

# Liberia

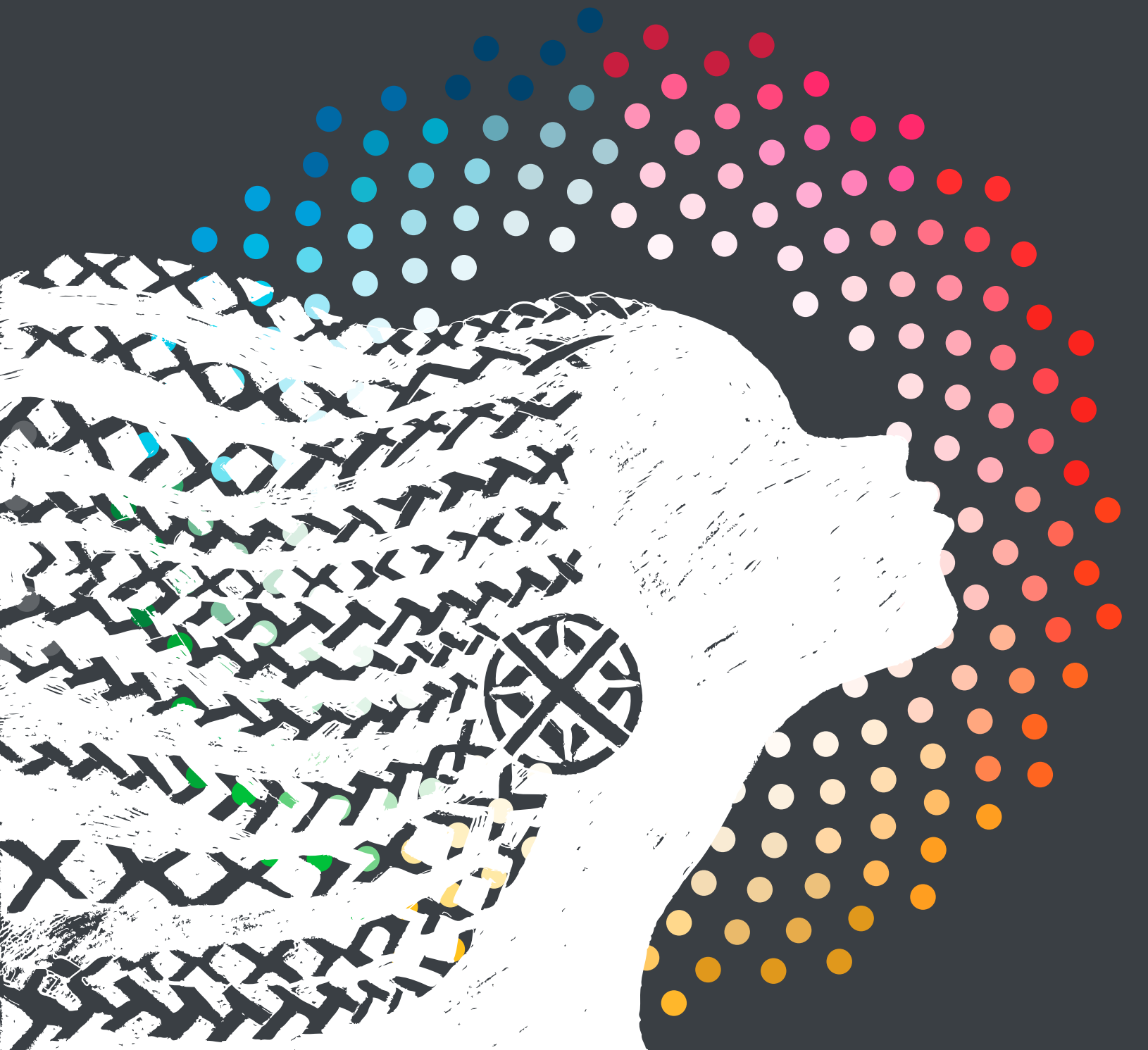
## Results

2019-2021



**Spotlight  
Initiative**

*To eliminate violence  
against women and girls*



*An Initiative of the United Nations with generous funding from the European Union*





# Spotlight Initiative

*To eliminate violence against women and girls*

## Liberia

# Key Results

### 2019-2021


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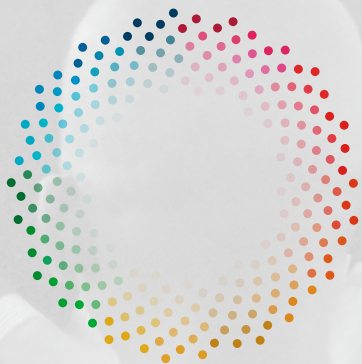
**Towards a World with**

**Zero Violence**

**Against Women**

**and Girls**





# Spotlight Initiative

*To eliminate violence  
against women and girls*



Photo: ©Spotlight Initiative Liberia/Helen Mayelle

# Foreword



**Niels Scott,  
Resident Coordinator  
of the United Nations  
in Liberia**

It gives me great pride to be introducing the Spotlight Initiative's first results newsletter from Liberia. As a team, we are aware of the huge challenges in significantly reducing the unacceptably high level of violence against women and girls, but we are also aware of the significant results of the Spotlight Initiative in Liberia and take this report as an opportunity to showcase its outcome so far whilst taking stock of the lessons we have learned along the way of the Initiative's implementation.

The Spotlight Initiative continues to be highly relevant for Liberian women and girls.

For instance, it is notable, that Female Genital Mutilation, which was until not so long ago a taboo topic is now being openly discussed in Liberian society. But discussion must now move to action.

The Demographic Health Survey of 2019-2020 shows that FGM is mostly performed at the ages of 10 to 14 years, and 35% of women admitted to having been members of Sande schools that practice FGM. This percentage was 50% in 2012 and 66% in 2007. So there has been a significant decrease (about 14 to 16%) recorded in the last few years. The United Nations will continue supporting the Government and Civil Society to maintain this downward trend until it disappears from the record books once and for all.

And together, we will continue to convince people to reject all types of violence: the Demographic Health Survey shows that 37% of Liberian women and 25% of Liberian men believe that gender-based violence is justified when a husband beats his wife in at least one of five specified cases<sup>1</sup>. We wish through the Spotlight Initiative to see all aspects of society evolve towards gender equality and the empowerment of women.

<sup>1</sup> Those five cases are: if she burns the food, argues with him, goes out without telling him, neglects the children, and refuses to have sexual intercourse with him (Liberia DHS: 2019-2020)

So far, Spotlight Initiative has supported over 225,562 Liberian women and girls to access a wide range of services in health, justice, protection, psychosocial and economic support. The initiative is working with some 300 traditional practitioners of FGM also known as Zoes, to engage in socio-economic livelihood projects including climate-smart agriculture and Village Savings and Loans Associations for income generation and economic security as a substitute to practicing FGM for income. The work with the Zoes also incorporated the construction of four vocational and heritage centres for sustaining positive traditions and cultures while serving as training grounds for women and girls in self-sustenance skills. Spotlight Initiative was also instrumental in the UN's COVID-19 country response.

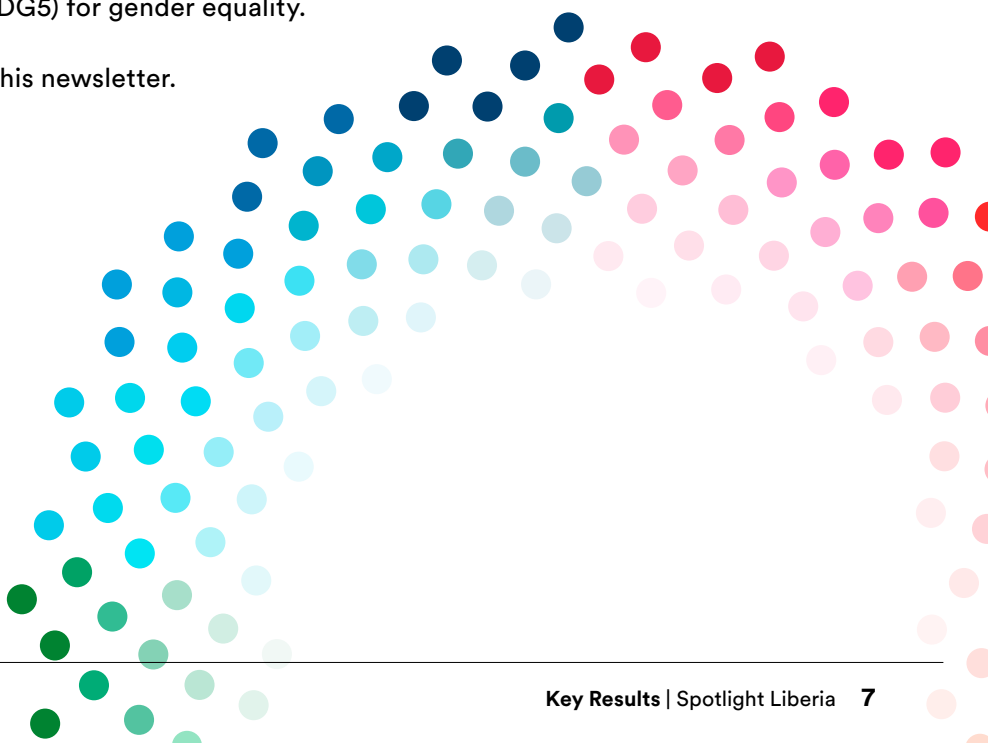
We remain immensely grateful to the European Union for its very generous funding support.

The results of the Initiative are, of course, also possible with the support and guidance of the Government of the Republic of Liberia which continues to tangibly demonstrate its commitment to ending violence against women and girls. The Government of Liberia has among other efforts allocated USD 380,000 in the draft FY 2022 National Budget to help mainstream gender-responsive planning and budgeting in nine ministries. We recognize leadership and coordination role of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection in designing national commitments towards elimination of violence within the National Anti GBV Roadmap (2020-2022) that represents a guiding tool for the Government to coordinate, integrate and drive change and foster accountability for prevention and response.

We also recognise and are grateful for the commitment and support of Liberia Civil Society organizations and Civil Society National Reference Group members, county based CSO Secretariats, the National Council of Traditional Chiefs and Elders, grassroots women organizations, the media and all our national partners towards the Initiative.

Through monitoring and evaluation of the Initiative and consultative meetings with stakeholders, we continue to learn and improve the objectives, partnerships, and sustainability of the Spotlight Initiative in Liberia. I hope you will join us in doing so. The women and girls of Liberia will expect our collective progress in contributing to such a vital part of Liberia's development. The Spotlight Initiative will continue to strive towards a violence-free Liberia for women and girls and to achieve Sustainable Development Goal Five (SDG5) for gender equality.

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter.





# Foreword



**His Excellency  
Laurent Delhaousse,  
European Union  
Ambassador in Liberia**

Gender equality is a core value of the European Union and a fundamental human right. However, no real equality and no empowerment of women and girls can ever be achieved without putting an end to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and harmful practices.

In Liberia, up to 78 percent of women and girls live with the physical and psychological consequences of female genital mutilation (FGM) in some of the counties where this barbaric practice is performed, sexual and gender-based violence is widespread, and deeply rooted discriminatory gender norms and beliefs oppress women and girls, restricting their ability to live a dignified life. This has to stop now. Every day lost in this fight is a broken life for many women and girls in Liberia.

The European Union (EU) has invested EUR 500 million in the Spotlight Initiative, a global programme implemented by the United Nations aimed at improving the lives of women and girls in 26 countries across Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

Through its funding of the Liberia Spotlight Initiative with over EUR 21 million, the EU is committed to eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls and to promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights by collaborating with government ministries, institutions, non-governmental organisations, CSOs and local associations. Spotlight will also contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular of SDG 5 and SDG 16.

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown – which saw a rise in cases of SGBV – posed significant challenges to the implementation of the Initiative in Liberia, especially in the most remote areas, but did not bring it to a halt. This underlines the strong resilience and commitment of all actors involved.

The EU highly commends the efforts made and the results achieved since the launch of Spotlight in 2019. In the five counties where the Initiative is being implemented, for instance, the levels of acceptance of SGBV and FGM are considerably decreasing.

Furthermore, we salute the 6 Count Policy statement suspending female genital mutilation for three years that was signed by over 150 traditional leaders in February 2022. Providing alternative livelihood options to traditional FGM practitioners has also proved successful, with 300 Zoes now able to sustain themselves and their families through newly acquired skills in business and climate-smart agriculture or thanks to the Village Savings and Loans Associations. Harmful traditions must become a thing of the past, while traditional teachings enrich the present in so many ways.

In this regard, the creation of vocational and heritage centres will provide all Liberians with a platform for dialogue and training where to discover, nurture and maintain those useful traditional practices. This is the way forward.

Despite this progress, there is still a long road ahead to full gender equality, but together we can make sure that no woman and girl is ever again left behind.

# Foreword



**Honorable**  
**Williametta E. Saydee Tarr,**  
***Minister of Gender, Children***  
***and Social Protection for the***  
***Republic of Liberia***

For the first time in Liberia, issues concerning women and girls' protection and equality are being addressed with urgency.

Women and girls are constantly threatened by a variety of inequities, including religious, traditional, and cultural practices, as well as unequal access to education, justice, healthcare, and commercial prospects.

Liberia is still a patriarchal society, with the assumption in parts of the country that women have specific duties assigned to the female gender, and that men are better suited to govern. As a result, we continue to see significant gender discrepancies, making it difficult for women to share equally in the benefits of a productive society.

Thankfully, the European Union Spotlight Initiative implemented by the United Nations serves as a continuation in the fight against gender-based violence and other challenges affecting women and girls' rights.



Gender inequality and the marginalization of women and girls in Liberia are perpetuated by socio-cultural norms, values, traditional practices, and perceptions that undermine women's values and dignity and subject them to poverty, domestic and gender-based violence, early child marriage, and female genital mutilation (FGM).

Liberia has made recent gains in girls' enrollment in school, a reduction in the number of sexual and gender-based violence cases, the appointment of women into key positions in government, and the closure of bush schools around the country.

With support from the Spotlight Initiative, it is evident that Liberians are learning more to be able to modify their thinking and improve their attitudes toward constructing a just and democratic society and promoting the current global development plan, which calls for investment in the empowerment of not only women and girls but the most vulnerable within our population.

Despite the gains, we must remain vigilant that women and girls continue to face real and unacceptable inequities. As a nation and people, we must do much more to reverse negative trends and, we can, with the generous support from our partners such as the EU and UN whose long-term commitment to this issue is very much appreciated.

I would like to highlight the efforts of OHCHR, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women in facilitating the implementation of the Spotlight Initiative activities through coordinated efforts of various line ministries of the Government and civil society. This is the first of its kind, and we are grateful for the help given.

The Government of Liberia will continue to provide strategic direction and support for the Spotlight Initiative to empower our women and girls through improved access to justice, access to education and economic opportunities, identifying gaps and issues, and tracking progress.

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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>CPS</b>	Comprehensive Prevention Strategy
<b>CSOs</b>	Civil Society Organizations
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FGM</b>	Female Genital Mutilation
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based Violence
<b>HPs</b>	Harmful Practices
<b>LD\$</b>	Liberian Dollars
<b>MIA</b>	Ministry of Internal Affairs
<b>MOE</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>MoGCSP</b>	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection
<b>MOH</b>	Ministry of Health
<b>MoJ</b>	Ministry of Justice
<b>NACCEL</b>	National Traditional Council of Chiefs and Elders
<b>PEP</b>	Post Exposure Prophylaxis
<b>PPE</b>	Personal Protective Equipment
<b>SGBV</b>	Sexual and Gender-based Violence
<b>SI</b>	Spotlight Initiative
<b>SRHRs</b>	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Fund for Population Agency
<b>UN-OCHR</b>	United Nations Office of the Commission on Human Rights
<b>UN-Women</b>	United Nations Women
<b>UNROs</b>	United Nations Recipient Organizations
<b>VAWG</b>	Violence Against Women and Girls
<b>VSLAs</b>	Village Savings and Loan Associations
<b>WACPS</b>	Women and Children's Protection Services



Photo: ©Spotlight Initiative Liberia/Helen Mayelle

## Overview

**T**he Liberia Spotlight Initiative (LSI) started implementation in 2019 focusing on lessening the occurrence of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), harmful practices (HPs), and increasing women and girls' access to sexual and reproductive health services.

This report summarizes the major attainments of the Initiative in its first three years of implementation – 2019 to 2021.



Photo: ©Spotlight Initiative Liberia/UNFPA



# Country Outlook on Violence against Women and Girls

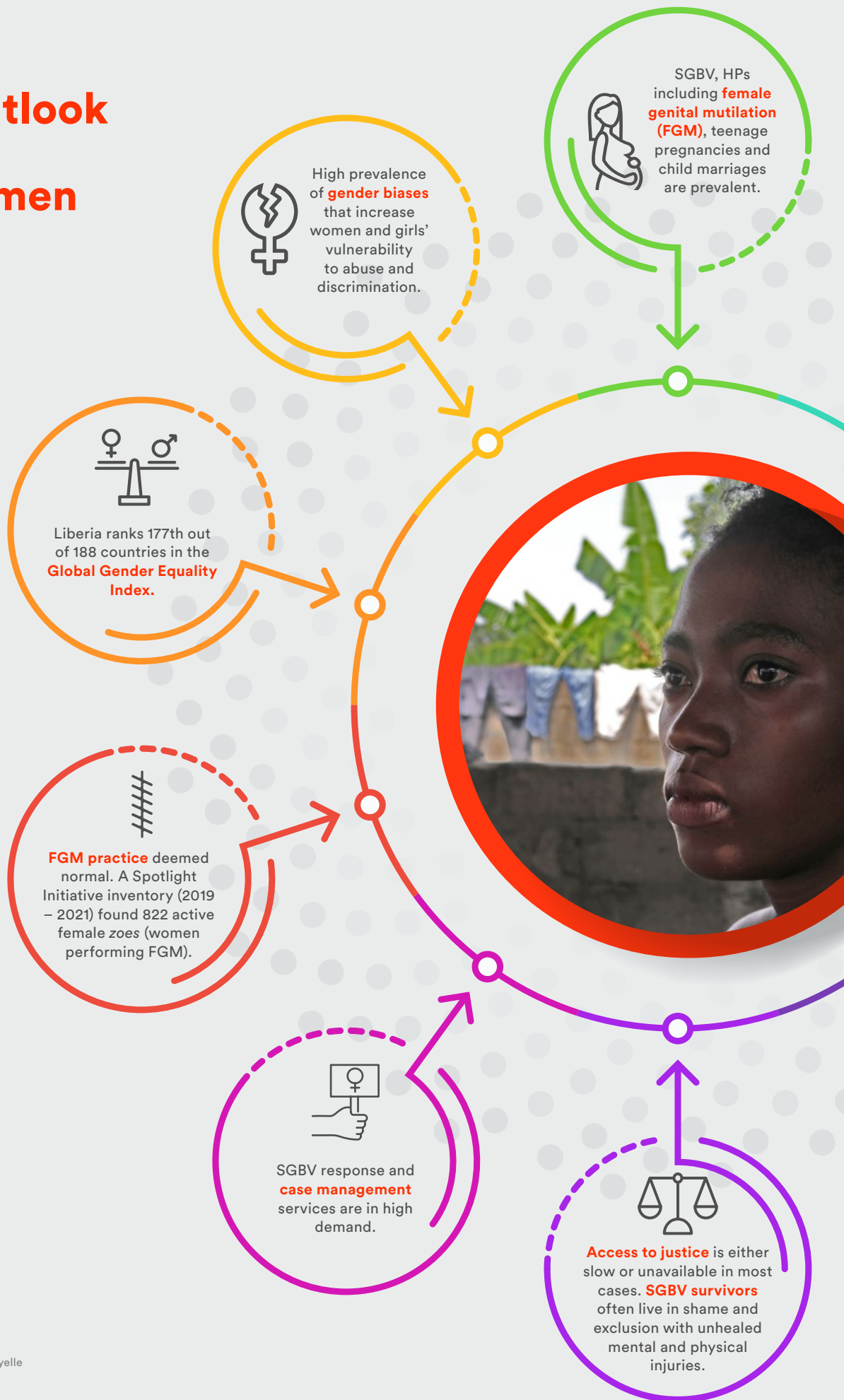
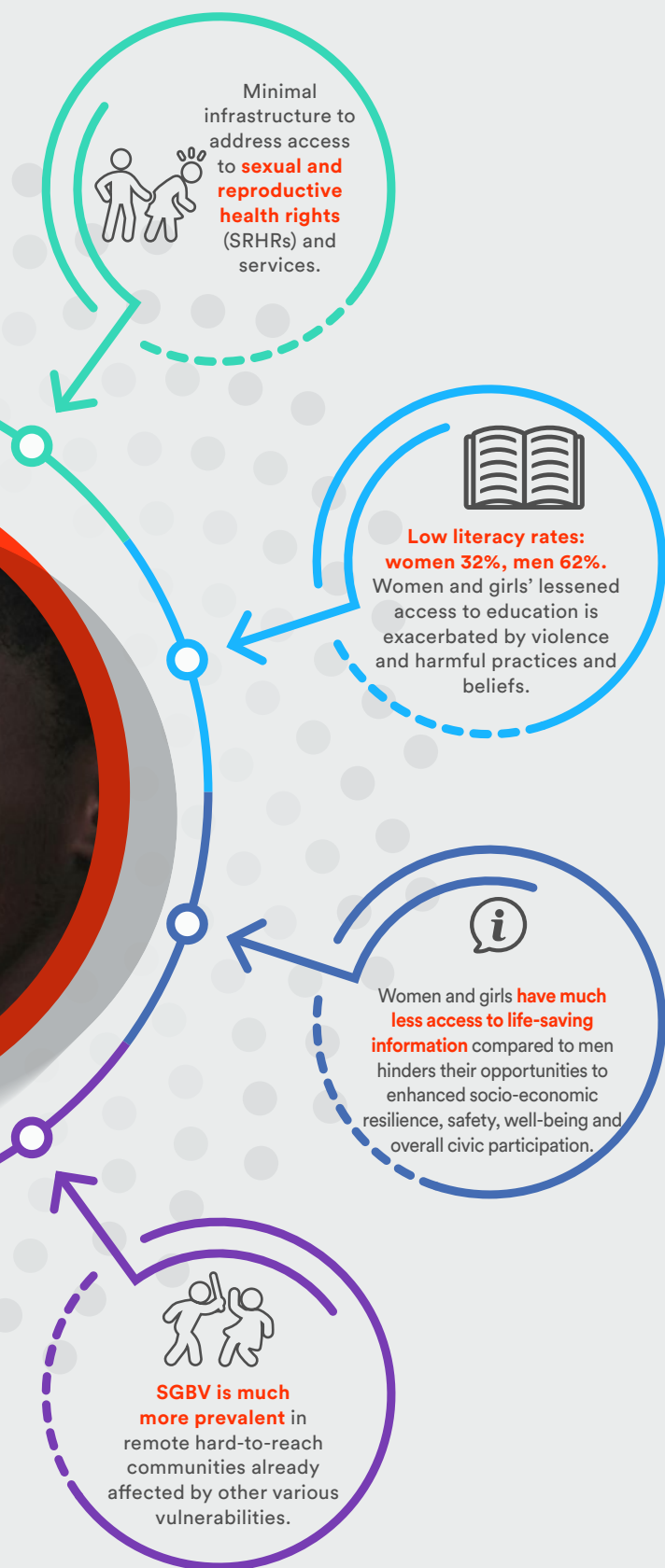


Photo: ©Spotlight Initiative Liberia/Helen Mayelle



Since 2018 however, SGBV and VAWG are more prominent on the national agenda and steadily gaining political and social support. The last two Government administrators of Liberia have been supportive and proactive towards implementing actions against SGBV and HPs.

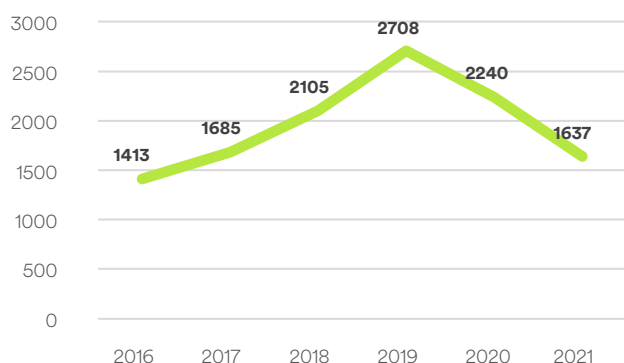
Recently and within the reporting period, FGM practice was suspended twice - in 2018 and 2019.

The current Government of Liberia:

- Allotted USD 380,000 in the draft FY 2022 National Budget to support the institutionalization of gender-responsive planning and budgeting (GRPB) in nine ministries.
- Enacted a one-year Zero Tolerance FGM Policy that led to the conduct of the inventory of traditional practitioners and zones in the 11 FGM practicing counties in Liberia.
- Procured fifteen vehicles and motorbikes to enable security and justice authorities to mobilize more quickly to respond to incidents, collect evidence, reach out to SGBV survivors and communities identified as SGBV hot spots.
- Passed the Domestic Violence Law in 2019.
- In collaboration with CSOs and other stakeholders, launched the Anti-SGBV Road Map a national campaign to tackle rape and other forms of violence against women and girls.

# Gender Equality, SGBV and VAWG Trends in Liberia (2018 – 2021)

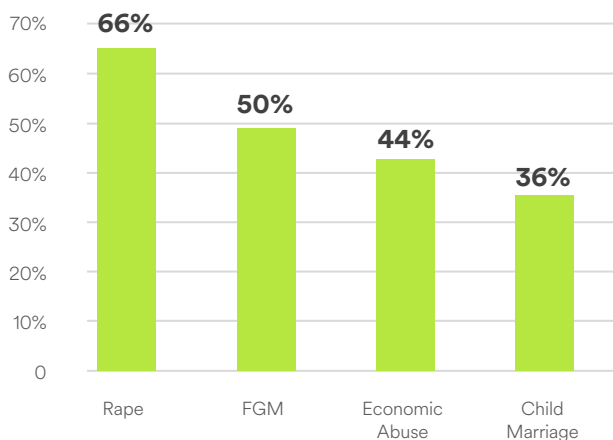
## Trends in SGBV cases



(Source: Spotlight Initiative's gender-based violence Information Management System (GBV-IMS) (a nationally coordinated and functional database that collects data on VAWG in Liberia))

80% of cases reported are of rape. 77% of rape survivors are girls under 18 years of age.

## Prevalence of SGBV



(Source: Spotlight Initiative's gender-based violence Information Management System (GBV-IMS) (a nationally coordinated and functional database that collects data on VAWG in Liberia))

A prevalence study conducted in the five counties by LSI in 2019 revealed that:

- Rape incidences stand highest in Lofa at 46% and in Nimba at 42.5%.
- Only 19% of the 1,739 respondents were aware that rape within marriage is illegal.
- Most respondents (88.3% in Montserrado, 81.3% in Grand Cape Mount and 81.3% in Grand Gedeh) disagreed with the statement that, “a woman forced to have sex with her husband constitutes rape”.

Source: SCORE Liberia Report PUB\_Liberia20-A5\_Gender-report\_FINAL\_10-10-2021.pdf (scoreforpeace.org)



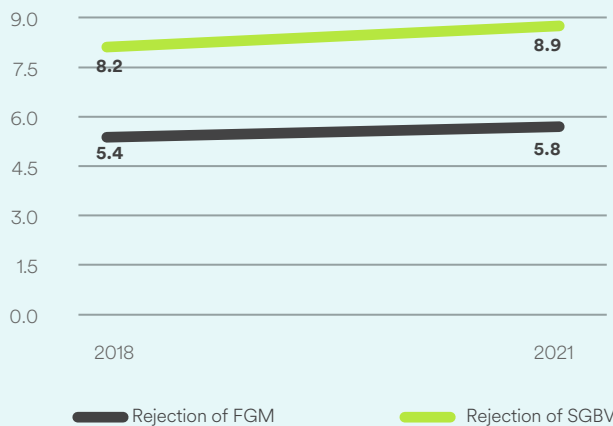


Photo: © Spotlight Initiative Liberia/Helen Mayelle

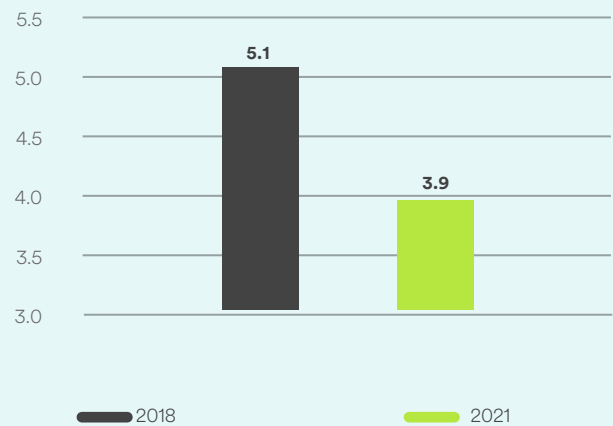


# General Outlook on Gender Equality and Violence Against Women and Girls in Liberia between 2018 and 2021

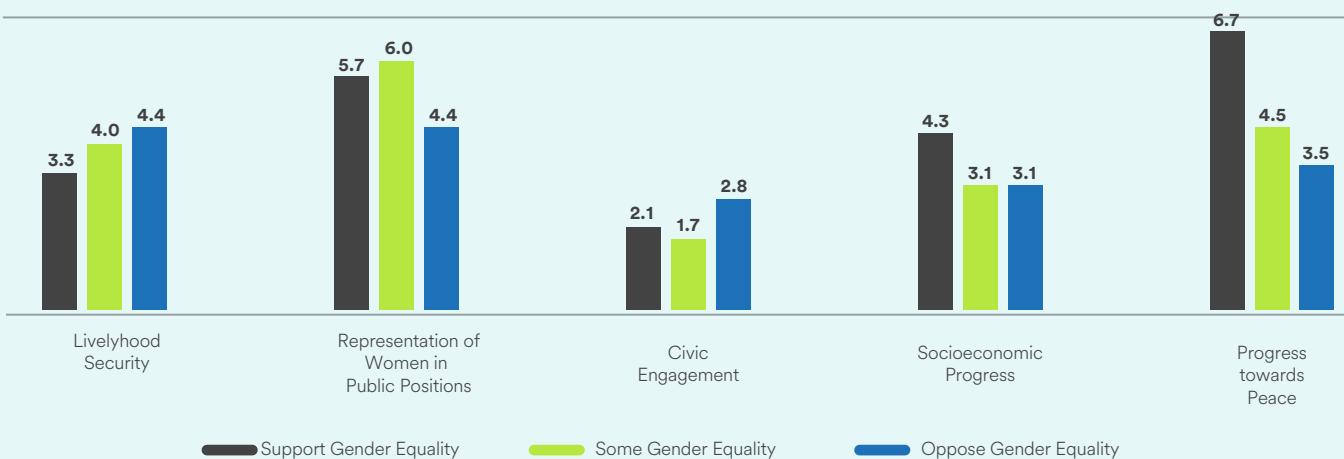
Rejection of Violence Against Women on a scale of 0 to 10: By 2021, more Liberians were inclined to reject VAWG compared to 2018.



Women's Livelihood: only approximately 4 out of 10 women in Liberia feel that they have a dependable basic income or are able to provide enough for their household members.



Differences between women who support and women who oppose gender equality on women's livelihood security and other indicators.



Source: SCORE Liberia Report PUB\_Liberia20-A5\_Gender-report\_FINAL\_10-10-2021.pdf (scoreforpeace.org)

A woman with a thoughtful expression, looking upwards and slightly to the right. She is wearing a vibrant red and black patterned dress with a matching headband. Her hands are clasped in her lap, and she wears a silver watch and rings. The background is a simple outdoor setting with a blue wall and a doorway.

I AM  
**#WithHer**  
ARE YOU?

Photo: © Spotlight Liberia/Helen Mayelle

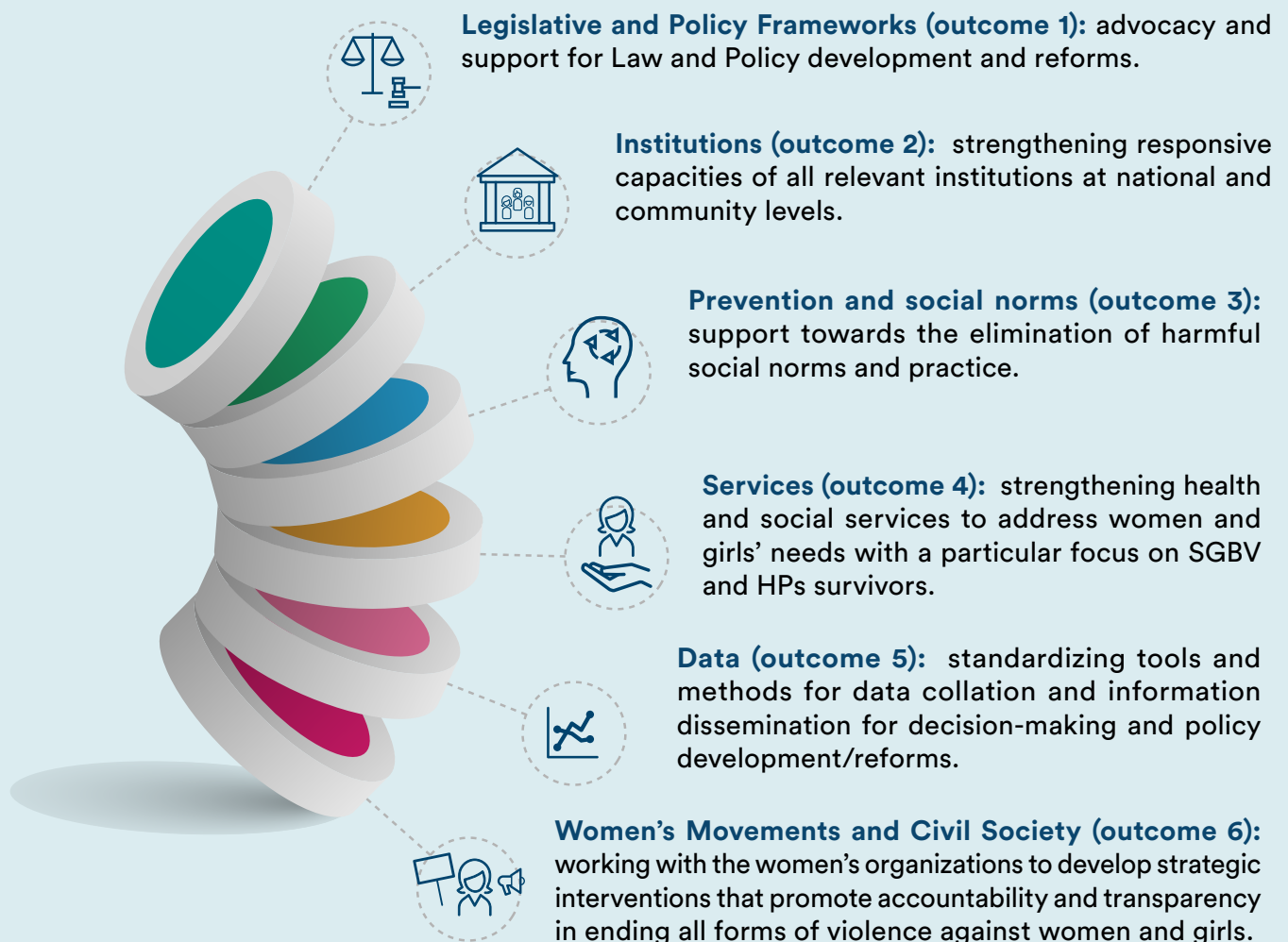


# The Intervention

**Spotlight Initiative** in Liberia's work is based on the UN Framework for Development Cooperation which aligns with Liberia's National development Plan – the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development. The Initiative broadly works on legislative reforms, social norms influence and support to civil society and women's movements contributing to the national efforts to end violence against women and girls. Its work is implemented through five UN Agencies (Recipient UN Organizations (UNROs)) working with national and international partners under the oversight of the UN Resident Coordinator's Office and with the guidance of the Government of the Republic of Liberia.

The programme aims to reach 613,578 direct beneficiaries and 1,987,701 indirect beneficiaries. With a total investment of USD 22,634,286 from the European Union (EU) for Phase I (2019 – 2020) and Phase II (2021-2022).

## Six Pillars of the Intervention

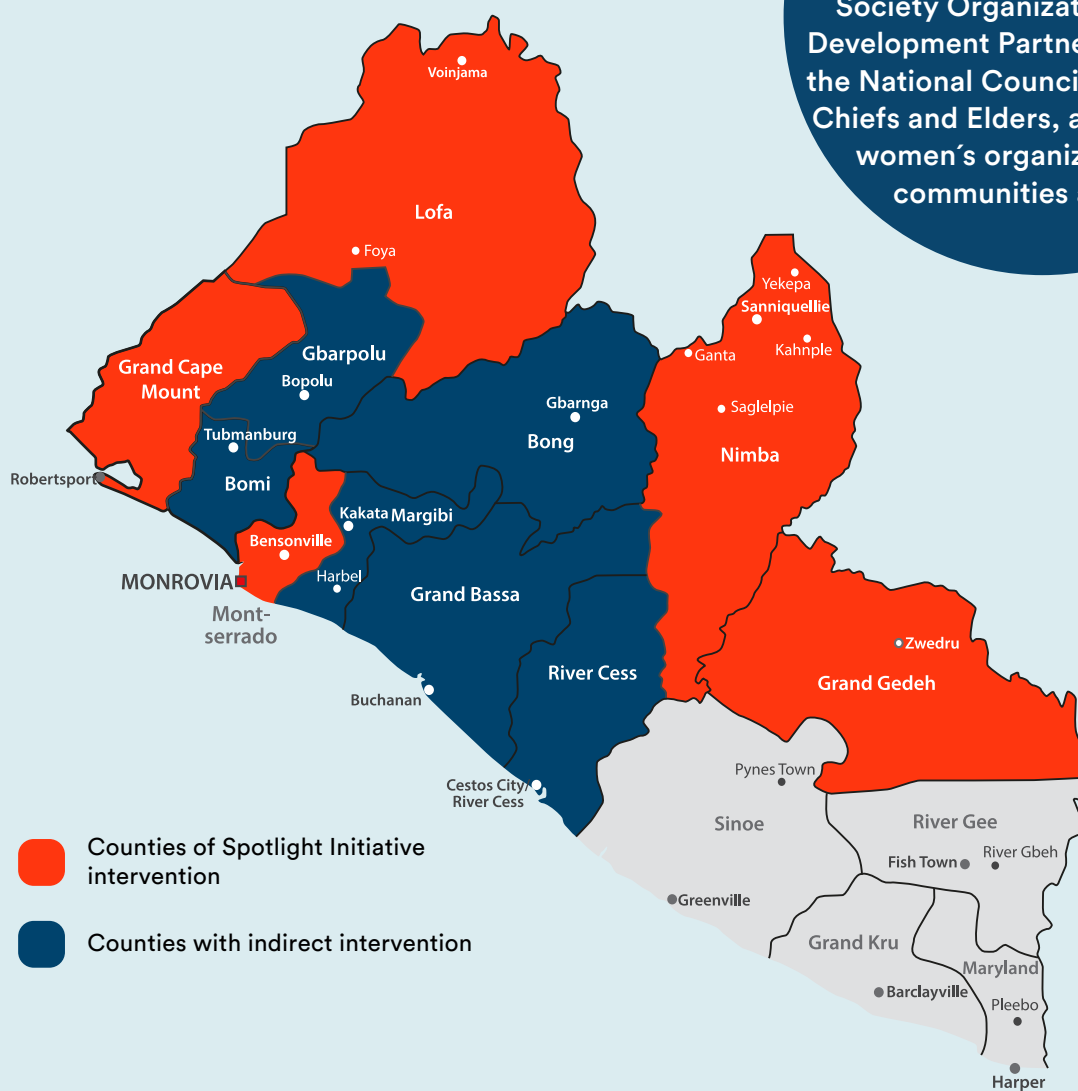




## Programme target and scope

It prioritizes the five counties of Nimba, Grand Gedeh, Lofa, Grand Cape Mount and Montserrado because of the high prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and/or harmful traditional practices (HPs), and little access to sexual, reproductive rehabilitation and health rights (SRHRs).

UNROs take on and realize the Initiative's objectives in partnership with the Government of Liberia, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Development Partners, the media, the National Council of Traditional Chiefs and Elders, and grassroots women's organizations and communities at large.









# Key Achievements 2019 – 2021



Domestic Violence Act was signed into law to legally address and tackle all forms of domestic violence, including dowry-related violence, harassment, abuse (physical, psychological, sexual, and verbal), and neglect.

The Bills outlawing FGM and rape respectively were drafted.



The *Young women and adolescent girls' empowerment programme* was launched to provide literacy and numeracy skills along with business development and financial management skills training.



In an effort to reduce the prevalence of FGM, the *Alternative Economic Livelihood Programme* was launched to support traditional FGM practitioners with skills and opportunities for self and community sustenance other than the practice of FGM for income.



**MONTSERRADO COUNTY, Liberia** - For 19-year-old Agnes, being born in the aftermath of civil war meant growing up quickly.

## A New Start

Agnes was one of 40 girls and young women from vulnerable backgrounds who were selected by their own communities to take part in Spotlight Initiative-supported economic empowerment training. In Liberia this is implemented by Spotlight Initiative through a local organization, Defense for Children Liberia.

Trainees could study catering, baking, tailoring, hairdressing, and cosmetics (make-up) but Agnes chose to learn cooking and baking.

“I chose this course because I know I will always have a ready market. People are always eating!” she says with joy.

Agnes is proud of her newly acquired business and financial management skills.

# Success Story

Her mother was a market woman and was often forced to leave Agnes and her brother, sometimes for days at a time. When she was just 7, Agnes was helping her brother fry some fish when she accidentally fell into the hot cooking oil and was severely burned. She carries the scars today.

“I’m lucky that my brother saved me before my face got burnt. I don’t know what would’ve happened to me,” she says.

As children, Agnes and her brother constantly saw their mother being beaten by their father and then later, by their stepfather.

When Agnes’ mother became sick, her husband left, forcing Agnes to drop out of school to care for her.

“I did all kinds of menial jobs to get us something to eat and soap to do the washing,” says Agnes. “It was not enough because my mama had to seek medical help, so I would sometimes ask for money from people,” Agnes recalls.

By the age of 13, Agnes was the sole breadwinner as well as caretaker for her mother. Today, she is also a single mother with a 5-year-old son. The family lives in a rented room of a house made from iron sheets, with wooden partitions to accommodate five different tenants living side-by-side in the same house.

“It’s better than where we were before and here water and electricity are now accessible,” says Agnes. “We live like a family with neighbours. We can even share food and other things. They help me look after my mother and son when I’m away. I do the same for them.”

*“I did all kinds of menial jobs to get us something to eat and soap to do the washing, it was not enough.”*



“When you don’t have anything to survive on, you will be forced to do risky things,” Agnes says, recalling the circumstances of her early pregnancy. “If I was to choose again, I would prefer to be educated... but that is not a problem anymore. Since I started running my business, I am happy and I get respect from the community.”

“I sold a lot during the Christmas and New Year seasons. Although I spent my earnings, I plan to start over and save to establish a quality catering service in this community. I will make food for meetings, workshops, churches and other big gatherings, like weddings.”

The project ensured that the girls were provided with transportation to and from the institute. Though she disliked early mornings spent travelling to Monrovia, “it was worth the pain” says Agnes. “I always reminded myself of the rewards ahead of me. This motivated me a lot, even during the rainy season, I just jumped out of bed.”

*“I chose this course because I know I will always have a ready market. People are always eating!”*

## Breaking the Cycle

After their training course, the young women received start-up packages to help them launch their small businesses, with local community leaders providing follow up support.

“We follow them in the community to make sure that [start up kits] are used for the intended purpose and then continue to follow them,” said the Community Secretary in Agnes’ town. “As a community, we are very happy that our young women are now putting their hands to work and that they are empowered. Before, most of them were not in school and almost all of them had children at young ages, and are living with their parents or alone. We are proud and happy, and we say thank you to the donors and Spotlight Initiative for this initiative.”

Ina Christensen from the Girls Empowerment Project for Spotlight Initiative in Liberia highlights the critical role of economic empowerment in eliminating violence against women and girls.

“Poverty is a huge problem for us fighting violence against women and girls,” she says. “As long as people remain extremely poor, violence will always have a place in our societies. Moreover, girls from poor backgrounds are more susceptible to dropping out of school early and consequently more likely to become pregnant early and to experience sexual and gender-based violence. We must economically empower these girls to become self-sufficient and break this vicious circle of suffering.”



This story can be found on the Spotlight Initiative website <https://www.spotlightinitiative.org/news/i-am-happy-and-i-get-respect-vocational-training-empowers-women-and-girls-liberia>



200 grassroots women rights advocates trained to develop gender mainstreaming strategies advocacy tools that respond to SGBV/VAWG and integrate them into their development plans and provide oversight in compliance with international standards. The groups also conduct advocacy, awareness, monitoring, and reporting of VAWG.



24/7 toll free SGBV call center and hotline was established to report cases and support victims and survivors of SGBV.



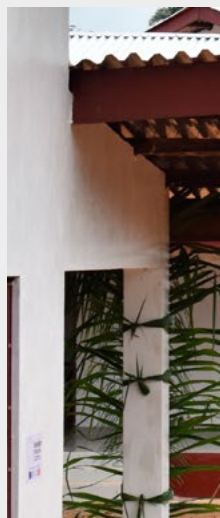
An SGBV information management system was established at the Ministry of Gender and Children's Social Protection (MoGCSP) to support the collection and analysis of quality data on SGBV.



Working with 25 CSOs and 5 CSO Secretariats who advise the programme, help monitor progress and advocate on behalf of SI through government and communities.

In September 2021, the Government of Liberia together with CSOs launched the **National Anti-SGBV Road Map** to combat these types of crimes. The road map was designed and developed with technical guidance from SI. The roadmap benefited from continuous capacity development of CSOs and their subsequent efforts in advocacy and lobbying to address VAWG issues countrywide and hold duty bearers accountable.

**The Anti-SGBV Road Map guides future interventions to address rape and other forms of SGBV in Liberia.**



Policy guidance and technical support were provided to the Government and National Council of Chiefs and Traditional Elders (NACCEL) towards the drafting and enactment of the *Six-Count Policy* statement in February 2022 that saw FGM practice in Liberia suspended for three years.



### 300 traditional FGM practitioners supported with alternative economic livelihood opportunities

- On the recommendation of NACCEL, four vocational and heritage centres were constructed in Grand Cape Mount, Montserrado, Lofa and Nimba Counties to help preserve and promote positive culture, support social cohesion and act as training facilities for women and girls to gain self-employment skills.
- Climate-smart agricultural projects were established in four counties (Grand Cape Mount, Montserrado, Lofa and Nimba) alongside the vocational heritage and training centres to support traditional practitioners of FGM with alternative sources of income instead of the practice of FGM for economic sustenance.



“

*We are now focusing on the agriculture and business activities EU and UN helped us to establish. I have practiced FGM for most of my life but now I advocate for girls to get an education unhindered and make their own choice of whether to undergo the initiation after they are 18 years old. I am happy that I still get to teach our good traditions to our girls and young women without causing any harm in the heritage centres.*

**Chief Zoe in Sonkay Town.**

”



Vocational and Heritage Center constructed in Sonkay Town, Todee District





Photos: © Spotlight Liberia/Helen Mayelle

## Feature

### Breakthroughs in VAWG/HPs Prevention and Norm Change

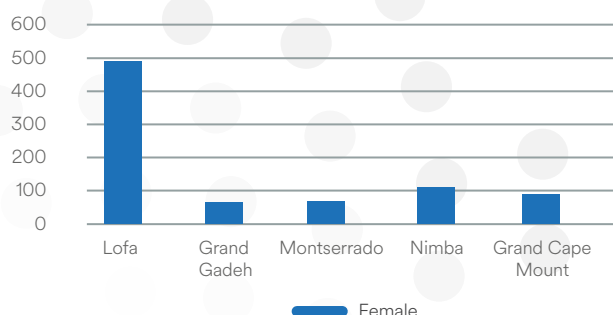
Working with stakeholders, SI mobilized and engaged over 11,500 community members (including women, men, boys, girls, traditional leaders, and teachers) during an inventory of traditional groves and zoes (FGM practitioners), reaching 822 zoes (practitioners), and setting up of Heritage and Vocational Centres critical for ending FGM.

1,033 stakeholders (mostly women's grassroots groups) committed to advocating about and addressing VAWG following several dialogues and information sessions. This commitment and support led to the adoption (and subsequent endorsement) of the Seven-Count Policy was adopted. The Seven-Count Policy statement addresses aspects of the Sande society (traditional cultural initiation institutes) considered by international human rights standards as 'harmful practices/traditions'. The policy was signed in June 2019, suspending all *Sande Schools* activities including FGM for one year.

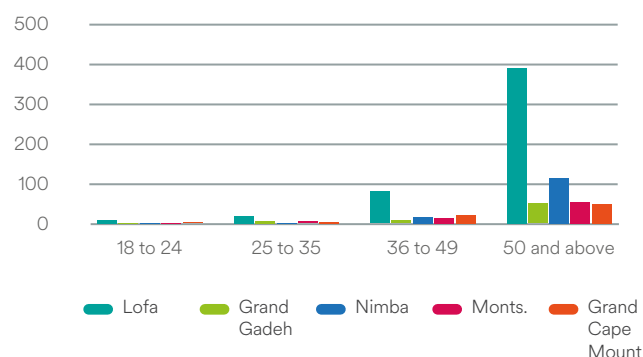
To support monitoring of the Policy, a comprehensive inventory of traditional groves and zoes was conducted in 28 administrative and statutory districts in the five LSI counties between 2019 and 2020. The inventory that had targeted 320 traditional practitioners/zoes ended up reaching and documenting 822 active practitioners of FGM.



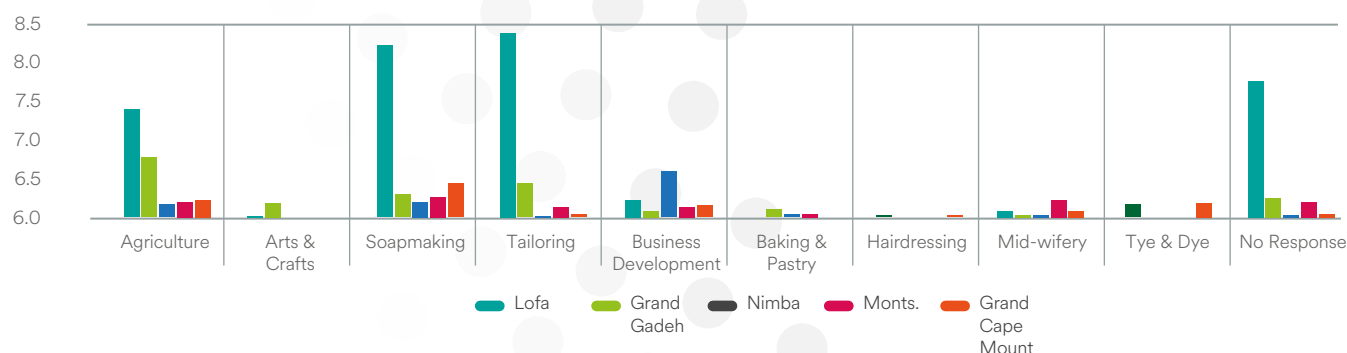
**Female Zoes Reached per County**



**Age Disaggregate of Female Zoes per County**



**Skills Requested by Zoes**



The policy's recommendations to establish alternative livelihood opportunities for FGM practitioners to focus on for sustenance and construction of heritage centres to preserve and promote the positive aspects of their culture were responded to by SI.

Guided by community chiefs and elders and zoes led by NACCEL and Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), 35-acre sites in four LSI counties (excluding Montserrado) were identified for cultural Heritage and Vocational Centres that would act as training centres for young girls and Zoes, and also provide land for climate-smart agriculture for livelihood activities for the communities.

The alternative livelihoods for and by zoes will encourage a stop to the practice of FGM which thrives on the need for economic and livelihood security by the women.



Renovated, provided supplies for and trained staff of three safe homes helping to provide safe shelter for recovering survivors of SGBV and HPs.



Constructed four, equipped, and trained staff of two maternity waiting homes to help provide expectant mothers from remote areas safe places to stay within the vicinity of health care in advance of giving birth.



Working with 25 CSOs and 5 CSO Secretariats who advise the programme, help monitor progress and advocate on behalf of SI through government and communities.

“

*The biggest deterrence of crime is not the magnitude of the punishment, what deters criminals is the increase probability that they will be caught and brought to justice if they commit crime. The DNA machines will go a long way in providing what constitutes evidence beyond doubt.*

**Dr. Benedict Kolee**  
**Chief Pathologist Republic of Liberia**

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Photo: © Spotlight Liberia/Helen Mayelle

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# SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE

IN COLLABORATION WITH

## MINISTRY OF HEALTH

REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

### NIMBA COUNTY

### INTERNAL VIOLENCE

Spotlight  
Initiative

MENTED BY UNFPA

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# Results in Numbers

## Beneficiaries reached in 2019

Indicative numbers	Direct	Indirect
Women (18 yrs. and above)	10,422	21,346
Girls (5-17)	18,716	49,616
Men (18 yrs. and above)	6,311	22,450
Boys	12,186	49,120
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>47,635</b>	<b>142,352</b>

## Beneficiaries reached in 2020

Indicative numbers	Direct	Indirect
Women (18 yrs. and above)	11,288	429,738
429,738	34,533	106,699
Girls (5-17)	45,454	98,389
Men (18 yrs. and above)	28,418	65,032
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>221,287</b>	<b>699,858</b>

## Beneficiaries reached in 2021

Indicative numbers	Direct	Indirect
Women (18 yrs. and above)	16,507	142,707
Girls (5-17)	11,571	46,236
Men (18 yrs. and above)	11,527	138,157
Boys (5-17 yrs.)	2,263	16,925
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>41,868</b>	<b>344,025</b>

Source: Spotlight Light Initiative in Liberia M&E database.





## Service provision

- 42,314 direct beneficiaries accessed multisectoral (health, psychosocial and justice) services.
- 825 children received health, psychosocial and access to justice services.
- 32,712 women and 2,199 men accessed mobile family planning and sexual reproductive health medical services.
- 2,300 SGBV survivors accessed essential drugs and supplies for sexual and reproductive health including emergency contraceptives, HIV post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), analgesics, antibiotics, and equipment procured and distributed to health facilities handling SGBV cases in referral hospitals and laboratories in all five counties of implementation.
- 982 girls (under 17years) victims of violence provided case management and referral services.
- 982 VAWG/SGBV survivors/victims of whom 180 were adolescents given skills in and start-up kits for self-economic empowerment through small-scale businesses.
- 30 women's rights advocacy and 90 SGBV community structures were set up in 110 communities in the five SI operational counties.
- 113 community structures established in SI counties to track, report and refer SGBV cases.
- 10 two-bedroom shelters constructed for female-headed refugee families and for refugee women surviving and/or at risk of facing SGBV and HPs in Nimba county.



Photo: © Spotlight Liberia/Helen Mayelle



## Awareness

- 23,405 people (8,460 women, 5,382 men, 4,966 girls and 4,597 boys) from 212 communities reached with awareness and SGBV information including prevention, punishment, and referral paths. Opportunity also used to disseminate COVID-19 health guidelines.
- CSOs engaged 385 communities, reaching a total of 48,022 persons (10,028 women, 14,410 men, 13,647 girls, 9,937 boys) to create awareness, advocate and share information on SGBV prevention and response services and HPs, and promote SRHRs.
- A total of 8,915 people (4,580 women, 4,335 men) in the five SI counties were reached with information about the Comprehensive Prevention Strategy (CPS).
- 8,959 males (5,249 men, 3,710 boys) were engaged through gender-transformative programmes to address violent masculinities and VAWG.
- Approximately 7,000 market women, motorcyclists, taxi drivers and families reached with awareness-raising campaigns on preventing and responding to SGBV.
- 4,675 children participated in awareness-raising sessions to promote good sexual and reproductive health practices and prevention of violence through the Liberia Children's Forum.
- Held dialogues with 125 (51 women, 74 men) comprising of traditional leaders, religious leaders, community elders, chiefs, and traditional women leaders about the simplified Domestic Violence Law, Inheritance Law and Rape Law.





## Capacity-building

- 191 officials (69 women, 122 men) benefited from efforts to build multi sectoral institutional capacities in the security and justice sectors.
- 174 officials (88 women, 86 men) trained to deliver timely and quality protection and response services to survivors and at-risk women.
- 300 FGM practitioners in the five LSI counties gained skills in climate-smart agriculture, savings and loans schemes, and literacy and life skills development
- 12 VSLAs established, generating a total of Liberian Dollars (LD \$) 2,149,775.00, which includes shares valued at LD\$ 2,023,945.00 and social funds of LD\$120,050.00, including fines amounting to LD\$ 5,780.00.
- 245 health professionals (64 men, 181 women) trained in mental health, social work, and psychosocial service provision for SGBV survivors.
- 148 community-based structures (130 child welfare committees and 18 GBV Observatories) comprised of at least 1,480 members in the five Spotlight counties were activated, through training and provision of operational support.
- 51 newly recruited WACPS officers (37 women, 14 men): across the five counties of operation trained in providing investigation and reporting with due diligence.



“

*The village saving loan has made me strong because through the loans I am able to earn money for myself, I have been able to pay my children's school fees-two in high school now and another in 10th grade, and I am able to buy slippers and clothes for myself. Thanks to the loans, I started and now run a successful business of selling used clothes, before that, I was doing nothing [to earn income].*

**Member of Lorkiamon Women's Advocacy and VSLA group in Nimba.**

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## Working with Spotlight Initiative to protect Women and Girls in Liberia

### Inspector Muna's Experience



## Stakeholder Interview

**NIMBA COUNTY, Liberia** - Inspector Muna Meah is a Commander in the Liberia National Police Force. For the past seven years, she has investigated cases of violence against women and children and supported survivors to access the help they need. She is the county coordinator for the Women and Children's Social Protection Centre in Sanniquille, north-central Liberia.

#### What kinds of cases do you work on?

I am in charge of cases pertaining to women and children in Nimba county. The most prevalent cases I handle here are rape, persistent non-support (failure to pay alimony) and domestic violence. Rape is the most commonly reported of these cases. It is a very difficult issue to work on, even for [those of] us with training and experience, because the impact of rape stays with the survivor for life. If a child is raped, they are provided counselling, medical and other support but they will never fully recover from the trauma and even physical damage. This is why I support the work of Spotlight Initiative to create awareness and share messages on the prevention of rape and the abuse of women and children. It is important that we work very hard to prevent [this violence] and for offenders to be punished.

*"Rape is a very difficult issue to work on, even for [those of] us with training and experience, because the impact stays with the survivor for life."*

## **What is the current situation of violence against women and children in the country?**

After COVID-19 and Ebola we experienced very high cases of rape because perpetrators had the advantage when children were at home. Women and girls are very vulnerable populations...from time immemorial they have been vulnerable. It's about now that women are getting onboard and being heard.

## **How has the Spotlight Initiative changed your work?**

We were trained in different areas of handling sexual and gender-based violence and how to work with survivors of rape. Spotlight has a team that can come and monitor us, follow up on cases we have documented and the cases that are forwarded to court. They also collect data on cases.

Through Spotlight, we have seen more women and girls coming up to report cases by themselves. Previously, it would be through other community members who have an understanding of the law and justice processes, but with the awareness created on how to report cases [women and girls] are coming here openly.

Spotlight has also renovated our office building and supplied us with chairs, desks and computers for us to do our work. They gave us a motorcycle for us to follow up on cases from remote communities.

## **What are some of the ways in which you are raising awareness on sexual and gender-based violence?**

Spotlight provided placards with messages to 'stop rape' and others with 'rape is a crime'. Some placards tell people that there are people out there to help victims of rape and tell people where to report cases of abuse. They also have messages for the offenders saying that 'if you commit this crime, you will be punished'. People read these placards and change their behaviour. Victims and reporters of cases now know that they are protected by the law if they report. They know that there are people to help them.



Footnote: Interview done by Helen Mayelle. Original interview edited for length and clarity.

## Media engagement

- 388 media practitioners from 66 media institutions have requisite skills and increased knowledge to report on SGBV Cases in a gender-sensitive manner and increase the visibility of SGBV issues in Liberia.
- Five CSO Secretariats established to coordinate CSO and Women Rights Group activities in the five spotlight counties.



“

The role of the media in Liberia is very crucial to end violence against women and girls but they need to start with changing their own attitudes and perceptions of violence against women. They too need sensitization and desensitization to better understand issues concerning women and that way we bring them on board to help project the issue as a national emergency.

**Director of Women's TV, Liberia.**

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I AM  
**#WithHer**  
ARE YOU?







# COVID-19 Response

In March 2020, Spotlight Initiative and the EU's country delegation carried out a situation review of the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls and how the initiative could address some of those impacts.

COVID-19 exacerbated SGBV and VAWG as lockdowns and economic desperation created spaces for violence, abuse and harmful practices to thrive unimpeded. Moreover, the pandemic impacted implementation of programme interventions that would otherwise help prevent and or slowdown prevalence of these crimes. The worst and more cases occurred within remote and slum communities.

Children were at heightened risk of being violated and abused. Long-term separations of families during the pandemic left some

children unsupervised or in the hands of abusers. Restrictions on movement increased the suffering of children from neglect, and deprived of their rights to food and play, many children fell prey to abusers. Media reports showed increasing numbers of girls falling victim to SGBV, including child marriage, early pregnancies, and FGM.

The pandemic worsened the situation for more vulnerable children's groups including street children, children on the move, and children living in institutions or detention centres as they got further exposed to harm, neglect, and discrimination within and outside their communities.

Access to justice for survivors was halted.

## Spotlight Initiative's COVID-19 Response

Joining national efforts through the Psychosocial and Women, Children and Girls Pillars led by MoGCSP, SI's response prioritized SGBV prevention and case management focusing on:

- supporting essential services to address SGBV during the lock-down periods.
- public sensitization on COVID-19 and SGBV

For business continuity, SI also adapted to innovative ways to carry out context-feasible activities such as holding virtual sessions for the *South-South experience learning session*; media training; and meetings with stakeholders to track implementation and progress.

Considering the rising cases of SGBV during the pandemic, SI continued advocacy and awareness-raising activities in hard-to-reach areas with strict adherence to health protocols.

**COVID-19 centre at the 14 Military Hospital in Monrovia was set up for VAWG survivors and to facilitate continuation of maternity, childcare, and SGBV support.**



Provided **information technology** equipment for the National Response Hub's SGBV call center to address concerns on GBV, maternal child health, and social protection.



Procured **personal protective equipment (PPE)** comprising raincoats, rain boots, detergents, thermometers, reusable face masks, buckets, scratch cards, and hand sanitizers to MoJ for the Liberia National Police, WACPS, and SGBV to advocate, sensitize and share information on SGBV and COVID-19.



**Transportation** 10 motorbikes provided to traditional leaders to facilitate monitoring and reporting on FGM and SGBV from remote areas during the pandemic.



Conducted **awareness-raising and sensitization** in communities on COVID-19, SRHRs and SGBV prevention and response through five CSOs.

Photos: © Spotlight Initiative Liberia



# Thank You!

While we work directly with the following partners, we are immensely grateful to all our supporters (direct and indirect) in and outside of Liberia.

**Donor:** European Union

**Recipient UN Organizations:** UN Women, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, and OHCHR.


**Associated Agencies:** UNHCR and IOM.

**Government of Liberia:** Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSP); Ministry of Health (MOH); Ministry of Justice (MOJ); Law Reform Commission (LRC); Ministry of Education (MOE); Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA); and Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR) and National Traditional Council of Chiefs and Elders of Liberia (NACCCEL).

**Other partners:** 16 civil society organizations (CSOs), Non-Governmental Organizations (international and national) (NGOs), and community-based organizations (CBOs) listed in the CSO National reference group; Children's Organization and Grassroot Women's Organizations.



**for a  
world  
with  
zero  
violence  
against  
women and  
girls**





**Spotlight  
Initiative**

*To eliminate violence  
against women and girls*

# **Liberia**

## **Results**

### **2019-2021**

An Initiative of the United Nations with generous funding from the European Union

