



Spotlight Initiative
To eliminate violence against women and girls



MPTF OFFICE ANNUAL SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE SECRETARIAT PROGRESS REPORT
REPORTING PERIOD: 1 JANUARY – 31 DECEMBER 2021

<p>Programme Title & Project Number</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Programme Title: Spotlight Initiative Secretariat ● MPTF Office Reference Number:² 00108307 	<p>Country, Locality(s), Priority Area(s) / Strategic Results¹</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>Participating Organisation(s)</p> <p>Organisations that have received direct funding from the MPTF Office under this programme: UNDP, UN Women, UNFPA</p>	<p>Implementing Partners</p> <p>N/A</p>
<p>Programme/Project Cost (US\$)</p> <p>Total approved budget as per project document: \$19,885,249</p> <p>MPTF /JP Contribution³:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● UN MPTFO (UNDP): \$9,204,696 ● UN Women: \$10,615,363 ● 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>Programme Duration</p> <p>Overall Duration September 2017 - December 2024</p> <p>Start Date⁴ 20.09.2017</p> <p>Original End Date⁵ 31.12.2024</p> <p>Current End date⁶ 31.12.2024</p>
<p>Government Contribution</p> <p>Other Contributions (donors)</p>	

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

2 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](#).

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

4 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](#).

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

6 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 Organisation 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.
Functional review of the management unit functions commended in January 2022, report to be expected in June 2022.

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List of Acronyms

COSI: Community of the Spotlight Initiative
CPD: Country Programme Document
CSO: Civil society organisation
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
GP: Global Platform
GRG: Civil Society Global Reference Group
KM: Knowledge Management
M&E: Monitoring & Evaluation
MPTF Office: Multi Partner Trust Fund Office
MTA: Mid-term Assessment
OICT: Office of Information and Communications Technology
OM: Operations Manual
OSC: Operational Steering Committee
PME: Participatory monitoring and evaluation
PNG: Papua New Guinea
RG: Reference Group
ROM: Results-oriented methodology
RP: Regional Programme
RUNO: Recipient United Nations Organisation
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
WRO: Woman-Led and/or Women's Rights Organisation
WHRD: Women Human Rights Defender

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Executive Summary

This report offers an overview of the work accomplished and progress made by the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat in 2021. More specifically, the report outlines the results of the Secretariat's efforts against the overarching functions and goals set out in the Spotlight Initiative Direct Cost Project Document and the Fund's [Terms of Reference](#) (ToR), i.e. to:

- Provide strategic advice and quality control over implementation of the Spotlight Initiative;
- Facilitate collaboration and communication between the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG), recipient United Nations organisations (RUNOs), and the United Nations Resident Coordinators (UN RCs) regarding the operations of the fund;
- Exercise accountability for the technical quality and coherence of the initiative in responding to country and regional programme needs;
- Provide management, operational, and administrative support to the Governing Body and the Operational Steering Committee (OSC), and ensure the submission of country-level/regional programme proposals to the OSC;
- Monitor and ensure the implementation of key decisions made by the governance bodies and raise any delays or challenges that arise to take proper, timely action;
- 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, as well as leverage their collective capacities and gender expertise to deliver on the goal of eliminating violence against women and girls (EVAWG);
- Foster coherence, alignment, quality, scaling up, and sharing of knowledge and lessons learned, and ensure that these feed into relevant wider United Nations Reform discussions;
- Produce high quality data analysis and practical tools for decision makers aimed at ensuring Spotlight Initiative interventions are based on sound research;
- Elaborate a comprehensive [Operations Manual](#), to codify policies and rules of procedure in accordance with signed legal agreements, and ensure its compliance;
- Manage the monitoring and control of operational risks and ensure activities are implemented as planned, 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 converted into policy tools;
- Manage and support communication, public information and visibility, in close collaboration with the UN Department of Public Information, the EOSG and the three core implementing agencies (plus UNICEF), to raise awareness on violence against women and girls and to illustrate the impact of Spotlight Initiative programmes;
- Coordinate and oversee the annual reporting process, both at fund-level and programme-level, and consolidate narrative annual and final reports submitted by RUNOs to present to the Operational Steering Committee for review.
- Support the monitoring and evaluation of programme technical quality, coherence and potential replicability of actions in other countries/contexts;
- Identify and facilitate potential partnerships;
- Ensure collaboration and streamlined communication with all relevant stakeholders and foster constant engagement with civil society;
- Coordinate country eligibility and allocation processes with the OSC, UN country teams, and EU delegations and engage in resource mobilisation to attract investments from donors.

This report has been structured around these main responsibilities.

Purpose

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. Additionally, as a complement to the EU's historic seed investment, the Government of Portugal has committed USD 68,47440,252 to the Spotlight Initiative, and the Government of Albania has committed USD 5,000. The Spotlight Initiative is 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 at country level and Development Coordination Office (DCO) Regional Directors at regional level. It contributes directly to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) by supporting the joint effort by all development actors to eliminate violence against women and girls as underscored specifically by SDG 5 on Gender Equality (Targets 5.2.12 and 5.3.13), as well as SDG 16 on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (Targets 16.1.1, 14 16.2.2 and 16.2.3).

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 new and innovative 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. Country and regional programmes engage with government and regional entities as essential partners, in order to foster local ownership and political buy-in, both key to eliminating violence against women and girls (EVAWG) in-country. Within its programmes, the Initiative fosters a unique new way of working with civil society, especially with local and grassroots organisations and feminist and women's rights organisations, recognizing their exceptional expertise and leadership on EVAWG.

The Secretariat is a fund governance support structure. It consists of 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 organisations 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

Mobilising partners and stakeholders to eliminate violence against women and girls

The Spotlight Initiative, a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) and UN Development System reform model fund, 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 new and innovative 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.

In the context of the continued Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent increase in violence against women and girls, in 2021, the Secretariat coordinated action amongst international development actors and continued to encourage a more streamlined process of information-sharing for the elimination of violence against women and girls, in line with the UN Secretary General's [call for action](#) on the matter, issued in April 2020. To that end, on 29 January 2021, the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat supported the European Union and Member States in organising a second meeting of the Group of Friends for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls, in accordance with the commitments made by the Group during its launch in December 2020. This second meeting was attended by 105 participants, 88 Member States, and Observers together with UN Agencies and EU representatives. On 15 March, the Group [organised its third meeting](#) on the sidelines of the 65th Commission on the Status of Women to discuss what the international community has done to address the rising levels of violence against women and girls during the Covid-19 pandemic. On 29 June, the Group's fourth meeting focused on [ending violence and harassment at work](#). The Group also convened in person for the first time, on 2 December 2021, to [celebrate its one-year anniversary](#) and to reiterate the group's purpose of responding to the impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had on all forms of gender-based violence.

Overseeing programming and guiding acceleration

The Secretariat is responsible for overseeing 34 Spotlight Initiative programmes as well as supporting and ensuring programmes follow proper procedures and are well-equipped to advance implementation, address challenges, and meet goals. In 2021, the Secretariat supported 13 programme teams with Phase II CPD and budget development, budget revisions and annual work plans, and provided guidance on programme governance (especially related to National/Regional Steering Committees).

Supporting the Agency Focal HQ Point system

In addition to this, the Secretariat holds monthly meetings with Agency Focal Points to discuss progress, address challenges on programme implementation, foster inter-agency coordination and further streamline communication channels between programmes, Agencies, and the Secretariat. The Technical Agency Focal Points meetings were a critical space to collaborate, identify synergies across areas of work and, importantly, to ensure that the varied expertise from across the UN system was leveraged for high-quality programme implementation. Following suggestions to ensure that discussions properly cover topics related to programme management and operations, the Secretariat also held regular meetings with Operational Agency Focal points every third Monday of the month, starting in June 2021. These particular meetings with Operational Agency Focal Points — who are in

charge of providing Spotlight programmes with relevant operational and managerial support — offer the opportunity for the Secretariat to ensure important information reaches programmes by making sure that Agency Focal Points remain fully informed on any new updates, rules or plans with the Spotlight Initiative. This helps to establish a more robust coordination mechanism between Agencies and the Secretariat. In addition to these regular meetings, the Secretariat planned a retreat with Agency Focal Points from all recipient UN agencies to be held in February 2022, to look back on three years of implementing the Initiative and to collectively shape the future of the Spotlight Initiative.

Effective country and regional programme support

The Secretariat works to ensure that governance decisions, guidance, and resources reach teams in Spotlight Initiative programmes in a timely manner, so that staff are equipped to carry out complex programmes under the new way of working, in the spirit of UN Reform. As such, the Secretariat actively coordinates with - and finds synergies between - Agency Focal Points, the EU and other partners to ensure prompt responses to requests for support are provided in order to equip programme teams with the information to proceed with smooth programme implementation. Moreover, the Secretariat provides targeted support to programme teams by offering ongoing advice, responding to questions via email and engaging in ad-hoc calls with programme teams. It has also identified Standard Operating Procedures for streamlining support to programmes. In addition to this, the Secretariat held a variety of trainings and webinars with teams, including those listed below.

- On 7 and 8 April 2021, the Secretariat briefed programme teams on Phase II processes and principles to help them prepare the required documents for Phase II of the Spotlight Initiative. During this session, the Secretariat also presented the relevant Phase II templates and provided answers to the questions of the country teams.
- On 17 May 2021, the Secretariat held a comprehensive training session with the Africa Regional Programme to explain key Spotlight principles and implementation under the concept of UN Reform. The session also covered programme governance structures, budget development and budget revisions procedures, annual work plans, reporting, delivery through CSOs, accelerating implementation, among other key elements of Spotlight programmes and their implementation.
- In May 2021, the Secretariat conducted a comprehensive induction training session with the newly recruited Ecuador Programme Team. During this session, the Secretariat advised staff on topics including recruitment, procurement, monitoring and evaluation, reporting, budgets and the budget revision process, annual work plans, fund replenishment and disbursements, in addition to civil society engagement, knowledge management and communications efforts.
- On 1 November 2021, the Secretariat held an induction session for Spotlight Coordinators who had relatively recently joined the programmes in Afghanistan, Africa Regional Programme, Liberia, Mozambique, and Papua New Guinea alongside some of their teams. The Secretariat presented an overview of key programme management principles and guidance, including on UN Reform, programme and budget revisions, implementation through civil society organisations, AWP, reporting, and fund transfers.

Additionally, the Secretariat continuously tracks requests received and associated responses, in order to actively and constantly improve its country support function. In November 2021, it conducted an analysis of its country support efforts to assess programmes' needs for guidance in addition to the Operations Manual, and to keep a record of its role in providing this support to inform future guidance including, but not limited to, the revised version of the Operations Manual. Through this analysis, the Secretariat found that most of the inquiries received by the Secretariat relate to budgets and budget revisions, programme implementation, and reporting. Consequently, most of the guidance and support provided by the Secretariat relates to such topics. There are plans to carry out this exercise

again in the future to have an updated assessment of needs and newly identify relevant themes in this area.

Bringing to fruition Phase II development for Latin America and Africa

Further, in March 2021, the Secretariat communicated information on the Phase II process with UN Resident Coordinators in country programmes in Africa and Latin America (excluding Ecuador, which follows a different project cycle). The Secretariat also provided templates and ample, detailed guidance on Phase II narrative and budget proposals. From then until the end of 2021, the Secretariat closely supported teams to finalise their Phase II documents for OSC approval. This exercise included multiple rounds of dedicated quality assurance review on proposal drafts and budgets to ensure the documents reached the necessary level of quality. Additionally, the Secretariat coordinated closely with the EU in Brussels during this process to ensure clear and constant support to teams and to streamline the process of approval.

In 2021, the Secretariat supported twelve (12) country programme teams and one (1) regional programme team in the Phase II transition process, including Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Argentina, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico and the Latin America Regional Programme. As part of its sustained support to programme teams, the Secretariat held a series of webinars in April 2021—including one in Spanish, one in English and one in French—to provide further guidance and assistance on Phase II, including information on Phase II proposals; details on allocations and duration; staffing; civil society engagement; budget development and templates; key Spotlight principles; and information on next steps. It also engaged in multiple, dedicated quality assurance reviews of programme budgets and Phase II proposals, to ensure quality of submissions and adherence to requirements and guidance. In 2022, the Secretariat will build on lessons learned from support given in 2021 to hold similar sessions and provide similar support to programmes in the Caribbean, Pacific and Central Asia regions, as they undergo the transition into Phase II.

Issuing of the Operations Manual Compendium and Other Guidance

In efforts to increase support to programme teams and UN Agencies, the Secretariat proposed, consulted and resolved issues on various pieces of programmatic and operational guidance. This included compiling, drafting, consolidating and disseminating the first version of the Operations Manual Compendium (OM), which contains all key programmatic guidance previously issued by the Spotlight Initiative Operational Steering Committee, the Administrative Agent of the Multi Partner Trust Fund Office, and the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat, under the guidance of the Executive Office of the Secretary General, since the Fund's inception on 20 September 2017. The OM was shared with Agency Focal Points and Spotlight Initiative programme teams after being approved and endorsed by the Operational Steering Committee in April 2021. This Manual was issued to ensure compliance with policies and rules of procedure and to ensure programmes function properly under the United Nations Development Group standards.

In addition to this, the Secretariat issued the aforementioned guidance on Phase II processes and templates, including the preparation and realization of dedicated Phase II webinars and several rounds of in-depth reviews. Guidance on the carry-over of Phase I funds was also provided during the reporting period, including requirements and processes related to development of the associated workplans. Along with these pieces of guidance, the Secretariat organized training processes for stakeholders on said guidance, as needed, as well as established accessible channels for Q&A processes where appropriate and relevant.

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, which provides overarching high-level strategic direction, and strengthens partnership and cohesion for the initiative. It is a high-level forum that facilitates consultation among stakeholders, including partner countries, to agree on common strategic communication lines and take stock of overall progress. It also engages in strategic oversight and approval of operational tools. The Secretariat provides strategic support to this entity by advising on compliance and pivotal decision-making needs; providing substantive servicing in meetings (including agenda setting, drafting of talking points and background notes, convening participants, holding pre-negotiation meetings with key stakeholders, planning logistics of events and compiling background documents for decisions); and engaging in detailed record-keeping and appropriate follow-up. The next Governing Body meeting will take place in early 2022.

The second tier of governance within the Spotlight Initiative is the Operational Steering Committee (OSC). Similar to the Governing Body, the OSC provides Fund governance, with operational and administrative support from the Secretariat.

In 2021, the Operational Steering Committee held six written procedures and one virtual meeting, due to the ongoing pandemic. Key decisions included the following:

2021 Operational Steering Committee Key Decisions:

Operational Steering Committee - 4 March 2021

- The Spotlight Secretariat Direct Cost Budget was approved.

Operational Steering Committee - 12 April 2021

- The Spotlight Initiative Revised Global Communications and Visibility Plan for 2021-22 was approved.
- The Spotlight Initiative Global Platform Concept Note was approved.

Operational Steering Committee - 23 April 2021

- Approval on Phase II programme continuation until 31 December 2022, as per the Spotlight Initiative Investment Plans, with an additional allocation (30%) of the total budgets per country programme, for the following countries: Argentina, El Salvador, Honduras, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Uganda, Zimbabwe.
- The OSC concluded that both Mali and Niger can go to a provisional Phase II, but the decision on the possible further financial allocation will only be considered at a later stage, pending an analysis to be conducted at country level and an agreement between the EU and UN on the way forward.
- For Mexico, the decision for a Phase II has been postponed to the next OSC, planned for the end of June. A workshop will be organised inviting all relevant stakeholders beforehand.
- The harmonised programme start dates were acknowledged as per documents submitted to the OSC.

Operational Steering Committee - 16 July 2021

- Spotlight Initiative El Salvador Country Programme document and Budget were approved, including the allocation for Phase II.

Operational Steering Committee - 6 August 2021

- The Spotlight Initiative Argentina Country Programme Document and full Programme Budget, including for Phase II were approved.
- The Spotlight Initiative Honduras Country Programme Document and full Programme Budget, including for Phase II were approved.
- The Spotlight Initiative Malawi Country Programme Document and full Programme Budget, including for Phase II were approved.
- The Spotlight Initiative Mozambique Country Programme Document and full Programme Budget, including for Phase II were approved.
- The Spotlight Initiative Zimbabwe Country Programme Document and full Programme Budget, including for Phase II were approved.

Operational Steering Committee - 15 October 2021

- The Spotlight Initiative Liberia Country Programme Document and full Programme Budget, including for Phase II were approved.
- The Spotlight Initiative Uganda Country Programme Document and full Programme Budget, including for Phase II were approved.
- The Spotlight Initiative Latin America Regional Programme Document and full Programme Budget, including for Phase II were approved.
- The Tajikistan Country Programme revision approved.
- The 2020 Spotlight Initiative Global Annual Report was endorsed.

Operational Steering Committee - 23 December 2021

- The Spotlight Initiative Mali Country Programme Document and full Programme Budget, including for Phase II were approved.
- The Spotlight Initiative Mexico Country Programme Document and full Programme Budget, including for Phase II were approved.
- The Spotlight Initiative Niger Country Programme Document and full Programme Budget, including for Phase II were approved.
- The Spotlight Initiative Nigeria Country Programme Document and full Programme Budget, including for Phase II were approved.

Throughout 2021, the Secretariat coordinated with stakeholders across the UN system to foster collaboration, communication, and cohesion. In addition to supporting with planning and servicing of the aforementioned Governing Body and OSC meetings, the Secretariat also continually convenes meetings with Heads of Agencies (HoAs) of relevant UN Agencies. On 5 August 2021, it convened a meeting with the Heads of the core UN Agencies (UN Women, UNDP, and UNFPA) plus UNICEF to discuss the results of Phase I of the Spotlight Initiative; the future of the Spotlight Initiative (including funding, structure and strengthening business processes in line with reforms); and the reflections from the outgoing Executive Directors from UN Women and UNICEF. These meetings provided a valuable space for the Agencies and the 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 EOSG and the Secretariat convened three meetings with the Directors of the core UN Agencies plus UNICEF – on 18 March 2021, 9 September 2021 and 9 December 2021. The purpose of these meetings was to jointly review implementation status of the Spotlight Initiative, collectively address any remaining challenges, and discuss areas for potential continuation of the Spotlight Initiative moving forward. The last Directors Meeting of the year – on 9 December 2021 – was convened by the EOSG to take stock of the Spotlight Initiative’s results and impact in 2021, including the launch of the Impact Report and the mid-term assessments (MTAs), and to discuss the future of the Spotlight Initiative. This meeting provided an important platform to discuss the one-year extension

of the fund that will allow most programmes to complete implementation of allocated budgets and reach objectives, as well as the need to ensure teams are well-staffed throughout this extension, to continue achieving results. A brainstorming meeting will be convened in 2022 to further explore the future of the Spotlight Initiative.

Moreover, in November 2021, the Secretariat hosted its first roundtable event with Permanent Representatives of partner countries, the Deputy Secretary-General (DSG), and the European Ambassador to highlight the impact of the Spotlight Initiative and exchange on an innovative approach to eliminating violence against women and girls and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. 19 Spotlight Country Permanent Representatives were in attendance, including Afghanistan, Argentina, Belize, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Liberia, Mali, Mexico, Niger, Samoa, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, and Zimbabwe.

Furthermore, the Secretariat engages in meetings with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General through, for instance, regular briefings with the UN Deputy Secretary-General. In 2021, a variety of such meetings were held to discuss, among other things, the global midterm assessment; upcoming Governing Body meetings, as relevant; share updates on communications efforts; engage in Phase II planning; discuss the future of the Spotlight Initiative; review key results from 2020; consider opportunities for partnerships and resource mobilisation; and share updates on implementation. Ahead of these meetings, the Secretariat supports with agenda-setting, compilation of any relevant background documents and drafting of briefing notes and talking points. In addition to this, it supports with significant meeting servicing and follow-up.

Supporting the engagement of the Civil Society Global Reference Group

Another key governance and coordination mechanism of the Spotlight Initiative that the Secretariat engaged in 2021 is the Civil Society Global Reference Group (GRG), an established institutional mechanism of peer-selected women's rights activists who advise the fund, advocate and partner for the realisation of its objectives, 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 in 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 2021, 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 organisations on the ground. Through regular meetings with the Secretariat, its annual retreat, and focused sub-working groups on monitoring, advocacy and communication, in 2021, the Civil Society Global Reference Group effectively elevated critical issues related to policy and implementation as they impact civil society for action at the highest levels of the Initiative. In 2021, two Global Reference Group Coordinators (GRG Coordinators) were recruited to lead the implementation of the Global Reference Group work plan, which includes undertaking strategic advocacy, coordination of Civil Society Reference Groups at regional and national levels, and coordination of civil society monitoring of the Initiative. The GRG Coordinators were also instrumental in the development and rollout of the Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy and in the development of the Compensation Guidance for Civil Society Reference Group members — two key achievements in 2021 that aim to strengthen and support civil society's role in the programme.

Transferring funding and overseeing strategic investments

Spotlight Initiative programmes are replenished in instalments 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. For Phase II funding, programmes must reach a 70% delivery rate on the most recent transfer and a 100% delivery rate on all previous transfers in order to receive additional cash, following OSC approval of the programme's continuation to the next phase. The Secretariat coordinates with the MPTFO on Fund liquidity needs, encourages forecast planning and works together with the MPTFO to jointly facilitate replenishment requests. Furthermore, it supports country and regional programmes to request additional funding, guiding programme teams through the process of submitting provisional financial and narrative reports and preparing the paperwork for the official request to the MPTF Office. Following, the Secretariat engages in follow-ups on transfer notifications and liaises with UN Agencies to resolve any issues and troubleshoot. In 2021, the Secretariat requested and facilitated a total amount of **USD 96,266,324** in Spotlight Initiative funding to 28 programmes across 5 regions, and to the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund. In 2021, the Secretariat requested and organized a total of 52 individual transfers, inclusive of transfers to programmes, the Secretariat and the Global Platform.

Spotlight Initiative Fund Disbursement in 2021:

Africa	Africa Regional Programme	\$ 4,248,000
	Liberia	\$ 5,000,000
	Malawi	\$ 5,000,000
	Mali	\$ -
	Mozambique	\$ 5,000,000
	Niger	\$ -
	Nigeria	\$ -
	Uganda	\$ 5,000,000
	Zimbabwe	\$ 5,000,000
Africa Sub Total		\$ 29,248,000
Asia	Afghanistan	\$ -
	Asia Regional Programme	\$ 2,748,980
	Kyrgyzstan	\$ -
	Safe and Fair	\$ 6,212,514
	Tajikistan	\$ 2,940,000
	WPHF - Afghanistan	\$ 800,000
Asia Sub Total		\$ 12,701,494
Caribbean	Belize	\$ 1,435,500
	Caribbean Regional Programme	\$ -
	Grenada	\$ 990,000
	Guyana	\$ 2,220,000
	Haiti	\$ 5,940,001
	Jamaica	\$ 3,960,000
	Trinidad and Tobago	\$ 2,220,001
	WPHF - Haiti	\$ 800,000
Caribbean Sub Total		\$ 17,565,502
Latin America	Argentina	\$ 2,314,286
	Ecuador	\$ 1,739,999
	El Salvador	\$ 3,085,713
	Honduras	\$ 3,085,714
	Mexico	\$ -
	Latin America Regional Programme	\$ 1,500,000
Latin America Sub Total		\$ 11,725,712
Pacific	Pacific Regional Programme	\$ 5,427,830
	Papua New Guinea	\$ 9,408,000
	Samoa	\$ -
	Timor-Leste	\$ 5,940,000
	Vanuatu	\$ 1,435,500
	WPHF - PNG	\$ 500,000
Pacific Sub Total		\$ 22,711,330
Total		\$ 93,952,038

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 implemented according to plan; (ii) have the intended impact on rights holders 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 and priorities of targeted rights holders (including those most at risk and facing intersecting forms of discrimination); and (v) are being monitored so as to identify problems and risks early, change course if necessary, and ensure the Initiative is on track.

Throughout the reporting period, the Secretariat's M&E team continued to support the implementation of the Spotlight Initiative's M&E Strategy, providing targeted advice and support to programmes. During 2021, the M&E team supported programmes to monitor progress against indicators, and in the achievement of outputs and outcomes. Additionally, the Secretariat offered significant support to programmes to ensure quality data was collected on the programme's impact, providing quality assurance to every programme's baseline, milestones, targets, and reporting data. As a result, and compared to 2020, the quantity and quality of data has improved dramatically.

In order to efficiently and rigorously aggregate programme results across all programmes, the Initiative developed the Spotlight Monitoring And Reporting Tool (S.M.A.R.T) platform. This online platform is a custom-built results system, designed for the specific requirements of Spotlight's robust results framework and Theory of Change and in response to programme-level needs. The SMART platform intakes annual reporting data, outputs country level data for programme annual reports, and aggregates data across all programmes to capture the global impact of the Initiative. 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, demonstrating accountability to stakeholders on results, and more effectively communicating the Initiative's results and aggregate impact.

Ensuring accountability to the Initiative's stakeholders, including its primary stakeholders — governments, civil society and rights holders — has been at the centre 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 is an inclusive process whereby a range of local stakeholders and community members are actively engaged in the monitoring and evaluation phases of a programme. PME allows for a feminist, human rights-based, and grassroots approach to monitoring and evaluation, ensuring that local stakeholders, including feminist and women's rights activists and organisations, are meaningfully engaged and have decision-making power throughout the programme cycle— from programme design to its implementation (including corrective actions), to its monitoring and evaluation. Shifting to a participatory approach to M&E comes as a request from the Spotlight Initiative's stakeholders and rights holders. To support these efforts, and to support the operationalization of the PME Strategy, the Secretariat produced a [Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation \(PME\) guideline](#) document which provides the parameters and practical implementation tools to streamline a participatory and inclusive approach to M&E. Additionally, the Secretariat revised its M&E strategy, building on the original strategy with additional elements on the PME framework, further details on roles and responsibilities, information on reporting, and additional guidance.

Representing a critical aspect of its monitoring and evaluation function, the Spotlight Secretariat, in collaboration with the European Union, continued to undertake the MTAs for all Spotlight programmes. Conducted by Hera, an evaluation and research company based in Brussels, the mid-term assessment offers an opportunity to assess the performance of each programme, improve

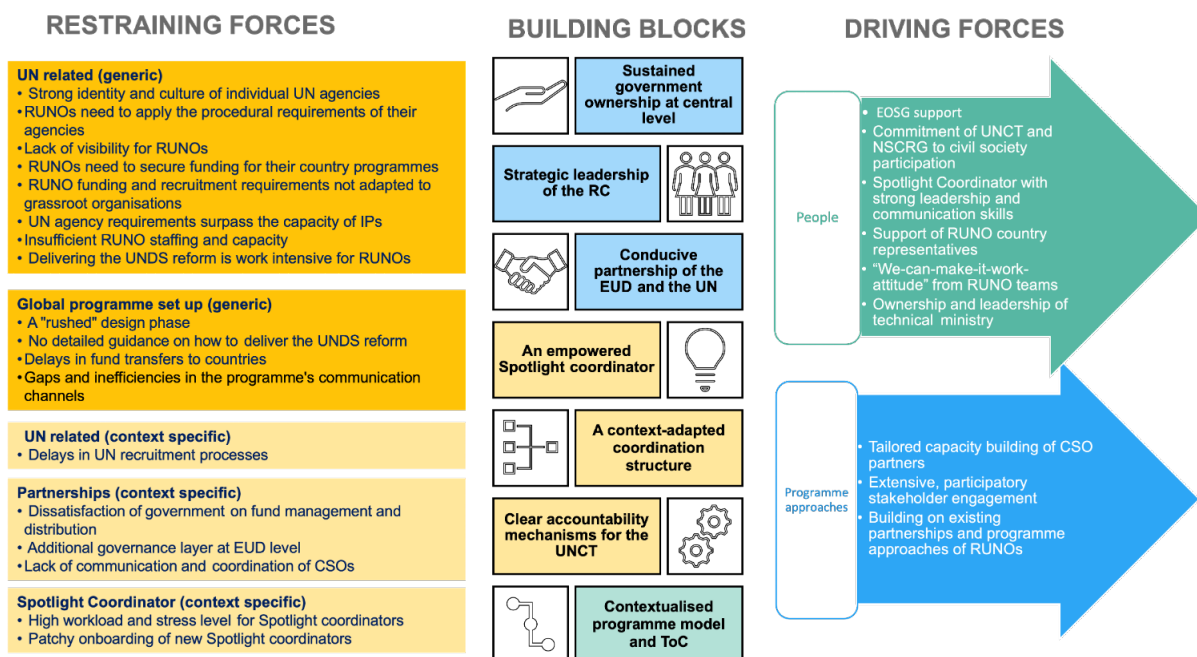
programme management by informing stakeholders of the performance of the interventions, and identify lessons learned to test the Spotlight Initiative's Theory of Change. Finally, the assessment provides critical information to guide the Operational Steering Committee's decision on the allocation and/or reallocation of Phase II funding. The mid-term assessments for Africa and Latin America were completed and presented to the Operational Steering Committee in April 2021. In the last quarter of 2021, the mid-term assessments were launched for the remaining programmes in the Caribbean, Pacific and Asia regions. The mid-term assessments for the latter regions are currently in progress.

The results of the mid-term assessments for Africa and Latin America showed compelling results across the 6 Pillars of the Spotlight Initiative. While the mid-term assessments for the Caribbean, Pacific and Asia regions are still in progress, preliminary results also confirm the following key findings that emerged from the mid-term assessments for programmes in Africa and Latin America.

- 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; and the central role given to civil society in the governance, design, and implementation of the Spotlight Initiative.
- Programme stakeholders (specifically government, civil society, EU and UN teams) overwhelmingly confirmed, through a survey of more than 700 respondents, the gender-transformative, survivor-centred and human-rights based approach of the Spotlight Initiative. In the same survey, around 90 percent of respondents also expressed the view 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 (see below).
- Reports also highlight the efficient and nimble adaptation of programmes to the Covid-19 context, including in ensuring that services for survivors of violence are seen as essential and in seeking new ways to reach communities during Covid-19 restrictions.

The mid-term assessments for Africa and Latin America were followed by a Metareview of the MTAs for said regions. The aim of the Metareview is to summarise learning results of Phase I, analyse how to implement successful programmes, and to give recommendations for the implementation of the next phase of the Spotlight Initiative programme. The specific objectives are to document key determinants of success of the Spotlight Initiative in different contexts and to analyse and develop an evidence-based understanding of the process of change. Among other things, the Metareview explored the key building blocks and driving forces of successful programmes, as well as the main restraining forces and lessons learnt. These were complemented by an overarching analysis of the role of global stakeholders, including the EU, the Secretariat, the Global Civil Society Reference Group, and the UN Agencies at headquarters level.

The draft Metareview is currently in the process of finalisation. Preliminary findings, however, are summarised in the figure below.



In addition to the mid-term assessments, the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat, in partnership with Dalberg, a global consulting firm, launched a study that aims to estimate and articulate the various current and potential impacts of Spotlight’s comprehensive model and work on VAWG outcomes themselves, as well as on the SDGs more broadly. The main objective of the study is to influence key stakeholders by 1) building the recognition of the intrinsic value of addressing VAWG; 2) driving a call to belief in the criticality of an integrated and interconnected approach to addressing VAWG, as exemplified by the Spotlight Initiative model; 3) illuminating and quantifying how investing in VAWG in this way is a critical component and accelerator of shared global priorities as captured through the SDGs; and 4) prompting a call to action for investment in the VAWG agenda over a sustained period.

The study outlines key examples of the types of impacts this holistic investment to end violence against women and girls has already yielded or is expected to yield, thereby furthering our progress on SDGs. These estimates illustrate the importance of investing in a comprehensive initiative like Spotlight which works on all aspects of issues, centres on survivors, elevates civil society, and builds on global best practices. Results from this study are expected by Q2 2022.

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 2021, the Secretariat shared extensive guidance with programme teams to support staff in producing high-quality, results-oriented reports. As with previous (annual) reporting cycles, the Secretariat held a series of reporting webinars to support programmes in the annual reporting cycle. As a follow up to these webinars, the Secretariat held four optional check-in calls in January 2021 to answer any outstanding questions and reiterate the requirements, quality criteria and timeline for the reporting process. Programmes submitted their 2020 Country/Regional Programme Annual Reports – as well as their 2020 indicator reporting via the Spotlight Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) – between 15 February and 1 March. Upon submission of the Programme Annual Reports, the Secretariat conducted a round of exhaustive quality assurance, sharing comments with programme

teams for their consideration prior to their report submission to their respective EU Delegations. This quality assurance process involved extensive preparation and engagement of the Secretariat team to provide thorough and detailed feedback on reports and ensure utmost quality and adherence to requirements and guidance. At the end of 2021, the Secretariat launched the 2021 reporting process to support work on 2021 Programme Annual Reports.

During this year, the Secretariat also produced a 2020 Global Annual Report, capturing key results and achievements across all programmes and at global level, and submitted it to the European Union on 31 May 2021. As part of this exercise, the Secretariat also produced global results indicator data (Annex A); a compilation of summaries of each programme's 2020 narrative reports (Annex B); and a series of snapshots of programmes approved in December 2019 (Annex C). Moreover, the Secretariat conducted an in-depth analysis, based on programmes' CSO Engagement Reports, to assess the distribution of funds delivered by Spotlight Initiative programmes to civil society — including disaggregation accounting for the percentage devoted to national and grassroots organisations; women's organisations; and new partners — and ensure targets, thresholds and requirements for funding civil society are met. Among other things, this analysis sought to evaluate engagement of civil society and provide useful insights to further deepen meaningful engagement with civil society, particularly feminist and women's rights organisations and grassroots organisations, in a variety of ways.

In addition to the annual report, the Secretariat is responsible for the production of various other reports. On 18 September 2021, the Secretariat coordinated with the MPTF Office to submit a fund replenishment request to the European Union to replenish the fund from the Africa and Pacific regions, based on delivery rates as of 30 June 2021. This replenishment was received in October 2021. In November 2021, the Secretariat and the MPTF Office submitted an additional fund replenishment request for the Asia, Caribbean and Latin America regions, based on delivery as of 30 September 2021. The Secretariat expects to receive this replenishment in early 2022 and will disburse funds to programmes as needed to ensure smooth cash flow and minimal interruptions to implementation.

Though most financial reporting is managed at HQ-level directly with MPTF Office, 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 2021, the Secretariat facilitated the disbursement of USD 96,266,324 to programmes through this process.

Finally, in 2021, Agencies submitted quarterly financial reports to allow for regular monitoring of programme implementation status. Each quarter, the Secretariat coordinated with the MPTF Office to analyse 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 advancing evidence-based programming and has thus worked to strengthen knowledge management (KM) efforts and increase **exchanges across Spotlight Initiative stakeholders**. The Community of the Spotlight Initiative and monthly newsletters, for instance, have allowed the Secretariat to provide a user-friendly platform with ample resources. **The KM Focal Points Network increased to over 50 members and was strengthened** with regular meetings. Another Knowledge Management Orientation session was held for new focal points to ensure quality

integration of KM practices in programming. In 2021, the Secretariat set up a coordination mechanism of KM focal points at the HQ level to strengthen synergies among different funds and initiatives.

In addition, the Secretariat developed a Global Knowledge Product tracker to organise knowledge generation from the inception of the Initiative and leverage programmes' expertise. Furthermore, the Secretariat, in collaboration with Regional and Country Programmes, organised a series of global, cross-regional and regional exchanges focusing on embracing healthy masculinities and innovative coordination for **Latin America** and **Caribbean**; addressing harmful practices and sexual and reproductive health and rights through effective stakeholder engagement for **Asia and Africa**; innovative adaptations through Covid-19 and other emergency contexts for the **Pacific**; and fostering civil society engagement through participatory monitoring and evaluation for all regions. Moreover, on 4 November 2021, the Spotlight Initiative and the WPHF held a Joint Peer Exchange on *Coalition Building on the Front Lines: Advocating for Women's Rights and EAWG* where civil society partners shared their **strategies, experiences, impact and lessons learned** related to advocacy and coalition building to promote women's rights and end VAWG. This session drew over 220 participants, from over 120 CSOs in over 33 countries. Overall, the learning sprints drew over 767 participants. These learning series were followed by knowledge products that were widely disseminated to stakeholders. Surveys showed that these sessions have been effective in fostering a deeper understanding of the relevant topics and ensuring evidence-based programme implementation.

Critically, to amplify lessons and best practices from across the Spotlight Initiative's countries and regions, and to model a comprehensive approach EAWG programming, the Secretariat, in collaboration with the UN Trust Fund on EAW, will be rolling out [*SHINE—a global hub for knowledge, engagement and impact to end violence against women and girls*](#). This aims to 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. In 2021, various consultations have been held across the UN, EU, and civil society to inform the design of the platform, a roll out technical action plan has been developed, a mapping of relevant existing platforms has been conducted to ensure synergy and strengthen sustainability from the onset, as well as testing of the platform with stakeholders. The official launch of the virtual platform will be held in early 2022. Through **SHINE**, further linkages will be made with relevant initiatives to strengthen the global evidence-base.

Under the framework of the Spotlight Initiative's global hub for knowledge, engagement and impact that came to be in 2021, the Secretariat has also produced and disseminated a series of knowledge products on various topics such as [*embracing healthy masculinities*](#) and [*innovative coordination in Latin America and the Caribbean, addressing harmful practices and sexual and reproductive health and rights in Africa and Asia, innovative adaptations for Covid-19 and other emergency contexts in the Pacific, participatory monitoring and evaluation*](#), and coalition-building for advocacy to EAWG and enhance women's rights following a series of knowledge exchanges. Furthermore, drawing on insights and analysis from a synthesis of over 98 reports from 2019 to 2021 across all Spotlight Initiative programmes, knowledge briefs on [*International Day of the Girl Child*](#), [*the adaptability of the Spotlight Initiative and its advancement of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus*](#), [*engaging Men and Boys*](#), and [*religious and faith-based leaders*](#) were developed.

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 organisations, Governments, researchers and non-traditional partners to connect and form coalitions around areas of action.

Raising awareness and visibility

For much of 2021, the Spotlight Initiative focused on online communications activities and events in order to overcome the challenges posed by Covid-19 travel and in-person meeting 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.

The Initiative successfully developed diverse online activations of its flagship digital engagement campaign on ending violence against women and girls ([#WithHer](#)), which consists of a series of social media-based conversations around VAWG featuring celebrities and influencers that the Secretariat launched in 2020. With the participation of international content creators, UN leaders, and civil society partners, the Secretariat reached 146 million users on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. At the country level, the campaign was adapted to local contexts and supported by EU and UN representation, along with the voices of civil society activists and women and girl survivors.

The Spotlight Initiative engaged in extensive media coverage this year, raising the visibility of violence against women and girls. This was particularly important given the significant increases in violence exposed by Covid-19 and its ensuing lockdowns. In total, more than 3,800 Spotlight Initiative-specific articles and stories were published by 1,450 media outlets across 121 countries, with an estimated reach of more than 3.6 billion readers.⁷ Stories were published in top-tier media outlets including: The Washington Post, The Independent, Yahoo News, El País, the Associated Press, ABC News, Clarin, Infobae, Euronews, the Bangkok Post, ReliefWeb, Deutsche Welle, Milenio (MX) and The Guardian (NG) to name a few. A media report with highlights from media coverage is available [here](#).

A number of op-eds in high-profile publications helped the Initiative reach a broader mainstream audience in 2021. In April, Mexican actress and UN Global Advocate for the Spotlight Initiative, Cecilia Suárez, wrote an [op-ed](#) on rising levels of femicide and the need for positive forms of masculinity and male accountability. The piece was published in El Pais, one of the world's most widely read Spanish language newspapers, with more than 65 million readers across its editions and more than 110,000 subscribers.

In June, UN Secretary General António Guterres published his own op-ed in [The Independent](#) calling for global solidarity to end the shadow pandemic of violence against women and girls in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. In the article, he used the Spotlight Initiative's 2020 key results as evidence that change is possible with substantial and sustained investment, highlighting the Initiative's success to the masthead's more than 18 million monthly readers.

Despite continued travel restrictions, the Spotlight Initiative was able to bring together senior UN women leaders for a [television-style panel](#) in December to discuss violence against women and girls. The round table focused on the "invisible emergency" of gender-based violence and included Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Natalia Kanem, UNODC Executive Director Ghada Waly, UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore, UN Women Executive Director Sima Bahous, and UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women Reem Alsalem. It was moderated by Melissa Fleming, head of the UN Department of Global Communications and the video was published to UN Web TV's 2.14 million subscribers.

The [Spotlight Initiative global website](#) published more than 100 human interest stories, publications and press releases, highlighting the breadth of Spotlight Initiative's global programming. This includes a renewed focus on its work with women and girls who face intersecting forms of discrimination. The

⁷ Meltwater media keyword search (1 Jan - 31 Dec 2021). Raw data of all media hits available [here](#).

number of sessions grew by more than 16 per cent (to 130,500) and the average session duration rose from 1:35 to 1:41.

2021 also marked a year of increased visibility across other UN platforms – a result of improved collaboration with UN agencies. Spotlight web stories were republished by UN News, UN Women, UNICEF, and DCO.

Spotlight Initiative’s social media presence kept growing in 2021. The Initiative now counts with more than 50,000 fans and almost 13 million impressions across [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#). On these platforms, the Spotlight Initiative shared human-interest stories, video interviews, articles, and publications daily. Additionally, more influencers joined the #WithHer Talks. The [third episode](#) was a discussion between an activist and a survivor and certified trauma-involved life coach on what survivors can do to rebuild after trauma. The [fourth episode](#), hosted by Miss Universe Belize during the 16 Days of Activism campaign, aimed to highlight the ways social influencers can use their platforms to address gender-based violence. Radio journalist Tracey Fowler hosted the [fifth episode](#) where she interviewed Spotlight Initiative partners and advocates on their work to eliminate violence against women and girls in the Caribbean region. Adding to its existing [Twitter](#) account in Spanish, the Secretariat also launched new social media accounts ([Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)) that aim to reach the public based in Latin America. The Initiative gathers almost 15,000 fans on these accounts which are being administered by the Spotlight Communications colleagues working in the region.

From January to December 2021, the Spotlight Initiative published more than 1,000 posts (text, photos, and videos created in-house) across all its platforms (Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram). The Initiative gained 16,000 new followers. On Twitter, the number of followers has increased by 16 per cent compared to the previous year, to reach almost 19,000 individual followers. The [annual activity on Twitter](#) also recorded almost 1,500,000 impressions and almost 27,000 engagements. On Facebook, the number of fans has increased by 78 per cent compared to the previous year, to reach almost 28,000 individual fans. The [annual activity on Facebook](#) also recorded almost 6 million impressions and more than 36,000 engagements. On Instagram, the number of followers has increased by 130 per cent compared to the previous year, to reach more than 5,000 individual followers. The [annual activity on Instagram](#) also recorded more than 5 million impressions (189% growth compared to the previous year) and more than 8,000 engagements (46% increase).

Finally, the Spotlight Initiative video catalogue has expanded this past year. The Secretariat has shared more content on its [YouTube channel](#) to make all global and locally produced videos available to the public. The Spotlight Initiative YouTube channels now house more than 90 videos and include 873 subscribers (+20% increase). In a year, the channels recorded more than 82,000 impressions.

Complexities of Spotlight Initiative Programmes

One of the main complexities the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat faced in 2021 was the continued impact on implementation and way of working brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. Virtual tools allowed the Secretariat team to continue operating under a remote work modality and communicating effectively, both internally and with partners. Lessons learned in 2020, following the Covid-19 outbreak, allowed the Secretariat to continue working and supporting teams with relatively minimal disruptions in 2021. The Secretariat was able to maintain constant communication with the Civil Society Global Reference Group, Heads of UN Agencies, Directors of UN Agencies, and Agency Focal Points through regular virtual meetings, as well as liaise with the Operational Steering Committee members via email, for governance matters. In addition, the Secretariat held a variety of online events and webinars to effectively support programmes and disseminate virtual resources which, along with other elements of guidance and support, allowed the Secretariat to effectively fulfil

its role to service the governance structure of the fund and supported UN Agencies through implementation of the 34 programmes in the portfolio, across 25 countries.

Another complexity in 2021 was the increased need for support, particularly in terms of programme management, brought about by the transition process into Phase II for programmes in Latin America and Africa. Supporting the review and quality assurance of the narrative and budget proposals required a significant amount of time and resources from the Secretariat that was servicing this process for the first time, in parallel to other priorities. The Secretariat offered particularly thorough quality assurance on budgets, which tended to require several more rounds of detailed review and support to get to the necessary level of quality. Likewise, in order to support programmes in the transition between Phase I and Phase II and ensure uninterrupted implementation as Phase I funds were winding down, a number of new operational challenges related to budget management, continuation of activities and programme staffing were being brought to the attention of the Secretariat for support in facilitating guidance or liaison with Agency HQs or other. One of the main challenges that emerged from the transition phase was ensuring programme teams were provided with the operational solutions to ensure staff continuity, without which programmes could not continue implementation and would have also lost critical capabilities moving onto Phase II. The Secretariat was able to clearly communicate with Agency HQs including at high level to clearly flag this issue and ensure a smoother transition in 2022 for the Caribbean, the Pacific and Central Asia, as they will undergo a similar process. The capacity of the Secretariat to support in 2022 will also be reinforced to deal with a similar transition as the revised Spotlight Secretariat Direct Cost Budget, approved by the Operational Steering Committee on 25 February 2021, included an additional staff position for a Data and Budget Analyst (to be onboarded in 2022), as well as an upgrade of the administrative support staff into an Operations and Fund Analyst (P2) position for the Management Unit. In addition, a Junior Coordination Consultant and Fund Officer were recruited in 2021, in order to bolster capacity. This will allow the Secretariat to better service programme teams, advance plans for the way forward and act on lessons learned in 2022.

Despite challenges encountered during 2021, the Spotlight Initiative and the Secretariat achieved significant results and, through growth and meaningful advancements, showcased the Initiative's great potential for making strides of progress in ending violence against women and girls. The Secretariat effectively fulfilled its role to service the governance structure of the fund and supported UN Agencies through implementation of the 34 programmes in the portfolio, across 25 countries. Moreover, it successfully provided strategic advice, operational support and quality control over implementation of the Spotlight Initiative and leveraged various UN Agencies technical expertise to achieve collective goals on EVAWG.