	SI 2.0 Liberia Outcome A	UNFPA	542,113	288,684	60,294	20.89
00141198	SI 2.0 Liberia Outcome A	UNWOMEN	1,029,060	259,995	19,747	7.60
00141199	SI 2.0 Liberia Outcome B	UNDP	28,348	7,087	-	-
00141199	SI 2.0 Liberia Outcome B	UNFPA	558,141	111,177	-	-
00141199	SI 2.0 Liberia Outcome B	UNWOMEN	3,914,845	1,051,660	70,267	6.68
00141200	SI 2.0 Liberia Outcome C	UNDP	1,195,699	323,566	-	-
00141200	SI 2.0 Liberia Outcome C	UNFPA	2,478,860	769,335	23,375	3.04
00141201	SI 2.0 Liberia Outcome D	UNWOMEN	553,968	161,022	10,534	6.54



00141202	SI 2.0 Liberia Outcome DCC*	UNDP	1,884,605	294,611	57,529	19.53
00141202	SI 2.0 Liberia Outcome DCC*	UNFPA	382,944	54,904	50,782	92.49
00141202	SI 2.0 Liberia Outcome DCC*	UNWOMEN	382,946	47,933	43,770	91.32
Liberia: Total			14,411,867	3,858,501	378,031	9.80

*Direct Coordination Costs

Sierra Leone						
00141186	SI 2.0 Sierra Leone Outcome A	UNDP	989,750	492,200	14,032	2.85
00141186	SI 2.0 Sierra Leone Outcome A	UNICEF	238,610	149,800	44,285	29.56
00141187	SI 2.0 Sierra Leone Outcome B	UNFPA	1,050,172	594,636	170,751	28.72
00141187	SI 2.0 Sierra Leone Outcome B	UNICEF	2,189,647	1,507,051	-	-
00141187	SI 2.0 Sierra Leone Outcome B	UNWOMEN	331,700	160,500	12,413	7.73
00141188	SI 2.0 Sierra Leone Outcome C	UNDP	1,225,615	624,880	5,344	0.86
00141188	SI 2.0 Sierra Leone Outcome C	UNFPA	1,300,050	658,050	154,237	23.44
00141188	SI 2.0 Sierra Leone Outcome C	UNICEF	374,500	240,750	71,477	29.69
00141189	SI 2.0 Sierra Leone Outcome C	UNWOMEN	1,365,948	641,282	58,663	9.15
00141190	SI 2.0 Sierra Leone Outcome DCC*	UNDP	1,954,095	928,868	39,214	4.22
00141190	SI 2.0 Sierra Leone Outcome DCC*	UNFPA	102,926	51,463	17,796	34.58
00141190	SI 2.0 Sierra Leone Outcome DCC*	UNICEF	102,927	51,463	2,054	3.99
00141190	SI 2.0 Sierra Leone Outcome DCC*	UNWOMEN	102,927	51,463	3,367	6.54
Sierra Leone: Total			11,328,867	6,152,406	593,631	9.65

Uganda						
00141110	SI 2.0 Uganda Outcome A	UNDP	698,710	698,710	505,843	72.40
00141110	SI 2.0 Uganda Outcome A	UNFPA	854,717	854,717	729,292	85.33
00141110	SI 2.0 Uganda Outcome A	UNICEF	571,393	571,393	516,620	90.41
00141110	SI 2.0 Uganda Outcome A	UNWOMEN	1,102,546	1,102,546	217,691	19.74
00141111	SI 2.0 Uganda Outcome B	UNHCR	779,959	779,959	779,959	100.00
00141112	SI 2.0 Uganda Outcome C	UNDP	588,500	588,500	495,316	84.17
00141112	SI 2.0 Uganda Outcome C	UNFPA	1,526,770	1,526,770	1,396,531	91.47
00141112	SI 2.0 Uganda Outcome C	UNHCR	65,112	65,112	65,112	100.00
00141112	SI 2.0 Uganda Outcome C	UNICEF	333,239	333,239	304,036	91.24
00141113	SI 2.0 Uganda Outcome DCC*	UNDP	511,631	511,631	452,389	88.42
00141113	SI 2.0 Uganda Outcome DCC*	UNFPA	257,995	257,995	233,304	90.43



00141113	SI 2.0 Uganda Outcome DCC*	UNHCR	161,100	161,100	161,100	100.00
00141113	SI 2.0 Uganda Outcome DCC*	UNICEF	221,969	221,969	221,480	99.78
00141113	SI 2.0 Uganda Outcome DCC*	UNWOMEN	246,359	246,359	175,178	71.11
Uganda: Total			7,920,000	7,920,000	6,253,852	78.96

*Direct Coordination Costs

Zambia						
00141130	SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome A	UNDP	127,437	81,427	6,850	8.41
00141130	SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome A	UNESCO	5,350	5,350	-	-
00141130	SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome A	UNFPA	40,714	27,874	685	2.46
00141131	SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome B	IOM	214,255	152,409	7,458	4.89
00141131	SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome B	UNDP	92,020	66,340	28	0.04
00141131	SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome B	UNESCO	332,323	230,264	39,196	17.02
00141131	SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome B	UNFPA	118,877	79,287	26,054	32.86
00141132	SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome C	IOM	146,068	109,949	20,884	18.99
00141132	SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome C	UNDP	8,560	-	-	-
00141132	SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome C	UNESCO	70,620	47,962	4,553	9.49
00141132	SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome C	UNFPA	117,165	75,435	31,137	41.28
00141133	SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome D	UNDP	210,450	147,660	5,237	3.55
00141133	SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome D	UNFPA	168,525	109,131	59,962	54.94
00141134	SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome DCC*	IOM	97,362	64,776	26,536	40.97
00141134	SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome DCC*	UNDP	64,789	60,455	22,354	36.98
00141134	SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome DCC*	UNESCO	61,658	41,106	-	-
00141134	SI 2.0 Zambia Outcome DCC*	UNFPA	153,545	121,020	39,904	32.97
Zambia: Total			2,029,718	1,420,444	290,836	20.48

*Direct Coordination Costs

Grand Total			38,797,504	21,926,851	8,124,807	37.05
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Contributors



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Belgium



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Ireland



Government of the
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Government of the
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UN Recipient Organizations





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*To eliminate violence
against women and girls*

