

# Spotlight Initiative

*To eliminate violence against women and girls*

## Africa Regional Programme

ANNUAL NARRATIVE PROGRESS REPORT

01 January – 31 December 2021

Initiated by the European Union and the United Nations:



<p><b>Programme title &amp; programme number</b></p>	<p><b>Priority regions/areas/localities for the programme</b></p>																			
<p>Programme title: <b>Africa’s Response to Addressing VAWG, SGBV, HP, SRHR including FGM and Child Marriage</b>                  MPTF Office project reference number <b>0119124</b></p>	<p>N/A</p>																			
<p><b>Recipient organization(s)</b></p>	<p><b>Key partners</b></p>																			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UN Women,</li> <li>• UNDP</li> <li>• UNFPA</li> <li>• UNICEF</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) African Union</li> <li>2) UNECA</li> <li>3) UNDCO</li> <li>3) Academia</li> <li>4) Regional intergovernmental entities</li> <li>5) Regional NGOs, CSOs</li> </ol>																			
<p><b>Programme Cost (\$)</b></p>	<p><b>Programme start and end dates</b></p>																			
<p>Total Phase I approved budget as per the Spotlight CPD/ RPD:<sup>2</sup> \$26,982,281                  Phase I spotlight funding:<sup>2</sup> \$25,620,000                  Agency contribution: \$1,362,281                  Spotlight funding and agency contribution by agency:</p>	<p>Start date: 13.07.2020                  End date: 31.12.2023</p>																			
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Name of RUNO</th> <th>Spotlight Phase I (\$)</th> <th>United Nations Agency Contributions (\$)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>UN Women</td> <td>3 454 656.00</td> <td>253 352.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>UNFPA</td> <td>10 625 993.00</td> <td>525 119.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>UNDP</td> <td>2 134 478.00</td> <td>196 000.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>UNICEF</td> <td>9 404 872.00</td> <td>387 810.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>TOTAL:</td> <td>25 620 000.00</td> <td>1 362 281.00</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Name of RUNO	Spotlight Phase I (\$)	United Nations Agency Contributions (\$)	UN Women	3 454 656.00	253 352.00	UNFPA	10 625 993.00	525 119.00	UNDP	2 134 478.00	196 000.00	UNICEF	9 404 872.00	387 810.00	TOTAL:	25 620 000.00	1 362 281.00	<p>Report submitted by:</p> <p><b>Julius OTIM</b>                  Africa Spotlight Regional Programme Coordinator (ASRPC) Email <a href="mailto:otim@unfpa.org">otim@unfpa.org</a></p>	
Name of RUNO	Spotlight Phase I (\$)	United Nations Agency Contributions (\$)																		
UN Women	3 454 656.00	253 352.00																		
UNFPA	10 625 993.00	525 119.00																		
UNDP	2 134 478.00	196 000.00																		
UNICEF	9 404 872.00	387 810.00																		
TOTAL:	25 620 000.00	1 362 281.00																		

<sup>1</sup> The present report refers solely to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in accordance to the Continental Policy Framework on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of 2005 as endorsed by the AU Assembly in January 2006 and the Maputo Action Plan

<sup>2</sup> The Spotlight Contribution refers to the amount transferred to the Recipient United Nations Organizations, which is available on the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](#).

# Table of Contents


<b>Acronym list</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>7</b>
The Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme (SIARP)	7
Result across pillars	9
Challenges and lessons learned	10
<b>Contextual shifts and implementation status</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Programme governance and coordination</b>	<b>17</b>
a. Africa Regional Steering Committee	17
b. Civil Society Regional Reference Group (CSRRG)	18
c. Inter-agency coordination, technical committees and other governance mechanisms	18
d. Use of the United Nations Reform inter-agency tool	19
<b>Programme partnerships</b>	<b>21</b>
a. African Union Commission	21
b. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)	22
c. European Union	26
d. Cooperation with other United Nations agencies	27
e. Other partners and resource mobilization	27
<b>Capturing broader transformations across outcomes</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Results: Capturing change at outcome level</b>	<b>33</b>
Outcome 1: Legal and policy framework	33
Outcome 5: Data	35
Outcome 6: Women's movement and civil society	38
<b>Lessons learned and new opportunities</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Innovative, promising or good practices</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Communication and visibility</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Next steps</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Annexes</b>	<b>60</b>

# Acronym list

<b>ACERWC</b>	Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
<b>ACHPR</b>	African Commission on Human and People's Rights – also known as the Banjul Commission
<b>ACRL</b>	African Council of Religious Leaders
<b>ACT</b>	Assess and Ascertain, Consider and Context, Track and Triangulate
<b>AfCHPR</b>	African Court on Human and People's Rights
<b>AfCFTA</b>	African Continental Free Trade Area
<b>AGS</b>	African Girls' Summit
<b>APHRC</b>	African Population Health and Research Center
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>AUC</b>	African Union Commission
<b>C4D</b>	Communication for Development
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
<b>CISP</b>	International Committee for the Development of People (INGO)
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus Disease 2019
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>CSRRG</b>	Civil Society Regional Reference Group
<b>CSW</b>	Commission on the Status of Women
<b>DHS</b>	Demographic Health Survey
<b>DHHS</b>	Department of Health, Humanitarian Services
<b>ECOWAS</b>	Economic Community of West African States
<b>EN/SOAWR</b>	Equality Now/Solidarity for African Women's Rights
<b>ENSAE</b>	École Nationale Supérieure de Statistique et d'Analyse Économique (Paris Higher Education School of Statistics and Analysis)
<b>EANNASO</b>	Eastern Africa National Networks of AIDS and Health Service Organizations
<b>EOI</b>	Expression of Interest
<b>ESARO</b>	East and Southern Africa Regional Office
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EVAWG</b>	Ending Violence against Women and Girls
<b>FGM</b>	Female Genital Mutilation
<b>GEWE</b>	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
<b>GPECM</b>	UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage
<b>GTA</b>	Gender Transformative Accelerator
<b>HHSD</b>	Health, Humanitarian Affairs, and Social Development
<b>HP</b>	Harmful Practices

<b>HR</b>	Human Rights
<b>IP</b>	Implementing Partner
<b>JPFGM</b>	UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation
<b>LTA</b> s	Long Term Arrangement for Services
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>NHRI</b>	National Human Rights Institutions
<b>PSH</b>	Partners for Sexual Health
<b>RECs</b>	Regional Economic Commissions
<b>RUNOs</b>	Recipient United Nations Organizations
<b>SBC</b>	Social and behaviour Change
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SGBV</b>	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
<b>SIARP</b>	The Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme
<b>SRHR</b>	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
<b>TWG</b>	Thematic Working Group
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNECA</b>	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
<b>VAWG</b>	Violence against women and girls
<b>WCARO</b>	Western and Central Africa Regional Office
<b>WLSA</b>	Women and Law in Southern Africa research and education trust



A young Black woman with her hair in braids is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. She is holding a purple-bordered white sign in front of her chest. The sign has the words "END VIOLENCE" written in black, hand-drawn capital letters. She is wearing a teal turtleneck under a light blue and white patterned hoodie. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green foliage. A white decorative shape with a dotted border is on the right side of the image.

END  
VIOLENCE



# Executive summary

## Introduction

The Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme (SIARP) is a global partnership between the United Nations, the European Union and the African Union with a continental scope that enhances a regional approach to end violence against women and girls (VAWG), sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices, as well as strengthening sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). The Regional Programme prioritizes strengthening existing strategies and initiatives, such as the African Union (AU) Gender Strategy 2017–2027, Agenda 2030, Agenda 2063, and the Maputo Plan of Action on operationalization of the Continental Policy Framework for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (2016–2030).

## The Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme (SIARP)

The Regional Programme works through two streams (Stream I and Stream II), both contributing towards achieving results under **Outcome 1:** Policies and legislation; **Outcome 5:** Data; and **Outcome 6:** Women's movements and civil society. Both streams promote and protect the rights of women and girls by providing support to the African Union Commission, through investment in regional women's rights organizations and civil society actors, to enhance existing capacities and mechanisms for eliminating VAWG and harmful practices (such as child marriage and FGM) and promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights, life-skills education and empowerment.

The Recipient United Nations Organizations (RUNOs), namely UN Women, UNFPA, UNDP and UNICEF, are responsible for implementation of the programme and are accountable for the overall results of the regional Spotlight Initiative. As such, the Africa Regional Programme is fully aligned with United Nations Reform efforts promoting inter-agency coordination, so that it is implemented as one United Nations system through joint programming on gender equality. The programme is guided by the principle

of leaving no one behind and has adopted a strategy of harnessing the respective strengths of multisectoral, multi-level partnerships that support the acceleration of transformative change. This consolidated report provides an overview of the progress, achievements, challenges and lessons of the regional programme in both streams for the period January to December 2021, as well as results built on progress made in 2020.

The year has been characterized by significant sociopolitical shifts. Africa has continued to grapple with an ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, with a total of 9,143,184 cases and 225,890 recorded deaths.<sup>3</sup> Countries such as Sudan and Ethiopia have continued to see a proliferation of internal conflict in some regions, while civil and political unrest has been experienced in South Africa and Eswatini. Military coups and the violent removal of leadership from power have been witnessed in West Africa (Guinea, Chad and Mali). The continent remains on the frontlines of the repercussions from climate change as the increased threat of droughts, floods, locust invasion that seriously hamper the agricultural sector and negatively affect food security. The relevance of the Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme is evident as violence against women and girls has also increased in such times of crisis.

In the last decade, 25 million child marriages globally have been averted thanks to accelerated progress in eliminating the practice. There is growing evidence that overall, rates of female genital mutilation (FGM) are declining across the globe. This remarkable accomplishment is now under threat. COVID-19 unleashed a learning crisis on the African continent, with school closures disrupting the school of millions of students. At the same time, political and economic instability and disrupted services are rolling back decades of progress in the fight against harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation. Globally, UNICEF foresees an additional 10 million girls at risk of becoming child brides before the end of the decade as a consequence.<sup>4</sup> One UNFPA analysis estimates that two million additional cases of FGM could take place over the next decade that would otherwise have been averted.<sup>5</sup> The disruption of legal services during the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in survivors of FGM experiencing significant delays in accessing justice

<sup>3</sup> *Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) – Africa CDC*, accessed 20 December 2021

<sup>4</sup> *UNICEF (2021) COVID-19: A threat to progress against child marriage*. Retrieved from <https://data.unicef.org/resources/covid-19-a-threat-to-progress-against-child-marriage/>

<sup>5</sup> *UNFPA. (2020). Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Family Planning and Ending Gender-based Violence, Female Genital Mutilation and Child Marriage*. Retrieved from [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/COVID-19\\_impact\\_brief\\_for\\_UNFPA\\_24\\_April\\_2020\\_1.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/COVID-19_impact_brief_for_UNFPA_24_April_2020_1.pdf)

and legal protection or other legal measures, including the arrest of perpetrators.

According to the 2020 Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation (JPFGM), Kenya country report, court closures during the initial lockdown period meant that survivors of FGM were unable to access justice.<sup>6</sup> In addition, where FGM-related cases could be heard, there were insufficient witnesses to prosecute the cases or the survivors' families were not able to attend court proceedings due to financial limitations. Similar issues were reported in Nigeria, where the reduced operation of courts during the pandemic limited women's access to legal protection.<sup>7</sup>

Urgent action is needed to prevent and mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on adolescent girls and speed up the elimination of harmful practices to meet the ambitious target of the Sustainable Development Goals: to eliminate harmful practices such as child marriage and FGM by 2030.

UNICEF and UNFPA leverage and complement the efforts of the partnership between the Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme, the European Union, the African Union Commission and other regional actors to accelerate action towards the elimination of harmful practices on the continent. These actions, implemented within the frameworks of the [UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage](#) and the [UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation](#), ensure that continental initiatives are supported.

Amid the host of challenges, both streams including the African Union Commission, Member States, and Regional Economic Commissions (RECs) continued to implement a collaborative model ensuring that the Regional Programme was delivered coherently and as one unified effort. The first Steering Committee meeting was held in May 2021 as part of efforts to ensure transparency, collaboration, coordination, communication and effective partnerships. The Civil Society Regional Reference Group (CSRRG), with 15 members (14 Female), was also established in early 2022.

## Partnerships

The European Union continues to be a champion of the Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme (SIARP). The reporting period observed active engagement of the European Union through the participation of its Delegation to the African Union and its HQ in Brussels in core management and decision-making platforms, such as during the regional Steering Committee

meeting and throughout the entire CSRRG selection process. The programme worked extensively with the African Union Commission Women, Gender and Youth Directorate (WGYD) and the Health, Humanitarian Affairs, and Social Development (HHSD) Department as key partners. The programme built the capacity of the African Union Commission WGYD through the secondment of six technical staff, who played influential roles while organizing joint planning meetings with RUNOs and sharing event calendars to effectively track the coordination and secure African Union Commission guidance and approval. In a bid to strengthen collaboration among RUNOs, working closely with the United Nations Development Coordination Office (UNDCO), the Programme Coordination Unit (PCU) convened the Regional Director's meeting in November 2021 as part of a forum that brought together all RUNO top leadership with the aim of strengthening the inter-agency regional programme. The meeting also brought the Streams together capitalizing on the Spotlight Initiative results and good practices across the continent.

The principle of leaving no one behind was operationalized by enhancing the capacity of civil society organizations and programme partners to reach marginalized and vulnerable groups such as adolescent girls and young women, young boys and men, and persons with disabilities. These and other groups were represented at all meetings and participated in influencing the SIARP processes and outcomes. To further ensure that no one was left behind, the programme engaged traditional and religious leaders, who often interact more closely with communities and can cascade information between duty bearers and their respective constituents.

Increased investment in, and collaboration with, CSOs and women's organisations, to implement a series of activities under pillars one, five and six that are intended to strengthen their technical, institutional and networking capacities, thereby increasing their effective participation in African Union policy and implementation processes addressing harmful practices and issues of violence against women and girls. The programme established formal IP agreements with 14 regional CSOs, research institutions and women's rights organizations and disbursed funds in line with the SIARP requirements of allocating 30–50 per cent of SIARP resources to CSOs.

<sup>6</sup> UNFPA-UNICEF (2020) *Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation: Accelerating Change*.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*



## Result across pillars

### Pillar one – policy and legislation

- **SIARP supported regional assessment of the enforcement status of laws and policies for the elimination of violence against women and girls (EVAWG).** The findings and recommendations serve as a major input for ongoing regional capacity building and the development of regional EVAWG action plans.
- **SIARP mobilized regional partners** (regional economic commissions [RECs], the African Union, Member states and CSOs) to develop the first **Regional Action Plan for Africa on Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls.**
- **SIARP participated in regional and international high-level events:** the African Union summit, International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM and the third African Girls' Summit, etc. and engaged in a broad range of advocacy activities. It successfully repositioned national and regional level responses as regards the implementation of policy commitments and legal provisions addressing harmful practices.
- **SIARP developed an African Union Harmful Practices Accountability Framework** that will be instrumental in helping the African Union Commission to monitor progress at all levels in line with national and regional commitments on harmful traditional practices. The Spotlight programme also supported the development of the African Union Report on FGM and Score Card report that will be an additional strategic document to strengthen the accountability framework.

### Pillar five – data

- **SIARP supported re-launching the African Union Commission regional data and research gender observatory** and scorecard to ensure quality, inclusive periodic reporting of member states and CSOs on VAWG/SGBV/harmful practices (HP) and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) to generate evidence to inform policy and programmes.
- **SIARP enhanced the capacity of government personnel** (including national statistical officers) and

CSOs to collect, manage, analyse and use data on child marriage and FGM. The capacity-building training will contribute to making national data accessible and easily disseminated to be used by decision-makers and civil society.

- **SIARP developed a knowledge management strategy,** in consultation with all RUNOs and the African Union, to establish a set of processes and methods focused on capturing, documenting, disseminating, identifying, leveraging, sharing, structuring and valuing VAWG/SGBV/sexual and reproductive health and rights and HP information assets.
- **SIARP ran a regional continental learning platform** that facilitated the exchange of lessons learned between the regional programme and the eight Spotlight Initiative implementing countries.

### Pillar six – the women's movement

- **SIARP created partnerships with 14 regional CSOs<sup>8</sup>** to strengthen the women's movement and ensure the elimination of VAWG.
- **The Spotlight Initiative supported an assessment of the status of civic space in Africa.** The findings of the assessment are well integrated at regional and national CSO level to work together and advocate for amendment of restrictive legislation and promote protection of the freedom of association.
- **The Spotlight Initiative supported successful advocacy of safe re-opening** and a back-to-school campaign that actively engaged religious leaders.
- **The Spotlight Initiative enhanced the capacity of Civil Society to schedule programming on the measurement of social norms regarding harmful practices,** through social norms training, implementing activities to promote positive outliers at community level.
- **The Spotlight Initiative developed national and regional laws and policy research, advocacy strategy** and a community mobilization tool focusing on the engagement of men and boys.
- **The Spotlight Initiative promoted innovative solutions for addressing FGM and child marriage** that have resulted in improved youth engagement and inspiration for ending harmful practices.

<sup>8</sup> (1) Equality Now; (2) African Population and Health Research Centre; (3) Partners for Sexual Health (PSH); (4) Women and Law in Southern Africa Research and Education Trust (WLSA); (5) African Council of Religious Leaders – Religious or Peace (ACRL- RfP); (6) International Committee for the Development of Peoples (CISP); (7) Girls Not Brides; (8) Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Statistique et d'Analyse Economique (ENSEA); (9) Italian Association for Women in Development; (12) African Women's Development and Communication Network –FEMNET; (13) Human Rights Defenders/Defend Defenders: HRD; (14) Concertation of Collectives of Women's Associations in the Great Lakes region (COCAFEM/GL)

## Communication and visibility

- During this reporting period, SIARP used information-sharing channels including the respective RUNO and partner (African Union Commission, CSOs) websites and social media to highlight the objectives and activities of the programme as well as to share important messages about gender-based violence, harmful practice, sexual and reproductive health and rights. Evidence shows that audience reach and engagement has increased compared to the previous year.
- The programme also seized the opportunity of relevant regional and international events including the African Union Summit, the third African Girls' Summit, International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM, the United Nations commission on the status of women, as well as international women's day, to feature the objectives and achievements of the regional programme.

## Challenges and lessons learned

COVID-19 continued to pose challenges throughout 2021, hampering both planning and implementation. Mobility was significantly reduced, which drastically changed the implementation procedures and limited the ability of SIARP partners to innovate and keep up the momentum of implementing the programme. The programme managed to adapt itself to the COVID-19 version of programme implementation procedures. The majority of face-to-face meetings were converted to hybrid formats or held virtually following the different institutional and country-specific COVID-19 response guidelines. Planning meetings were held virtually to allow co-creation, consultation and joint implementation of the programme to continue.

Implementation of SIARP in 2021 relied considerably on the approved Programme Document. One of the biggest implementation challenges was finding strong and qualified regional CSOs that the SIARP could partner with. The selection process caused a significant delay and the capacity of the CSOs to deliver the activities, once decided at an accelerated pace continues to be a challenge. Moreover, the conceptualization of activities, getting the necessary agreements among RUNOs, and getting approvals from African Union Commission and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) also took unexpected extended time. To mitigate this, as delays were experienced in implementation, the programme increased joint planning with all partners and stakeholders to generate common understanding and also worked through the Programme Coordination Unit and the Spotlight secretariat to accelerate the discussion and negotiation of accelerated annual work plans.

“  
**Peace, justice  
and sustainable  
development. None  
are possible without  
gender equality  
and women’s  
empowerment.**

- António Guterres  
UN Secretary-General







# Contextual shifts and implementation status

## Broader contextual shifts

The reporting period has been a year of sociopolitical shifts/developments for some countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. For example, the protest in Sudan after the military coup, the ongoing year-long conflict in Ethiopia (that created displacement internally and to the neighbouring country of Sudan); the civil unrest in South Africa following the imprisonment of former President Jacob Zuma has resulted in instabilities in East and Southern Africa, while in West Africa heads of states were removed by violence in four countries (Guinea, Chad, Mali and recently Burkina Faso). More than 24 countries held national and local elections with a few additional ones planned at the end of 2021.<sup>9</sup> The Ugandan general elections on 14 January witnessed violence and repression, while the promised elections in Somalia continue to be delayed. Political disruptions and insecurities in parts of Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali and Niger posed a challenge to the provision of prevention and protection services against harmful practices such as child marriage and FGM.

Simultaneously, political and economic instability and disrupted services are rolling back decades of progress in the fight against harmful practices and violence against women and girls. In Ethiopia, while child marriage and FGM has been declining, the current insecurity and violence across several parts of the country pose a serious challenge to the progress made so far. It is evident that during a crisis, displacement or natural disaster, the risk of gender-based violence and other forms of violence increase for women and girls. Similarly, political disruptions and insecurities in parts of Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Niger and Sudan are posing challenges to the provision of prevention and protection services against harmful practices such as child marriage and FGM.

The negative impact of climate change continued in 2021 with rising temperature and changes in precipitation across many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa leading to increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events: heatwaves, droughts, floods, and storms.<sup>10</sup> The natural disaster has a devastating impact on the economy

of the affected countries like Somalia where 80 per cent of the country is affected by severe drought. For example, in addition to the effects of the climate crisis such as food insecurity, population displacement, and water scarcity, more than half of African countries are likely to experience climate-related conflicts.<sup>11</sup>

As COVID-19 and fears of food shortages demonstrated Africa's over-reliance on global supply chains, the impetus is growing to strengthen value chains on the continent. On a positive development update, even after months of delays, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) came into force on 1 January 2021. Bringing together 1.3bn people in a \$3.4 trillion economic bloc, the AfCFTA is set to become the world's largest free trade area since the establishment of the World Trade Organization in 1995.

## Continued effects of COVID-19 in 2021 and respective Programme adjustments

The second and third waves of Covid-19 hit Sub-Saharan countries with various emerging variants, a total of 9,143,184 cases and 225,890 recorded deaths<sup>12</sup> due to lack of compliance with preventive measures, increased social interaction and movement, spread of variants, etc. The vaccine rollout remained very low in the region with only seven percent of the population fully vaccinated.<sup>13</sup>

COVID-19 unleashed a learning crisis on the African continent, with school closures disrupting the studies of millions of students. According to a new report released by UN Women to assess the impact of Covid-19 on VAWG in 13 countries including 4 in Africa, nearly 7 in 10 women (68 per cent) think that the incidence of physical or verbal abuse by a spouse/partner has increased during the pandemic in the area in which they live with Kenya (92 per cent) and Nigeria (74 per cent) being the countries with the highest perception of increased violence. Women's sense of safety both at home and in public places was

<sup>9</sup> *The Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa*, <https://www.eisa.org>.

<sup>10</sup> *World Bank Group, Africa's pulse, Oct 2021*, [9781464818059.pdf \(worldbank.org\)](https://www.worldbank.org)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/july-2021/cop26-climate-top-priorities-africa>

<sup>12</sup> *Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) – Africa CDC*, accessed Dec 20 2021

<sup>13</sup> <https://africacdc.org/covid-19-vaccination/>



eroded, adversely affecting their mental and emotional health.<sup>14</sup> Restrictions of movement enforced in many countries due to Covid-19 have affected implementation of SIARP.

Initiatives such as the roll-out of the [gender-transformative-accelerator-tool-brief](#) that were originally designed to be implemented on-site were rolled out in Mozambique in partnership with Girls Not Brides on a virtual platform, while in Niger a hybrid approach had to be adopted. While these initiatives did result in concrete actions to strengthen gender transformative programming, the limitations of not conducting face-to-face consultative interactions have been noted and will be reviewed in the scale-up and dissemination plans scheduled for 2022.

Travel restrictions on United Nations staff and other regional experts due to COVID-19 have also impacted the programmes, as traditional technical assistance models that typically involve periodic, in-person visits are not viable in the current context. Where a programme requires the physical presence and mobility of experts in a country, implementation has been delayed; elsewhere, it has shifted to virtual or remote support, e.g., training and capacity building delivered virtually. To adapt to the situation, the manner of implementation has been revised; for example, face-to-face meetings moved to either virtual or hybrid settings.

In its positive social and gender norms promotion, SIARP implemented [the ACT framework](#) in Ethiopia and Guinea, where it measures and tracks changing norms

in relation to female genital mutilation and social and behavioural change. The programme went on to support the government of Ethiopia in recruiting a pool of social norms measurement experts to establish a baseline on the social and behavioural drivers influencing child marriage and FGM in seven regions of Ethiopia: Afar, Amhara, Gambella, Oromia, Somali, SNNP and Tigray. However, these programme areas have been reduced to five regions for the baseline study due to ongoing instabilities in two of the targeted regions. A similar process has been cascaded to support the Government in rolling out the ACT framework to establish a social and behaviour change (SBC) baseline for FGM.

Overall, the programme is on track despite the delays experienced at the beginning of the year due to lack of capacity and limited response to requests for proposals from potential civil society partners mainly from West and Central Africa, whose scope of engagement is limited to some countries including those with long-term agreements with other agencies. Most of the engagements with the key implementing partner were challenged, for a variety of reasons including lack of sufficient human resources at the department, structural changes and changing priorities due to COVID-19.

Despite the challenging and uncertain regional context, through close inter-agency coordination and timely discussions on technical coherence, efforts have been made to improve coordination by seconding staff, organizing planning meetings with RUNOs, sharing event calendars and implementing other mitigating measures.

### Spotlight Initiative - implementation progress by outcome areas

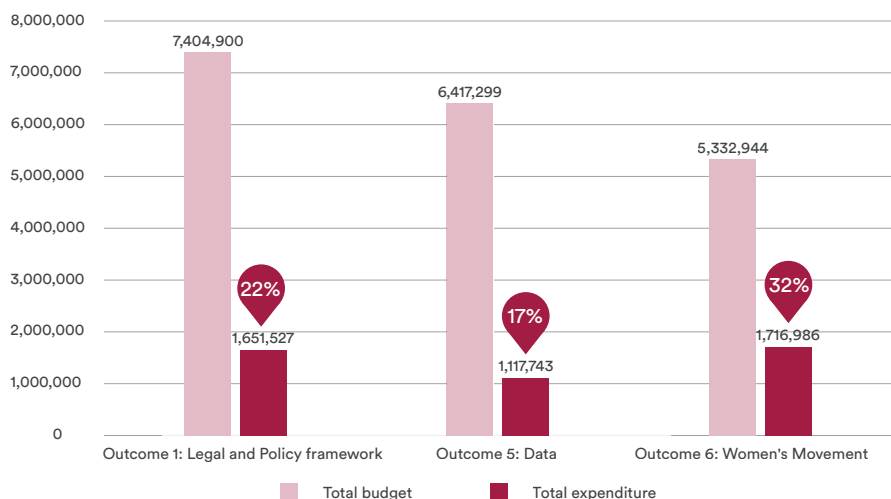


Figure 1 Spotlight Initiative - Financial implementation progress by outcome areas

The above bar chart shows that in December 2021 the financial implementation status of outcomes 1, 5 and 6 stood at 22 per cent, 17 per cent and 32 per cent respectively.

<sup>14</sup> (UN women, measuring the shadow pandemic: Violence against women during COVID-19, 2021) <https://data.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/documents/Publications/Measuring-shadow-pandemic.pdf>

“  
**I believe in a world  
in which every  
woman and girl  
is safe, where her  
voice is heard and  
her choices are  
respected.**

- Jutta Urpilainen  
European Commissioner for International Partnerships







# Programme governance and coordination

## a. Africa Regional Steering Committee

The Africa Regional Steering Committee (ARSC) is the highest governance structure of the Spotlight Africa Regional Programme, tasked with providing strategic leadership and oversight to the programme. The ARSC ensures that the Spotlight Africa Regional Programme is aligned with the priorities and dynamics of the Africa region and also reflects the initiative's principles of inclusiveness, transparency, accountability, regional participation and ownership. The ARSC provides strategic guidance for all parties responsible for execution of the programme and ensures effective oversight of the regional programme. The ARSC is responsible for strategic and technical rigor and coherence across Stream I and Stream II, while ensuring that every opportunity is taken to cover all key areas of focus. Members of the ARSC include:

- The African Union Commissioner for Social Affairs
- The director of the United Nations Development Coordination Office (UNDCO) Regional Office for Africa
- The director of the African Union Commission Department of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social development
- The deputy Head of the Gender Equality, Human Rights and Democracy Unit of the European Union Office in Brussels
- The Ambassador of the European Union to the African Union
- The Regional Director for East and Southern Africa of the four RUNOs (UNFPA, UNWOMEN, UNICEF and UNDP)
- Members of the Civil Society Regional Reference Group

The ARSC is jointly chaired by the African Union Commission (AUC) and the United Nations Development Coordination Office (UNDCO) Regional Office for Africa.

The Regional Steering Committee has the following roles and responsibilities:

- To manage stakeholder relations at regional level with regards to the Regional Component, covering both Stream I and Stream II

- To oversee and advise on programme coherence between Stream I and Stream II
- To identify opportunities for linkages and synergies that might add value to or accelerate the desired transformative impact between Stream I and Stream II
- To support resource mobilization for Stream I and II to close the unfunded gap
- To identify risks of duplication and overlap between Stream I and Stream II and communicate those to the attention of the Stream I and Stream II governing bodies for action
- To ensure proper communication, coordination and coherent reporting across the entire Regional Programme
- To identify opportunities to increase the visibility of the objectives and achievements of the Regional Programme

The Programme Coordination Unit (PCU) serves as the Secretariat of the Africa Regional Steering Committee and supports the committee in fulfilling its roles and functions.

The ARSC planned to meet twice per year and the First Steering Committee meeting took place on 26 May 2021. During the meeting, members discussed implementation of the regional programme, appraisal of the original work plan to reflect on its acceleration measures and its alignment with regional priorities and the communication and visibility plan of the programme, as well as on the establishment of the civil society regional reference group.

The following key recommendations and outcomes were noted: (i) implement guidance on transparency, collaboration, coordination, communication, and effective partnerships as well as adherence to the signed SIARP document; (ii) continue to fast-track programme implementation, going beyond meetings and documents but making a transformative change at grassroots level; (iii) continue to address challenges linked to the establishment of the Civil Society Regional Reference Group (CSRRG) highlighted challenges, notably as regards its selection process for members of the Civil Society Reference Group; (iv) preparation and submission of a visibility and communication plan.

The steering committee guided the governance structure of the SIARP, which was then adopted by the African Union

Commission, the European Union, and UN Women to relaunch the CSRRG selection process. Moreover, based on the guidance of the committee, RUNOs put in place coordination mechanisms, developed standard operating procedures (SOPs) and streamlined communications.

The second ARSC meeting was scheduled to convene in November 2021 but was later postponed for the reason that the proposed time aligned with the African Union Commission high-level departmental transitioning time. The secretariat has worked closely with the African Union Commission and UNDCO to deliberate on the next meeting in the first Quarter of 2022.

In addition, the stream II partners continue to use the Steering Committees of both the [UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage](#) and the [UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation](#) to provide strategic guidance and oversight responsibility for the overall management and functioning of the Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme.

Members of the Stream II – FGM steering committee include all of the donors (France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Spain, Austria, Iceland, Luxemburg and the European Union). It convened twice in 2021, on 29 April and 10 November. At the first meeting, it was decided to include the SIARP results in the Annual Report.

Stream II Child Marriage Steering Committee meetings were held on 16 February and 24 August 2021 with donors (Belgium, Canada, European Union, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, UK, Zonta International). During this meeting, the Spotlight Initiative annual work plan was negotiated in consultation with the African Union Commission. The agreed annual work plan was then integrated into the Joint Programme annual work plans of Headquarters, Regional Offices and UNICEF and UNFPA African Union Liaison Offices, including country targeted activities such as the rollout of monitoring, accountability and measurement frameworks and capacity building of government personnel, women's rights groups and youth-led groups.

## **b. Civil Society Regional Reference Group (CSRRG)**

The aim of establishing the Civil Society Regional Reference Group (CSRRG) is to provide advisory, technical and monitoring support to the regional programme. The Civil Society Regional Reference Group will also create linkages with the Civil Society Reference Group (CSRG) established in the Spotlight Countries at a national and global level.

In February 2021, in collaboration with the African Union Commission, European Union, United Nations and CSOs, SIARP set up the Civil Society Regional Reference Group (CSRRG) selection committee and launched a call for applications. Based on a diversity criterion adopted by the selection committee, 15 members and three reserves were nominated in March and subsequently notified.

Following the Africa Regional Steering Committee Meeting held on 26 May 2021, a decision was made by the African Union Commission to hold internal meetings on the Civil Society Regional Reference Group and advice on the way forward. Accordingly, a letter was written by the African Union Commission in July 2021 advising focal persons from the Women Gender and Youth Directorate (WGYD) and Health and Humanitarian Social Affairs Department (HHSD) to hold a tri-partite technical meeting with United Nations and European Union focal persons to review documents and agree on the selection committee plan of action. As per the guidance, the regional steering committee decided to conduct a fresh process to select CSRRG members, with HHSD convening meetings to agree on the selection criteria and the way forward.

Accordingly, seven CSRRG selection committee members were assembled, representing CSOs (4 members), the United Nations (1 representative), the African Union Commission (1 representative) and the European Union (1 representative). An orientation meeting was then held on 26 November 2021 to discuss the role and responsibilities of the members, the timeline of the selection process and the next steps. In a parallel process, a call for application was relaunched in November 2021 and 50+ applications were received. The selection committee finalized the selection of the CSRRG process and fifteen members (1 male and 14 female) were selected. The inauguration meeting of the CSRRG was held early 2022. Three members of the CSRRG will be members of the regional steering committee and participate in the coming annual regional steering committee meeting. In the coming year the regional programme will work closely with the reference group to support both streams on advisory, technical and monitoring issues.

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

Effective inter-agency coordination was fostered throughout the implementation through monthly coordination meetings with United Nations agencies/RUNO representatives from respective HQ, Regional Offices and Liaison Offices both in Stream I and II, to monitor the developments of the programme. These regular monthly coordination platforms have helped participants to review the progress of the project,



its challenges, mitigating measures and upcoming priorities and to agree on strategies for a joint approach. Furthermore, the monthly SIARP FGM focal points meeting is attended by UNFPA and UNICEF and the African Union Commission continues to participate in this reporting period, with particular emphasis on regional monitoring of the programme.

As a lesson learned from last year, different task forces/platforms have been created comprising all of the RUNO technical team, to facilitate joint discussion and review of issues and decision-making while engaging with CSOs. The technical team has developed a standard operation procedure (SOP) for CSO engagement that has been implemented with the aim of improving coordination between RUNOs, management of the flow of information and joint decision-making processes. For activities where RUNOs engage a similar CSO, a regular coordination mechanism has been set up whereby the CSO is tasked to develop a joint work plan that creates an opportunity for two of the agencies to implement similar/related activities jointly. In addition to the joint work plan, a weekly coordination meeting has been operationalized to track progress. Accordingly, preparations are underway to conduct a training session on VAWG data collection, analysis, coordination that brought together two related activities by two different agencies. This modality of joint implementation is expected to avoid duplication of efforts, enhance alignment of activities, and create an opportunity to bring in the expertise of the different agencies and fast track implementation.

In addition, technical focal points from all United Nations agencies/RUNOs have jointly conducted a series of consultations and developed a tailor-made knowledge management strategy for pillar five of the regional programme. The strategy provides a tailor-made process for harnessing the data and knowledge products coming out of countries in the Africa region to enrich the wealth of existing data on VAWG, SRHR and HPs and to fill the gaps where no such data exists. This knowledge management (KM) will strengthen partnerships to enable access to GBV-focused KM platforms and promote close interlinkages between them in order to influence GBV-related SDGs at regional and national levels.

#### **d. Use of the United Nations Reform inter-agency tool**

During the reporting period, SIARP developed a joint call for [Expression of Interest \(EOI\)](#) in both English and French to identify experienced CSOs, women's rights organizations and/ or research institutes in Africa (including those representing regional and country networks) that will implement SIARP activities at grassroots level. This approach facilitates learning from inter-agency collaboration by eliminating duplication,

leveraging the common bargaining power of the United Nations and maximizing economies of scale. After the joint call, RUNOs also jointly reviewed and selected the CSOs. After the selection, the programme also developed SOPs to guide the joint engagement of RUNOs and CSOs throughout the programme implementation process. Joint implementation also contributes to efforts to reform the United Nations such that one United Nations entity delivers on behalf of other United Nations entities.

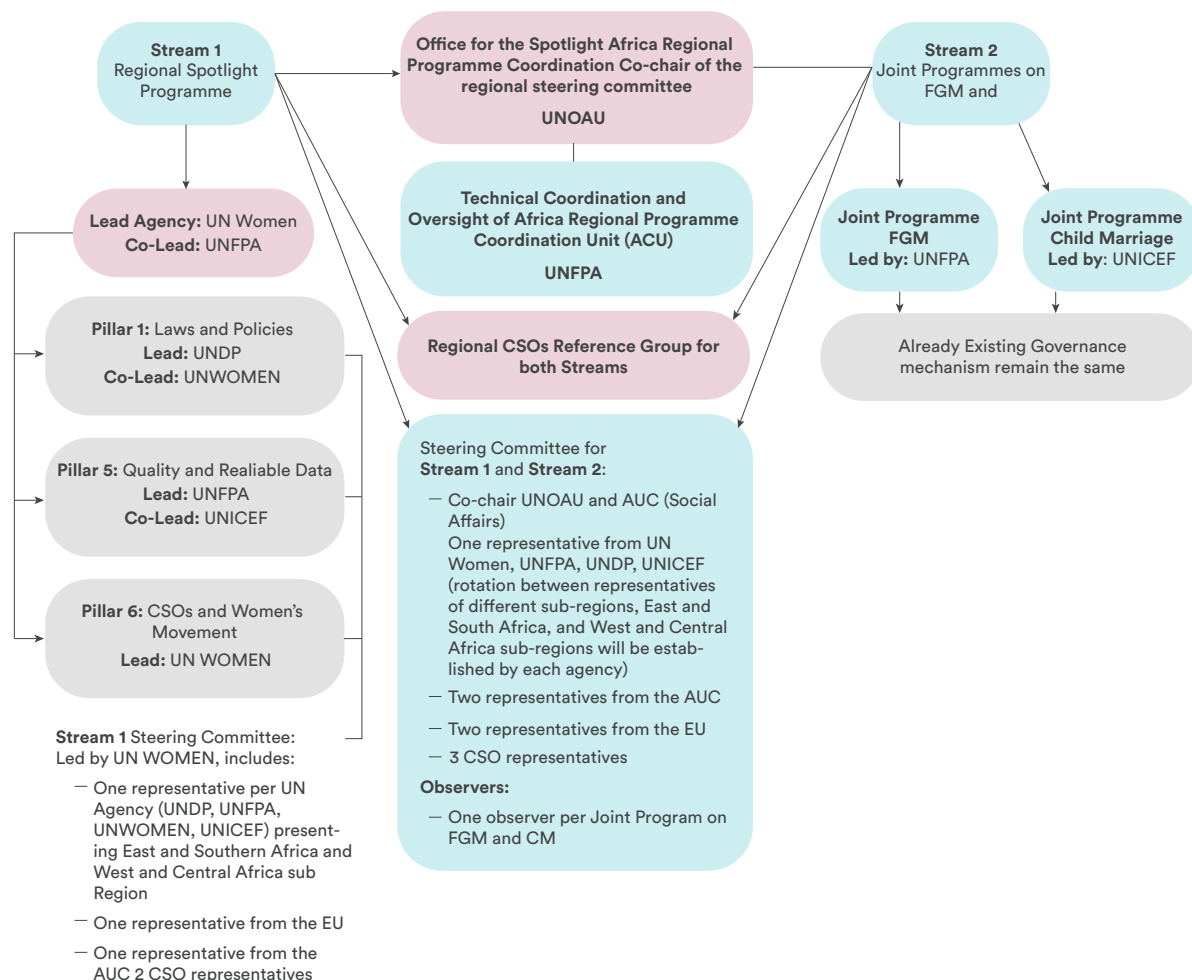
The principle of leaving no one behind informed interventions that enhanced the capacities of civil society organizations/implementing partners to reach marginalized and vulnerable groups such as adolescent girls and young women, young boys and men, and persons with disabilities. These and other groups needed to be represented at all meetings and to participate and influence SIARP processes and outcomes. To further ensure that no one was left behind, the programme also engaged traditional and religious leaders (e.g. in school reopening, addressing EAW, etc.), who often interact more closely with communities and can cascade information between the duty bearers and their respective constituents.





# Programme partnerships

## Spotlight Africa Regional Program Governance Structure



## Overview

During the 2021 implementation year, SIARP continued to engage in innovative approaches partnering with the African Union Commission, civil society organisations and the European Union to provide technical support for national and subnational initiatives and campaigns in order to eliminate harmful practices. Below is a description of major partnership engagements implemented during the year.

### a. African Union Commission

The partnership between the African Union Commission and the United Nations in delivering the Spotlight Africa Regional Programme is both strategic and programmatic,

through the Department of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development (HHSD) as lead, and the Women, Gender and Youth Directorate (WGYD). The African Union Commission is a member and co-chair of the Regional Steering Committee, which oversees the entire Spotlight Africa Regional Programme. The programme builds the capacity of the African Union Commission WGYD through the secondment of six technical staff, who play an important role in shaping the discourse and action of the African Union Commission regarding gender equality and ending gender-based violence. They have also been influential in organizing joint action with RUNOs and sharing information to effectively track coordination, as well as in facilitating African Union Commission guidance and approvals.



At the programmatic level, the African Union Commission plays a critical role as the main lead responsible for planning and reviewing the SIARP 2021 Work plan, mobilizing RECs, Member States and CSOs for joint consultations and for co-hosting high-level events organized by the SIARP. Moreover, the African Union Commission is involved in providing oversight and guidance in the selection of CSOs & CSRRG, actively participated in hiring consultants and seconded staff who are engaged to support the African Union Commission. As part of this partnership, both SIARP streams supported the African Union Commission technically and financially in organizing the third African Girls' Summit in that was held in Niger from 16–18 November 2021 to expand the policy space for girls' empowerment outcomes in Africa, resulting in the Niamey Call to Action and Commitment on Eliminating Harmful Practices in Africa.

SIARP continued working closely with other regional institutions such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in their efforts to eliminate harmful practices including child marriage and FGM.

A special consultation meeting was held with the ECOWAS Commission on Social Affairs and Gender related activities to combat GBV and eliminate FGM (Senegal, 1–2 November 2021). Moreover, a Global Youth Round Table discussion entitled Accelerating Progress to Eliminate Female Genital Mutilation: Put Young People First! was held from 3–5 November 2021. A total of 70 participants (23 male, 47 female) attended physically while 70 attended virtually from the ESARO, WCARO, ASRO and MENA Regions of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation.<sup>15</sup> Finally, the round table discussion resulted in the establishment of a Global Youth Consortium against FGM to position young people with regard to FGM.

## b. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

Partnership with civil society organizations is at the heart of the global and regional effort to accelerate the fight to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence, including child marriage and female genital mutilation, at grassroots level. In line with the SDG and African Union Commission frameworks and commitments including the Maputo Protocol and Agenda 2063, SIARP continued to establish innovative partnerships with civil society and women's rights organizations. The programme has been providing technical support to regional, national and subnational initiatives and campaigns to eliminate VAWG and harmful practices.

In order to identify experienced CSOs, women's rights organizations and/or research institutes in Africa (including those representing regional and country networks) that could implement SIARP activities, a joint call for Expression of Interest (EOI) was launched through the UN Women website, in both English and French. In the CSO selection process, SIARP developed criteria to ensure geographical and linguistic representation, as well as representation from CSOs working at both regional and grassroots level. Following an extensive review of applications, 15 CSO were selected.

A consultation session was also held on ending violence against women and girls with the African Union Commission and traditional and religious leaders; a deliberate effort was made to include young people, persons with disabilities, rural women and women from conflict settings, to ensure inclusion and apply the principle of leaving no one behind. SIARP has been using a) Joint venture contracting with United Nations agencies;<sup>16</sup> b) long-term agreements (LTAs);<sup>17</sup> and c) leveraged partnership<sup>18</sup> methods to engage with CSOs.

Accordingly, SIARP created partnerships with the following regional and international CSOs:

<sup>15</sup> The countries participating in the meeting are: Ethiopia, Sudan, Senegal, Egypt, Mauritania, Nigeria, Chad, Somalia, South Africa, the Central African Republic, Niger, Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Yemen, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Ghana, Togo, Cameroon, Côte D'Ivoire, Kenya, Uganda and Djibouti.

<sup>16</sup> The objective is to advance gender transformative programming. It targets mostly Africa-based women rights CSOs that include the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), Equality Now and the Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development. Human Right Defenders/DefendDefenders also came on board in the second half of 2021 to support the initiatives with NHRIs.

<sup>17</sup> The objective of this approach is to target particular technical capacity, for example in social and gender norms measurement, social policy and budgeting. This approach has targeted mostly CSOs with expanded capacity to provide technical support on the continent that include youth-led and women rights organizations such as AIDOS.

<sup>18</sup> Through this approach, Stream II is building on existing GPECM and JPFMG partnerships (such as Girls Not Brides, the African Council of Religious Leaders and Sonke Gender Justice) to advance activities aimed at improving research and evidence generation, policies and legislation.

1. **Equality Now**<sup>19</sup> is an international women's rights organization that works to achieve legal and systemic changes that address violence and discrimination against women and girls around the world, including Africa (13 countries), with a focus on ending sexual violence, harmful practices (child, early and forced marriage [CEFM], FGM, etc.), discrimination in Law and Sex Trafficking. It also hosts the Solidarity for African Women's Rights Coalition (SOAWR), a network of 63 CSOs working to accelerate the ratification, domestication and implementation of the Maputo Protocol. Combining grassroots activism with international, regional and national legal advocacy, Equality Now supports the achievements of SIARP in both streams and aims to eliminate violence against women and girls through the mobilization of other CSOs, approach links conducting high-level policy advocacy and global activism on ending violence against women and girls with the support and legal advice to grassroots partners and networks working on specific cases of women and girls to promote change at all levels. SIARP is partnering with Equality Now to implement activities under Pillars one and six including:

- Assessment of the status of domestication of global and regional HR instruments and progress on development and implementation of National Action Plans on EVAWG and
- Building the capacity of regional CSOs/women's rights movements to develop shadow reports on the situation of the rights of women and girls in Africa.
- Support for advocacy initiatives by regional partners including the African Union Commission and CSOs to advocate for the ratification, domestication and enforcement of regional instruments, including the Maputo Protocol, by Member States.
- Support for CSOs in establishing systems/protocols to support and protect the rights of women's rights defenders and prevent VAW-related extra-judicial executions and prosecutions.
- Under stream II, Equality Now is also conducting a desk review to analyse the experience of different African countries<sup>20</sup> in using and applying the multisectoral approaches to address gender-based violence including FGM and aims to produce a report documenting good practice and learning for efforts to address harmful practices, particularly FGM. The desk review will be finalized in the first quarter of 2022. Equality Now held a virtual training workshop on the use of the multisectoral approach (MSA) to ending FGM

in Africa for women's rights organizations (WROs), civil society organizations (CSO's) and journalists across the African countries including Kenya, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Somalia, Benin and Mali. They also invited the Governments of Kenya and Burkina Faso to speak on how they have included MSA in the FGM interventions. The training focused on the introduction of the MSA i.e. the concept, key pillars and contextualizing the approach within "End FGM" interventions across the region. The learning and sharing session that was conducted in 10 February 2021, included presentations by the Governments of Kenya and Burkina Faso, represented by the CEO of the Anti-FGM Board in Kenya and the Head of the Department of Legal Affairs and Relations from Burkina Faso. In addition, stakeholders from the National Council for the fight against the practice of excision from Burkina Faso attended the session. The outcomes of the training workshop were utilized as part of the inputs for the desk review.

- Cross-border FGM is the other area that was focused on through advocacy and trainings with CSOs. Women, youth, human rights and all other vulnerable groups were also supported and trained in how to use accountability frameworks and human rights frameworks; they also worked with the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) towards galvanizing political commitment and accelerate action towards zero Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) cases in Africa by 2030.
- Equality Now also worked with Journalists through capacity-building activities such as training and study tours in 2021.
- Women's rights CSOs are also mobilized by Equality Now, which hosts and coordinates CSOs that are members of Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR). In 2021, Equality Now mobilized over 40 SOAWR members in the CSO consultation process to contribute to content development of the Regional Action Plan on EVAWG. The programme developed a joint Standard Operating Procedure that guides the engagement of RUNOs with CSOs. As an example, the programme has set up a weekly call with RUNOs and APHRC to coordinate and ensure complementarity between the activities implemented by APHRC under different pillars and by different RUNOs.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.equalitynow.org/>

<sup>20</sup> Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda



**2. The African Population and Health Research Centre (APHRC)**<sup>21</sup> is a premier regional African research institution and policy-focused think tank exploring questions of population health and wellbeing. APHRC works in over 30 African countries and has extensive experience in gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). It engaged under pillars one, five and six in collaboration with the Eastern Africa National Networks of AIDS and Health Service Organizations (EANNASO) and Population Council Kenya, by bringing together civil society and community group voices from Africa to inform policies and improve programming on HIV, TB, Malaria and other health issues.

- APHRC is leading on harmonizing and standardizing data collection tools for collecting and measuring data on VAWG/SGBV/HP and SRHR
  - It supports regional dialogues between the African Union and Regional CSOs, Actors and Member States to promote and advocate for an enabling legal and policy environment in which CSOs can operate and advocate for women's rights
  - It builds the capacity of the African Union Commission, RECs, CSOs and women's rights organizations to coordinate data collection relating to VAWG/SGBV/HP and SRHR indicators to inform evidence-based decision-making
  - It builds the capacity of regional CSO networks (including networks of rural women, women living in conflict affected areas, women with disabilities and women living with HIV/AIDS) to fast track, monitor and report on the implementation of regional African Union instruments including the Maputo Protocol, Agenda 2063, African Union Commission Gender Strategy on VAWG/HP and SRHR.
  - It engages with CSOs and women's rights organizations (WROs) as part of the consultation process a) to identify the capacity needs of CSOs, partners and particularly WROs, in order to collect, use, analyse and disseminate sex-disaggregated data on SGBV and HP; and b) to identify key capacity needs for CSOs, especially women's rights organizations, in order that they can engage with international and continental human rights instruments and mechanisms.
- 3. Partners for Sexual Health (PSH)** is a regional, grassroots youth-serving, non-profit organization that provides sexual and reproductive health & rights (SRHR) services, including HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence services, and advocates for the domestication of SRHR policies. SIARP is partnering with PSH under pillar six. Its missions:

- To support the regional civil society reference group (CSRRG) in various advisory and advocacy engagements
- To effectively coordinate and provide oversight on the implementation of international and regional commitments on gender equality and women's rights
- To convene an annual regional CSO and women's movement forum on EVAW, SGBV/HP and SRHR to influence the African Union and global policy agendas on EVAW, SGBV/HP and SRHR activities.

**4. The Women and Law in Southern Africa Research and Education Trust (WLSA)** started as a local chapter of a sub-regional network in 1989 and is registered and operates as a Private Voluntary Organization (PVO) in Zimbabwe. Network member countries include Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland and Zambia. WLSA networks contribute to the sustainable well-being of women and girls through action-oriented research in the socio-legal field and by advocating for women's rights. WLSA work incorporates action into research by questioning and challenging the law, instigating campaigns for changes in laws, policies and action plans, educating women and girls about their rights, providing legal advice and gender-sensitizing communities and leadership. SIARP partnered with WLSA to undertake activity under pillar one, notably to build the capacity of regional partners and influence member states to develop, review, enforce and report on laws and policies to guarantee the ability of women's rights groups, CSOs and HR defenders to advance the human rights agenda and accountability on SGBV and HP.

**5. The African Council of Religious Leaders – Religions for Peace (ACRL- RfP)** is a continental coalition of different faith organizations, faith communities and religious leaders on the continent, working together to advance peace, sustainable development and shared well-being. ACRL – RfP was established in 2002 in Nairobi, Kenya, as a pan-African multi-faith organization and inaugurated in Abuja, Nigeria in 2003. Today it consists of national inter-faith councils from 28 countries and 4 sub-regional platforms. SIARP extended the partnership with ACRL – RfP for an additional nine months in order to continue with advocacy and engagement with religious leaders and members of the national interfaith councils and to address harmful practices. The regional partnership has been replicated at country level, particularly in Kenya, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, to adapt and implement a new initiative called Faith for Positive

<sup>21</sup> APHRC website: <https://aphrc.org>

Change for Children that enhances systematic engagement with faith-based organizations, at scale, for social and behaviour change and disseminates guidelines developed to promote back-to-school campaigns and protection against child marriage and FGM, as well as COVID-19.

**6. The International Committee for the Development of Peoples.** SIARP established a partnership cooperation agreement (PCA) with the **International Committee for the Development of Peoples (CISP)** to build the capacity of civil society and government partners to enhance the quality of social norms programming and measurement in the region. Through this PCA, SIARP and CISP will jointly roll out the training package on social norms with a focus on four countries: Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi and Somalia.

**7. Girls Not Brides<sup>22</sup>** is a global network of more than 1,500 civil society organizations from over 100 countries committed to ending child marriage and ensuring that girls can reach their full potential. The partnership with Girls Not Brides is the result of interactive consultations with potential partners to promote data-driven gender-transformative programming in the Africa region. The shortlisting, identification, and formalizing of partnership with Girls Not Brides not only led to a rich discussion on the United Nations-CSO model of implementation but also to deeper conversations on co-creation and the participatory engagement of national partnerships/coalitions in Mozambique and Nigeria.

SIARP also formalized a partnership agreement with Girls Not Brides<sup>23</sup> on an innovative data-driven approach to implementing gender-transformative programming through the **gender-transformative-accelerator-tool-brief**. The members of Girls not Brides work across multiple sectors, including SRHR, education, child protection, GBV and human rights and at all levels of the socioecological model, including in services, laws and policies and communities. The partnership is instrumental in achieving transformative, lasting change. This partnership fosters collaboration with civil society including youth-led local organizations. 82 per cent of Girls Not Brides members are working directly in communities, 40 per cent identify as youth-led. More broadly, Girls Not Brides has 923 members in Africa, which provides opportunities for engagement and impact at scale.

**8. The École Nationale Supérieure de Statistique et d'Analyse économique (ENSEA).** ENSEA is based in Ivory Coast and the **Ecole Nationale de la Statistique et de l'Analyse de l'Information (ENSAE)** is based in Senegal. The partnership with these research institutes is aimed at a) building the capacity of CSOs, especially WROs and governments, in GBV and Data, including VAW prevalence surveys; b) supporting CSOs and especially WROs in engaging with international and regional human rights mechanisms. They are both SIARP partners under the pillar 5 (data).

**9. The Italian Association for Women in Development – AIDOS:** AIDOS (an international CSO), in collaboration with GAMS Belgique, continued its Building Bridges programme for ending FGM engaging grassroots organizations, communities and media professionals, especially in West Africa: in Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, the Republic of Guinea and Senegal. In collaboration with local partners and radio programmes, online training programmes have been implemented to address and amplify the transformation of social and gender norms to end FGM. In addition, the CSO also implemented the Community of Practice (COP), international stakeholders dialogues and online thematic discussions

**10. The Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development – FORWARD** is a regional CSO that conducted all of its activities in Kenya, Gambia and the United Kingdom diaspora in 2021 through training on gender equality, feminism, GBV, FGM, Communication and leadership. The training was provided for 71 young women. A young women's network has been established with the participation of 58 young women from Kenya, the Gambia and the United Kingdom. Through the network and the training, support for young women's Social Action Projects was also extended to 20 young women. Trained young women are required to undertake social action projects in their communities, multiplying the reach and impact of the intervention and adding to the increasing number abandoning FGM. Two sessions on FGM were facilitated, in which 60 Diaspora change-makers participated, together with the African Diaspora Women's Network, the End FGM European Network, policy makers and other influencers.

<sup>22</sup> Equality Now countries: Burkina Faso, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Malawi, Mauritania, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo and Zambia

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/> Girls Not Brides members are a diverse network of civil society organizations working to end child marriage around the world.

**11. The Sonke Gender Justice Network (regional CSO).**

The project with Sonke Gender Justice focused on Engaging Men and Boys to Eliminate Female Genital Mutilation. Implementation began this year and the result is described in Outcome 6.

**12. The African Women's Development and Communication Network – FEMNET.** Through the Spotlight funding, FEMNET held capacity development and advocacy activities for local women leaders and young FGM elimination champions in Kenya, Guinea, Somalia, Egypt and Niger.**13. Human Rights Defenders (HRD)/DefendDefenders:**

HRD have worked together with DefendDefenders to facilitate the establishment by national human rights institutions of a platform for their continuous engagement with Civil Society Organizations and HRDs, including those working on addressing issues relating to FGM. This platform has contributed to long-lasting impacts, as it is important for civil society and national human rights institutions (NHRIs) to have clear communication channels through which to address pertinent issues in society and raise awareness of the challenges faced by HRDs. The platform was inaugurated with a virtual round table discussion attended by three NHRIs from Uganda, Senegal and Sierra Leone: Equality Now, Purposeful and Dinidari Africa respectively, as well as 42 other participants, to discuss Resolution A/HRC/RES/44/16 and [PRIMER](#) on the elimination of FGM.

This event mobilized and amplified voices and actions for the implementation of Resolution A/HRC/RES/44/16 and [PRIMER](#) on the elimination of FGM. For example, all statements made by the senior representatives of the UNFPA Office in Geneva, the Deputy Permanent Representative of Burkina Faso in Geneva, the Global Coordinator, UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of FGM, NANHRI, the Executive Director, DefendDefenders and the chairperson, African Defenders, reaffirmed political commitment and clear actions to ensure the implementation and accountability of HCR44/16.

The information gathered during this round table event has been adequately reflected in the communication and advocacy packages (audiovisuals and editorial journal/magazine) on both HCR 44/16, and the Primer for NHRIs. These resource packages will be disseminated in all upcoming events to further educate the targeted users to create a platform for further exchanges. The conversation was intended not only to educate and inform about HRC 44/16 but also to strengthen the commitment of NHRIs and CSOs to amplify their efforts and actions to implement the primer that was developed by UNFPA to guide their actions. Senegal,

for example, has taken implementation of the primer forward into a further planning process. Senegal NHRIs have now included full implementation of the Primer in their 2022 work plan.

**14. SIARP is also in the process of onboarding the Concentration of Collectives of Women's Associations in the Great Lakes region (COCAFEM/GL) to lead activities supporting regional dialogue between the African Union, regional CSO Actors and Member States to promote and advocate for an enabling legal and policy environment in which CSOs can operate and advocate for women's rights and strengthen the capacity of networks of regional CSOs (including networks of rural women, women living in conflict affected areas, women with disabilities and women living with HIV/AIDS) to fast-track, monitor and report on the implementation of regional African Union instruments including the Maputo Protocol, Agenda 2063, the African Union Commission Gender Strategy on VAWG/HP and SRHR under SIARP Pillars 1 and 6. COCAFEM/GL is made up of 11 collectives led by women, comprising a total of 1,861 Associations working at grassroots level in the three countries. There is a plan to partner with additional CSOs in the remaining programme implementation period.****c. European Union**

As a strategic key partner of SIARP, the European Union demonstrated partnership in multiple strategic events. The EU Delegation to the AU actively participated in meetings of the regional steering committee, in the CSRRG selection process, in programmatic discussion (e.g. virtual consultation on the Annual continental coordination platform for the African Union Member States implementing National Spotlight Programmes) and during the African Union Summit side event. The European Union Delegation to the AU also participated in the in-person consultation (19–21 October) in Addis Ababa between the African Union, regional faith-based organizations and communities of traditional leaders to strengthen their engagement in preventing and responding to VAW/G, SGBV and harmful practices and in promoting SRHR in Africa.

In addition, the European Union was also actively involved in the training on the effective use of the African Union Gender Observatory (AUGO) Platform on 14 and 15 December 2021 and explained the implications of the platform in terms of building the capacity of the institutions responsible for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of Human Rights instruments.

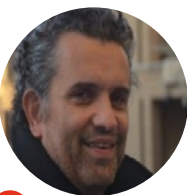
The EU Headquarters in Brussels also actively participated in the activities of Stream II joint programmes, notably in the framework of the steering committees on FGM

and Child Marriage. EU representatives have spoken at events in 2021 such as the Global Programme to End Child Marriage in East & Southern Africa and the Global Donors Meeting on Child Marriage (October).

“

**We can change legislations, or improve access to services, such as preventive or post violence care; but to change mindsets and challenge stereotypes, we need to engage at community level- engage men, boys, traditional and religious leaders at the grassroots level, based on an accurate analysis of the situation and supported by quality, disaggregated and globally comparable data.**

- Thomas Huygebaert  
Head of Policy Cooperation  
EU Delegation to the African Union



”

#### **d. Cooperation with other United Nations agencies**

Effective inter-agency coordination was fostered throughout implementation through a regular monthly meeting with United Nations agencies/RUNO representatives from HQ, Regional and Liaison Offices respectively, in both streams, to monitor developments in the programme. These monthly coordination platforms helped participants to review the progress of the project, its challenges, mitigating measures and upcoming priorities and to agree on strategies for a joint approach. Furthermore, the monthly SIARP FGM focal points meeting is attended by UNFPA and UNICEF Addis Ababa and the African Union Commission continues to participate in monitoring monthly progress and the plan.

In addition, different task forces/platforms comprise each RUNO's technical team, to facilitate joint discussion and review of issues and decision-making while engaging with CSOs. The technical team has developed a standard operating procedure (SOP) for CSO engagement that has been implemented with the aim of improving coordination between RUNOs and to manage the flow of information and joint decision-making processes.

In addition, technical focal points from all United Nations agencies/RUNOs have jointly developed a knowledge management strategy that is discussed in detail under pillar five.

#### **e. Other partners and resource mobilization**

SIARP partners up with traditional and religious leaders to support partnerships between the African Union, regional faith-based organizations and communities of traditional leaders, to strengthen their engagement in preventing and responding to VAW/G, SGBV and harmful practices, as well as in promoting SRHR in Africa. This engagement is also expected to develop guidelines, expected to be finalized in 2022 quarter four, for engaging the African Union Commission and traditional and religious leaders. In addition, under stream one, SIARP is also in the process of forming a partnership with the University of Pretoria to support Member States in drafting and submitting situational reports on the rights of women and girls in Africa.





# Capturing broader transformations across outcomes

Increased investments in and collaboration with CSOs and the women's movement has been a cross-cutting theme for programme implementation across outcomes one, five and six. The programme established formal agreements with 14 regional CSOs, research institutions and women's rights organizations.

The regional programme provided these CSOs with technical and financial support to strengthen their technical, institutional and networking capacities, enhance their effectiveness and participation in African Union policy and implementation processes addressing harmful practices and issues of violence against women and girls. In this reporting period, the programme witnessed intersectional transformations across outcomes, mainly through CSOs engagement, which has been instrumental in bridging the accountability paths between duty bearers and rights holders (the community). The assessments/studies, accountability framework tool, regional FGM report and scorecard that are delivered under pillar one are expected to be effectively utilized by the CSO (pillar six, women's movement) as long as they foster the accountability process of state commitments towards ending VAWG and harmful practices.

Furthermore, the capacity-building efforts under pillar five will strengthen the capacity of the African Union Commission, RECs, CSOs and women's rights organizations to coordinate data collection relating to VAWG/SGBV/HP and SRHR indicators. This data will inform evidence-based decision-making and build the capacity of networks of regional CSOs (including networks of rural women, women living in conflict-affected areas, women with disabilities and women living with HIV/AIDS) to effectively track, monitor and report on the implementation of regional African Union instruments including the Maputo Protocol, Agenda 2063 and the African Union Commission Gender Strategy on VAWG/HP and SRHR.

The strategic documents (strategy, policy briefs) developed on the engagement of men and boys under pillar six will contribute to outcome one as the intervention intends to influence the adoption of policy frameworks on the engagement of men and boys. Advocacy strategies and community mobilization tools to engage men and

boys, developed through a CSO in outcome six, will also contribute to the success of outcome three prevention by promoting gender-equitable social norms, attitudes and behaviour change in men and boys to prevent violence against women and girls and harmful practices.

The evidence on social norms (ACT) will also be an input for the entire programme development and response plan at policy and legal framework level and at community mobilization level (pillar three in the spotlight initiative implementing countries) that will improve services addressing violence against women and girls and harmful practices.

The innovative solution to ending FGM and child marriage that is promoted under outcome six will bring transformative changes to outcomes by improving the availability, accessibility and quality of sub-national essential services for survivors of violence and harmful practices.

The inter-agency collaboration that was witnessed during CSO selection was a shining example of application of the United Nations reform principle improving the outcome of collaborative work: the Expression of Interest (EOI) could be sent out to a larger audience and potential duplication of effort could be reduced by selecting similar CSOs.


The Knowledge Management strategy that has been developed primarily under outcome five will strengthen the synergy between Streams I and II on the learnings coming out of the Spotlight Initiative implementing countries and regional programmes. This strategy will facilitate intra-outcome data generation and knowledge capture and development, fostering innovation and enhancing the capacity of CSOs through in-house learning sessions, webinars and courses.

## Reporting on the implementation of Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PME)

The programme invested in building the capacity of regional CSOs and women's rights organizations to draft and submit periodic reports about the rights of women and girls in Africa. As a result, in collaboration with a regional CSO (Equality Now), SIARP conducted a training session for CSOs on drafting and submitting periodic reports on the situation regarding women and girls rights in Africa. The training involved 26 participants drawn from 21 countries from Africa's five sub-regions. The training focused on building the capacity of CSOs/women's rights organizations to engage with the shadow/alternative reporting processes within the different regional and international mechanisms, in order to increase accountability for human rights commitments and ensure wider implementation of the relevant regional and global instruments.

The programme also created partnerships with two CSOs in Nigeria and Tanzania that are mobilizing other CSOs to prepare shadow reports once they have received capacity-building training on report preparation. A training manual on alternative periodic reporting on women's rights in Africa is in production to build the capacity of CSOs.

In addition the regional programme will work closely with the established CSRRG to better coordinate and supervise the Spotlight Africa programme and the implementation of international and regional commitments on gender equality and women's rights. The regional programme will also facilitate monitoring missions for the CSRRG to build its capacity for programme monitoring and reporting.




**The first step in eliminating violence is for all the key players – in a family, in a community, in society – to begin to have conversations and say, ‘this is not right, and it must stop.**

- Amina Mohammed  
UN Deputy Secretary-General









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

# stand up to abuse and stop violence against women and girls



Initiated by the European Union and United Nations



**#SpotlightEndViolence**



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



# Results: Capturing change at outcome level

The following section explains the results under the Initiative's three outcome areas (Outcomes one, five and six).

## Outcome 1: Legal and policy framework

During this reporting period, in collaboration with a regional CSO, SIARP executed the following key initiatives contributing to tackling the multiple obstacles faced as regards the ratification, domestication and enforcement of regional laws and policies.

**Regional evidence-based mapping and assessment** was conducted to establish the status of implementation/enforcement of laws and policies, action plans, financing and the capacity of regional partners and member states to deliver EVA WG programmes. The assessment found out that although there are frameworks, regional strategies and action plans in place to address EVAWG/GBV/Women Peace Security(WPS), there are gaps, including the limited capacity of RECs to coordinate member states in implementing interventions for EVAWG, the existence of different policies in different member states, inconsistencies in budgets and inadequate funding for EVAWG, poor coordination of national institutions and a shortage/absence of mechanisms for monitoring compliance and EVAWG reporting. The recommendations of the study are informing the development of the Africa Regional Action Plan and will further contribute to implementation of the capacity-building programme for regional partners on drafting and reviewing laws and policies in relation to EVAWG and SRHR.

**Regional partners develop first Regional Action Plan for Africa on Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls.**<sup>24</sup> SIARP supported the ongoing process to develop the first-ever evidence-based Regional Action Plan (RAP) for Africa with a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework on Eliminating Violence against Women and Girls (EVAWG) including SGBV/HP and SRHR. The guideline for the Regional Action plan on EVAWG is now in place and consultations have been conducted with regional partners (RECs, the African Union, Member states, CSOs) that contribute to the

content of the Action Plan. The consultation increased the commitment of partners, and these contributed to the identification of regional efforts included in the Action Plan for EVAWG that is being drafted. By sharing experiences and contributing to the development of a Regional Action Plan (RAP), gender experts and senior EVAWG administrators in the region have demonstrated commitment and buy-in for implementing RAP. The Monitoring and Evaluation framework embedded in RAP will also enable Member States to measure progress and account for implementation of this action plan to deliver on EVAWG in particular and on GEWE in general.

With only 26 out of 55 African Member States having National Action Plans on EVAWG, there is a current need for a regional framework to provide a common action plan and a guiding framework for all Member States to deliver on EVAWG commitments. The plan will detail coordinated actions, structures, mechanisms, strategies and investments to be taken at regional and national levels for violence prevention and response programming. This regional action plan will also be a strategic instrument to enable regional partners and Member States to **move from commitment to action** on the elimination of violence against women and girls, including Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR).

**Facilitators' training manual developed on the drafting, ratification and implementation of HR instruments in relation to EVAWG/SRHR.** SIARP is facilitating the development of a facilitators' training manual to build the capacity of regional partners to influence member states on the drafting, ratification, and implementation of HR instruments in relation to EVAWG/SRHR. A regional consultation was conducted with RECS, CSOs and the African Union Commission, who all contributed to the development of the training manual content. The manual will be finalized in the first quarter of 2022 and will inform the roll-out of the capacity-building programme for regional partners on advocating, developing, enforcing and reporting on laws and policies aimed at eliminating violence against women and girls in the region.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.africa.undp.org/content/rba/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2021/regional-partners-develop-first-regional-action-plan-for-africa.html>

**Assessment conducted of the status of domestication and implementation of the subject laws and the challenges experienced in eliminating SGBV.** A desk review was conducted analysing the laws on SGBV, the status of domestication and implementation of the subject laws and the challenges experienced in eliminating SGBV. The desk review was conducted in 13<sup>25</sup> countries that have not ratified the Maputo protocol. The report is currently under internal review by SIARP, Equality Now and women's rights organizations in those 13 countries.

**SIARP supported the third African Girls' Summit to reinforce national and regional responses as regards the implementation of policy commitments and legal provisions in addressing harmful practices.** The programme provided technical and financial support for realization of the summit, from development of the agenda to communicating the summit's declaration statement. SIARP efficiently collaborated with the African Union Commission Youth Division and organized a pre-summit youth event that brought a total of 410 participants together as inspired and determined youth leaders who believe that the youth of Africa must be fully involved, empowered and meaningfully engaged in ending harmful practices. The sessions sought member states accountability for accelerating the end of harmful practices using a culture, human rights and an accountability framework. The sessions also urge the importance of: working closely with traditional and faith leaders to bridge knowledge gaps; supporting and engaging adolescent girls and young women in national COVID-19 responses; empowering girls and boys with digital skills and consider establishing an e-village as a platform for showcasing and incubating innovation; and, especially, ending harmful practices and fostering intergenerational knowledge and skills exchange

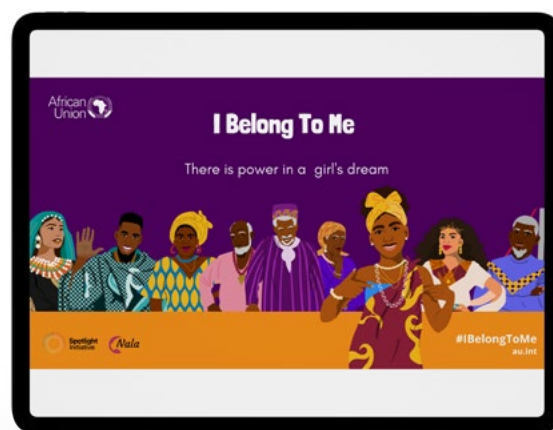


© African Union Commission

Brooke Machingura from Zimbabwe participated in the AGS opening ceremony and delivered the *I Belong To Me* poem alongside three other activists, November 2021

through scaled up mentorship programmes. The events also stressed the need for immediate action beyond the development of frameworks/protocols: all actors have enough legal instruments to act and change the current situation. Key recommendations include urgent mobilization of young people to break the vicious circle and bring out more champions from among them, who can drive action. The event also pointed out the need to use social media more creatively to reinforce further actions. Some of the key recommendations from the session were incorporated into the third African Girls' Summit outcome document or the Niamey Call to Action and Commitment to Eliminate Harmful Practices in Africa.

During the closing session of the summit, the Spotlight Initiative programme used the opportunity for a preview launch of the **African Union I Belong To Me** storybook (details included in the communication and visibility section), which was created with the technical and financial support of the Initiative.



**African Union Harmful Practices Accountability Framework developed.** SIARP supported the development of the regional Accountability Framework to provide guidance to make Member States more accountable for eliminating gender-based violence and harmful practices, particularly female genital mutilation and child marriage, with a clarified process, guidelines, actions and measures on the ground. The tool will enable the African Union Commission to monitor progress at all levels, in line with all of the national, regional, continental and international commitments to end harmful practices including FGM and child marriage. The framework is built upon, and benefits from, existing African Union accountability frameworks to build the capacity of non-state actors to utilize the spectrum of tools and processes at the disposal of the court to protect and safeguard the rights of girls and women in efforts to eliminate FGM.

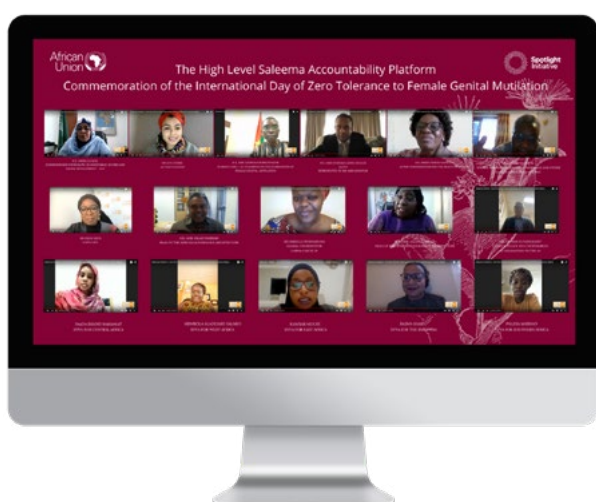
<sup>25</sup> Botswana, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Eritrea, Madagascar, Morocco, Niger, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan.



The programme set up a working group drawn from the African Union Commission Department of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development (HHSD) and Regional and HQ staff of UNFPA and UNICEF, to review the entire framework development process. The document is under final review and the edits will be endorsed by the African Union Specialized Technical Committee (STC). The framework will be finalized and translated into French and Arabic for implementation by March 2022 at the latest. When the accountability Framework is put into practice it will serve as a platform for Member States to report on and strengthen action towards the elimination of gender-based violence, particularly female genital mutilation and child marriage. It is also expected to change the standpoint of stakeholders who are providing support to the victims of harmful practices. The systematic reporting and assessment actions explicitly show the progress, so survivors will be provided services according to the needs and gaps characterized in the reports and assessments.

#### African Union Report on FGM and Score Card developed.

The African Union report on female genital mutilation on the continent is developed to provide a recent historic account, scope of the harmful practice, an examination of the impact on lives of young girls and women, a policy analysis and recommendations, particularly on peer review towards accelerated elimination of female genital mutilation in Africa. The report was prepared along with a policy document ([Policy Brief on Getting to Zero Female Genital Mutilation in Africa](#)) and a scorecard for peer review that was expected to be used along with the African Union HP Accountability Framework. The document is undergoing final review by the African Union Commission, editing and translation to French and Arabic, and some design work. The document will be circulated among the Member States by the beginning of 2022 as an accountability mechanisms resource document.



*The high-level Saleema accountability platform, February 2021*

#### SIRAP supported repositioning the Saleema accountability platform in the fringe of the African Union Summit.

The Saleema accountability platform was created during the African Union summit to commemorate the International Day of Zero Tolerance to FGM. This high-level virtual event convened 106 stakeholders including: the Ambassador of the European Union to the African Union; the Head of the African Governance Architecture; the Commissioner on Gender of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights; the elected member of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the African Union Special Rapporteur on Child Marriage and other Harmful Practices; and civil society: the African Women Leaders Network.

The session also brought together those engaged in designing and implementing the African Union Accountability Framework on Harmful Practices. Under the leadership of the African Union Commissioner of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development, the Saleema Youth Victorious Ambassadors (SYVAs) convened Member States: Burkina Faso, Egypt; FGM elimination champions, to learn from their best experience including the accountability system of the dedicated national councils that they instituted to address harmful practices. This platform has taken into consideration the multi-layered action necessary for the elimination of harmful practices by posing specific questions to stakeholders based on their mandates and capacity, with the objective of creating an experience and identifying challenges and promising practices.

## Outcome 5: Data

In this reporting year, SIARP supported the African Union Commission, UNECA, RECs, member states and other relevant regional partners to increase the availability and use of reliable quality data and improve the harmonization of data collection concerning VAWG and SGBV/HP/SRHR. The following section describes key activities conducted by SIARP under Pillar 5.

- **SIARP supported strengthening the African Union Commission regional data and research gender observatory and scorecard platform** to ensure quality, inclusive periodic reporting of VAWG/SGBV/HP and SRHR by member states and CSOs. The Gender Observatory stands as the most comprehensive and up-to-date source of information about Member States' efforts towards achieving Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. The initial design with comprehensive indicators was finalized by the end of 2021; however, the launch was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, support this year focused on revamping the gender observatory to include additional indicators relating to VAWG/SGBV/HP/SRHR and training member states. Once



fully operational, the Gender Scorecard is expected to provide a valuable entry point for data analysis, thereby opening a window of opportunity for improved decision-making towards the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment in the region. Specific support provided by SIARP in 2021 includes:

- Reviewing thematic areas of the Gender observatory to include systemic data on VAWG and SGBV/HP and SRHR indicators for young women. This includes partnering with RUNOs to review the scorecard and its indicators.
- Engaging in web hosting; revamping and operationalizing the Gender observatory by including systematic data on VAWG and SGBV/HP and SRHR as mandated by African Union Instruments such as the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA) and Agenda 2063. The platform has now been re-launched as the [African Union Gender Observatory](#), with new content.
- Supporting training on effective use of the African Union Gender Observatory (AUGO). This was held on 14 and 15 December, bringing together 139 participants from member states, CSOs, the African Union and partner organizations.

SIARP will continue refining activities so that results from the Gender scorecard are widely available and disseminated to policy makers for decision-making. This will be achieved through strengthened coordination vis-à-vis commitments to SDGs, CEDAW and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, with the support of SIARP. It has also strengthened the capacity of the African Union Commission, RECs, CSOs and women's rights organizations to coordinate data collection relating to VAWG/SGBV/HP and SRHR indicators with which to inform evidence-based decision-making. To this contribution, a Technical Working Group is established as a coordination mechanism composed of CSOs, ECA, the African Union Commission and RUNOs. Terms of reference were established to guide engagement of the thematic working group (TWG), a mandate was prepared and three follow-up TWG meetings were held. During the meetings, the working group reviewed the training curriculum outline, identified eligible participants for the training and prepared a draft concept note plus a roadmap. APHRC is engaged as a regional partner in the coordination of data collection and the development of a curriculum that will be cascaded in three rounds of training sessions. SIARP also supported the development of harmonized, standardized data collection tools on VAWG/SGBV/HP and SRHR that

will enable continental progress to be measured and comparable data to be collected and used.

- **The Annual continental coordination platform for National Spotlight Initiative** programme implementing countries is organized to provide a continental dialogue space for discussing progress made and challenges faced in VAWG/SGBV/HP and promoting SRHR. The platform was organized in collaboration with the African Union Commission's Women, Gender, and Youth Directorate and all RUNOs. It is further included in a [Social Media Campaign](#) articulating the commitments and statements of a range of high-level participants, on positive actions to address thematic issues. As a result, a [knowledge product](#) was developed to showcase the lessons and promising practices were presented during the event, which is currently pending clearance for publication from the African Union Commission.

- **Knowledge management implementation strategy developed.** A strategy was developed in consultation with RUNOs and the African Union to establish a set of processes and methods focused on capturing, documenting, disseminating, identifying, leveraging, sharing, structuring and deriving value from information assets relating to VAWG/SGBV, sexual and reproductive health and rights and HP. This knowledge management (KM) Strategy ([Final draft – SIARP KM strategy](#)) for SIARP is the first step towards the development of a continental knowledge management hub that will foster south-south exchange between a wide range of stakeholders on what works to prevent and respond to VAWG and HP in Africa.

As part of the process, an implementation plan was also prepared; coordination between RUNOs and UNECA strengthened to support continental-level knowledge management on VAWG. A knowledge management hub plan was prepared and an agreed business requirement finalized.

- **KNOWVAW data training:** In this reporting period, preparation of an online KNOWVAW data course is finalized. The online training will be rolled out in the first quarter of 2022 for selected CSO representatives and RUNO technical staff. This will be the basis for the development and customization of a curriculum on VAW prevalence surveys for the region.
- **Adopting data-driven gender transformative approaches:** This activity builds on the UNFPA-UNICEF Global programme on ending child marriage. It supports the critical role of key players – within the wider social ecosystem including boys, men, gatekeepers, systems and policymakers – in transforming unequal gender norms and promoting gender equality. In order to address the challenge,

the [gender-transformative-accelerator-tool-brief](#) examining structural barriers to gender equality, drivers and bottlenecks has been adapted and implemented to ensure gender-transformative programming. The tool has been implemented in Ethiopia, India, Mozambique and Niger (with plans for a roll-out in Burkina Faso and Bangladesh in 2022), in the hope that it will contribute to building the capacity of countries to implement gender-transformative actions. This approach will be expanded to eight Africa Spotlight countries through collaboration with Girls Not Brides, based on the outcomes of the experiences of the four countries.

- **A cross-regional knowledge-sharing platform to understand and address bottlenecks in FGM-related health care.** SIARP provided a virtual platform to countries in the Arab States (MENA), West and Central Africa, and East and Southern Africa on which to exchange experiences and lessons learned and improve access to and the provision of FGM-related health care in programme countries. Webinars were conducted on Prevention and Response to FGM, Cross-Border FGM and Social Norms Change. Each webinar had over 100 participants from all regions. The knowledge sharing webinars facilitated knowledge exchange at a time when travel between countries was limited due to COVID-19 SOPs. The platform provided Nigeria, Djibouti and Kenya with an opportunity to share their experiences, including of bottlenecks in service provision during the COVID-19 lockdowns, in order to ensure continuity.
- **Measuring social norms:** Under SIARP, the [ACT framework](#) used to measure and track changes in social norms relating to female genital mutilation has been rolled out in Eritrea to establish baseline indicators for child marriage and FGM social and behaviour change. The results of the ACT surveys are informing programme design, especially at community level where reflective dialogues are being held to change beliefs and norms that reinforce community adoption of these harmful practices.
- **Harnessing the power of data to end harmful practices:** SIARP delivered a data training session aimed at building the capacity of those handling data on child marriage and FGM (government personnel in key decision-making positions, CSO programme managers, UNFPA and UNICEF programme staff) and data generators (national statistical officers) to evaluate data needs and the collection, management, analysis and use of child marriage and FGM data. Over 111 participants in Spotlight focus countries and non-Spotlight focus countries underwent a two-

week online training course run from Africa. The course built the capacity of trainees to influence the collection of disaggregated VAWG data including SGBV/HP, in line with globally agreed standards. It also contributed to making national data accessible and easily disseminated for use by decision-makers and civil society.

- **Data country profiles on child marriage for Advocacy.** [Child marriage country profiles were developed](#) and produced for six Spotlight target countries (Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mali, Liberia, Nigeria, and Mozambique), in two languages, indicating a snapshot of the situation in each of the countries with respect to child marriage levels and trends, as well as a core set of related indicators. The profiles were developed to support the evidence-based advocacy efforts of civil society partners, UNICEF, UNFPA and other partners.
- **Community of practice:** SIARP partnered with AIDOS (the Italian Association for Women in Development) to hold community of practice (COP) activities on FGM as a forum in which to widely share evidence, best practices and challenges and moderate [online debates](#) and discussions. Several sub-activities took place within the framework of the activity, one of which was the International Stakeholders' Dialogue series in English and French.

“

Ending FGM will take a long time and this needs real commitment. We also need a political decision.

- Awa Mah Camara  
Journalist at the  
National TV station (ORTM) in Mali



”

This community of practice raised the number of its members to 556 by the end of 2021. Through the Online Talks in French and English, 175 persons were reached. Likewise, through the [International Stakeholders Dialogues](#), 53 stakeholders from the public sector and civil society, representing 33 organizations from 21 countries (9 in Africa, 10 in Europe and 2 in North America), as well as 84 other participants, were reached to discuss the gender transformative approach

aimed at eliminating FGM.<sup>26</sup> Before the final webinar that took place on 2 December, a report on Results of the International Stakeholder Dialogue on FGM was prepared and shared with the donor community and all of the participants from various organizations. Four videos were produced by AIDOS during the previous phase of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of FGM as a support tool for the UNFPA-UNICEF Manual on Social Norms and Change. These were launched online between February and May 2021.

“

My documentary is going to help other girls to know that their voices matter. Storytelling allows community voices to be heard.

- Charity Resian Nempaso  
Co-director of the film  
Against All Odds



”

The outcomes of the dialogues conducted at the international Stakeholders' meetings were taken forward into the future work of the Community of Practice on FGM, which provides virtual spaces for collective discussion, ideas and information-sharing on female genital mutilation while applying a bridge-building perspective (focusing both on Africa and Europe). Through the dialogues, organizations brought innovative feminist practices and strategies to the table that often proved complementary. Participants collectively identified root causes and consequences of FGM and critically reviewed gender roles and power

relations preventing them from opposing the practice and entering into an empowering process. Some such processes were discussed: girls' and boys' SRHR clubs; gender transformative activities such as men's groups that encourage reflection on hegemonic masculinity and promote the role of men in ending all types of GBV; training male allies against FGM; legal clinics that uphold women's rights in law; engaging male religious and community leaders. All these subjects will deeply affect both the providers' services and the lives of victims of FGM receiving services.



## Outcome 6: Women's movement and civil society

During the reporting period, SIARP has increased investment in collaboration with CSOs and women's movements. It is engaged in strengthening the technical, institutional and networking capacities of CSOs that will enhance the effectiveness of African Union policy and boost participation in implementation processes aimed at addressing harmful practices and violence against women and girls. As part of this process, through the joint call for Expression of interest (EOI) and additional partner selection method, the programme has established formal agreements with nine regional CSOs, research institutions and women's rights organizations.

**Desk review conducted on the status of civic space in Africa.** In collaboration with APHRC, the programme carried out a desk review of: the status of the civic space in selected countries<sup>27</sup>; policy-making efforts to eliminate VAWG; African Union instruments on ending VAWG and their status (ratification/domestication/implementation); the status of capacity-building efforts and VAWG data capture tools.

<sup>26</sup> All of the thematic discussions held in 2021 can be reached from the AIDOS webpage

<https://copfgm.org/gender-transformative-approaches>

<https://copfgm.org/media-fgm>

<https://copfgm.org/law-and-fgm>

<https://copfgm.org/intergenerational>

<https://copfgm.org/male-involvement-in-ending-fgm>

Blog space: <https://copfgm.org/blog-en>

YouTube video-interviews and Webinar recordings:

<https://youtu.be/zl-uSP47oUU>

<https://youtu.be/zQ9eBQuZ0f0>

<https://youtu.be/eaEOmpmWUls>

<https://youtu.be/VlojcVvEJ9g>

<https://youtu.be/6IC2v9pqYUI>

<sup>27</sup> Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

Key recommendations made included the following:

- Regional and national CSOs need to work together at national, regional and African Union level to effectively advocate for states to repeal or substantially amend restrictive legislation that is not in accordance with international law and standards in protecting freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression.
- Effort needs to be made to protect civic space in which civil society can advocate and participate in decision-making.
- There is a need to increase citizen participation in expanding the boundaries of fundamental rights in order to shift power relations between citizens and their political leadership.
- There is a need to strengthen existing mechanisms with the aim of putting in place new systems to address reprisals against human rights defenders who are complying with international and regional instruments, in order to ensure that civil society actors are not put at risk because of any information they provide while publicly calling out states for imposing restrictions on the participation of civil society.
- The African Union human rights mechanisms should strengthen their monitoring of the states' obligation to adhere to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Guidelines on Freedom of Association and Assembly, which were adopted at the sixtieth ordinary session of the Commission in May 2017.

The findings of the assessment will inform the four regional dialogues that will be organized by the program with close collaboration of the African Union and regional CSO Actors and Member States to promote and advocate for an enabling legal and policy environment for CSOs.

**The Spotlight programme strengthened partnerships between the African Union Commission, traditional leaders and religious leaders in ending violence against women and girls.** This programme aims to build and strengthen such partnerships working to end violence against women and girls. A consultation meeting was held from 19 to 21 October 2021 that brought together regional Faith Based Organizations (FBOs), Cultural Traditional Leaders (CTLs), the African Union Commission and RECs for expanded dialogue on the importance of their partnership in addressing EVAWG, HP and SRHR. The strategic sessions explored and documented accountability mechanisms and longer-term efforts by regional FBOs and CTLs. Learning from the engagement was outlined and recorded

to guide the engagement of regional FBOs and CTLs. The programme drafted guidelines that reinforced the engagement of traditional leaders, religious leaders and the African Union Commission. The guideline will be validated in the next reporting period and will be endorsed by the key stakeholders as a key guiding document.



*Strategic Consultative meeting with Cultural and Religious leaders in ending violence against women and girls.*

**The Spotlight Programme supported the Safe Re-opening and Back-to-school campaign:** SIARP and the African Council of Religious Leaders – Religions for Peace (ACRL-RfP) convened an Interfaith virtual conference on 8 October 2021 to advocate for the safe reopening of all schools in Eastern and Southern Africa. The online event brought together 140<sup>28</sup> stakeholders from seven countries in the region (Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe), from multi-faith religious leaders to civil society organizations, academicians and technical experts. The team joined the Interfaith conference to strongly advocate for governments to reopen and keep all schools operational, even in communities with high rates of COVID-19, while imposing all adequate safety measures: particularly ventilation, but also hygiene, social distancing and the use of masks. Stakeholders also noted the importance of more budget allocation for quality education to finance COVID-19 safety protocols and to run community engagement programmes that would bring all learners back to school, including those who had dropped out before COVID-19. This strategic engagement will be replicated in Q1 of 2022 to discuss the role of religious leaders in ending harmful practices.

**Innovative ideas promoted to reduce the Impact of harmful practices on the mental health of children and young people.** The Spotlight programme, in collaboration with the African Union Commission Youth Division and the

<sup>28</sup> Members of the Council of Traditional and Religious Leaders of Africa (COTLA), which was established with UN Women's support, the 2021 African Union Men's Conference on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, the IPPF-led State of African Women (SoAW) Campaign, as well as African Union campaigns on eliminating violence against women and girls (EVAWG), early and child marriage (ECM) and FGM, including the African Union Initiative on the Elimination of FGM and the recently launched Saleema Initiative for ending FGM



Department of Health and Humanitarian Affairs (DHHS), together with the Youth Reference Group, the African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage, launched a seed fund, the Youth Innovation Challenge<sup>29</sup> to test innovative youth ideas on the impact of harmful practices on the mental health of children and young people in their communities. The winners will be selected in the first quarter of 2022 and funded to implement innovative approaches that will help survivors of harmful practices cope with the psychosocial consequences of their experiences, as well as create awareness of the impact of harmful practices on mental wellbeing and mental health.

#### Capacity building for civil society in programming and measuring social norms relating to harmful practices.

SIARP developed and tested (in Kenya with government and civil society) a new social norms training package that will be adapted into self-paced online training modules. Through a partnership cooperation agreement with the [International Committee for the Development of Peoples \(CISP\)](#), the training will be rolled out in four countries (Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi and Somalia) to enhance the quality of social norms programming and measurement at national and subnational level. CISP, in addition to training, will also offer mentorship support to local civil society organizations targeted by the programme for capacity building.

#### Open interaction between the diaspora in European Union countries and communities in Africa to facilitate and promote social norm changes in favour of the elimination of FGM.

In collaboration with AIDOS, an initiative entitled Building Bridges is being implemented between the diaspora in European Union countries and communities in Africa. Sensitization through the use of radio and video media was rolled out throughout the year in five<sup>30</sup> West African Countries. Radio production training was also given to 11 professionals from the aforementioned countries, which resulted in the production of podcasts, details of which are recorded in the communication and visibility section of this report. Through the interaction between the diaspora and Africa, nearly 2000 people were sensitized to the prevention of FGM through such media as films that were produced prior to the start of the Spotlight programme. Both the radio programmes and the media professionals trained will help to raise societal awareness regarding the prevention and elimination of FGM.

#### CSOs actively engaged in trickle-down community social action projects aimed at eliminating FGM. Three CSOs<sup>31</sup>

were supported as implementing partners. All three CSOs undertook national, regional and global level activities for lobbying and advocating for the elimination of FGM and protecting the rights of girls and women.

Training on gender equality, feminism, GBV, FGM, communication and leadership was given to 71 young women (from Kenya and Gambia) by a regional CSO (FORWARD). A young women's network has been established with the participation of 58 young women from Kenya, the Gambia and the United Kingdom diaspora. Through the network and the training, support for young women's social action projects was also given to 20 young women. After attending the training, the young women are required to undertake social action projects in their communities to intensify the impact of the intervention to end FGM. Two sessions on the issue of female genital mutilation were facilitated; those participating included 60 Diaspora change-makers, the African Diaspora Women's Network and the End FGM European Network, as well as policymakers and other influencers ([Link to the Gambia training video](#)).

#### Capacity building in periodic reporting for CSOs.

In collaboration with a regional CSO (Equality Now), SIARP conducted a training session for CSOs on drafting and submitting periodic reports on the situation of the rights of women and girls in Africa. The training involved 26 participants drawn from 21 countries from the five sub-regions of Africa. The training focused on building the capacity of CSOs/women's rights organizations to engage with the shadow/alternative reporting processes within the different regional and international mechanisms aimed at promoting accountability for human rights commitments and ensuring greater implementation of the relevant regional and global instruments. In addition, the SIARP created partnerships with CSOs in Nigeria and Tanzania to strengthen their capacity on drafting and submission of periodic reports about the rights of women and girls in Africa. These CSOs are engaged in mobilizing other CSOs and preparing shadow reports. A training manual on alternative reporting is under development that will enable CSOs to influence the implementation of laws and policies concerning EVAWG.

#### National and regional laws policy research, advocacy strategy and community mobilization tool focusing on the engagement of men and boys developed.

The project with Sonke Gender Justice focused on Engaging Men and Boys to Eliminate Female Genital Mutilation. Policy research [LINK](#) has been finalized to establish whether or not they

<sup>29</sup> [Call for application](#)

<sup>30</sup> (Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, the Republic of Guinea and Burkina Faso)

<sup>31</sup> *Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development - FORWARD, the African Women's Development and Communication Network – FEMNET, Equality Now*

outlaw the practice of FGM and to identify whether such laws and policies promote the engagement of men and boys to address harmful social, cultural and gender norms and practices that perpetuate the practice of FGM; in addition, a scorecard has been developed [LINK](#) that will facilitate the monitoring of national and regional laws and policies, focusing on the engagement of men and boys. Along with the policy research and the development of the scorecard, a policy advocacy strategy on FGM was prepared, [LINK](#) aimed at building the capacity of civil society partners, including the existing Men Engage Alliance national and regional networks, youth and faith-based organizations. 174 persons downloaded all of the documents.

In addition to the policy review, a draft community mobilization tool has been developed to enable Men Engage Alliance (MEA) partners/CSOs to mobilize men and boys to advocate for an end to FGM. This has been through the development of social media campaign content on the role of men and boys in eliminating FGM. Sonke Gender Justice also developed a Journalists' Handbook on FGM.

A two-day meeting was held on 11 and 12 October 2021 with the General Purpose Committee of the East Africa Legislative Assembly in Arusha in collaboration with Amref and EASSI. The purpose of the meeting was to advocate for the Passing of the EAC Anti-FGM Bill into Law and to advocate for male engagement in addressing FGM and emerging trends such as cross-border FGM.

**In addition, in collaboration with Sonke Gender Justice, SIARP fostered social change at grassroots level** by providing a variety of training sessions to a total of 58 trainees including religious leaders, media professionals, youth advocates and men and boys. The sessions covered creative advocacy, media reporting on FGM, the gender transformative approach and changes in social norms. Similar capacity building activities such as hosting annual teenage girls festival, webinars and trainings on social norm changes were also conducted by FEMNET. The capacity-building sessions reached teenage girls (53), anti-FGM groups (30) and women leaders (3).

**Innovative FGM** solution promoted. In partnership with the UNFPA Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office, the African Union Commission and the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation, SIARP have launched the FGM Innovation HackLab Project, which aims to stimulate the innovations market to increase the number of innovative FGM solutions emerging from the community, including from young people. The FGM Innovation HackLab project commenced in 2021 with the opening of a call for innovative ideas from young people across Africa that are aligned with key opportunity areas in line with the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female

Genital Mutilation, the United Nations transformative results and the SDGs.

The call for ideas solicited 113 applications from young people from 18 countries across the continent, over 60 per cent of which were from young women. A cohort of 18 ideas were longlisted for further assessment, following which 10 ideas from Benin, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Gambia, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria and Uganda were selected for the next phase: the boot camp. The boot camp was an intensive two weeks of training and an idea development workshop in which the innovators sought to develop their ideas into commercially viable and impactful solutions. Following the [boot camp](#), nine ideas were presented before a final jury at a virtual pitch event (the jury was made up of representatives of the private sector, the young women who created the EcoPad®, a journalist from Al Jazeera, a Spotlight Ambassador and a representative of the African Union Commission) to identify four of the ideas to benefit from the seed fund (\$70,000) + business support services for 3–6 months.



*Online invitation for final pitch event, December 2021*

During the Pitch event, which took place on 7 December 2021, four ideas were selected for incubation (2 male, 2 female); two from Uganda, one from Nigeria and one from Burkina Faso. The winning ideas will receive business support from an identified Africa-based; youth-led innovation incubator with a network of incubation hubs across the continent: AfriLabs.

The final selected innovative ideas are as follows:

- A mobile platform to empower victims and survivors to get help, that links them to the right service providers in Uganda
- A mobile app that enhances access to FGM services and information by way of referral through mobile technology, whereby survivors can access services anonymously. SMART RR identifies linked FGM/SRH/GBV service providers and can provide survivors with

remote support or transport to receive services in Nigeria

- A website that will allow the testimonies of victims, written or audiovisual, to be disseminated and which will provide girls from Burkina Faso with medical and psychological support
- A mobile application to collect and analyse crowd-sourced, anonymous reports of FGM practices, identifying patterns and key insights. This is aimed at increasing awareness, transparency and public accountability with data-led insights from Uganda
- The [pitch event](#) drew 914 participants from all around the globe; there were 1,106 Facebook engagements, 680 comments and 27 shares.

**State accountability for the commitments enhanced through social media and traditional media platforms.** In collaboration with Equality Now, the Spotlight Initiative programme engaged Journalists through capacity-building initiatives such as training and study tours in 2021. Journalists were trained and paired up with partners from thirteen countries<sup>32</sup>. The initiative also involved conducting interviews with FGM survivors, law enforcement agencies and anti-FGM advocates, with the objective of enhancing their understanding of the drivers of FGM and especially cross-border FGM. In addition to enhancing public understanding of FGM as a human rights violation, the use of these media has also been critical in amplifying the voices of survivors by providing them with a platform on which to share their experiences of FGM. The post training evaluation indicated that the capacity-building training met its objective and provided input to conceptualize future capacity-building sessions. Details of the study tour and story reports are recorded

and documented in the communication and visibility section of this report.

## Reporting on SRHR

SRHR is one of the key elements integrated into the development of the Regional Action Plan for Africa on EVAWG in addition to SGBV and HP. The Regional Action Plan will provide strategic guidance for Regional Partners and Member States to move from policy to Action in eliminating VAWG/SGBV/HP and promoting SRHR services. Support for the development of data collection tools also includes SRHR indicators. The objective of the gender transformative accelerator tool is to change harmful norms and their underlying power relations, so that we can ensure that the sexual and reproductive health and rights of adolescent girls and young people are respected.

Under outcome 5, building on field-testing of the gender transformative accelerator tool in Ethiopia, Mozambique, India and Niger under the Global Programme to End Child Marriage, the programme strengthened adolescent girl/young women and systems level interventions including those relating to SRHR and bodily autonomy. A gender transformative accelerator tool ultimately seeks to challenge harmful gender and social norms and underlying power relations. For instance, field-testing of the tool in Mozambique enabled participants to revisit issues of bodily autonomy and sexuality while exploring the agency (and internal bias) of service providers to deliver adolescent and youth-friendly SRH services.

## Rights holders (Beneficiaries)

Indicative numbers	Direct for 2021	Indirect for 2021	Comments/justifications
Women (18 years and over)	1,026	2,627,308	It is difficult to obtain clear sex- and age-disaggregated data from most online events including the third African Girls' Summit, roundtable discussions, virtual girls' festival, radio programme outreach, etc. Indirect beneficiaries are taken from the programme document that shows the indirect beneficiaries reached through interventions under pillars one and five.
Girls (5–17 years)	173	3,241,870	
Men (18 years and over)	190	2,524,324	
Boys (5–17 years)	23	2,884,834	
Rights holders- with no disaggregation by sex	8,756	-	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10,169</b>	<b>11,278,336.00</b>	

<sup>32</sup> Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda in East Africa and Burkina Faso, Guinea-Conakry, Liberia, Mali, Senegal and Sierra Leone

In this reporting period, the regional programme directly reached an estimated 10,169 rights holders. As a regional programme, the interventions that are cascaded in the three outcome areas are estimated to reach a population of 11,278,336.

## Challenges and mitigating measures

**The COVID-19 Pandemic** continues to present major operational challenges due to lockdowns and restrictions of movement (including restrictions on United Nations staff movements), continuously emerging new variants of the virus, low-speed vaccination roll-outs in various countries, etc. The pandemic made it difficult to convene trainings, meetings, and consultations that were initially planned to be held in-person. RUNOs working in different localities were affected differently, with some countries such as Uganda and Nigeria adopting strict SOP guidelines that included total lockdowns and airport closures. Furthermore, due to internet connectivity challenges in some of the countries, the planned virtual training sessions and workshops could not be held.

The programmatic effect of the pandemic also affected the achievements of the programme as women's rights have experienced significant regression over the past year, with COVID-19 further exacerbating existing inequalities and escalating already high levels of harmful practices and violence against women and girls.

All these factors resulted in delayed implementation of the planned activities. To mitigate the COVID-19 effect, the programme adopted virtual consultations as a major means of implementation and a coordination mechanism with partners and among RUNOs. In addition, the programme also explores ways to organize hybrid consultations and meetings when the situation allows. Despite all efforts, the emergence of different variants resulting in new closures and restrictions in countries will continue to cause significant delays in implementation of the programme in 2022.

As the current environment continues slowly to return to normal, third parties are being engaged within the regions to provide technical assistance and monitoring support for the implementation of programmes working to put an end to child marriage and FGM.

**Limited availability and capacity of regional CSOs.** Under stream 1, SIARP launched a two-round joint inter-agency call for expression of interest in January 2021, to identify potential CSOs as implementing partners. However, requests for proposals received a very limited response from regional CSOs with a wider span across the continent, including those on long-term agreements

(mainly from western and central countries). Therefore, the programme is involved in sole sourcing/direct selection to identify CSOs working in these regions (many of the CSOs have limited outreach beyond the country they operate in), and provide support to build the capacity of the selected CSOs to accelerate action and streamline implementation. The capacity building support includes organizing a working session to work on the project proposal, budget and workplan together, close follow-up and invite the CSOs to take part in training organized through the support of the program.

The requests for proposals are still receiving a limited response from regional CSOs with a wider span across the continent, including those on long-term agreements for services (LTAs).

**Lack of human resources and change in Leadership.** The partnership with the African Union Commission has faced some challenges including a lack of human resources, change in leadership and shifted priorities due to COVID-19, which resulted in protracted feedback and guidance from the African Union Commission and delayed the implementation of some project activities. However, efforts have been made to improve the coordination through close follow-up and through the secondment of staff who are highly engaged in organizing joint meetings with RUNOs and sharing event calendars.

**Lack of regional guidelines for prevention and response measures to eliminate EVAWG.** This has restricted coordinated regional approaches to ending violence against women and girls. To resolve this, a regional action plan with an M&E framework is being developed as a regional guidance framework for EVAWG.

**The Spotlight Initiative budget replenishment procedure** hinders the smooth planning and implementation of the activities. As not all RUNOs have the same implementation rate, some RUNOs have been challenged with budget deficiency as they jointly have to hit the 70 per cent delivery rate threshold. Risk management details are recorded in **Annex B**.





# Lessons learned and new opportunities

Learning lessons is key to improving future programming and implementation work, and many lessons have emerged across the programmes. This section covers the lessons learned relating to implementation management and programmatic aspects. The regional programme has shown that behavioural and system change can be facilitated at national level, and state members' accountability increased, by supporting CSOs and grassroots organizations, building their capacity to plan and implement actions aimed at eliminating VAWG using (existing) community-based structures, local organizations and other members of the community.

## Technical lessons

- Pillar coordination has been essential in ensuring smooth programme implementation, including synergies and complementarities between the various activities implemented by RUNOs. For example, RUNOs jointly planned and engaged with CSOs while one CSO executed activities under various pillars. To achieve this, a joint planning and consultation meeting was held during the reporting period. Regular RUNO coordination meetings have significantly contributed to the coordination effort by creating a platform on which RUNOs can discuss progress, bottlenecks and areas of joint implementation.
  - The development of a joint EOI to select implementing partners was a lengthy process that impacted programme implementation; however, this process contributed to strengthening synergies and complementarities between the different activities implemented by RUNOs.
  - The involvement of the African Union Commission at the initial planning stage of activities helps to secure commitment and engagement. It proved crucial to have regular meetings with the African Union Commission to discuss progress, challenges, and the way forward.
  - **Engagement of young girls at the third African Girls' Summit.** Participants in the summit explained that the engagement of young girls during the third African Girls' Summit, including delivering the outcome statement for the participants, enhanced the accountability of member states and all stakeholders. Additional resources are required to bring more girls to similar relevant high-level events that strengthen their engagement and ownership.
- **Much more evidence is needed on the impact of COVID-19 on VAWG;** during the third African Girls' Summit, there was increasing evidence of interest in the impact of COVID-19 on harmful traditional practices, which calls for strengthening of the ongoing effort to generate and communicate knowledge products for these issues.
  - **Innovation Hub** the implementation process of the FGM Innovation HackLab Project revealed the capacity of young people to bring innovative contemporary solutions to harmful practices that have been addressed with similar approaches over and over again. In addition, the operational process of conducting Innovation Challenges/Hubs also takes time from the preparation phase to the investment phase, needs continuous attention and back-up and involves a number of steps, for example: support for development of the idea; business support; prototyping and market routing.
  - For such a technical process, professional help should be taken from the experienced team and the Spotlight Initiative has got the technical support of internal stakeholders (UNFPA HQ Innovation team) and external partners (WFP Innovation Team) from the beginning to the Boot-Camp. This is the first Innovation Challenge focusing on FGM, which is one of the compelling issues around the world. Apart from creating innovative solutions for eliminating FGM, INNOHACK is also good practice for raising awareness of FGM by drawing the attention of youth as well as innovators, tech companies and entrepreneurs who do not generally work on such issues.



© courtesy of UNFPA Uganda



## Contextual

- The COVID-19 context demonstrated the ability of United Nations agencies and partners to be flexible and responsive to ensure smooth implementation of SIARP activities, such as transitioning from face to face-to-face events to online and hybrid events; however, it is important to bring further alternative options ensuring that grassroots organizations are engaged, especially Women Right Organizations that have limited technology exposure and experience.
- The collaboration of CSOs and regional partners, the African Union, RECs and member states is critical to ensuring that commitments towards eliminating violence against women and girls are met. This is being emphasized during interventions and there is deliberate engagement.
- The programme is building the capacity and leadership of the African Union to coordinate all Spotlight-related initiatives. This will ensure that regional interventions are streamlined, ensure the sustainability of efforts and increase the response of Africa to EVAWG. This is both a lesson and an opportunity.
- Improving the suitability of norm-focused interventions through measurement. The lessons typically learned from experiences of implementing norm-shifting programmes or norm-focused interventions, especially during COVID-19, are that these actions typically need to be adapted when they are introduced into new sociocultural contexts and new target populations as well as when they are adopted by new organizations or integrated into ongoing programmes. The key is to ensure that elements of normative change, identified through implementation monitoring and measurement, yield similar social norm outcomes following adaptation. Accordingly, the programme is focused on enhancing the quality of the measurement and implementation monitoring of normative change elements, by providing tools, guidelines and training.

laws and policies concerning EVAWG. Furthermore, the programme is currently undertaking an assessment of the status of Women Human Rights Defenders in 10 selected African countries<sup>33</sup>. The recommendations of the study will facilitate lobbying for a change in the legal, political and social environment by civil society/women's human rights defenders in the Africa Region.

## New Opportunities


The programme invested in building the capacity of regional CSOs and women's rights organizations to draft and submit periodic reports on the rights of women and girls in Africa. As a result, the partnership was initiated with two CSOs (one in Nigeria and one in Tanzania) that are mobilizing other CSOs to prepare shadow reports. To enhance the capacity of the CSOs, a training manual on alternative periodic reporting on women's rights in Africa is also being developed by Equality Now. This support will enable CSOs to influence the implementation of

<sup>33</sup> Zimbabwe, Eswatini, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Uganda, Rwanda, South Sudan, Ghana and Nigeria



**Violence against women and girls remains as one of the critical impediments to the realization of women's fundamental rights, including the right to life, human dignity, peace, justice, and socioeconomic and political development.**

- Prudence Nonkululeko Ngwenya Ag.  
African Union Commission, Women, Gender and Youth  
Directorate Director







# Innovative, promising or good practices

In terms of its implementation status, the regional Spotlight programme is in its early stages and more time is needed before the activities implemented can be qualified as promising or good practice. The programme will **focus on identifying** what has been done, scaling up what has been proven to be working and changing what is not working or what is not bringing change fast enough. Even though the programme is at an early stage of implementation, the following practices have been identified as promising and innovative practices.

## Regional Action Plan for Africa on Eliminating Violence Against Women and Girls – with a monitoring and evaluation framework

Africa is experiencing increased prevalence of GBV that has further escalated during COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, only 26 out of 55 member states have National Action Plans on EVAWG and this limits the implementation of regional commitments on EVAWG. Developing a Regional Action Plan for Africa on EVAWG that is evidence-based and has an M&E framework is therefore potentially a promising practice that will provide a common framework for Africa with common measures to eliminate VAWG. This action plan is also the first ever in the region.

The participatory development process that involved regional actors (RECs, member states, CSOs and the United Nations) involved in the action plan revealed increased commitment and ownership by stakeholders. The action plan development process also helps to identify common actions, structures, mechanisms, strategies and investments to be taken at regional and national level to end violence against women and girls, prevent harmful practices and promote sexual and reproductive health and rights. The Regional Action Plan on EVAWG will therefore mobilize different actors in the region to implement comprehensive evidence-based actions, so that every woman and girl lives free of violence. Further details of the consultation process are published in the form of a blog

entitled Regional partners develop first [Regional Action Plan for Africa on Eliminating Violence Against Women and Girls | UNDP in Africa](#)

## Spotlight fostered a culture of innovative ideas for ending FGM

A Spotlight programme organized in partnership with the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation applied a participatory approach and supported the implementation of innovation challenges. The call for ideas identified 113 applications from young people across the continent; interestingly and appreciably, over 60 per cent of these were from young women. The entire process of instituting the innovation hub to end FGM mobilized a number of relevant sectors, including the partnership created with UNFPA ESARO, UNFPA, the HQ Innovation Team and the WFP innovation department.

The call for innovative ideas and the intense assessments made during selection of the applications, as well as the boot camp (capacity-building for potential candidates), stimulate the innovation market and youth engagement to bring innovative solutions to FGM that have mainly emerged from the personal experience of young people.

Four teams, two from Uganda, one from Nigeria and one from Burkina Faso were selected to be in the incubator (business support), which will be provided by an identified Africa-based, youth-led innovation incubator with a network of incubation hubs across the continent – AfriLabs.

One of the innovators, Mulabbi<sup>34</sup>, who invented Axces Mobile, explained that her inspiration comes from a deeply personal experience.

Similarly, Deborah Nassanga created her app called HERStory! based on the personal experience of a family member who underwent FGM. This innovation challenge will enable girls – not only the winners but all candidates passing through the process, as well as young participants in the pitch events – to keep on innovating and inspire others to do the same. Implementation of the

<sup>34</sup> <https://esaro.unfpa.org/en/news/death-friends-sister-after-female-genital-mutilation-inspires-award-winning-app>



selected innovative ideas is expected to herald a new approach towards eradicating harmful practices in the region and beyond, and enabling women to report FGM anonymously.

“

While at school, a friend (from the Sabinu tribe in Kapchorwa, Eastern Uganda) lost her sister at the age of 16 after she underwent FGM. With the nearest health centre over 20 km away, and with a poor road network, the girl bled to death while being rushed to hospital.

When I read about the FGM Hack Lab, I had a flash back to what I had witnessed years back. I tasked myself to do something to help girls and women access services when they need them. My solution had to be one that is very simple in terms of cost and ease of use, even for those with no access to smartphones or Internet.

- Mulabbi

”



Joseph Mulabbi and Deborah Nassanga, Uganda's two finalists before they made their pitches at the UNFPA FGM Hack Lab event

## Implementing South to South cooperation – Annual Continental Coordination Platform for National Spotlight Programmes in Africa

The annual continental learning platform that was organized by the programme is one promising programmatic implementation approach. The programme brought together the eight countries implementing the Spotlight Initiative programme in Africa in a highly coordinated effort with key implementing partners of the programme, including the African Union Commission, United Nations agencies (RUNOs) and country offices, for two days of interactive learning and sharing. The platform created a unique first opportunity among the Spotlight national programmes and the Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme to collaboratively share and learn from good practices, identify emerging trends and operational challenges and implement strategies that can inform future programming.

The platform provided the opportunity to share innovative, promising or good practices from the African Union Member States implementing National Spotlight Programmes in programme implementation and partnership development. The event was also meant to: promote learning among programme countries that is informed by statistical information on progress and challenges vis-à-vis ending VAWG/SGBV/HP and promoting SRHR; enhance ways in which programme countries can ensure coherence and comparability in data collection, analysis and dissemination, while recognizing contextual peculiarities; and to strengthen a sense of collaboration and shared contribution to objectives of the Spotlight Initiative among countries implementing the Spotlight Programme.

The platform created a unique and first opportunity among the Spotlight national programmes and the Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme to collaboratively share and learn from good practices, identify emerging trends and operational challenges and implement strategies that can inform future programming. The learning event taught practical lessons that can have an impact in Spotlight Initiative (SI) countries and bring positive and measurable change to the scourge that is all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG), including gender-based violence (GBV), harmful practices (HP) and female genital mutilation (FGM), and achieve step changes in the adoption of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

The sharing experience highlighted the fact that SI countries need to work together in adopting multi-stakeholder interventions and multisectoral approaches that bring their interventions closer to sectors like education, health, security and social protection. This is also manifested in the case studies presented. Leveraging shared goals in these sectors is a key entry point to comprehensively eliminating gender-based violence against women and girls, early child marriages and FGM. Across the eight countries participants learned that to address the health, cultural, socioeconomic, and political dimensions of GBV/HP/FGM and SRHR, the SI Programme should work seamlessly around social behaviour change at individual, community and societal levels.

Details of promising practice and knowledge management products are recorded in [Annex D](#).







# Communication and visibility

## a. Overview

As part of strengthening the communication and visibility effort of the regional programme, a draft communication and visibility strategy with an annual work plan and event calendar has been developed. The strategy has a strong focus on the outcomes and a full range of activities and products. In December 2021, a validation workshop has been organized to collect inputs from key stakeholders including the EU, and the inputs are incorporated into the current draft strategy. Besides, SIARP commissioned a media company to fine-tune the strategy and work on the layout design, and this will be finalized in the first quarter of 2022. The team will continue to compiling the narratives and visuals including videos, photos, and human interest stories, and keep sharing them globally, and regionally through all channels including YouTube, websites, and social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

SIARP has used various information-sharing channels, including the websites and social media of the respective RUNOs and partners (the African Union Commission, CSOs, etc.) to highlight the objectives and activities of the programme, as well as to share important messages about GBV, HP, SRHR. Existing platforms have been leveraged to increase the programme's visibility and reach a wider audience. For example, during this reporting year, the programme used the Global Programme to End Child Marriage, which has a high level of engagement on social media. With over 3,700 followers on Twitter (a 46 per cent increase during 2021) and over 1,800 followers on Instagram (a 19 per cent increase during 2021), the accounts recorded over 768,000 impressions over the year. Similarly, the Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation: Accelerating Change also noted a rise in followers and engagement on social media. It currently has over 4,300 followers on Twitter (an 84 per cent increase during 2021) and over 2,000 followers on Instagram (account initiated in 2021); Mailchimp: Audience number increased to 1993 subscribers with an increase in the email open rate of 4 points, from 36.6 to 40.8. Examples; [1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11](#)

Some social media coverage includes recognition of the contribution of the programme (see [link1](#), [link2](#), and [link3](#)), engagement in advocacy events (see [link4](#) and [link5](#)), examples of programme activities (see [link6](#) and [link7](#)),

and knowledge management updates (see [link8](#)), as well as stories about its impact (see [link9](#) and [link10](#)).

On the other hand, the Saleema Initiative social media platforms (Twitter and Facebook) have also recorded a reach of over 840,000 most of which is through Twitter, which has reached 1,512 followers: a 152 per cent increase since January 2021. Furthermore, different communication assets including short videos, quote cards, press releases and posters were also used as part of the communication activities.

## b. Messages

During the reporting period, the following key messages have been endorsed and communicated to the general public as well as to donors on the various platforms.

- Female genital mutilation is a human rights violation rooted in gender inequalities that create and sustain power imbalances that limit access to opportunities and resources and prevent girls and women from realizing their rights and full potential.
- Global progress has been made towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 – Gender equality, and target 5.3 – Elimination of female genital mutilation. Today, girls are one-third less likely to undergo the practice compared to three decades ago.
- The COVID-19 pandemic appears to have increased the number of girls undergoing female genital mutilation, leading to a major setback to target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals. [UNFPA estimates there may be as many as 2 million cases of female genital mutilation by 2030](#) that would have been averted had it not been for the pandemic.
- Over the next decade, up to **10 million more girls** will be at risk of becoming child brides as a result of the pandemic. [Link to COVID-19: A threat to progress against child marriage](#)
- Furthermore, a recent [UNICEF publication](#) proposes that progress is possible under the right conditions – with significant shifts in the well-being of society, the status of women and the provision of key services over the course of several decades.



- **Partnership for change to end violence in Africa.** This theme was used during the consultation meeting held from 19 to 21 October in Addis Ababa to strengthen the partnership between the African Union Commission, Community and Traditional Leaders and Faith-Based Organizations and strengthen their engagement in preventing and responding to VAW/G, SGBV and harmful practices and promoting SRHR in Africa.

### c. Media and visibility events

In addition to social media platforms, the SIARP utilized traditional media to promote awareness of the impact of gender-based violence and HP, as well as SRHR, and to boost the visibility of the Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme at national, continental and global level. Some of the major media highlights on the various events are included on the link provided. [Media engagement on the continent of Africa and Major media highlights from the various events.docx](#).

During this reporting period, SIARP organized the following media and visibility events:

- The **Annual Continental Coordination Platform for African Union Member States Implementing National Spotlight Programmes** was held in collaboration with the Women, Gender and Youth Directorate of the African Union Commission. [Annual Continental Coordination Platform](#).
- During the reporting period, a total of 31 journalists from **13 countries** were identified and trained on FGM issues as allies in ending FGM; 24 of these journalists (from 11 countries<sup>35</sup>) were supported during a **three-day study tour** aimed at highlighting FGM within their countries of focus and specifically cross-border FGM.



© UN Women Ethiopia

Figure SEQ Figure \\* ARABIC 5 Partnership for Change: Strengthening the role of religious and traditional leaders in ending violence against women and girls, 19 October Addis Ababa

- **Strategic consultations held to strengthen the role of religious and traditional leaders in ending violence against women and girls from 19 to 21 October 2021**, which brought together regional FBOs, CTLs, the African Union Commission and RECs for expanded dialogue and commitment to the importance of their partnership in addressing EAWG, HP and SRHR; see press releases: [Press release 1](#), [Press release 2](#) and [Press release 3](#).
- **Intergenerational dialogue on Child, Early and Forced Marriage.** The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the Governments of Canada and Zambia, together with SIARP and Save the Children, hosted an **inter-generational dialogue on child, early and forced marriage**. 432 people attended the virtual event, located in 80 different countries across all regions of the world. The high-level event enjoyed the participation of ministers and government representatives from Zambia, Canada, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, the United Kingdom, Lebanon and the Netherlands, as well as young girls participating from Syria, Venezuela, Ethiopia and Burkina Faso.
- **The High-Level Saleema Accountability platform:** On 8 February 2021, SYVAs held the High-Level Saleema Accountability Platform, in the fringe of the African Union Summit, to commemorate International Day of Zero Tolerance to FGM. This event brought together stakeholders involved in designing and implementing the African Union Accountability Framework on Harmful Practices, with a specific focus on African Union Assembly Decision 737 and UNHRC Resolution [A/HRC/RES/44/16](#), which qualified FGM as a human rights violation.
- **The first Saleema Youth Victorious Ambassadors (SYVAs) country visits: Unleashing the Voices of Africa for the elimination of Female Genital Mutilation** was undertaken by Basma Kamel, SYVA for the Diaspora in Gambia to highlight the efforts being made, as well as to collect data and information regarding needs at country and community levels, to inform action at regional level ([link to summary video](#)). As part of their journey to becoming the new generation of leaders on the African Continent, SYVAs had a training session with Activist Naimah Hassan on public speaking and the role of the media in ending FGM.
- **Youth Round Table on FGM:** Organized by the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of FGM through the UNFPA Western and Central Africa Regional Office (WCARO), the objective of the Youth Round Table on FGM was to place youth at the heart of Phase IV of the Joint Programme, set to commence in 2022, as an opportunity to build on the gains made

<sup>35</sup> Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda in East Africa and Burkina Faso, Guinea-Conakry, Liberia, Mali, Senegal and Sierra Leone

in Phases I-III, considering the new normal of a post-pandemic world. [Link to Global Youth Round Table on FGM.](#)

- **Inter-agency collaboration to highlight the impact of the pandemic on harmful practices:** in March 2021, in collaboration with the African Union Commission and United Nations partners (UNWOMEN, UNFPA and OHCHR) the UNICEF African Union Office (AOU) held a policy dialogue session, on International Women's Day, to highlight the impact of COVID-19 in terms of exacerbating harmful practices, particularly child marriage, and to call for timely measures to mitigate the overall impact on girls and their families. To complement these efforts, UNICEF AOU also engaged in social media activities to raise the profile of exemplary leaders among women and girls, who promote the rights of women and girls. Accordingly, to draw attention and advocate for ending child marriage, SGBV and HP, UNICEF AOU developed and guided the social media profile of the African Union Goodwill Ambassador for Ending Child Marriage.
- **High-level political engagement and visibility: Commissioner Elfadil's visit to President Kaboré:** Amira Elfadil, the African Union Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development, paid a courtesy visit to Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, president of Burkina Faso and an African Union Champion on Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation, during which they held dialogue. Commissioner Elfadil also met with Hélène Marie Laurence Marchal, Minister for Women, National Solidarity, Family and Humanitarian Action, to discuss adoption of the African Union Accountability Framework during the next meeting of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee and the support of the Spotlight Initiative for this process of establishing girls and women's human rights in Africa ([link to Girls' Summit Press release](#)).



© African Union Commission

- **The third African Girls' Summit** aims to mobilize action around the 2021 African Union theme of the year: Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa We Want, in the context of which it will

interrogate the nexus between culture, human rights and accountability in efforts to eliminate harmful practices.

- **The SYVAs parallel session: Girls' and Survivors' Voices in the Decision-making process:** SYVAs convened a panel composed of activists and survivors from the continent, in order to understand the needs of CSOs and how to engage them in the African Union Accountability Framework.



#### d. Campaigns

- **Media campaign to promote social norm changes in favour of the elimination of FGM.** An IP agreement was signed with AIDOS for engaging CSOs and associations to support 'building bridge' initiative linking the diaspora in European Union countries with communities in Africa to encourage open interaction between communities and families to facilitate social norm changes in favour of the elimination of FGM. Sensitization through use of radio and video in five West African Countries (Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Republic of Guinea, Burkina Faso) took place all through the year. The De Retour au Pays programme reached 1,060 persons in Senegal, 1,800 in Mauritania, 720 in Mali, 900 in the Republic of Guinea and 900 in Burkina Faso, with at least 20 sessions held in each country. Through online training on radio production 11 media professionals from the countries indicated above were trained and 6 podcasts were produced in French, dubbed in 6 local languages and broadcast 100 times on 15 local radio stations; 12 live radio programmes were organized around the podcasts.
- **The I Belong To Me Book:** I Belong To Me is a book directed at children, pre-adolescents and parents, with the objective of generating a conversation within the household about African culture and harmful practices. The book was produced by a team composed exclusively of African Women, in order to preserve the cultural authenticity of the storytelling and the nuances that exist in African social norms and



interactions. This product was designed by the African Union, in partnership with the Spotlight Initiative and the Nala Feminist Collective. [African Union I Belong To Me book](#)

### e. Human interest stories

[Community activists are on a mission to end child marriage in Mozambique.](#)

This story is about two community activists who rescued a girl from child marriage, challenging customary practices. It exemplifies how lack of knowledge leads to a serious human rights violation and how the programme’s intervention is driving behavioural change that has a positive impact on rescuing girls from child marriage.



© UNICEF Mozambique/2020/Ricardo Franco

[A mother’s struggle to rescue her teenage daughter from forced marriage](#)

This is the story of a determined mother from Uganda who was able to rescue her daughter from a forced marriage by reporting the case to the local authorities. The story also narrates how the programme’s intervention is easing community life, especially in tackling harmful practices. The European Union-United Nations Spotlight Initiative programme, through UNICEF, hands over 360 bicycles to help para-social workers to get around.



© UNICEF/UN0384957/Abdul

[“With funding from partners, Ethiopian radio talk shows aim to end female genital mutilation”](#) This story was published on the UNFPA public website. It is about the positive impact of a daily radio programme in changing people’s mindset regarding GBV, including FGM in Ethiopia.



© UNFPA

### f. Testimonials

In the reporting period, a significant number of high-profile personalities, decision-makers and influencers have been engaged on the various platforms organized under the Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme and witnessed how social norms, traditional practices and stereotypes prevent women and girls from achieving and exercising their full potential. It also highlighted the need to strengthen commitment and engagement to bring a shift in mindset and practice. Below are some of the testimonials captured during the year:

[One Action You](#) take is a video of testimonies of participants in the consultation meeting with traditional and religious leaders on ending violence against women and girls:

**“Violence against women and girls remains as one of the critical impediments to the realization of women’s fundamental rights, including the right to life, human dignity, peace, justice and socioeconomic and political development”** Prudence Nonkululeko Ngwenya Ag. Director, Women, Gender and Youth Directorate African Union Commission

**“We can change legislation or improve access to services, but to change mindsets and challenge stereotypes, we need to engage at the community level – engage men, boys, traditional and religious leaders at the grass-root level”** Thomas Huyghebaert, Head of policy and Cooperation at the European Union delegation to the African Union. [Click here](#) to access the full messages transmitted during the high-level consultation meeting.

**“Spotlight is a daring initiative! From the country presentations we saw an extraordinary amount of work that goes beyond naming the problem, to finding solutions, in a way that implements existing commitments, and strives to shift negative social norms and celebrate positive cultural diversity”** Dr Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, African Union Goodwill Ambassador for ending child marriage, speaking at the Continental Coordination Platform for African Union Member States Implementing National Spotlight Programmes.

**Social Media Campaign** articulating commitments and statements by a range of high-level personalities, on positive actions to address thematic issues.

## **g. Photos**

All accompanying photos were uploaded in the photo submission platform.

## **h. Videos**

The following are the main videos produced during this reporting period under SIARP.

- **Vaillante**, an original TV series on child marriage in West and Central Africa.
- **Coping with COVID-19**, a documentary series following nine adolescent girls in six countries as they film their lives during lockdown
- **Highlights of the three-day consultation meeting** co-hosted in collaboration with the African Union Commission to strengthen the role of traditional and religious leaders in ending violence against women and girls.
- **Call to Action to End Violence against Women. What are the solutions?, Ending Violence against Women and Girls: How can we get everyone involved? And Reverend Dr. Lydia Mwaniki on harmful practices and how they affect women differently.**
- The Joint Programme also engaged in advocacy events during the year, such as **the Global High-Level Event to Accelerate Investment and Action to End FGM**, the **High-Level Panel Discussion: The Multisectoral Prevention and Response to FGM**, and the **Global Youth Round Table addressing FGM**.







# Next steps

In 2022, the Spotlight programme will continue supporting the regional effort to end violence against women and girls despite the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic challenges. It will be a year in which the programme is more streamlined, building on the foundational activities conducted in 2021. The majority of the 2022 implementing partner (CSO) agreements and work plans have now been signed; this will enable swift continuity in advancing its key priorities in a steady manner. The following section will explain the programmatic, operational and partnership-related focus for the coming year.

## Programme areas

Under **pillar one** the following key deliverables will be implemented:

- **Finalization and dissemination of the assessment studies and strategic documents** that are in the pipeline, including the mapping assessment of the enforcement status of laws/policies on EVAWG, the African Union Harmful Practices Accountability Framework, a review of the status of civic space, an assessment of the status of women human rights defenders in 10 selected African countries, an assessment of the integration of national and sectoral policies and plans aimed at ending child marriage in 6<sup>36</sup> African countries.
- Organization of a **high-level international conference and high-level panels** focusing on the annual strategic thematic issue of FGM, as part of implementation of the plan of action of the African Union Initiative on Eliminating FGM, to be held on International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation.
- **Capacity-building and support for regional and national human rights institutions** disseminating and advocating for full implementation of the resolutions and recommendations of the various human rights instruments regarding FGM.
- Conduct **Saleema Ambassador advocacy** missions, meet the relevant partners and advocate the accountability framework.

Under **pillar five**, the following key activities will be implemented:

- Develop and pilot a comprehensive and contextualized **curriculum on the VAW Prevalence Survey to the**

**African continent** that specifically includes modules on FGM and HP.

- Establish/operationalize two **regional knowledge management platforms** on a media/communication platform for Regional CSOs, in order to enable knowledge sharing on best practices and lessons learned on VAWG/HP and SRHR, including engaging key African Union processes and organizing a two-day learning event.
- Organize **training sessions** to build the capacity of the African Union Commission, RECs, CSOs and women's rights organizations to coordinate data collection relating to VAWG/SGBV/HP/SRHR indicators to inform evidence-based decision-making.
- Roll out a **social norms programming package** to local civil society organizations and government partners in four countries under the East and Southern Africa Regional Office through training and mentorship
- **Technical Experts Meeting**; in line with best practice and scientific rigor, the UNFPA is proposing a meeting of key **FGM** experts and stakeholders to help develop, refine and critically examine the proposed work plan and the approaches and methodologies currently being proposed by the data fellowship programme. This meeting is expected to channel the expertise of various FGM data and research experts as well as other stakeholders towards the use of the best and most appropriate methodologies relevant to FGM data and research.

Under **pillar six**, the following key activities will be implemented:

- Develop a comprehensive **online course for CSOs**, especially women's rights organizations, to build their capacity to manage knowledge, exchange information and advocate accountability concerning the ratification, domestication and reporting of African Union instruments intended to end VAWG and promote SRHR.
- Support the **operationalization of a continental civil society regional reference group (CSRRG)** to effectively coordinate and supervise the implementation of international and regional commitments on gender equality and women's rights in collaboration with the African Union.
- Promote the **Youth Innovation Challenge on Child Marriage** by reviewing and selecting the best 10

<sup>36</sup> Ethiopia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Chad, Mali and Nigeria



intervention proposals, each of which will be awarded \$2,500 for implementation, documenting progress and sharing lessons learned. Similarly, continue supporting the implementation of the four selected projects in 2021 and launch the second round of **InnoHack to eliminate FGM**; select new groups and provide capacity building through boot camp.

- Provide **technical and financial support to CSOs and the Global Youth Consortium against FGM**.

## Operational and coordination areas

The programme will continue to deliver the regional component while ensuring **programmatic coordination and coherence** between Stream I, Stream II FGM and Stream II Child marriage. The ongoing monthly coordination platforms will monitor the status of the programme in a timely manner, increase accountability and identify and address challenges before they have an adverse effect. The programme will also seek streamlined guidance and oversight support from the regional, stream I and stream II steering committees. The operational focus of the regional programme will be joint coordination, planning and reporting of relevant activities by the African Union Commission and the United Nations technical team.

Finalizing the **regional mid-term assessment (MTA)** and cascading the dissemination of findings and recommendations will also be one of the key priorities of the forthcoming six months of the regional programme. Knowledge- and evidence-sharing from the assessments/ studies used to programme funding and to identify lessons and promising practice will be the other major focus area of the regional programme.

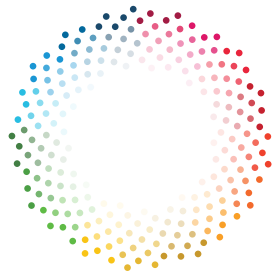
## Partnership areas

The regional programme will strengthen the partnership at all levels, including with the African Union Commission, inter-agency coordination and European Union delegates both at the EU Delegation to the African Union (Addis Ababa) and at the HQ (Brussels). The partnership and collaboration with CSRRG will be nurtured by ensuring the active engagement of the group through planned key milestone events and general monitoring and evaluation of the regional programme.

## Annexes

<b>Annex A:</b>	<a href="#">Results framework</a>
<b>Annex B:</b>	<a href="#">Risk matrix</a>
<b>Annex C:</b>	<a href="#">CSO engagement report</a>
<b>Annex D:</b>	<a href="#">Promising or good practices reporting template</a>





# Spotlight Initiative

African Union

