



Spotlight Initiative
To eliminate violence against women and girls



**MPTF OFFICE GENERIC ANNUAL PROGRAMME¹ NARRATIVE PROGRESS REPORT
REPORTING PERIOD: 1 JANUARY – 31 DECEMBER 2020**

<p align="center">Programme Title & Project Number</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Programme Title: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat ● MPTF Office Project Reference Number:³ 00108307 	<p align="center">Country, Locality(s), Priority Area(s) / Strategic Results²</p> <p><i>Country/Region:</i> 34+ programmes in Africa, ASEAN, Caribbean, Central Asia, Latin America, and Pacific</p> <p><i>Priority area/ strategic results:</i> Eliminating Violence Against Women and Girls, Sustainable Development, UN Reform</p>
<p align="center">Participating Organization(s)</p> <p>Organizations that have received direct funding from the MPTF Office under this programme: UNDP, UN Women, UNFPA</p>	<p align="center">Implementing Partners</p> <p>Governments, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Associated Agencies</p>
<p align="center">Programme/Project Cost (US\$)</p> <p>Total approved budget as per project document: \$19,008,650</p> <p>MPTF /JP Contribution⁴:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● UN MPTFO (UNDP): \$9,204,696 ● UN Women: \$9,738,763 ● UNFPA: \$65,190 <p>Agency Contribution: \$744,264</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MPTFO (UNDP): \$235,714 ● UN Women: \$351,984 ● UNFPA: \$156,566 <p>Government Contribution</p> <p>Other Contributions (donors)</p>	<p align="center">Programme Duration</p> <p>Overall Duration: September 2017 - December 2024</p> <p>Start Date⁵: 20.09.2017</p> <p>Original End Date⁶: 31.12.2024</p> <p>Current End date⁷</p>

¹ The term “programme” is used for programmes, joint programmes and projects.

² Strategic Results, as formulated in the Strategic UN Planning Framework (e.g. UNDAF) or project document.

³ The MPTF Office Project Reference Number is the same number as the one on the Notification message. It is also referred to as “Project ID” on the project’s factsheet page the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](#).

⁴ The MPTF or JP Contribution, refers to the amount transferred to the Participating UN Organizations, which is available on the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](#).

⁵ The start date is the date of the first transfer of the funds from the MPTF Office as Administrative Agent. Transfer date is available on the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](#).

⁶ As per approval of the original project document by the relevant decision-making body/Steering Committee.

⁷ If there has been an extension, then the revised, approved end date should be reflected here. If there has been no extension approved, then the current end date is the same as the original end date. The end date is the same as the operational closure date which is when all activities for which a Participating Organization is responsible under an approved MPTF / JP have been completed. As per the MOU, agencies are to notify the MPTF Office when a programme completes its operational activities.

TOTAL:	\$19,752,914
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Programme Assessment/Review/Mid-Term Eval.
Assessment/Review - if applicable <i>please attach</i> Yes No Date: <i>dd.mm.yyyy</i>
Mid-Term Evaluation Report – <i>if applicable please attach</i> Yes No Date: <i>dd.mm.yyyy</i>

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List of Acronyms

COSI: Community of the Spotlight Initiative
CPD: Country Programme Document
CSO: Civil society organization
DCO: United Nations Development Coordination Office
DG INTPA: Directorate-General for International Partnerships (formerly DG DEVCO, the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development)
DSG: Deputy Secretary General
EOSG: Executive Office of the Secretary-General
EU: European Union
EVAWG: Eliminating violence against women and girls
FGM: Female genital mutilation
GBV: Gender-based violence
GRG: Civil Society Global Reference Group
LA RP: Latin America Regional Programme
M&E: Monitoring & Evaluation
MPTF Office: Multi Partner Trust Fund Office
OSC: Operational Steering Committee
PME: Participatory monitoring and evaluation
PNG: Papua New Guinea
ROM: Results-oriented methodology
RP: Regional Programme
RUNO: Recipient United Nations Organization
SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals
SMART: Spotlight Monitoring and Reporting Tool
ToR: Terms of Reference
UN RC: United Nations Resident Coordinator
UNCT: United Nations Country Team
UNDAF: United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDG: United Nations Development Group
UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
UNDS: United Nations Development System
UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF: United Nations Children’s Fund
UNTF EVAW: United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women
UNV: United Nations Volunteers
UN Women: United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VAWG: Violence against women and girls
WPHF: Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund

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Executive Summary

This report offers an overview of the work accomplished and progress made by the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat in 2020. More specifically, the report outlines the results of the Secretariat's efforts against the overarching functions and goals set out in its [Terms of Reference](#) (ToR), i.e. to:

- Provide strategic advice and quality control over the implementation of the initiative;
- Exercise accountability for the technical quality and coherence of the initiative in responding to country and regional programme needs;
- Ensure the full weight of existing United Nations (UN) programmes, partnerships, research and networks are brought together in support of the initiative;
- Facilitate collaboration and communication between the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG), recipient United Nations organizations (RUNOs), and the United Nations Resident Coordinators (UN RCs) regarding the operations of the fund;
- Ensure the submission of country-level/regional programme proposals to the Operational Steering Committee (OSC);
- Provide operational and administrative support to the Governing Body and Operational Steering Committee;
- Bring together a range of UN entities together to leverage their collective capacities, mandates and gender expertise to deliver on the goal of eliminating violence against women and girls;
- Coordinate with the three core implementing agencies - United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) - plus the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the wider UN system;
- Ensure that lessons learned feed into relevant wider United Nations reform discussions;
- Manage the monitoring and control of operational risks and ensure activities are implemented according to plan, having the intended impact on rights-holders, effectively owned by communities, relevant to the needs of rights-holders, and captured through knowledge management strategies to be transformed into policy tools;
- Manage and support communication, public information and visibility to raise awareness of the scourge of violence against women and girls and to illustrate and the impact of Spotlight Initiative programmes;
- Undertake resource mobilization and partnership-building efforts;
- Ensure coherence, alignment, quality, scaling up, sharing of knowledge and lessons learned, and strong technical support.

This report has been structured around these main responsibilities.

Purpose

The Secretariat is a fund governance support structure. The Secretariat has two units: the Management Unit and the Technical Unit. The two units work in close collaboration, and in a complementary manner. The Secretariat executes the management and coordination activities of the Fund and provides technical support to programme countries and regions. As the Spotlight Initiative is a Demonstration Fund for the United Nations Development System (UNDS) Reform, the Secretariat also facilitates coordination across implementing organizations in service of this new way of working. The Management Unit acts as the secretariat of the Governing Body and Operational Steering Committee and is hosted by the Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) Office, while the Technical Unit is hosted by UN Women and provides technical and programmatic leadership. The Executive Office of the Secretary-General provides overall coordination of the Secretariat.

Results

Mobilizing partners and stakeholders to eliminate violence against women and girls

In May 2017, the European Union (EU) announced its plan to launch a global initiative on violence against women and girls (VAWG), accompanied by a financial envelope of EUR 500 million. The inception of the Spotlight Initiative occurred on 20 September 2017. The Spotlight Initiative offers an opportunity for the United Nations and European Union to support a comprehensive approach to preventing and responding to violence against women and girls in target countries, and to do so in innovative and new ways. The initiative builds on knowledge and lessons learned from past programmes and supports coordination efforts with relevant global initiatives to avoid overlap or duplication. The Spotlight Initiative is also a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) and UN Development System reform model fund, pioneering an unprecedented integration of UN agency efforts under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator.

In addition to the EU's historic investment, the Government of Portugal has committed USD 40,252 to the Spotlight Initiative, and the Government of Albania has committed USD 5,000.

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent “shadow pandemic” of deepened violence against women and girls in 2020, the Secretariat redoubled its efforts to mobilize funding and secure commitments to end violence against women and girls. In December, the Spotlight Initiative followed up on the UN Secretary-General's call for ‘peace in the home’ and action on gender-based violence in the context of Covid-19 by organizing the virtual launch of the [Group of Friends for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls](#). The launch was attended by 78 Member States and Observers, together with UN agencies. The Group subsequently drafted and adopted a common statement for the sixty-fifth Commission on the Status of Women, which reaffirmed Member States' commitment to respect and comply with all international obligations and commitments on gender equality and to scale up the response to gender-based violence across sectors.

Overseeing programming and guiding acceleration

The Secretariat is responsible for overseeing Spotlight Initiative programmes and ensuring that teams are both following proper procedures and meeting requirements, and supported to advance implementation, address challenges, and meet goals. In 2020, the Secretariat worked with programme teams to collect and track budget revisions, annual work plans, and National Steering Committee decisions in order to track programmes' progress in activating governance mechanisms and following guidance. After the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Secretariat coordinated with the European Union and the MPTF Office to issue programme and budget revision guidance specifically related to reprogramming in the context of Covid-19. The Secretariat aimed to ensure maximum flexibility and clarity in order for teams to adjust quickly to the new context while ensuring eligibility of costs and coordination with the EU Delegations.

As part of this reprogramming, Spotlight Initiative programmes produced Covid-19 response plans in close consultation with EU Delegations and civil society partners. The Secretariat used these plans to produce global-level analysis on the Spotlight Initiative's response and disseminated the plans via the Spotlight Initiative's community of practice (COSI) to facilitate the exchange of good practices across programmes. Throughout 2020, the Secretariat supported teams in adapting programming

and budgets to the restrictions of Covid-19 and mitigating measures as well as to the rise in violence against women and girls during the pandemic.

The Secretariat works to ensure that governance decisions, guidance, and resources reach teams in Spotlight Initiative programmes and regions and that staff are equipped to carry out complex programmes under a new way of working in the spirit of UN Reform. Moreover, the Secretariat provides targeted support to programme teams. In addition to offering ongoing support by responding to questions via email, in 2020, the Secretariat held a series of trainings and webinars with teams. In February 2020, the Secretariat collaborated with the MPTF Office to convene programme management training sessions with teams in the newly approved programmes in the Caribbean, Central Asia and Pacific. During these sessions, the Secretariat advised staff on topics including recruitment, procurement, reporting, budgets and annual work plans, in addition to civil society engagement and communications efforts. In December 2020, the Secretariat held similar training sessions in response to requests from teams to guide newly recruited staff on programme management and implementation and to offer support to the teams in Afghanistan, Ecuador, the Caribbean Regional Programme, and the Central Asia and Afghanistan Regional Programme during the early months of their implementation. For programmes in the Africa and Latin America regions, the Secretariat scheduled “check-in calls” with Spotlight Coordinators in November 2020 to advise on next steps related to the extension of Phase I and the upcoming process for Phase II as well as to listen to any concerns and identify areas for the Secretariat to further support programmes. Additionally, in August 2020, the Secretariat held a series of four orientation sessions for the Africa Regional Programme, in order to ensure that the team was well-informed and well-placed to accelerate implementation.

In the second half of 2020, the Secretariat also held meetings with UN Resident Coordinators, Heads of RUNOs and UN Country Teams in order to identify implementation acceleration measures and collectively problem-solve to overcome any obstacles. This series of meetings was an important feedback platform, as teams shared their experiences with implementation under UN Reform principles. The lessons from these meetings have allowed the Secretariat to inform the UN System through the EOSG and UN Development Coordination Office (DCO) on good practices under UN Reform.

In 2020, the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat also undertook missions to support UN Country Teams in setting up programmes and advancing the implementation of activities. Results of this support include:

Caribbean Regional Programme

The Secretariat provided direct support to the finalisation of the Caribbean Regional Programme Project Document and budget, both remotely and in person during a two-week mission. During the mission, working closely with the Resident Coordinator’s Office, the Secretariat coordinated the convening of RUNOs to agree on and finalize the Programme Management Structure for the Regional Programme, as well as the programme budget ahead of submission to the Operational Steering Committee. In addition, Secretariat worked in conjunction with the Resident Coordinator’s Office to convene the multi-stakeholder workshop to approve the programme documents. The Caribbean Regional Programme was approved by the Operational Steering Committee on 24 July 2020.

Niger

Through a 2-month mission to Niger, the Secretariat provided tailored technical support to the Country Team in the fields of monitoring, coordination, and reporting. In line with the principles of UN Reform, the Secretariat contributed to the establishment of a “coordination by pillar” system

aimed at fostering synergies between implementing UN Agencies and key partners both at the technical and operational level. The Country Team is now better positioned to advance implementation in line with Spotlight Initiative principles and expectations. Additionally, with extensive engagement of the Civil Society National Reference Group, the Secretariat piloted the newly developed [Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Guidance](#).

Facilitating decision-making and cooperation through governance and coordination structures

Within the Spotlight Initiative's governance structure, the highest tier of governance is the Governing Body. In 2020, the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat convened the Governing Body once, on 14 September 2020. During this meeting, members agreed on the necessity to expedite delivery of the Spotlight Initiative, as well as the critical importance of the mid-term assessment. On the Global Platform, a global knowledge hub under development, the EU requested that the Secretariat discuss internally on how to ensure complementarity with [Action Coalitions of Generation Equality](#), in particular through the lesson sharing elements.⁸ The Governing Body members also requested that respective teams ensure that there is joint visibility for the Spotlight Initiative at all levels.

The second tier of governance within the Spotlight Initiative is the Operational Steering Committee. The Secretariat facilitated four Operational Steering Committee email meetings in 2020. Key decisions included the following:

Operational Steering Committee - 21 January 2020

- **Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan** country programmes approved

Operational Steering Committee - 24 July 2020

- Additional Pillar 6 (Women's Movements) to the **Pacific Regional Programme** approved
- **Central Asia and Afghanistan Regional Programme** (inclusive of Pillar 6) approved
- **Caribbean Regional Programme** (inclusive of Pillar 6) approved
- Grant-giving programmes for civil society organizations through the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) for **Papua New Guinea, Haiti, and Afghanistan** approved
- Reallocation of **USD 9.1 million in response to the Covid-19 pandemic** from the Spotlight Initiative **Sub-Saharan Africa** multi-country grants envelope of the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UNTF EVAW)
- **Civil Society Global Reference Group** budget totalling USD 250,000 for 2020-2021 approved

Operational Steering Committee - 7 September 2020

- **Guatemala** country programme closure approved

Operational Steering Committee - 13 November 2020

- **Afghanistan and Ecuador** country programmes approved

Throughout 2020, the Secretariat coordinated with stakeholders across the UN system to foster collaboration, communication, and cohesion. The Secretariat convened three meetings - on 27 January 2020, 6 July 2020, and 11 September 2020 - with the Heads of the core UN Agencies (UN Women, UNDP, and UNFPA) plus UNICEF to discuss the implementation status of Spotlight Initiative programmes, assess the Spotlight Initiative's Covid-19 response, and prepare for the Governing Body meeting, respectively. These meetings provided a valuable space for the agencies and the

⁸ Read more about how the Spotlight Initiative is working toward Generation Equality [here](#).

Secretariat to come to a common understanding of the progress of the Spotlight Initiative and agree to decisions about the way forward at a high level.

In addition, the Secretariat engaged the Directors of the core UN Agencies plus UNICEF with two meetings in 2020 - on 9 September 2020 and 20 November 2020. The purpose of these meetings was to collectively address challenges and bottlenecks on implementation, identify potential solutions and areas for deeper collaboration, and complement the technical level discussions held regularly with Agency Focal Points.

Another key coordination mechanism of the Spotlight Initiative that the Secretariat engaged in 2020 is the Civil Society Global Reference Group (GRG), an established institutional mechanism of 20 peer-selected women's rights activists who advise the fund and hold the initiative accountable to its commitments to civil society. The group members represent a diverse cross-section of civil society, balanced by region and issue-orientation, and with a focus on activists facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. One representative from the Civil Society Global Reference Group serves as a full member on the Operational Steering Committee and one on the Governing Body. As a new model for a Sustainable Development Goal fund, the representation of the Civil Society Global Reference Group on the highest governance mechanisms embodies a new way of working with civil society and reflects the Initiative's commitment to meaningfully engage civil society at all levels.

In 2020, the Civil Society Global Reference Group worked with the Secretariat to identify bottlenecks in the UN's processes that restrict grassroots funding, as well as the shifts needed to enable more effective human rights-based programming that responds to the lived realities of women's organizations on the ground. Through monthly meetings with the Secretariat; focused sub-working groups on monitoring, advocacy, and communication; webinars; and meetings with the UN Deputy Secretary-General, in 2020, the Civil Society Global Reference Group effectively elevated critical issues related to policy and implementation as it impacts civil society for action at the highest levels of the Initiative.

Transferring funding and overseeing strategic investments

Spotlight Initiative programmes are replenished in installments based on delivery status and cash availability, in order to avoid overloading capacity and to incentivize timely implementation. Generally, after programmes are approved by the Operational Steering Committee, they receive 40% of their Phase I budgets as their first tranche of funding. Once programmes reach a 70% delivery rate (including expenditures and commitments) on the first tranche (and a 100% delivery rate on any previous transfers, such as the prefunding amounts transferred to programmes that began implementation in January 2019), these programmes become eligible to request the second tranche. The Secretariat supports country and regional programmes to request additional funding, guiding the team through the process of submitting provisional financial and narrative reports and preparing the paperwork for the official request to the MPTF Office. In 2020, the MPTF Office distributed a total amount of USD 166,925,651 in Spotlight Initiative funding to 32 programmes across 5 regions, and to the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund.

Spotlight Initiative Fund Disbursement in 2020:

Africa	Africa RP	\$ 6,000,000
	Liberia	\$ 9,226,829
	Malawi	\$ 11,628,425
	Mali	\$ 10,442,487
	Mozambique	\$ 11,619,872
	Niger	\$ 9,855,943
	Nigeria	\$ 14,570,067
	Uganda	\$ 12,801,128
	Zimbabwe	\$ 12,309,536
Africa Sub Total		\$ 98,454,287
Latin America	Argentina	\$ 2,856,623
	Ecuador	\$ 1,160,001
	El Salvador	\$ 3,831,349
	Honduras	\$ 3,890,945
	Mexico	\$ 3,272,037
	LA RP	\$ 1,925,000
LA Sub Total		\$ 16,935,955
Pacific	Papua New Guinea	\$ 6,272,000
	Samoa	\$ 1,160,000
	Timor-Leste	\$ 3,960,000
	Vanuatu	\$ 990,000
	Pacific RP	\$ 1,650,000
	WPHF - PNG	\$ 1,500,000
Pacific Sub Total		\$ 15,532,000
Caribbean	Belize	\$ 990,000
	Grenada	\$ 660,000
	Guyana	\$ 1,480,000
	Haiti	\$ 3,960,000
	Jamaica	\$ 2,640,000
	Trinidad and Tobago	\$ 1,480,000
	Caribbean RP	\$ 3,821,132
	WPHF-Haiti	\$ 700,000
Caribbean Sub Total		\$ 15,731,132
Asia	Afghanistan	\$ 4,950,000
	Kyrgyzstan	\$ 4,700,000
	Tajikistan	\$ 1,960,000
	Asia RP	\$ 1,499,604
	WPHF-Afghanistan	\$ 700,000
	Safe and Fair	\$ 6,462,673
Asia Sub Total		\$ 20,272,277
Total		\$ 166,925,651

Monitoring and evaluating the initiative for results and recommendations

The key functions of the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework are to ensure that the right decisions are taken so that the Spotlight Initiative's activities: (i) are being implemented according to plan; (ii) have the intended impact on the beneficiaries and agents of change; (iii) are effectively delivering benefits and the benefits are being sustainably managed and owned by communities; (iv) are relevant to the needs of, and prioritized by, targeted beneficiaries/agents of change (including those most at risk and facing intersecting forms of discrimination); and (v) are being monitored so as to identify problems and risks early and ensure the progress of the Initiative is on track.

Throughout the reporting period, the Secretariat's monitoring team continued to support the implementation of Spotlight Initiative's M&E Strategy, ensuring continual information on how activities are being implemented, which reflects progress towards achieving the intended programme objectives, outputs and outcomes. Monitoring is critical for identifying implementation issues that warrant decisions at different levels of management. In this way, monitoring provides regular feedback and progress on programme performance to management and stakeholders that will be used in decision-making and learning to improve programmes. Information from monitoring serves as a critical input for evaluation.

- In order to efficiently and rigorously capture and then aggregate programme results across all programmes and all pillars of the Initiative's Theory of Change, the Initiative developed and uses the Spotlight Monitoring And Reporting Tool (S.M.A.R.T) platform. This online platform is a custom-built results monitoring system, built for the specific requirements of the robust results framework and in response to country level needs, such as: cost-effective, low internet connectivity, including a questionnaire format for simplified unified understanding and disaggregation of indicators, a universally accessible platform across separate UN agencies. The SMART platform intakes annual reporting data, outputs country level data for programme annual reports, and aggregates data across all programmes for the global annual report data. The key results and 1-page infographics that highlight the outstanding results of the Spotlight Initiative are produced as an outcome of the SMART platform.
- The M&E team dedicated a significant amount of its work to supporting country colleagues in capturing change and providing quality data on the programme's impact. As a result, and compared to 2019, the quantity and quality of data have improved dramatically, despite some UN Country Teams finding the timeframe for the data entry to be too short and coupled with competing demands of accelerated implementation, with the production of the annual reports and the midterm assessment taking place concurrently. To ensure quality assurance, the Secretariat undertook two rounds of revisions of every programme's baseline, milestones, targets and reporting data.
- Ensuring accountability to the Initiative's stakeholders, including its primary stakeholder - civil society - has been at the center of the M&E team's mission. During the reporting period, the M&E team worked on developing a participatory monitoring and evaluation (PME) strategy. Participatory monitoring and evaluation (PME) is an inclusive process whereby a wide range of local stakeholders and community members are actively engaged in the monitoring and evaluation phases of a programme. Through PME, primary stakeholders are seen as rights holders and agents of change, with their knowledge, experience and expertise valued: participants share control over the content, the process and the results of the monitoring and evaluation activity; observe, document and analyze changes at the community-level; and actively contribute to decision-making processes. Shifting to a participatory approach to M&E comes as a request from the Spotlight Initiative's stakeholders and rights holders. Through PME, the Spotlight Initiative has the potential to ensure that the M&E cycle supports mutual engagement and learning, and ultimately sustainably accelerates the elimination of VAWG.

So far, a PME Guidance Note has been jointly developed with civil society. It outlines the key principles of PME, its objectives and provides practical guidelines to start implementing it in Spotlight Initiative programmes. A dissemination event is planned in May 2021 in the context of the Initiative's Global and Regional Learning Sprints.

In 2020, the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat in collaboration with EU counterparts, launched a mid-term assessment of the Initiative. The assessment covers all programmes, focusing first on programmes in **Latin America** and **Africa**, and then, in mid-2021, the programmes in the **Caribbean, Pacific, and Asia**.

Conducted by Hera, an evaluation and research company based in Brussels, the mid-term assessment offers the opportunity to assess the performance of each programme, improve programme management by informing stakeholders about the performance of the interventions, and identify lessons learned to test the Spotlight Initiative's theory of change. Finally, the assessment provides critical information to guide the Operational Steering Committee's decision on the allocation and/or reallocation of Phase II funding.

At the time of this report, the mid-term assessments reports have been presented to the Operational Steering Committee for a decision on programmes' Phase II. The Spotlight Initiative Secretariat, in coordination with country programmes, is currently preparing for the necessary follow up to the mid-term assessments. The review of the findings shows compelling results across the 6 pillars of the Initiative.

- Based on the criteria of the EU Results-Oriented Methodology (ROM), the reports received an overwhelming majority of green scores under each of the criteria: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. Out of a total of 180, the reports received 119 green scores (66%), 57 orange scores (32%) and only 4 red scores (2%).
- Overall, the mid-term assessments validate the assumptions and key principles of the Spotlight Initiative: the comprehensive theory of change, the participatory and multi-stakeholder methodology as well as the adherence to the "leaving no one behind" principle and the central role given to civil society in the governance, design and implementation of the Initiative.
- Programmes' stakeholders (government, civil society, EU and UN teams), through a survey of more than 700 respondents, overwhelmingly confirmed the gender-transformative, survivor-centered and human-rights based approach of the Initiative. In the same survey, around 90% of respondents also expressed that they considered the Spotlight Initiative to be in line with the UN Reform's principles and to contribute to more efficient and better coordinated action on ending violence against women and girls.
- Reports also highlight the efficient and nimble adaptation of programmes to the Covid-19 context, including in ensuring services for survivors of violence are seen as essential and new ways to reach communities during Covid-19 restrictions.

Key quotes from stakeholders, collected during the mid-term assessment exercise, include:

"With Spotlight, we have created an extraordinary and significant policy dialogue that did not exist a year ago. One that is positive and transformative in its impact." – EU Delegation, Nigeria

"This is the first time that a concerted effort has been placed on giving voice to vulnerable segments of society on issues that directly affect them at the national stage." – Civil Society, Zimbabwe

The findings of these mid-term assessments will be presented to each programme's National Steering Committee for a collective reflection on Phase I's achievements and to support the adoption of correcting measures for Phase II, when necessary. The findings will also feed into a meta-analysis, which will surface trends and commonalities across programmes, and issues related to the global management of the Initiative.

Reporting on results

The Secretariat is responsible for reporting on the Spotlight Initiative's results and for supporting UN Agencies and country and regional programme teams to submit required reports, in line with the Spotlight Initiative's legal and contractual agreements.

In 2020, the Secretariat shared extensive guidance with programme teams to support staff in producing high-quality, results-oriented reports. In March 2020, programmes in Africa and Latin America as well as the Safe & Fair programme submitted 2019 Annual Reports, for which the Secretariat conducted two rounds of quality assurance. The Secretariat then produced a 2019 Global Annual Report, which captured results across regions at the programme-level as well as achievements at the global level and was submitted to the European Union on 31 May 2020. In July 2020, programmes in the Caribbean, Central Asia, and Pacific submitted "inception reports" to cover their progress in the first 6 months of implementation, which the Secretariat also quality assured. These reports shared important information on foundational processes, such as programme operationalization, recruitments, and partnership-building, which are critical to setting programmes up for success and allowing programmes to accelerate once key structures are in place.

In September 2020, the Secretariat coordinated with the MPTF Office to produce a fund replenishment report to request the European Union to replenish the fund from the Africa and Latin America envelopes. To produce this report, the Secretariat requested 2-page report updates from programmes to complement their 2019 annual reports, which the Secretariat used to present comprehensive overviews of progress in the Spotlight Initiative's implementation per pillar. The fund replenishment report also presented updates on the Context of the Action and measures taken; the status of fund development; governance and coordination; fund and programme quality assurance; and partnerships, along with challenges, mitigating measures, and lessons learned. The narrative report was complemented by a financial overview, which was produced in partnership with the MPTF Office.

Though most financial reporting is managed at HQ-level, the Secretariat coordinates with programme teams to produce provisional financial reports, which are required to request additional funding from the MPTF Office. The Secretariat provides instructions and report templates to teams and coordinates with the MPTF Office to review requests and the relevant supporting documents. The Secretariat is also responsible for requesting the OSC Chair's signature on fund transfer requests. As noted earlier in this report, in 2020, the Secretariat facilitated the disbursement of USD 166,925,651 to programmes through this process.

Finally, in 2020, Agencies submitted quarterly financial reports to allow for regular monitoring of programme implementation status. Each quarter, the Secretariat coordinated with the MPTF Office to analyze the data and course correct as needed, with a focus on programmes that required acceleration measures to expend funding efficiently and on time.

Advancing knowledge management and capacity development

The Spotlight Initiative is committed to accelerating efforts through evidence-based programming. To ensure both catalytic and sustainable impact, the Initiative serves as a knowledge platform identifying best practices and lessons learned, promoting innovation, and building on the evidence base on ending violence against women and girls.

The Spotlight Initiative Secretariat expanded Knowledge management efforts in 2020 to include the **Caribbean, Pacific, and Central Asia programmes**, including in its Knowledge Management Focal Points Network, and strengthened exchange across all Spotlight Initiative stakeholders. Through the wealth of knowledge cultivated across its programmes, the Secretariat continuously shared the latest evidence and resources to inform evidence-based programme development, implementation and supported development country level national response plans that responded to the spike in violence against women and girls in the Covid-19 context. Through the Community of the Spotlight Initiative (COSI) as well as the monthly newsletters, the Secretariat offers a one-stop-shop continuously updated with all Spotlight Initiative platforms, resources, and tools, and was expanded in 2020 to support programmes to pivot in the context of Covid-19. The Secretariat also supported knowledge production and capacity development across the six pillars of the Theory of Change and on cross-thematic areas for programmes, including through the development of a Knowledge Product Guideline. The Knowledge Management Focal Points Network with over 50 members was also strengthened through regular orientations and meetings held throughout the year. The Secretariat supported the development and review of knowledge management strategy and work plan for each Spotlight Initiative programme to build and strengthen knowledge management across all elements of implementation and to ensure teams were adequately equipped to respond to the Covid-19 context, as well as exchange and strengthen promising practices and lessons learned.

Furthermore, the Secretariat, in collaboration with Regional and Country programmes, held eight knowledge exchanges in 2020 that drew over 1,120 participants from the UN, civil society, government, the EU and other constituencies engaged in the Initiative. The first series of webinars focused on pivoting programming to address the exacerbated violence against women and girls in the context of Covid-19. The second included a series of Global Learning Sprints, the first of its kind, to promote cross-regional knowledge exchange and bottom-up capacity development. These learning sprints were tailored to focus on needs-based thematic topics and technical gaps across programming. The learning sprints drew over 800 participants from the UN, government, civil society, non-traditional partners, the EU and other Spotlight Initiative stakeholders, and feedback surveys have shown that these learning sprints have resulted in strengthened Covid-19 response across 25+ programmes, quality evidence-based ending violence against women and girls programme implementation overall, and deepened connections in the Spotlight Initiative global community in 2020.

To amplify lessons and best practices from across the Spotlight Initiative's 34 programmes and 5 regions beyond Spotlight Initiative stakeholders, model comprehensive elimination of violence against women and girls programming and create direct links between duty bearers and local, grassroots activists, the Secretariat has developed a concept note for the Spotlight Initiative Global Platform. The Global Platform would offer the combined power of a knowledge hub, a community of practice and an advocacy platform, founded in the practical experience of the Initiative's programmes and a coalition of diverse stakeholders, such as the UN, civil society organizations, Governments, researchers and non-traditional partners to connect and form coalitions around areas of action.

Raising awareness and visibility

For much of 2020, the Spotlight Initiative focused on online communications activities and events in order to overcome the challenges posed by Covid-19 lockdowns and travel restrictions. This included a special focus on engaging social media influencers and media networks to promote messages on the prevention of violence against women and girls.

In March, the Initiative launched its flagship digital engagement campaign on ending violence against women and girls ([#WithHer](#)) in Brussels, with high-level representation from the UN and EU. Online, the campaign reached 220 million users on Twitter and Facebook.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres officially appointed two new UN Global Advocates for Spotlight Initiative, Ariel- and Emmy-nominated actress Cecilia Suárez, and South Africa Rugby Team Captain Siya Kolisi. This contributed to the Initiative's increased media presence, with more than 2,800 Spotlight Initiative-specific articles and stories published by 1,180 media outlets across 101 countries, with an estimated reach of more than 3.7 billion readers.⁹ Top-tier outlets included The Washington Post, The Independent, Daily Mail, Reuters, The Hill, El Pais, El Mundo, Infobae, Clarin, Milenio, ABC News, Al Jazeera, Vice, Medium, Thomson Reuters Foundation News, MSN, IPS, The Punch (Nigeria), Foreign Policy, The World Economic Forum, The South African, The Guardian (Nigeria), Haaretz, Xinhua News, Channels TV, AllAfrica.com and ReliefWeb, to name a few. This was particularly important given the significant increases in violence exposed by Covid-19.

The Spotlight Initiative's own digital presence also grew, with traffic to the [Spotlight Initiative global website](#) organically increasing by 330%, compared to the previous year. The launch of the Initiative's first Instagram and Facebook profiles resulted in more than 15,000 fans and almost six million impressions on [Facebook](#), and more than 2,000 followers and almost two million impressions on [Instagram](#). Growth was further supported by #WithHer Talks, a series of social media-based conversations around VAWG featuring celebrities and influencers. The [first episode](#) was a discussion between activists and survivors of domestic violence, while the [second episode](#) focused on the ways that Bollywood shapes public understanding of gender roles. More episodes are set to air in 2021.

At the country level, campaigns were adapted to local contexts and supported by high-level national and regional launches in **Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, the Pacific, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Timor-Leste, Uganda and Vanuatu** and for the **Central Asia and Afghanistan Regional Programme**. These included EU and UN representation, along with the voices of civil society activists and women and girl survivors.

⁹ Meltwater media keyword search (1 Jan - 31 Dec 2020). Raw data of all media hits available [here](#).

Challenges and Mitigating Measures

In 2020, the primary challenge that the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat faced was the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Secretariat team had to quickly transition to remote work modalities and adapt to a new global context. Fortunately, the team was able to take advantage of virtual tools and platforms to continue working and communicating effectively, both internally and with partners. The limitation of physical gatherings required the Secretariat to reimagine its way of working and identify innovative solutions for meetings and engagements. For governance matters, the Secretariat utilized the non-objection procedure by sending documents for decision to Operational Steering Committee members via email and requesting feedback or confirmation as appropriate. This approach ensured a continuation of Operational Steering Committee decision-making throughout 2020, including for approving new programmes. The Secretariat was also able to hold a virtual Governing Body meeting and maintain regular virtual meetings with the Civil Society Global Reference Group, Heads of UN Agencies, Directors of UN Agencies, and Agency Focal Points. For programme support, knowledge management, and capacity development purposes, the Secretariat held several online events, webinars, check-in calls, and network-building sessions, which ultimately allowed the Secretariat to reach more staff and stakeholders and to effectively disseminate virtual resources.

Another challenge in 2020 was the constrained capacity of the Secretariat in the face of a growing need for targeted programme support, as the Initiative's portfolio of programmes more than doubled. Moreover, the unprecedented contextual shifts of 2020 required the Secretariat to dedicate extensive time and attention to supporting programme teams in their adaptation and response to Covid-19 and its consequences. This challenge will be mitigated in 2021, as the revised budget for the Secretariat, which will be approved by the Operational Steering Committee, will include additional staff positions, including: Data and Budget Analyst, Operations and Fund Analyst, Communications Officer, Digital Editor, and Fund Officer. This additional capacity will allow the Secretariat to better service programme teams, advance plans for the way forward, and act on lessons learned in 2020.

An additional challenge for the Secretariat in 2020 involved the development of the SMART Platform. This process has been an organic and iterative process. Efforts undertaken after the 2019 reporting cycle and following feedback from the EU contributed to great improvements for this reporting process. The Secretariat is nevertheless identifying new areas for improvement and will undertake upgrades to the SMART platform in 2021 that will continue to improve the overall ease of use, the quality of the data, the service's products and the interactivity within the system.

Finally, the Secretariat faced obstacles to the implementation of certain programmes that required special attention. In Guyana and Tajikistan, for example, there were delays to governments signing the Country Programme Documents (CPDs). Securing government approval of Spotlight Initiative programmes is essential, as the fund is meant to operate in support of governments' national commitments to eliminating violence against women and girls. The Secretariat worked closely with the UN Country Teams, EU Delegations and EU Brussels to address these political situations. In Guyana, the team successfully received the government's signature. The process in Tajikistan is ongoing, but the UN Resident Coordinator and EU Ambassador have engaged with the government at all levels and received strong commitments on signature of the programme. In other programmes, the Secretariat faced challenging contextual situations, including political transitions and natural disasters, in addition to the global rise in violence against women human rights defenders and backlash to multilateralism. The Secretariat offered close support and guidance to UN Country Teams to ensure the proper mitigating measures were taken and with the EU Brussels to collectively identify solutions and opportunities for course correction.

Conclusion and Steps Forward

2020 was a challenging year for the Spotlight Initiative and the Secretariat, but it was also a year in which the Initiative demonstrated its progress and potential. For the way forward, the Secretariat will build on the results achieved, particularly in responding to Covid-19 and advancing key priorities in line with the Initiative's theory of change, and adjust its way of working based on the recommendations and findings of the mid-term assessment.

As two new country programmes were approved at the end of 2020 - Afghanistan and Ecuador - in 2021, the Secretariat will provide targeted support to the teams, with a focus on the recent deterioration in the security situation in Afghanistan. The Secretariat will also guide programmes in Africa and Latin America through the transition to Phase II of programming, which involves additional funding to consolidate progress made in Phase I, with a focus on ensuring sustainability and developing exit strategies. For programmes in Asia, the Caribbean, and the Pacific, the Secretariat will support teams in accelerating implementation to ensure programmes remain "on track" despite the challenges of Covid-19 and other contextual shifts in 2020. The Secretariat will also oversee the mid-term assessment for these regions, building off of lessons learned from the mid-term assessment of Africa and Latin America in 2020.

Additionally, the Secretariat's priorities in 2021 will include sustaining the EU's initial investment in eliminating violence against women and girls and expanding the Spotlight Initiative through a diversified partner base, with an expansion of stakeholders and partners; the scaling up of investments, the broadening and extension of existing programmes; and the addition of new programmes. The Secretariat will also collaborate with the EU and the permanent missions of Spotlight Initiative implementing countries to identify resource mobilization opportunities.

In addition, the Secretariat will direct its efforts in 2021 towards the deepening of strategic knowledge management and capacity development efforts, including through the launch of a virtual exchange and convening platform called the Spotlight Initiative Global Platform. The Secretariat will also identify opportunities to collate good practices and lessons learned on UN Reform and support the wider business operations and efficiency agenda at the UN. Furthermore, the Secretariat will deepen meaningful engagement with civil society, particularly feminist and women's rights organizations and grassroots organizations, at the strategic and implementation levels. Finally, the Secretariat will continue and expand its work with cultural influencers and private sector partners through the Culture Change Commitment and advance the #WithHer campaign.

Financial Report of the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat

Project Expenditures

Expenditure by Project within Region, as of 31 December 2020 (in US Dollars):

Region/Project Title	Total Approved Amount	Total Transferred Amount	Total Expenditure	Delivery Rate %
Africa				
Africa Regional Programme	\$ 25,620,000	\$ 6,000,000	\$ 499,064	8.32
Liberia Spotlight Programme	\$ 15,844,000	\$ 15,844,000	\$ 6,572,279	41.48
Malawi Spotlight Programme	\$ 20,000,000	\$ 20,000,000	\$ 7,624,426	38.12
Mali Spotlight Programme	\$ 18,000,000	\$ 18,000,000	\$ 7,461,064	41.45
Mozambique Spotlight Programme	\$ 20,000,000	\$ 20,000,000	\$ 9,893,726	49.47
Niger Spotlight Programme	\$ 17,000,000	\$ 17,000,000	\$ 7,209,103	42.41
Nigeria Spotlight Programme	\$ 25,000,000	\$ 25,000,000	\$ 10,109,806	40.44
SPOTLIGHT GRANTS UNTFEVAW - Afghanistan	\$ 20,636,792	\$ 20,636,792	\$ 2,818,130	13.66
SPOTLIGHT GRANTS WPHF	\$ 7,075,472	\$ 7,075,472	\$ 736,652	10.41
Uganda Spotlight Programme	\$ 22,000,000	\$ 22,000,000	\$ 12,778,053	58.08
Zimbabwe Spotlight Programme	\$ 21,000,000	\$ 21,000,000	\$ 8,166,161	38.89
Africa: Total	\$ 212,176,264	\$ 192,556,264	\$ 73,868,464	38.36
Asia				
Afghanistan Spotlight Programme	\$ 16,500,000	\$ 4,950,000	\$ -	0.00
Asia Spotlight Regional Programme	\$ 4,248,584	\$ 1,499,604	\$ 85,242	5.68
Kyrgyzstan Spotlight Programme	\$ 4,700,000	\$ 4,700,000	\$ 878,852	18.70
Safe and Fair	\$ 29,370,587	\$ 16,775,666	\$ 10,311,679	61.47
SPOTLIGHT WPHF AFGHANISTAN	\$ 2,000,000	\$ 700,000	\$ -	0.00
Tajikistan Spotlight Programme	\$ 4,900,000	\$ 1,960,000	\$ 610,212	31.13
Asia: Total	\$ 61,719,171	\$ 30,585,270	\$ 11,885,985	38.86
Caribbean				
Belize Spotlight Programme	\$ 2,475,000	\$ 990,000	\$ 653,235	65.98
Caribbean Spotlight Regional Programme	\$ 9,552,830	\$ 3,821,132	\$ -	0.00
Grenada Spotlight Programme	\$ 1,650,000	\$ 660,000	\$ 155,829	23.61
Guyana Spotlight Programme	\$ 3,700,000	\$ 1,480,000	\$ 217,575	14.70
Haiti Spotlight Programme	\$ 9,900,000	\$ 3,959,999	\$ 1,816,662	45.88
Jamaica Spotlight Programme	\$ 6,600,000	\$ 2,640,000	\$ 903,668	34.23
SPOTLIGHT WPHF HAITI	\$ 2,000,000	\$ 700,000	\$ -	0.00
Trinidad and Tobago Spotlight Programme	\$ 3,700,000	\$ 1,479,999	\$ 578,084	39.06
Caribbean: Total	\$ 39,577,830	\$ 15,731,130	\$ 4,325,052	27.49
Latin America				
Argentina Spotlight Programme	\$ 5,400,000	\$ 5,400,000	\$ 2,624,248	48.60
Ecuador Spotlight Programme	\$ 2,900,000	\$ 1,160,001	\$ -	0.00
El Salvador Spotlight Programme	\$ 7,200,000	\$ 7,200,000	\$ 4,937,857	68.58
Guatemala Spotlight Programme	\$ 5,400,001	\$ 2,497,496	\$ 20,390	0.82
Honduras Spotlight Programme	\$ 7,200,000	\$ 7,200,000	\$ 3,376,642	46.90
Latin America Regional Programme	\$ 3,500,000	\$ 3,500,000	\$ 1,062,646	30.36
Mexico Spotlight Programme	\$ 6,300,000	\$ 6,300,000	\$ 2,544,236	40.38
SPOTLIGHT GRANTS UNTFEVAW - LA	\$ 5,660,378	\$ 5,660,378	\$ 935,834	16.53
Latin America: Total	\$ 43,560,379	\$ 38,917,875	\$ 15,501,853	39.83
Pacific				
Pacific Regional Programme	\$ 7,077,830	\$ 1,650,000	\$ 808,921	49.03
Papua New Guinea Spotlight Programme	\$ 15,680,000	\$ 6,272,000	\$ 2,980,355	47.52
Samoa Spotlight Programme	\$ 2,900,000	\$ 2,900,000	\$ 687,074	23.69
SPOTLIGHT WPHF PNG	\$ 2,000,000	\$ 1,500,000	\$ -	0.00
Timor-Leste Spotlight Programme	\$ 9,900,000	\$ 3,960,000	\$ 1,406,316	35.51
Vanuatu Spotlight Programme	\$ 2,475,000	\$ 990,000	\$ 355,283	35.89
Pacific: Total	\$ 40,032,830	\$ 17,272,000	\$ 6,237,949	36.12
Grand Total	\$ 397,066,474	\$ 295,062,539	\$ 111,819,303	37.9