



# Spotlight Initiative

## **ANNUAL NARRATIVE PROGRAMME REPORT**

**PROGRAMME TITLE: SPOTLIGHT REGIONAL PROGRAMME IN CENTRAL ASIA AND AFGHANISTAN**

**PROGRAMME START DATE: 24 JULY 2020<sup>1</sup>**

**REPORTING PERIOD: 01 JANUARY 2021 – 31 DECEMBER 2021**

---

<sup>1</sup> Pre-funding approval as of 1 October 2019. Approval of programme by Operational Steering Committee (OSC) on 24 July 2020. Full implementation started on 01 December 2020 upon receipt of funds.



| <p><b>Programme Title &amp; Programme Number</b></p> <p>Programme Title: Alliances for Change – Ending Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and Harmful Practice in Central Asia</p> <p>MPTF Office Project Reference Number:<sup>2</sup> 00119463</p>   | <p><b>Priority regions/areas/localities for the programme</b></p> <p>Central Asia and Afghanistan Regional Programme</p>                                   |                              |                              |          |           |        |       |         |        |      |           |        |              |                  |                |   |
|--|--|------------------------------|------------------------------|----------|-----------|--------|-------|---------|--------|------|-----------|--------|--------------|------------------|----------------|---|
| <p><b>Recipient Organization(s)</b></p> <p>UN Women, UNFPA and UNDP</p>  | <p><b>Key Partners</b></p> <p>Governments, Civil Society, Activists, Survivors, Youth, Men and Faith-based Leaders from the five Central Asian states.</p> |                              |                              |          |           |        |       |         |        |      |           |        |              |                  |                |   |
| <p><b>Programme Cost (US\$)</b></p> <p><b>Total Phase I budget, and (where OSC approved) Phase II budget as per the Spotlight CPD/RPD: US\$4,432,461</b></p> <p><b>Phase I Spotlight funding:<sup>3</sup> \$4,248,584</b></p> <p><b>Agency Contribution: \$183,877</b></p> <p><b>Spotlight Funding and Agency Contribution by Agency:</b></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="121 997 784 1318"> <thead> <tr> <th>Name of RUNO</th> <th>Spotlight Phase I (\$)</th> <th>UN Agency Contributions (\$)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>UN Women</td> <td>2,541,617</td> <td>72,485</td> </tr> <tr> <td>UNFPA</td> <td>688,010</td> <td>37,880</td> </tr> <tr> <td>UNDP</td> <td>1,018,957</td> <td>73,512</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>TOTAL</b></td> <td><b>4,248,584</b></td> <td><b>183,877</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><b>TOTAL: \$4,432,461</b></p> | Name of RUNO   | Spotlight Phase I (\$)       | UN Agency Contributions (\$) | UN Women | 2,541,617 | 72,485 | UNFPA | 688,010 | 37,880 | UNDP | 1,018,957 | 73,512 | <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>4,248,584</b> | <b>183,877</b> | <p><b>Programme Start and End Dates</b></p> <p><b>Start Date:</b><br/>24.07.2020*</p> <p><b>End Date:</b><br/>31.12.2022</p> <p>* Pre-funding approval as of 1 October 2019. Approval of programme by OSC on 24 July 2020. Actual delivery started on 01 December 2020 upon receipt of funds.</p> <p><b>Report Submitted By:</b><br/>Michaela Friberg-Storey, UN Resident Coordinator, and Irada Ahmadova, Spotlight Regional Programme Coordinator</p> |
| Name of RUNO   | Spotlight Phase I (\$)   | UN Agency Contributions (\$) |                              |          |           |        |       |         |        |      |           |        |              |                  |                |   |
| UN Women   | 2,541,617  | 72,485                       |                              |          |           |        |       |         |        |      |           |        |              |                  |                |   |
| UNFPA  | 688,010  | 37,880                       |                              |          |           |        |       |         |        |      |           |        |              |                  |                |   |
| UNDP   | 1,018,957  | 73,512                       |                              |          |           |        |       |         |        |      |           |        |              |                  |                |   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>4,248,584</b>   | <b>183,877</b>               |                              |          |           |        |       |         |        |      |           |        |              |                  |                |   |

<sup>2</sup> The Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) Office Project Reference Number is the same as the one on the Notification message. It is also referred to as “Project ID” on the project’s fact sheet page the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](#).

<sup>3</sup> The Spotlight Contribution refers to the amount transferred to the Recipient UN Organizations, which is available on the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](#).



## Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| List of Acronyms .....   | 4  |
| Executive Summary.....   | 5  |
| Contextual Shifts and Implementation Status.....   | 9  |
| Programme Governance and Coordination.....   | 11 |
| Programme Partnerships.....  | 17 |
| Results.....   | 24 |
| Capturing Broader Transformations Across Outcomes.....   | 30 |
| Capturing Change at Outcome Level.....   | 32 |
| Rights Holders (“Beneficiaries”).....  | 37 |
| Challenges and Mitigating Measures.....  | 38 |
| Lessons Learned and New Opportunities.....   | 39 |
| Innovative, Promising or Good Practices.....   | 40 |
| Building or Strengthening Partnership.....   | 44 |
| Good Practices/Lessons Learned.....  | 48 |
| Communications and Visibility.....   | 51 |
| Next Steps.....  | 59 |
| Annexes .....  | 67 |
| Annex A: Results Framework   |    |
| Annex B: Risk Matrix.....  |    |
| Annex C: CSO Engagement Report.....  |    |
| Annex D: Promising or Good Practices .....   |    |
| Annex E: Annual Work Plan.....   |    |
| Annex F: Spotlight Initiative Regional Programme for Central Asia Alignment with<br>Spotlight Initiative Country Programmes in the Region..... |    |



### List of Acronyms

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| DV         | Domestic Violence  |
| CEDAW      | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women |
| CA         | Central Asia   |
| COP        | Community of Practice  |
| COVID-19   | (Coronavirus) pandemic   |
| CSOs       | Civil Society Organizations  |
| CS-RRG     | Civil Society Regional Reference Group                                     |
| GEF        | Gender Equality Forum  |
| GEWE       | Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment                                    |
| EU         | European Union   |
| EVAWG      | Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls                            |
| GBV        | Gender-based Violence  |
| GRB        | Gender-responsive Budgeting  |
| MFA        | Ministry of Foreign Affairs  |
| MSR        | Multisectoral Response   |
| NWMs/NGEMs | National Women's Machineries/National Gender Equality Machineries          |
| NGOs       | Non-Governmental Organizations   |
| OSC        | Operational Steering Committee   |
| RCO        | UN Resident Coordinator Office   |
| ROCG       | Regional Open Coordination Group on Small Grants for CSOs                  |
| RUNOs      | Recipient United Nations Organizations                                     |
| SDAW       | Sexual and Domestic Violence Against Women                                 |
| SG         | Small Grants   |
| SGBV       | Sexual and Gender-Based Violence   |
| SI         | Spotlight Initiative   |
| SOPs       | Standard Operating Procedures  |
| UN         | United Nations   |
| UN GTGs    | UN Gender Theme Groups   |
| UN RC      | United Nations Resident Coordinator  |
| UNCT       | UN Country Team  |
| VAWG       | Violence Against Women and Girls   |



## **Executive Summary**

The Spotlight Initiative Regional Programme for Central Asia and Afghanistan (the Spotlight Regional Programme) became fully operational in early 2021 and aims to prevent, respond to and eliminate violence against women and girls (VAWG) and harmful practices. The Spotlight Regional Programme emphasizes the power of collective action, cross-border networking focusing on the creation of the Central Asia Alliance as a regional mechanism that engages governments, civil society, academia and community leaders to come together across borders to prevent, respond to, deliver services, and close the data gap on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). This is to be achieved alongside broader efforts to change discriminatory gender-based social norms and attitude and to use the unique expertise of each stakeholder group to contribute towards increased quality of state and non-state prevention and response to end SGBV and harmful practices.

This report highlights the key accomplishments of the Spotlight Regional Programme in five Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) and Afghanistan in 2021, including progress made in collaborative programme interventions, engagement of a wide range of stakeholders, building viable partnerships, and fostering innovative approaches. It also reflects on lessons learned, good practices, promising opportunities for a seamless transition to Phase II in 2023 and broader contextual shifts that have affected programming during the reporting year.

The Spotlight Initiative (SI) is anchored in the strategic partnership between the European Union (EU) and United Nations (UN) which transcends the traditional donor-recipient relationship and serves as a driving force for achieving sustainable results under the SI Regional Programme through its vigorous and concerted efforts aimed at accelerating progress in transforming harmful behaviour affecting women and girls in the region.

During the reporting period, three recipient UN organizations (RUNOs), i.e., the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and UN Women, continued working together closely in the spirit of UN reform through the established interagency Community of Practice (COP) mechanism to accelerate delivery and generate joint results. This included a critical assessment of programme workplans to review activities that could not be implemented due to the COVID-19 pandemic and concerted efforts that required refocusing to address new risk factors for eliminating VAWG and implementing response efforts for victims and their families.





The programme team convened regular coordination meetings with various stakeholders, including the European Union (EU) and UN Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs) from the six countries and Spotlight Country Programmes in Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, building a solid foundation for expanding regional cooperation and for moving the programme forward.

During the reporting period, viable partnerships were forged under the SI Regional Programme to strengthen political will and government support for the programme products and recommendations to foster gender transformation in the region. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan joined the Generation Equality Forum (GEF) and its two Action Coalitions (on Gender-Based Violence and Economic Justice and Rights) as commitment makers. While addressing the GEF, the President of Kazakhstan expressed his country's readiness to contribute financially to the UN and EU-led Spotlight Initiative's Regional Programme for Central Asia and Afghanistan. The Government of Uzbekistan, along with civil society partners, made strong commitments and financial pledges, in line with its national priorities on delivering the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls. The Spotlight Regional Programme will further utilize global platforms, such as the GEF, which provide multiple avenues for building and strengthening vibrant partnerships in Central Asia.

The Spotlight Regional Programme continued to play a catalytic role in enhancing coherence across all pillars and has contributed to a more proactive, forward-looking, and integrated gender transformation process in the region through the deployment of technical expertise, capacity-building and organizational learning support. The programme adopted an intersectional approach, thereby shedding light on the multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination experienced by women and girls in the region.

The Spotlight Regional Programme has greatly benefited from a series of coherence discussions, entitled "Pathways to Change", whose platform led to the examination of programme key goals and objectives, expected results and means for their achievement, using the Theory of Change and means for their verification. Under Pillar 1, the Programme developed a unified methodology for conducting review of national legislation and law-enforcement practices on SGBV and harmful practices and their alignment with international norms and standards to guide the national SGBV legislation.

The Civil Society Regional Reference Group (CS-RRG) and civil society organizations (CSOs) in the region reviewed the draft methodology to ensure the application of participatory approaches. Reviews of the national legal frameworks and law enforcement practices on SGBV and harmful practices in the five countries in Central Asia were launched, based on the desk review, official



requests to respective state institutions and semi-structured interviews with CSOs on law enforcement practices.

Draft regional Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) models and tools on response to SGBV and harmful practices were developed and sectoral training packages (knowledge products) on provision of one-stop-shop services for GBV survivors are designed for specialists of health, social and police sectors. For the first time in Central Asia, disability was integrated into the regional SOPs and training packages, which were reviewed by Women Enabled International (WEI), the only international organization for women with disabilities, to provide health and social support to persons with disabilities (PWDs) who are victims of SGBV.

An innovative grants competition was launched among NGOs. Entitled “Knowledge Created by NGOs for NGOs”, this collaborative event helped identify organizations with unique experience in working with victims of violence. Ten NGOs were selected as winners, out of 30 applications received from the Central Asian countries, which offered a fair mix of advocacy, educational, direct support and capacity-building expertise. Each successful application had its specific target group – including rural/urban women in difficult life situations, women in need of specialized social services, legal advice and other related services, youth, students, local and rural communities. All submissions by tech-savvy NGOs described a variety of channels and means for the delivery of services, activities and advocacy information, including via social media, TV, radio and IT solutions<sup>4</sup>.

Avenues for cooperation between two RUNOs were established involving men championing for ending SGBV via two campaigns in the region, HeForShe and MenEngage, which pursued a two-fold objective: to advance Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE), targeting similar audiences, men and boys, and to turn toxic masculinities into championing for GEWE.

An informal regional alliance on SGBV was created at the regional forum of youth-led and youth-serving organizations. The forum brought together 38 representatives from Central Asian countries (10 representatives from Turkmenistan participated remotely) who crafted strategic goals and developed a communication strategy for the informal regional youth network.

A discussion on enhancing coherence focused on identifying practical use for the Spotlight Regional Programme products, including three region-wide studies, and reached a consensus that the key

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.kz.undp.org/content/kazakhstan/en/home/stories/2021/ngos-in-central-asia-bring-glimmer-of-hope-to-victims-of-gender-.html>



added value of the Programme is the development of regionally relevant models for measurement and methodologies for SGBV data collection and analysis, which concur with key Programme objectives on knowledge accumulation and sharing. The major finding of these discussions is the importance of providing training on the study methodology and data analysis for key state and non-state partners.

An agreement was signed with the University of Melbourne (UoM) for adaptation of the kNOwVAWdata course to the Central Asian context and its translation into Russian to build capacity of national partners in Central Asia in measuring violence against women. The American University of Central Asia in Kyrgyzstan was selected and contracted by UoM to deliver the Russian version of the course to participants from the Central Asian countries in 2022.

As the pandemic continued to impact the region, especially the most vulnerable groups of women, the Spotlight Regional Programme placed the “leaving no one behind” principle at the heart of the post-COVID response to address such issues as violence, awareness-raising, the functioning of shelters, improving helplines and reporting mechanisms.

The Spotlight Regional Programme encountered a number of challenges throughout the reporting period, particularly the limited availability of research institutions able to handle complex regional studies focusing on gender-specific issues. Hence, the Programme had to adjust or split procurement plans and activities. Moreover, while Central Asia has intellectual and research capacity, when three Spotlight Initiative Programmes (one regional and two country ones) are implemented simultaneously in one region, growing demand for local expertise in the elimination of violence against women and girls (EVAWG), with access to official data and government counterparts, exceeds supply, affecting RUNOs’ delivery of planned outputs in a coordinated and sequenced manner.

The Spotlight Regional Programme team provided constant support and mentoring to its implementing partner IDEA Central Asia, which was selected on a competitive basis, to deliver youth activities. Selecting a qualified youth-led organization with strong capacity and regional coverage still remains a challenge as the capacity of youth organizations in Central Asia in preventing and responding to GBV is underdeveloped.

The Spotlight Regional Programme team was able to adjust and focus on a broad range of gender equality and gender discrimination issues in the region and to engage a wider spectrum of





organizations which now advocate for EVAWG and ending SGBV, despite constraints imposed due to COVID-19.

### **Contextual Shifts and Implementation Status**

2021 was eventful for Kyrgyzstan with presidential, parliamentary and municipal elections held that year. On 10 January 2021, Mr. Sadyr Japarov was elected the new President of Kyrgyzstan in a snap election sparked by an uprising in October 2020. In May, a new constitution was endorsed and a transition to the presidential system of governance approved. On 28 November, the parliamentary and municipal elections were conducted.

The gender quota for women in the Parliament was decreased from 30 percent to 25 percent after endorsement by Parliament in July 2021. On 28 April, tragic Kyrgyz-Tajik border clashes claimed the lives of 36 Kyrgyz persons. The distribution of regional water has repeatedly led to disputes between the states that are upstream (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) and those downstream (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) of the main rivers Amu Darya and Syr Darya. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan offered their mediation to resolve the conflict.

On 24 October 2021, President of Uzbekistan, Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, was re-elected for the second term. Five years ago, he launched economic reforms calling to increase foreign trade and investment in and to strengthen regional cooperation in Central Asia.

On 10 January 2021, Kazakhstan held elections to the lower house of parliament (*Majilis*) which resulted in a sweeping victory for the ruling Nur Otan party.

#### *Developments in Afghanistan*

Following the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban on 15 August 2021 and the disintegration of the Government, the de facto authorities formed an all-male “caretaker cabinet” and announced appointments across security and government structures at the national and subnational levels. Afghanistan faces multiple crises: a growing humanitarian emergency, a massive economic contraction, the crippling of its banking and financial systems and the fact that an inclusive government remains to be formed. The influx of refugees has increased, mainly to Tajikistan, which is hosting the largest number of refugees from Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan. It is projected that over 24 million people will require humanitarian assistance in 2022, compared to 18.4 million in 2021.





Fundamental rights and freedoms of Afghan women and girls have been severely curtailed, despite pledges by the de facto authorities to protect women's rights within sharia. On 3 December 2021, the Taliban leader issued a decree on the rights of women, which included upholding their right to consent to marriage and instructing the de facto Supreme Court to adjudicate cases involving women. While welcomed by some, the decree was criticized for failing to address the full spectrum of women's rights, including granting women the right to work and girls' right to education beyond grade six, or 11 to 12 years of age.

To identify potential areas for cooperation and support for the Spotlight Initiative Afghanistan Country Programme, the Spotlight Regional Programme invited the RCO Team Leader in Afghanistan to join the first regional technical leads meeting in September 2021 with participation of focal points from UNDP, UNFPA, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UN Women Europe and Central Asia (ECA) Regional Offices. The consultation focused on the critical areas where technical inputs from and engagement of the three RUNOs and UNICEF Regional Offices could leverage, or complement, the Spotlight Regional Programme initiatives with Afghanistan in a new political context.

The team greatly benefited from the discussion with the RCO team in Afghanistan and received updates on the current operational status of EVAWG programming in the country. The discussion's outcome involved support to women's rights activists and CSOs in Afghanistan through the regional communications campaign, within the framework of 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence, by sharing powerful social media communications messages crafted by the RCO in Afghanistan on the RUNOs' and RCO social platforms.

The Spotlight Regional Programme worked closely with the regional UN Country Offices to mitigate potential security and political risks and will continue its efforts to consolidate more cooperative and integrated regional actions for meaningful and sustainable gender transformation in Central Asia and Afghanistan.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made people worldwide feel more insecure. A special report on new threats to human security recently released by UNDP highlights that the pandemic has affected everyone, imperiling every dimension of well-being, disrupted lives and livelihoods, upended the global economy, interrupted education and increased feelings of insecurity. For the first time, human development indicators (HDI) have declined drastically, contrary to other recent global crises. The report explores the interlinked nature of four threats to human security: violent conflicts, horizontal inequalities, evolving challenges to health care systems and the downsides of digital technology.



The pandemic has exacerbated all the risk factors pertaining to VAWG, including unemployment and poverty, and reinforced many of the root causes, such as gender stereotypes and harmful social norms. An estimated 11 million girls may not return to school because of COVID-19, thereby increasing their risk of child marriage. In 2021, the UN system further mobilized multiple stakeholders through the UN Secretary-General’s political engagement strategy on GBV to address the immediate needs and long-term vulnerabilities of girls and women at risk of violence, and to recognize the key role women’s rights organizations have played during the global crisis. To that end, the entire UN system galvanized their platforms and networks to end GBV in the context of COVID-19.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in the region in early 2020 enormous upheaval ensued in Central Asia with profound impacts on health and socio-economic realms. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development report<sup>5</sup>, “the pandemic has shone a spotlight on the socioeconomic vulnerability that women living in Central Asia face. Domestic violence has increased dramatically; women have taken on more unpaid work; remittance flows to households have fallen; and women have been particularly affected in the labour market, because they are disproportionately employed in some of the hardest-hit sectors, especially those with high levels of informality.”

As containment measures were introduced, businesses were shuttered, mobility was curtailed, and borders were temporarily closed. In 2021, severe disruptions to trade and limits on the movement of people all affected the region’s growth drivers. The pandemic exposed sharp economic and social inequalities and widened the existing gap with the most vulnerable in society, including unequal impacts affecting women and girls.

All five governments in Central Asia introduced emergency responses: socio-economic support policies and programmes to address citizens’ economic vulnerabilities. From a gender lens, the governments in the region took measures to address the urgent needs of women and girls in marginalized and vulnerable situations exacerbated by the pandemic. Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan referenced vulnerable households and groups in their emergency support to policy responses. All countries revised their national budgets to offer state fiscal assistance packages, including through COVID-19 anti-crisis funds, ranging from 2 per cent of GDP in Uzbekistan to 9 per cent in Kazakhstan.

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://euneighbourseast.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/gender-gaps-in-eurasia-the-daunting-effects-of-covid-19.pdf>





On 6 October 2021, the EU Special Representative for Central Asia convened the third EU–Central Asia Civil Society Forum in Almaty, Kazakhstan, bringing together over 300 civil society representatives, government experts and EU and international organization representatives to discuss sustainable post-COVID recovery and how to build forward better in the region. Participants shared examples where civil society has been instrumental in addressing the pandemic’s fallout, e.g., in domestic violence and the shrinking space for civil society. The recommendations generated at the regional CSO forum have informed discussions held at the 17<sup>th</sup> EU-Central Asia Ministerial meeting on 22 November 2021 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The EU presented its priorities for regional cooperation, in line with the 2019 EU Strategy on Central Asia, including promoting resilience, prosperity and regional cooperation, *engaging with civil society and youth* to develop a closer partnership. In a joint press statement, participants committed to strengthening EU-Central Asia cooperation, to supporting a green, resilient, inclusive, and sustainable post-COVID-19 recovery and to cooperating to tackle the challenges of the new political landscape in Afghanistan.

As the pandemic continued to impact the region, notably the most vulnerable groups of women, the Spotlight Regional Programme focused the “leaving no one behind” principle on the post-COVID response. This meant addressing issues of violence and awareness-raising, functioning of shelters, improving helplines and reporting mechanisms. As the hardest hit sectors by lockdowns and by slowdown in digitalization are those where women are more frequently employed, the Spotlight Regional Programme will continue to address the surge of online violence, and to better collect and analyze data to inform policies to end GBV, with a special focus on survivors facing manifold forms of discrimination and further integration of VAWG issues into COVID-19 response plans.

In 2021, due to self-isolation and imposed restrictions on free movement and travel during the pandemic, domestic violence cases increased dramatically. Thus, more women and girls were referred to NGOs, crisis centres and shelters, where they received professional help and guaranteed safety. However, as human and financial resource constraints affected these organizations, they had limited capacity to cope with the sudden influx of domestic violence survivors. Hence, the Spotlight Regional Programme, within the Small Grants (SG) component, laid a special emphasis on strengthening capacities of the grassroots organizations to render comprehensive services, including legal, social, and psychological counselling, to persons subjected to all forms of violence, especially domestic violence and sexual abuse.

Moreover, to bring the issues of SGBV into the spotlight, the grantees conducted a series of awareness-raising seminars for the key stakeholders and public on VAWG and the ways to effectively address them. The Spotlight Regional Programme will continue to encourage a broad



range of national partners to prioritize adequate and timely gender-responsive socioeconomic policy responses within the COVID-19 response framework and recovery.

The “new normal” with COVID-19 and associated potential health emergencies are setting new standards for convening meetings, training sessions, interactive events, etc. While there is no substitute to live interaction, which leads to new contacts, networking opportunities and forging of new partnerships, online and hybrid forms of communication do bring together various stakeholders who are able to share new ideas and initiate discussions on emerging challenges and opportunities, with substantive cost-savings.

- **Implementation progress by outcome area:**

| <b>Spotlight Initiative - Outcome areas</b>  | <b>Implementation progress as of 31 Dec 2021</b> |
|--|--|
| <b>Outcome 1: Legal and Policy Framework</b> | 65.3%  |
| <b>Outcome 2: Institutions</b>               | 64.4%  |
| <b>Outcome 3: Prevention and Norm Change</b> | 11.5%  |
| <b>Outcome 4: Quality Services</b>           | n/a  |
| <b>Outcome 5: Data</b>                       | 9.1%   |
| <b>Outcome 6: Women’s Movement</b>           | 39.4%  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                 | <b>38.1%</b>                                     |

The Spotlight Regional Programme is “on track”: its implementation is expected to accelerate towards the end of Phase 1 in 2022 as the procurement arrangements and preparatory work for a competitive recruitment of companies and hiring of experts has been completed, with major contracts signed and financial resources committed in 2021.

One of the findings of Phase 1 is an increasing intellectual and research capacity in the region. However, simultaneous implementation of the Spotlight Regional Programmes and two country programmes in Central Asia exacerbates the imbalance between demand and supply of local research institutions and experts on EVAWG, thereby affecting the pace of programme implementation.



Regional studies and research envisaged by the Spotlight Regional Programme aim to produce a largely missing baseline for measuring progress of EVAWG efforts in Central Asia. The intended outputs, findings, recommendations, and knowledge products commissioned in 2021 will be released for in-depth broad consultations, verification, and validation in 2022. They will take into consideration the fact that research activities, due to their complexity, are time-consuming and require the participatory approach of a broad range of actors and a wide regional coverage as well as quality planning, effective roll-out of studies and establishing meaningful interaction with key counterparts. These are critical prerequisites for achieving substantial results across all programme pillars.

### **Programme Governance and Coordination**

The Spotlight Regional Programme covers five Central Asian countries and partners with national stakeholders from Afghanistan. Through the support of the RUNOs Regional Offices and UN RCO in Kazakhstan, the RUNOs continued a dialogue with their agency counterparts in the implementing countries. At all implementation stages, the Spotlight Regional Programme provided collaborative support with the six UN Country Teams (UNCTs), notably the Spotlight Country Programmes in Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, with a view to:

- a) Ensuring the agenda-setting of the Central Asia Alliance, its scope of work and its vision would bolster ongoing national-level work on legislative reform and services;
- b) Identifying and engaging national stakeholders as Alliance members to support the investments made by the Spotlight Country Programmes in terms of tool development, advocacy and supporting tangible behaviour change at national and community levels;
- c) Ensuring the Alliance reflects an inclusive membership of vulnerable populations, activists, survivors, and key government officials, and
- d) Ensuring the building of the regional women's movement is grounded in local needs and priorities and reinforces and/or complements ongoing country-level support to CSOs.

Managed by the RCO Kazakhstan, in coordination with the RCOs and RUNOs in Central Asia, the scope of work focuses entirely on expanding regional cooperation, with an emphasis on supporting ongoing and prospective national EVAWG and SGBV joint action in these countries. The only exception is awarding grants to grass-roots women's organizations, including capacity-development support, as part of Pillar 6.





While the Spotlight Initiative Country Programmes in Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are focused on all six pillars, the investments made through the Spotlight Regional Programme aimed to bolster national work, particularly around Pillars 1, 2, 3 and 6, and, to some extent, Pillar 5. To ensure the Regional Programme's continued relevance to these country programmes, the UN Resident Coordinators from the three countries participated in the Spotlight Regional Programme's Steering Committee.

**The Regional Steering Committee.** The Regional Steering Committee for the Spotlight Regional Programme for Central Asia and Afghanistan was established to guide the implementation of the regional programme and to ensure its adequate communication and coordination at the regional level. RUNOs in Kazakhstan act as the main agency focal points and consult with their respective offices in other participating countries. The role of the Steering Committee is to ensure complementarity of programmes and actions among the three RUNOs.

In addition, the Steering Committee approves the Regional Programme workplan and budget. The Steering Committee is chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator in Kazakhstan and comprises a representative of the EU Delegation in Kazakhstan, Heads of RUNOs in Kazakhstan, and two CSO representatives nominated by and selected from the Civil Society Regional Reference Group.

In addition, the UN RCs from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Afghanistan may be invited to participate in the Steering Committee meetings when relevant. Regular consultation among UN RCs is an important coordination mechanism. The RUNO and Project Management Team also regularly meet on different matters related to the programme. CSO partners coordinate among themselves across the participating countries. Adequate government involvement in the management of the Spotlight Regional Programme is achieved in close consultation with the EU Delegation in Kazakhstan.

The Spotlight Regional Programme is anchored in the EU partnership through which the UN and EU coordinate their strategies, share relevant information, and provide coherent leadership. Joint work is aligned with the EU's new Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Relations 2020–2025 (GAP III), aimed at accelerating progress on empowering women and girls and safeguarding gains made on gender equality over 25 years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Moreover, the EU-UN partnership is in line with the new EU Joint Communication on Multilateralism, which focuses on the global multilateral system that is 'fit for purpose' to address today's challenges.





In addition to the Regional Steering Committee, coordination with the EU is pursued through regular online meetings with the relevant Development Cooperation Section of the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan.

A cohesive multidisciplinary cross-agency approach for responding to violence against women and girls is essential to protecting victims and survivors from further harm when responding to violence. Hence, an effective coordination mechanism will have a greater impact in responding to violence. To ensure the benefits of a coordinated approach, other stakeholders such as academic/research institutions, local communities and/or the private sector may also be invited to participate in the Committee's discussions related to planning, implementation and monitoring of the programme activities.

As the highest governance structure for the Spotlight Initiative Regional Programme for Central Asia and Afghanistan, the Steering Committee meets twice a year and provides strategic oversight for the Programme. The Committee makes decisions that are in accordance with the objectives, approach, and scope of the Regional Programme, and guides the implementing partners and responsible parties in its execution. Where consensus and/or agreement cannot be reached among the Regional Steering Committee members, the UN Resident Coordinator in Kazakhstan would make the final decision.

Recognizing the absence of regional institutions that could be its natural partners, the Spotlight Initiative Regional Programme is striving to engage relevant international institutions on a case-by-case basis. Such institutions may include the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Special Programme for the Economies in Central Asia (SPECA) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Another option is the newly created Action Coalition within the Generation Equality Forum.

The first meeting of the Regional Steering Committee was convened in July 2021, with a view to presenting progress in the programme implementation, financial situation and to endorse the 2020 Annual Report and Annual Workplan for Phase I. Until then, the UN RC in Kazakhstan continued to regularly consult with UN RCs in Central Asia countries and Afghanistan to ensure that the Regional Programme remained relevant and enjoyed stakeholder support. Furthermore, the RCO in Kazakhstan was meeting on a bimonthly basis with the RUNO representatives in Kazakhstan to discuss the Regional Programme implementation.

### **The Civil Society Regional Reference Group**





The **Civil Society Regional Reference Group (CS-RRG)** was constituted via an independent process led by civil society and facilitated by the UN. To enable the CSOs' participation in the design of the Spotlight Regional Programme, the RCO in Kazakhstan established an **interim CS-RRG**, which contributed to the design phase of the Regional Programme document and provided relevant inputs regarding possible engagement of the civil society actors in programme activities.

The **Permanent CS-RRG** was established in December 2020 as an institutional mechanism to facilitate systematic civil society engagement in the design and implementation of the Regional Programme and as a source of expertise. The CS-RRG's function is twofold: to advise the Spotlight Regional Programme team on the design of the programme and to advocate for the implementation of its objectives. The kick-off meeting of the permanent CS-RRG was held in March 2021 where the group members were tasked with revisiting the discussion and finalizing the TOR.

A Code of Conduct was also proposed to mitigate possible conflicts of interest and to ensure that the CS-RRG members adhered to the highest standards related to human rights, gender equality and participation. The Knowledge Management focal point drafted a workplan which was further cleared, in consultation with the team, and approved in June 2021.

The CS-RRG comprises 12 preeminent regional experts, including 3 representatives from Afghanistan (1 male and 2 female), who are specialized in eliminating VAWG and harmful practices (HP) and advancing women's rights more broadly. At least 50 percent of the CS-RRG members are leaders or members of regional/subregional women's rights organizations/networks, including women's funds. Those representing local or grassroots communities have significant experience working on women's rights and gender equality and possess expertise in eliminating VAWG by applying a human rights-based approach.

Additionally, members include individuals with knowledge of human rights and feminist frameworks and experience in the protection area. A geographic balance was a key consideration to ensure fair representation of all states/regions/districts on the CS-RRG. The members serve in their individual capacity and their command of English is not a precondition for participation in the Group. In 2021, all efforts were directed towards ensuring language accessibility, which varies at the regional level.

The **Selection Committee**, which comprises five members from regional CSOs and two members from the UN, pursued the following tasks:

- Reviewed and agreed on the details of the process and timeline to inform the CS-RRG, including Terms of Reference (TOR) for CS-RRG, the application form and Code of Conduct for permanent members of CS-RRG;



- Set up the deadlines for the call for applications for the CS-RRG membership and for approving the application review procedure, and
- Reviewed and evaluated the applications and made selections and decisions on the final list of CS-RRG members.

The CS-RRG members are informed about all activities designed for reaching out to CSOs, including the announcement of grants and regional convenings of NGOs. The CS-RRG is regarded as a key Spotlight Regional Programme gateway to CSOs, women’s movements and activists in Central Asia and Afghanistan.

A regional workshop on establishing a civil society network for Central Asia and Afghanistan to end SGBV was held during 31 May – 3 June 2021 to harness the collective expertise, experiences, challenges, and energy of gender equality advocates from the region. Attendance at the workshop included representatives of regional CSOs and nine CS-RRG members who contributed to strengthening CSO collaboration in the region. The post-workshop consultation focused on the development of a roadmap for the CSOs regional network on SGBV.

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

To facilitate greater transparency, efficiency, and good governance in the disbursement of Small Grants to CSOs and overall regional coordination of the programme activities, a Regional Open Coordination Group on Small Grants for CSOs (ROCG) was established under Pillar 6 of the Spotlight Regional Programme in 2020. The ROCG has been extensively consulted throughout 2021 as a platform for informal consultations for building CSOs capacity and the women’s movement in the region to ensure the application of coordinated approaches to country and regional interventions at the strategic level.

Through regular consultations with the UN Gender Theme Groups (GTGs) in all five countries, technical support was provided to strengthen programme implementation and to review and align institutional and legislative frameworks on ending SGBV in the region. A draft concept note on the establishment of a Central Asia Alliance for ending SGBV was widely discussed with UNCTs in all five countries through their respective GTGs. The Spotlight Regional Programme will continue to involve GTGs in all five countries to further coordinate programme activities in the region.

Implementation of the Spotlight Regional Programme is overseen by the UN RC Office in Kazakhstan. Coordination among participating UN Agencies/RUNOs and their country offices in Central Asia is undertaken through the RC system. While remaining the key vehicle for bridging





regional and country-level work on EVAWG and SGBV, inter-agency coordination is facilitated through regular meetings of Project Officers, Technical Coherence Meetings, and regular consultations of Project Officers with technical leads from the Agencies specialized in specific areas of the VAWG portfolio, ensuring robust, affordable operations are in place to deliver on joint commitments.

Coordination at the regional level with the RUNOs Regional Offices is ensured through quarterly meetings with RUNOs regional technical leads. The first meeting was organized in September 2021, the next meeting is planned for April 2022. During the first meeting, the team discussed areas of the EVAWG priorities within the Spotlight Regional Programme where RUNOs' technical expertise and available resources can be potentially beneficial. To that end, a matrix of available resources in the region was developed and endorsed.

The Spotlight Regional Programme internal coordination is ensured through regular proactive discussions on enhancing coherence and meetings convened from April through August 2021 under the heading "Pathways to Change" which brought together RUNO Project Officers. Through these regular group discussions, the programme implementation was strengthened by identifying interlinkages across Pillars within the Spotlight Regional Programme and across Spotlight Regional and Country Programmes in the region. Additionally, group discussions on coherence helped identify a list of indicators at the outcome and output levels, which the team discussed and agreed to consider for programme reporting.

#### ***a) Use of UN Reform inter-agency tools***

During the reporting period, RUNOs were working together in the spirit of UN Reform through the established inter-agency COP mechanism to accelerate delivery and generate joint results. This included a critical assessment of programme workplans to review activities that could not be implemented due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as concerted efforts that needed refocusing to deal with new risk factors for VAWG and with response efforts for victims and their families.

The Spotlight Regional Programme continued to apply a more multisectoral approach to ensure greater efficiencies, enhanced synergies across pillars and more cohesive and effective engagement with the most disadvantaged beneficiaries, thereby demonstrating a commitment to leave no one behind.

In pursuit of a more responsive, integrated implementation of the Spotlight Regional Programme, in line with UN Reform efforts, with support from the UN RC in Kazakhstan, the programme team





representing all RUNOs uses the UN common premises in Almaty which offer several essential common services such as security/safety, IT support, recruitment and pouch delivery to Nur-Sultan, the capital of Kazakhstan. Launched in 2019, the UN Common Premises in Almaty symbolize the strong partnership between the Government of Kazakhstan and the United Nations.

The UNDP Country Office provided support for the recruitment of three Spotlight Regional Programme national team members (Monitoring & Reporting Specialist, Communications Officer, and Programme Assistant), which was undertaken in compliance with UNDP recruitment selection policy and procedures. Pursuant to the request from the RC Office, the UNV Office in Kazakhstan offered support for the selection and recruitment of an international UNV as Spotlight Regional Programme Coordinator, following a decision to hire an international candidate who would play a substantive role in guiding the implementation of the regional programme.

### **Programme Partnerships**

The Spotlight Regional Programme is partnering with RUNO Offices in the Central Asian countries to ensure complementarity with the EVAWG programming and Country Programme Document priorities for fostering gender transformation on a broader scale. The country offices (for instance, Turkmenistan) signified the importance of the Spotlight Regional Programme as it supported and backed the country-level efforts of UN RCO team and UN Gender Theme Group members to advance gender equality and eliminate GBV.

In addition, given that the Kyrgyzstan Spotlight Country Programme is in an advanced stage of implementation, the Spotlight Regional Programme team received valuable recommendations from the programme team in Kyrgyzstan through the inter-agency exchange process. The team shared its findings of national studies and recommended broadening the scope of the national legislation review on VAW, specifically to include gender discrimination, women's rights and equality.

In addition, partnering with country offices and ensuring that activities are highly relevant to country-specific priorities creates a conducive environment for the Spotlight Regional Programme team to engage key national counterparts in the regional proceedings and exchange to maximize its impact with multiple stakeholders.

The partnership with training and educational institutions in the law enforcement sector is of particular importance to the Spotlight Regional Programme. Although the law enforcement agencies are characterized by a strict line of command and communication policy, in addition to their regulations on cooperation with international organizations, ministerial training and educational



institutions provide sufficient entry points for thinking out of the box and bringing in new ideas and perspectives to be addressed through training programmes and knowledge management in research and exchange with lecturers and students.

### **a) Government**

In June 2021, a regional consultation for Central Asia and Afghanistan was organized as part of preparatory work for the Generation Equality Forum<sup>6</sup> held on 30 June – 2 July 2021 in Paris. Seventeen leaders joined the Forum Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence (AC on GBV) in April 2021, including the European Commission representing international organizations, and UN Women and the World Health Organization representing UN Agencies.

From the Central Asia region, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan registered as commitment-makers under the Forum AC on GBV. The participation of Central Asia in the Spotlight Regional Programme helped create a solid foundation for the robust regional movement which contributes to the targets pursued by the Forum and encourages other member states and partners to join game-changing forces. The main purpose of the regional consultation was to discuss how the Spotlight Regional Programme for Central Asia and Afghanistan could support the regional mobilization to eliminate of VAWG, and how partners could make national commitments to help enforce targets and actions designed by the Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence. To that end, a new partnership was established with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of Kazakhstan, one of the actors committed to the Forum from Central Asia.

In his statement at the Forum, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev announced Kazakhstan's joining the ACs on GBV and Economic Justice and Rights and initiated the creation of a Central Asian Regional Knowledge Platform for sharing state-of-the-art violence prevention, response expertise and women's empowerment oriented collaborative programmes. The President confirmed his robust commitment to advancing gender equality, women's safety and empowerment and

---

<sup>6</sup> The Mexico Forum launched six Action Coalitions: GBV; Economic justice and rights; Bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR); Feminist action for climate justice; Technology and innovation for gender equality and Feminist movements and leadership. The Action Coalitions represent innovative models of multi-stakeholder partnerships, involving governments, civil society, private sector, parliamentarians, trade unions and other stakeholders, who share a common goal to accelerate action on a critical thematic area of concern. Each Action Coalition developed a set of concrete, ambitious and transformative actions that the members of the Action Coalition will take, with time and resource commitments, for implementation between 2020-2025 in order to achieve immediate and irreversible progress towards gender equality. This accelerated action agenda is taking on the following cross-cutting issues, in order to deliver tangible results: Financing, Transforming Gender Norms (including by engaging men and boys), Law and Policy Reform, Education, Gender Data and Accountability, Addressing intersectional discrimination, and Focusing on systemic change by addressing structural inequalities.



Kazakhstan's readiness to make financial contributions to the UN and EU-led Spotlight Initiative's Regional Programme for Central Asia and Afghanistan.<sup>7</sup> The MFA has made a contribution of \$50,000 to the Spotlight Regional Programme for building capacity of the regional CSOs and to support the implementation of Pillar 6 activities to further engage CSOs, with a special focus on responding to SGBV, in the context of COVID-19 and beyond.

### ***b) Civil Society***

During the reporting period, RUNOs involved a wide range of CSOs, including international, national, local/grassroots and feminist ones. Due to sound expertise and for acceleration purposes, it was agreed to involve the international implementing partner (IIP) East European Institute for Reproductive Health (EEIRH) from Romania for implementation of activities under Pillar 2 and Pillar 5. The EEIRH is a long-standing partner of one of the RUNOs and has extensive experience in working on multisectoral response to GBV issues and GBV data collection and processing. The disability aspect was included in a number of documents, including regional SOP modes, training materials for health, psycho-social support and police sectors on case management and case referral mechanisms.

Another CSO selected through a competitive selection process was the International Debate Education Association Central Asia (IDEA CA), a youth-led organization from Kyrgyzstan. Being a national CSO, the organization established strong links with the Central Asian countries. This CSO has experience in supporting young people in education, youth activism, debates, and prevention of GBV. Within the Spotlight Regional Programme, IDEA CA is working to engage youth organizations in Central Asia by establishing a viable informal network in the region and invited representatives of a youth organization working with PWDs to the regional youth forum organized in 2021.

A desk review of the MenEngage Platform in Central Asia was carried out by an implementing partner of one of the RUNOs from Kazakhstan, the Eurasian Centre for People Management (ECPM), which has been working with Spotlight Regional Programme to bring together different actors committed to engaging men and boys to address stereotypical gender norms, eliminate violence against women in Kazakhstan since 2019.

---

<sup>7</sup> [Kazakhstan President delivered a video statement at the Generation Equality Forum — Official website of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan \(akorda.kz\)](https://www.akorda.kz/en/press-releases/2021/05/10/kazakhstan-president-delivered-a-video-statement-at-the-generation-equality-forum)





An innovative grants competition entitled “Knowledge Created by NGOs for NGOs” aimed to identify NGOs with unique experience in working with victims of violence. Ten NGOs were selected as winners of the competition, out of 30 applications. A geographic distribution of winners represented four Central Asian countries. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan received 3 grants each, and Uzbekistan – 1 grant. Grants were disbursed to 9 organizations. However, the grant to Uzbekistan was put on hold, owing to local financial regulations of NGO operations. For NGOs from Turkmenistan, it is traditionally not money-wise attractive to receive grants tied to foreign currency, due to specific restrictions on national currency conversion. Hence, the Spotlight Regional Programme seeks to offer conducive means to support capacity development needs of NGOs in Turkmenistan. Proposed applications offered a fair mix of advocacy, educational, direct support and capacity-building experience. Each successful application had its defined target group, including rural/urban women in difficult life situations, women in need of specialized social services, legal advice and other related services, youth and students, local or rural communities. All submissions described a variety of channels and means for the delivery of services by media and technologically savvy NGOs, including via social media, TV, radio and IT solutions.

Altogether 29 CSO representatives (26 women and 3 men) from the five Central Asian countries and Afghanistan were selected through an online application process to participate in a Virtual Regional Workshop on establishing a Civil Society Network. The application process aimed to identify the most qualified participants to join the workshop and to actively engage in creating the regional network which would include representatives from urban and rural areas, intergenerational activists, thereby ensuring a broad array of views.

To follow up on the workshop results, a small working group was created to take the next steps in the network development. The small group comprised one workshop participant per country and included a CSO working with women with disabilities in Kazakhstan, a CSO from rural areas in Kyrgyzstan, another rural CSO from Uzbekistan, a young activist from Tajikistan, and two CSOs from the capitals in Turkmenistan and Afghanistan, respectively.

The Kameda Public Foundation from Kazakhstan, which delivered a scoping study and mapping of regional women’s CSOs, was selected as a vendor through a competitive process. This is a qualified woman-led consulting CSO with over 15 years’ experience in CSO development and capacity building. Some examples of Kameda’s projects are the “Development of Concrete Policy Instruments for Rural Women Employment Initiative” in Kazakhstan supported by UN Women, and a project on youth employment in Kazakhstan’s regions implemented with UNDP support. “Knowledge Created by NGOs for NGOs” grants competition was documented via knowledge





products for further dissemination among peer NGOs during Phase 2 and beyond, including through the virtual knowledge platform.

While applying the principle of *leaving no one behind* throughout the programme implementation and as part of a call for proposals under the Small Grants for CSOs component, the Spotlight Regional Programme, in close cooperation with members of the Regional Open Coordination Group on Small Grants, prioritized the selection of CSOs which lacked technical capacities to access funding to more traditional funding channels and/or were less-known grassroots organizations that represented the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, including those in hard-to-reach and rural areas. Moreover, within the framework of their projects, some grantees carried out outreach seminars and counselling sessions in rural and hard-to-reach areas to ensure a wider audience had free access to comprehensive services and could learn more about EAWG and SGBV.

### **c) European Union Delegation**

In 2021, the Spotlight Regional Programme further strengthened its relationship with the EU Delegation both in Kazakhstan and the Central Asian region. The UN RC in Kazakhstan regularly met with the EU Ambassador and head of the development cooperation section. Regular regional coordination meetings with major stakeholders included the EU representatives. The RC Office continued pursuing regular communication with the EU Delegation in Kazakhstan and attended the People and Prosperity cluster meetings hosted by the EU Delegation to provide the latest updates on the progress made in the implementation of the Spotlight Regional Programme and to ensure planning its strategic priorities ahead, in consultation with the EU Delegation.

The engagement with the EU representatives in Central Asia has resulted in a wide range of opportunities for the EU to advocate with the respective governments at the policy level to address areas requiring attention and greater commitment from the governments, which has also contributed to the commitments made by Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan at the Generation Equality Forum. These commitments can be regarded as steppingstones in formulating the gender transformation agenda in Central Asia.

The Spotlight Regional Programme is anchored in the EU partnership through which the UN and the EU coordinate their strategies, share relevant information, and provide coherent leadership. Joint work is also aligned with the EU's new Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Relations 2020–2025 (GAP III), aimed at accelerating progress on empowering women and girls, and safeguarding gains made on gender equality over 25 years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action.





Moreover, the EU-UN partnership is in line with the new EU Joint Communication on Multilateralism, which focuses on the global multilateral system that is 'fit for purpose' to address today's challenges. In addition to the Regional Steering Committee, coordination with the EU is pursued through regular online meetings with the relevant Development Cooperation Section of the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan.

The Ambassador of the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan took part in the first Spotlight Regional Programme Steering Committee Meeting as a voting member and is always an invitee to high-level events convened within the Programme implementation framework.

The Ambassador of the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan participated in the following events:

- The 16 Days of Activism against GVB campaign;
- Launch of Small Grants;
- Virtual Regional Workshop "Convening a Civil Society Network for Central Asia and Afghanistan to end SGBV";
- Regional Consultation "Building Game-Changing Commitments and Mobilizing Partners";
- Study Tour on prevention and response to SGBV for representatives of the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic, and
- Regional Youth Forum.

The EU Delegation in Kazakhstan was duly informed about all milestone events organized by the Spotlight Regional Programme team. Newsletters published regularly were circulated to the EU Delegation and international community in the region.

#### ***d) Cooperation with other UN Agencies***

Throughout the reporting period, the Spotlight Regional Programme continued to strengthen its collaboration with other UN Agencies, namely UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), by agreeing on a number of joint strategic actions that leverage these agencies' positive attributes and expertise.

As a follow-up to the Regional Director's meeting last year, the first meeting of the Spotlight Regional Programme RUNO's regional technical leads was organized in September 2021 with participation of focal points from the three RUNOs' and UNICEF Regional Offices and the RCO Team Leader in Afghanistan.





The Spotlight Regional Programme collaborated with UNHCR to jointly advocate for encouraging gender transformation in the region as part of the 16 Days of Activism against GBV Campaign and to promote visibility of the regional programme. With support from UNHCR, a prominent regional celebrity and public activist, Ms. Manizha Sangin, UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador, who participated in the Eurovision song contest, was invited to Kazakhstan to exchange experiences with local youth and women activists in Central Asia. Ms. Sangin established a public fund “SilSila” to assist domestic violence survivors and migrant women from Central Asia.

Within the Spotlight Regional Programme, a number of public campaigns were organized in Kazakhstan in cooperation with UNHCR with the participation of representatives of crisis centres and shelters, NGO service providers, human rights defenders, bloggers and the media to raise public awareness about eliminating VAWG and to establish broader partnerships in the Central Asia region for further exchange of experiences and best practices.

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

In June 2021, the Spotlight Regional Programme undertook a consultation to identify existing opportunities for mobilizing regional efforts in preparation for the Generation Equality Forum in Paris (30 June – 2 July 2021) and to expand regional cooperation and partnership on eliminating VAWG and ending SGBV in Central Asia. In August, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan contributed \$50,000 to support the Spotlight Initiative Regional Programme for Central Asia and Afghanistan under Pillar 6 to strengthen programme implementation in capacity building of state and non-state actors to prevent and eliminate VAWG. This partnership will support the regional programme’s efforts to promote national and regional ownership and sustainability through and beyond the Spotlight Initiative in Central Asia and help strengthen the political will and provide support to the programme’s products and recommendations generated to eliminate violence against women and girls. The Spotlight Regional Programme will utilize similar global platforms, which present multiple avenues for building and strengthening vibrant partnerships in Central Asia.

A timely intervention of the Spotlight Regional Programme made the participation of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in the Forum and its two Action Coalitions as commitment-makers possible. While addressing the Forum, the President of Kazakhstan made a statement on Kazakhstan’s joining the Action Coalitions on Gender-Based Violence and Economic Justice and Rights, and expressed his readiness to contribute financially to the UN and EU-led Spotlight Initiative’s Regional Programme for Central Asia and Afghanistan. The Government of Uzbekistan, along with civil society partners, made strong commitments and financial pledges, in line with the national priorities on delivering the SDGs, particularly Goal 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls.



For the first time ever in Central Asia, disability was integrated into the regional SOPs and training packages, which were reviewed by Women Enabled International (WEI), the only international organization for women with disabilities. Themes included the particularities of providing health and social support to persons with disabilities who are subject to SGBV.

Capacity building oriented activities are still underway, which engage a wider audience, including non-state state actors, in training sessions focusing on basic principles of gender equality and eliminating VAWG. The key challenge was to identify the most appropriate modality for cooperation with the government entity under the Spotlight Regional Programme. A direct agreement was concluded between UN Women and the MFA of Kazakhstan to transfer funds to support capacity building activities under Pillar 6.

Within its outcomes and activities, the Spotlight Regional Programme is capitalizing on the existing partnerships. One of them includes the UNDP Seoul Policy Centre (SPC) for Knowledge Exchange through SDG Partnerships. Engagement with the SPC greatly advanced activities on the establishment of a regional network of police to prevent SGBV. The SPC also facilitated working exchange between the Ministries of Internal Affairs of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and their educational and training facilities.

In particular, this partnership is a response to the need for sectoral training programme(s) to be developed with the participation of specialists from departmental science and practitioners in the law enforcement sector. This partnership will help organize a regular exchange of teachers and experts, under the auspices of the Spotlight Regional Programme, between the Karaganda Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Aktobe Law Institute of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic.

## **Results**

The Spotlight Regional Programme launched Pillar 1 Activity 1.1.1 to develop a unified methodology reviewing national legislation and law-enforcement practices on SGBV and harmful practices and their alignment with international norms and standards to guide the national SGBV legislation. The CS-RRG and CSOs in the region reviewed the draft methodology to ensure a participatory approach. Reviews of the national legal frameworks and law enforcement practices on SGBV and harmful practices in the five countries in Central Asia were launched, based on the desk review,



official requests to respective state institutions, and semi-structured interviews with CSOs on law enforcement practices.

Within Activity 1.1.1, a study was commissioned on strengthening the architecture of the SGBV response in the five Central Asia countries. The study was designed as part of reprogramming resources in the context of travel and meeting restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This initiative contributes to strengthening evidence-based knowledge of national partners regarding the gaps in the systemic response to SGBV. Another goal was further honing the capacity of national research institutions to assess these gaps through exposure to internationally recognized UN tools and instruments on eliminating VAWG.

Within the Pillar 2 Activity 2.1.1, a series of meetings on the police response to SGBV and an exchange among the representatives of law enforcement agencies from the Central Asian countries took place to better equip officials at national and subnational levels to develop and deliver evidence-based EVAWG prevention and response programmes. Establishing a regional network of police contributes to strengthening national and cross-border networking for the Central Asia Alliance on SGBV. Subsequently, police service representatives learned about practices developed by their counterparts in the Central Asian countries in addressing sexual and domestic violence through experience-sharing and discussion. For participating countries, such an exchange serves as a learning platform to introduce new ways and methods of work, while the host country can learn from their peers and further promote good practices.

During 2021, this peer exchange involved the following events:

- *Regional online round tables presenting an overview of experiences of the Central Asian countries and South Korea in prevention and response to GBV.*

Kazakhstan had an opportunity to promote its experience of adapting the South Korean experience in the development of a guidance and training course for police on handling sexual and domestic violence cases and the training of trainers, whereas Uzbekistan shared information about its ongoing national programme on rehabilitation and reintegration of survivors of violence and on suicide prevention.

The SPC for Knowledge Exchange through SDG Partnerships shared signature features of the South Korean system of multisectoral response to SGBV through the Sunflower Crisis Centre for victims of violence and the national protocol for investigating cases of violence against children. Participants learned that South Korea views multisectoral response to SGBV to be more effective



compared to the referral system. Representatives of the Ministry of Interior and Police Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) of the Kyrgyz Republic presented their roadmap for strengthening the national system of training police in prevention and response to SGBV and received comments and inputs from their peer colleagues from Kazakhstan.

- *Study tour for the representatives of the Ministry of Interior and Police Academy of MIA of the Kyrgyz Republic to Kazakhstan*

Taking into consideration the travel and meeting restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, only the Kyrgyz delegation participated in person. Representatives from other Central Asian countries joined online for the inception meeting, presentations and discussions with the senior management of the Committee of Administrative Police of the MIA of Kazakhstan, its training institutions and representatives of Kazakhstan's state and non-state crisis centres for the victims of violence.

Key topics for the Kyrgyz delegation included: (i) The existing legal framework and current practices of police response to sexual and domestic violence cases in Kazakhstan; (ii) the functioning of specialized units for protection of women against violence within the Committee of Administrative Police of the MIA of Kazakhstan; (iii) the use of protective orders and other special measures; and (iv) correctional programmes for abusers. A significant part of the programme was devoted to studying the police training programme, which Kazakhstan adopted from South Korean training materials for police on interaction with victims of violence. Kazakhstan's adapted training manual includes recommendations that a standard list of actions police inspectors be aimed to minimize secondary trauma for survivors of violence.

Participants from Kyrgyzstan emphasized that, during this study tour, an expert network was established to exchange good practices, including experience of the specialized units on protection of women and in-service training for police on providing essential services to victims of violence, which have a potential for implementation in their country.

- *A regional virtual dialogue of women in police service in the Central Asian countries.*

Initially planned as part of 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence campaign, this event generated a great interest as a stand-alone and programmatic exercise, which set a course for prospective cooperation among the Central Asia countries. It brought together over 80 online participants, including representatives from the law enforcement ministries of the Central Asian





countries, the Procurator General's Office in Uzbekistan, leading legal associations, NGOs and crisis centres, gender experts and UN Agencies from the five Central Asian countries.

This meeting featured a dialogue on the role of women police officers in prevention and response to domestic and sexual violence. While Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have already established specialized units, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are studying their experiences and practices, but view such units (and more women police officers) as a positive practice to the police response system to violence against women. Participating countries discussed the benefits and challenges in the work of women police officers.

The President of the Women Police Officers Network in Respublika Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina, enriched the discussion with insights from Bosnia and Herzegovina on the impact of attracting more women to the police service. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan spoke about training programmes and awareness-building for police personnel, with references to earlier joint activities supported by the Spotlight Regional Programme and South Korean experience. The Seoul Policy Centre for Knowledge Exchange through SDG Partnerships contributed more insights about the system of multisectoral response to SGBV.

The variety and mix of stakeholders and experiences helped to identify areas for interaction among respective departments of the internal affairs of the Central Asian countries to adapt successful practices to attract more women to police forces and to promote gender equality in police service. These areas, among others, include multisectoral coordination in the provision of services to victims of violence; correctional programmes for aggressors; and standards of service for victims of violence, with a focus on women with disabilities.

A draft Concept Note on institutionalization of the Central Asia Alliance on ending all forms of VAWG and harmful practices was developed in close consultations with, and written feedback from, the teams of the Afghanistan Spotlight Country Programme, the Kyrgyzstan Spotlight Country Programme, the Spotlight Tajikistan Country Programme, GTG Uzbekistan, EVAWG regional technical leads and the Spotlight Regional Programme team from Kazakhstan.

The Spotlight Regional Programme established a partnership with the newly formed regional NeMolchiAsia (Don'tBeSilentAsia) Coalition on ending SGBV which was ready to support the Central Asia Alliance. The OSCE Secretariat expressed its interest in supporting the Alliance, given its relevance to the OSCE contribution through its ongoing 'WIN – Women and Men Innovating and Networking for Gender Equality' Project on combating GBV implemented in the Central Asian region.



One of the key investments of the Spotlight Regional Programme is building knowledge on the importance of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) in combatting VAW. The first draft of the desk review assessing progress on the implementation of recommendations on GRB in the Central Asia region was developed with a focus on: a) the status of GRB in the Central Asia region; and b) existing national regulatory frameworks on GRB in the field of combating violence against women in the Central Asia countries and in related sectors and government programmes. UNCTs and international organizations in the region provided their inputs for the desk review.

The draft Central Asian regional model SOPs for health, psychosocial support and police sectors were developed, based on the existing ones in the countries and international best practices. The disability aspect was incorporated into the SOPs for the first ever time in Central Asia. Draft training packages for health and psychosocial sectors were developed. Each training package has two parts: theoretical information on the key topics included in the curriculum, and the implementation package, a ready-to-use material for trainers. The disability aspect was integrated into the training packages.

A regional forum of youth-led and youth-serving organizations was convened on 18-20 November 2021 in Almaty and brought together 38 representatives of organizations from the Central Asian countries (6 participants per country from Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and 5 representatives from Kazakhstan), whereas 10 representatives from Turkmenistan participated remotely. At the forum, an informal youth regional alliance on SGBV was formed and youth organizations developed its goals, mission and communication strategy.

An agreement was signed with the University of Melbourne for adaptation of the kNOWVAWdata course to the Central Asian context and for its translation into Russian to build capacity of national partners in Central Asia in measuring violence against women. The American University of Central Asia in Kyrgyzstan was selected and contracted by UoM to deliver the Russian version of the course in 2022.

The Spotlight Regional Programme contributed to strengthening of CSOs' regional coordination, knowledge-sharing and networking across Central Asia and Afghanistan, specifically through an assessment of the institutional/governmental barriers to the full engagement of civil society and an overview of Civil Society Collaboration on SGBV in Central Asia and Afghanistan, which also fed into a preparatory phase of Pillar 6.



The assessment of the institutional/governmental barriers was carried out to identify the best mechanisms for supporting the effective participation of civil society in the regional women's movement building. A desk study, along with online sources, and a series of consultations were conducted: a total of 15 meetings for 25 interviewees - 18 women and 7 men, including 11 representatives from the region.

To identify mechanisms aimed at enhancing the role of CSOs as actors of change in ending SGBV, and their contribution to the regional women's movement supported by the Spotlight Regional Programme, an Ideathon was organized with local CSOs and a number of representatives from international organizations supporting civil society in the region (e.g., OSCE, UN). Solutions generated at the Ideathon were then re-elaborated and integrated as part of the Strategic Approach to CSOs engagement, which aims to identify mechanisms that increase capacity and effectiveness of CSO partnerships in ending SGBV in Central Asia and Afghanistan.

A thorough desk review and multiple interviews with CSOs, researchers, activists, UN Agencies and other international actors in the region were carried out, focusing on the concept of civil society in Central Asia, attitudes by governments to civil society in each country of the region and on an overview of civil society collaboration on SGBV in the region. As a result, an "Overview of Civil Society Collaboration on Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Central Asia and Afghanistan" was produced.

A mapping of CSO regional networks on SGBV, involving a total of 27 global and regional CSO networks, and two case studies of advanced international networks, e.g., the European Women's Lobby (EWL) and a GBV Prevention Network in the Eastern, Southern and the Horn and Africa, were conducted.

The Spotlight Regional Programme has laid a solid foundation for creating a CSO regional network. Altogether 52 representatives of 27 CSOs, UN Agencies and implementing organizations attended a four-day virtual regional workshop (31 May - 3 June) to identify the main challenges and opportunities for regional collaboration and developed a joint vision and mission for the regional civil society network. Following the workshop, a small working group consisting of a CSO from each of the six countries was created to support the regional network establishment. The working group conducted a series of virtual meetings and prepared a draft roadmap for the regional network.

In November 2021, a scoping study was completed by a women's CSO, in close cooperation with CSOs and consultants from Central Asia, to map existing regionally active CSOs given their limited number in the region. Moreover, most lack a regional scope and there are practically no local grant-





making organizations. CSOs with a potential to serve as a regional grant-making body were shortlisted and capacity building efforts are underway.

A local vendor was hired to conduct mapping of the existing knowledge materials and resources on SGBV in order to establish a regional virtual knowledge platform planned for 2022, and to serve as a GEWE regional mechanism for CSOs, activists, parliamentarians, ministries and other government departments in Central Asia.

Within the small grants' component, the Spotlight Regional Programme has strengthened the institutional and organizational capacity of grassroots organizations supporting EAWG and ending SGBV. During the reporting period, the Spotlight Regional Programme awarded two cohorts of grantees: 15 CSOs (Kazakhstan – 5; Kyrgyzstan – 3; Tajikistan – 3; Uzbekistan – 4) which received a total of \$409,851.29 in March – April, and 3 Crisis Centres in Kazakhstan received \$28,619 from the MFA Kazakhstan in November.

Online information sessions were organized to attract more potential applicants and provide additional clarification. Following the selection process, the list of shortlisted candidates was shared with the ROCG members to identify concerns on the reputation, expertise and/or effectiveness of the applicant, and their final comments and feedback were considered prior to sending the award letters to the selected applicants.

### **Capturing Broader Transformations Across Outcomes**

In June 2021, as part of the resource mobilization effort and enhancing coherence in EAWG and ending SGBV in the region, the Spotlight Regional Programme conducted a regional consultation to identify existing opportunities for expanding regional efforts in the preparation for the Generation Equality Forum in Paris (30 June – 2 July 2021).

The Spotlight Regional Programme's lobbying efforts resulted in a newly established cooperation with the Government of Kazakhstan and in the domestic resources mobilization to further boost the programme delivery process. A timely intervention for the Spotlight Regional Programme made the participation of Kazakhstan in the Forum's Action Coalition on GBV as a commitment-maker possible. Utilizing such global platforms and initiatives presents multiple avenues under the Spotlight Initiative to forge viable regional partnerships and to strengthen the political will and support for the programme outcomes and recommendations aimed at eliminating violence against women and girls.





While addressing the Generation Equality Forum, the President of Kazakhstan made a statement on Kazakhstan's joining the Action Coalitions on Gender-Based Violence and Economic Justice and Rights and expressed the country's readiness to contribute financially to the UN and EU-led Spotlight Initiative's Regional Programme for Central Asia and Afghanistan.

For the first time in Central Asia, disability was integrated into the regional SOPs and training packages, which were reviewed by Women Enabled International (WEI), the only international organization for women with disability, to include the provision health and social support to persons with disabilities who are victims of SGBV.

Youth organizations working with young people with disabilities joined the regional youth alliance and will be actively involved in the prevention of and response to GBV in Central Asia. Youth organizations have committed to increase the capacity of youth CSOs that help women with disabilities who face double discrimination – as a woman and as a person with disabilities.

The programme has greatly benefited from a series of discussions, entitled "Pathways to Change", that provided a comprehensive platform to examine programme key goals and objectives, expected results and means for their achievement by using the Theory of Change.

Under Pillar 1 on participatory cross-border review of the national legislation on SGBV and harmful practices, interlinkages between country programme reviews in the Central Asia region (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) and those of the Spotlight Regional Programme were identified. As a result, the Spotlight Regional Programme interventions and existing country reviews are to be aligned with a new unified methodology which is under elaboration.

Under Pillar 2 on strengthening institutions, identification of the interlinkages between two RUNO activities on costing of EVAWG resulted in a clear division of labour between both UN Agencies. Hence, the GRB analysis will focus on planning and development of practical instruments for streamlining gender into state planning and budgeting system at the policy level, whereas the costing exercise will focus on essential services provision via assessing the SOPs.

In addition, linkages with the Kyrgyzstan Spotlight Country Programme were established, also with the development and adaptation of the SOPs. Thus, the Spotlight Regional Programme will use documents developed by the Kyrgyzstan Spotlight Country Programme on SOPs as a minimum basis for the regional scope of work to further build on and expand regional interventions.



Under Pillar 3 on changing social norms and practices, avenues for cooperation between two RUNOs were established on involving men to champion ending SGBV in the region. Thus, both campaigns, HeForShe and MenEngage, will be rolled out in the region and managed by both UN Agencies to promote GEWE by targeting similar audiences, men and boys, and turn toxic masculinities into champions for GEWE.

This collaborative approach has resulted in joint planning and implementation of a regional communications campaign. Under Pillar 5 focusing on filling data gaps, the coherence discussion focused on identifying practical use for the programme products, which, among others, include three region-wide studies. There was unanimous agreement that the key added value of the Spotlight Regional Programme was the development of regionally relevant models for measurement and methodologies for SGBV data collection and analysis. This is in line with the main programme objective on knowledge accumulation and sharing.

However, the most significant finding of the above-mentioned discussions was that, in order to ensure sustainability and applicability of the research conducted, it was critical to provide training on the study methodology and data analysis for the crucial state and non-state partners on how to use data for prevention. Under Pillar 6, the main outcome of the discussions was the decision to proceed with a unified regional virtual knowledge platform encompassing three separate ones initially planned under: i) the SGBV Alliance (Pillar 2), ii) the regional movement DontBeSilent (Pillar 3), and iii) a virtual knowledge-sharing hub (Pillar 6).

A key challenge was to obtain a clear vision for, and understanding of, all planned assessment studies. As a result of collaborative consultations, a priority was given to conducting a needs assessment study to support outreach efforts to grassroots CSOs, with a special focus on the harder to reach grassroots CSOs, CSOs representing underrepresented groups, and grassroots women's organizations in the wider network of CSOs.

The adaptation of the kNOwVAW data course in Central Asia under Pillar 5 planned in 2022 will help to strengthen capacity of practitioners to collect data and to measure prevalence of SGBV in countries, improving formulation of evidence-based policy on SGBV under Pillar 1 and strengthening institutions to provide quality services to GBV survivors.

## **Capturing Change at Outcome Level**

### ***Outcome 1: Legal and Policy Framework***



### **Activity 1.1.1 Participatory cross-border review of national legislation on SGBV and harmful practices**

The partnership of the CS-RRG and CSOs from the region has been strengthened through mutual work on the methodology for conducting a review of national sexual and gender-based violence legislation and law-enforcement practices and their alignment with international norms and standards to guide the national SGBV legislation and law enforcement practices review.

Expert desk reviews identified existing gaps in national legal frameworks and law enforcement practices. These will further inform the strategy and recommendations being elaborated on harmonizing legal frameworks and law enforcement practices on EVAWG, in compliance with international standards and norms.

Collaboration between the Spotlight Regional Programme and UN Country Team in Turkmenistan strengthened while UNCT and GTG worked closely with the Government of Turkmenistan to inform the national review, which supported advocacy on EVAWG among national partners.

## **Outcome 2: Institutions**

### **Activity 2.1.1 Support the development of the Regional SOP models and tools for SGBV case referral and case management, including costing**

The development of the Regional SOP models and training packages for service providers is critical for reinforcing institutional capacity in prevention and response to GBV in the Central Asian region in line with internationally accepted standards and practices. The regional model SOPs for health, psychosocial support and police sectors were developed based on the findings of the undertaken situation analysis and review of the existing country SOPs and international best practices in prevention and response to GBV. The revised SOPs will help significantly improve the quality of services for GBV survivors in the region.

The training packages for both health and psycho-social sectors were developed in English. Each training package has two parts: theoretical information on the key topics included in the curriculum and an implementation package, a ready-to-use material for trainers. The Central Asian countries will use the training package to build the capacity of individual service providers and institutions.



### **Activity 2.1.1 Institutionalizing an Alliance for Central Asia and Afghanistan on ending SGBV and harmful practices**

On 21 June 2021, an event, entitled *Building Game-Changing Commitments and Mobilizing Partners*, brought together over 60 experts, representatives from CSOs, state institutions, EU Delegation, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and UNCTs to explore the following areas: 1) how the Spotlight Regional Programme could support regional mobilization and movement for transformative change on EVAWG; and 2) how partners could contribute to the attainment of targets and actions designed by the Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence.

The event also launched a regional consultation on institutionalization of the multistakeholder Alliance for Central Asia and Afghanistan to end all forms of SGBV and harmful practices. Participants agreed that the Generation Equality Forum commitments made by Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan could be seen as steppingstones in formulating the common agenda in Central Asia.

The Alliance could serve as a unique platform to discuss progress, achievements and bottlenecks in reaching the EVAWG targets, and support an intergenerational dialogue and engagement in EVAWG. The Alliance could be promoted as a subregional collective commitment within the Generation Equality Forum Action Coalition on GBV and enhance mobilization of other countries in the region as commitment makers.

Given the complexities of a cross-border Alliance, the development of this regional mechanism will be more informal in attaining its goals: support to regional advocacy, knowledge sharing, collective capacity development and awareness raising on international norms and standards, hands-on work in the development of institutional potential and procedures, and behavioural change communications. The aim is that all these activities will eventually contribute towards enhanced prevention, protection and law enforcement.

A partnership among UNCTs in all six countries in the region, the Spotlight Initiative Country Programmes, and regional technical leads on EVAWG and GTGs in Central Asia has been established and will be further strengthened with the creation of the Central Asian Alliance on ending SGBV and harmful practices. In addition, cooperation of the Regional NeMolchiAsia (Don'tBeSilentAsia) Coalition on ending SGBV with the Alliance has been secured, and an initiated dialogue on cooperation with the OSCE Secretariat and EBRD Central Asia will be intensified to ensure the engagement of international organizations in the Alliance.



Activities on the exchange of practices and experiences among the law enforcement agencies of the Central Asian countries within the networking and knowledge-sharing among NGOs participating in the “Knowledge Created by NGOs for NGOs” initiative allowed partners in Kyrgyzstan to improve their draft strategy to redesign their in-service training system for the police. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan now consider establishing specialized units within police service on protection of women against domestic and sexual violence and attracting more women in police service. Uzbekistan and other Central Asian countries are eager to learn from correctional programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence in Kyrgyzstan, and all countries continue their work on standard protocols to be used in interacting with victims of violence, including persons with disabilities.

### **Outcome 3: Prevention and Norm Change**

#### **Activity 3.2.1 Central Asia-wide #Don’t be Silent movement giving voices and a safe space to SGBV survivors**

The Spotlight Regional Programme supported the first edition in the publication series, entitled “Calling in”<sup>8</sup>, within a feminist initiative designed by the youth-led NGO FemAgora, which highlights the self-organized work of crises centres and services in Central Asia in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Fourteen experts from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan shared their approaches to domestic violence responses and experiences of the crisis centres and their recommendations on support and other services provided by crisis centres. The publication captured evidence and data on violence against women and girls and includes recommendations from health sector and civic sector partners on the support required for the effective functioning of crises centres.

#### **Activity 3.2.2 Empowering youth to change gender norms and stereotypes**

Activities to engage and empower young people contribute to changing negative social norms and gender stereotypes and strengthen young people’s capacity to become agents of change. An informal regional alliance of young people to combat GBV in the Central Asian region was established at the regional forum of youth-led and youth-serving organizations, held on 18-20 November 2021 in Almaty which was attended by 38 representatives from all Central Asian countries. The regional forum helped youth-led organizations improve their communication skills through peer-to-peer discussions and shared experience and best practices on GBV prevention and

---

<sup>8</sup> <https://eca.unwomen.org/ru/digital-library/publications/2021/6/femagora>



mobilize youth in the region to change social norms. A draft situation analysis report, along with a strategy and communication plan for youth organizations of Central Asia, was developed to further empower youth organizations to challenge gender norms and stereotypes.

Online training, developed for Y-peer network on gender equality, GBV and SRH issues was translated into the Kazakh and Turkmen languages for reaching youth living in villages and remote areas, as Russian speakers normally reside in the urban areas of Central Asia.

### **Activity 3.2.3 Mobilizing men as champions to end SGBV**

A virtual regional workshop was organized on 30 June 2021 to discuss preliminary results of a desk review of existing practices on “MenEngage” in prevention of GBV in Central Asia. The workshop brought together experts, RUNOs representatives and partners from five Central Asian countries and Eastern Europe. The desk review will be finalized in 2022.

### **Outcome 5: Closing the Data Gaps**

A mapping of existing in-country data on SGBV by different sources was conducted, highlighting both positive and weak aspects of SGBV data collection systems in the Central Asian countries and enabling to improve data collection systems to better capture the unequal access to services of GBV survivors, particularly those from vulnerable and marginalized groups.

The kNOwVAWdata course translation into Russian is underway and its adaptation to the Central Asian context will strengthen the capacity of national partners in measuring violence against women in this region. The interregional partnership between the University of Melbourne and the American University of Central Asia was created to move this work forward. The availability of the Russian version of the course for participants from the Central Asian countries is expected in 2022.

### **Outcome 6: Women’s movement**

The Virtual Regional Workshop on convening a civil society network for Central Asia and Afghanistan to end Sexual and Gender-Based Violence has contributed to strengthening cooperation among women's rights groups and CSOs representing five Central Asian countries and Afghanistan. Fifty-two representatives (48 women, 4 men) from 27 CSOs in 6 countries, representatives of UN Agencies and implementing organizations increased their knowledge of effective networking and relationship-building; exchanged ideas and experiences; identified main



challenges facing civil society across the region to fight SGBV; and explored opportunities for future collaboration in the region.

A Small Working Group composed of one workshop participant per country was set up. The Group developed a Regional Network Roadmap. In addition, leaders of the European Women’s Lobby and GBV Prevention Network from Eastern, Southern and the Horn of Africa contributed significantly to the knowledge and practices exchange which CSOs in the Central Asia region greatly appreciated.

Efforts were made towards establishing a regional grant mechanism. A scoping study to map regionally active CSOs completed, resulting in a short list recommendations of potential regional grant-making CSOs.

The characteristics of active women’s CSOs in Central Asia were identified, a database of over 600 women’s CSOs and activists was created and a grant-making manual to ensure alignment with local needs and appropriate representation from all the Central Asian countries was developed. Women’s rights groups and CSOs representing groups facing multiple forms of discrimination/marginalization (e.g., women with disabilities, LGBTIQI) stepped up organizational cooperation as a result of the Ideathon, a brainstorming event encouraging participants to take an active role in finding solutions to challenges. CSO interaction was boosted by their active engagement in discussions about barriers hampering the effective engagement of civil society in the region and about finding innovative solutions. The strategy for CSO engagement in ending SGBV in Central Asia and Afghanistan, aimed at enhancing the role civil society as actors of change in the SGBV response, was developed through consultations with key international and local stakeholders.

Progress was made towards establishing a virtual knowledge platform to facilitate remote knowledge and best practices exchange and joint advocacy for GEWE and ending SGBV. A local company was hired to develop content design and conduct mapping of existing knowledge materials for the virtual regional knowledge platform on eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls. The platform is expected to serve as a GEWE regional mechanism for governments and non-state stakeholders, including CSOs and gender activists in Central Asia.

Some progress was made on raising CSO capacity through the provision of grants. Some grantees, including less-known grassroots organizations that represent the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, introduced new financial, human resources and safety policies and procedures, and expanded their networks and coalitions with local and regional partners. For example, the NGOs Coalition ‘Ne Molchi.KZ’ successfully brought together over 300 activists, human rights defenders,





CSOs and government officials to more effectively influence and make progress on GEWE and ending SGBV.

Furthermore, the CSOs beneficiaries, including SGBV and trafficking survivors, and women with disabilities, received comprehensive services, including legal, social and psychological counselling that improved their lives. For example, women had their legal documents registered and received state financial and social assistance.

**Rights Holders (“Beneficiaries”)**

| Indicative numbers        | Direct for 2021 | Indirect for 2021 | Comments / Explanations   |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|---|
| Women (18 yrs. and above) | 21,710          | 28,414            | <p>The <b>direct beneficiaries</b> include the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each specialist hired within the Small Grants component to render comprehensive assistance (online or in-person) to SGBV survivors has a designated journal of consultations, in which they indicate the beneficiaries’ age, the category of required assistance (e.g., legal, social, and psychological counselling) and the place of residence.</li> <li>The number of participants that attended various capacity-building and/or awareness-raising seminars organized by small grant recipients.</li> </ol> <p>The <b>indirect beneficiaries</b> include the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The number of people who learned about SGBV- and GEWE-related issues via coalitions, social media posts (including Facebook, Instagram, telegram), newspapers articles and TV programmes.</li> <li>The number of people who learned through brochures and promotion materials distributed.</li> </ol> |
| Girls (5-17)              | 485             | 3,954             |   |
| Men (18 yrs. and above)   | 925             | 3,220             |   |
| Boys (5-17 yrs.)          | 211             | 1,248             |   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>              | <b>23,331</b>   | <b>36,836</b>     |   |

**Challenges and Mitigating Measures**

The ongoing COVID pandemic and associated restrictions led to a revision of the programme budget, specifically the travel budget, enabling the development of studies which contributed significantly to understanding the current situation, specifically, the sectoral response to SGBV.

One of the challenges confronted by the Spotlight Regional Programme is the limited number of research institutions capable of handling complex regional studies focused on gender-specific





issues. Hence, the Programme had to adjust or split procurement plans and activities. Moreover, while Central Asia has intellectual and research capacity, when three Spotlight Initiative Programmes (one regional and two country-based) are implemented simultaneously in one region, the demand for local expertise on EVAWG with access to official data and government counterparts, is greater than the existing supply. This makes it challenging for RUNOs to deliver planned outputs in a coordinated and sequenced manner.

The national capacity in measuring GBV prevalence and conducting studies remains weak in Central Asia. Under Pillar 5, the Spotlight Regional Programme has brought and engaged internationally recognized expertise and transferred knowledge and skills on carrying out studies on SGBV to national partners. The programme worked with University of Melbourne to adapt the KnowVAWData course to the Central Asian context. Another challenge was to find an appropriate university in the Central Asian countries due to the language barrier as English is not widely spoken in the region. The American University of Central Asia (AUCA) expressed its interest in the initiative. A twinning process between UoM and AUCA turned out to be a very challenging process as it took almost a year to discuss all details and to agree on various issues with all parties.

Selecting a qualified youth-led organization with strong capacity and regional coverage still remains a challenge as the capacity of youth organizations in Central Asia in preventing and responding to GBV is underdeveloped. The Spotlight Regional Programme team provided constant support and mentoring to its implementing partner IDEA Central Asia, which was selected on a competitive basis, to effectively implement the planned youth activities.

Finding qualified experts and CSOs with a strong capacity in Central Asian region posed a considerable challenge. Implementation of the Spotlight Initiative Programme at the regional and country levels created a considerable demand for respective expertise which is scarce in the region. In some instances, the Spotlight Regional Programme had to involve and engage experienced NGOs outside of the region to ensure effective delivery.

Given that the MenEngage concept is a novel notion for the region, it has only been implemented in Kazakhstan (since 2019) and Kyrgyzstan. In other countries, engaging men for challenging harmful gender norms and advocating for gender-transformative policies at all levels is in its early stage. A lack of experts and CSOs experienced in applying the MenEngage platform in Central Asia makes its region-wide promotion difficult.

### **Lessons Learned and New Opportunities**



The Spotlight Regional Programme team was able to adjust and to focus on broader gender equality and gender discrimination issues in the region and to involve a wider spectrum of organizations that now advocate for eliminating VAWG and ending SGBV. Consulting with beneficiaries and involving them significantly helps to design events and to meet their needs and expectations.

Scaling up regional cooperation within the Spotlight Programme for Central Asia and Afghanistan requires an extra effort to ensure that the country offices deliver on their joint commitments.

## **New Opportunities**

Some UN country offices, for example in Turkmenistan, emphasized the importance of the Spotlight Regional Programme as it helped to revitalize gender issues and supported the efforts of UNCT and Gender Theme Group members to advance gender equality and eliminate GBV.

The Spotlight Regional Programme initiated an innovative grants competition “*Knowledge by NGOs for NGOs*” to pool knowledge and experience gained by partnering civil society organizations in the region, and its results and products will be disseminated among CSOs in the region and beyond.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to online/distant or hybrid format meetings, setting new standards for convening meetings, training sessions, and consultations. The experience of 2021 revealed that each event came with its own set of pros and cons. While virtual communication proved adequate to bring together various stakeholders, to share new ideas, and to initiate discussions of emerging challenges and arising opportunities with substantive cost-savings, offline and hybrid formats were used, where feasible, to allow a more interactive engagement of participants and to establish new contacts, expand networking opportunities and forge partnerships.

## **Lessons learned**

Although the capacities of youth organizations in Central Asia in eliminating VAWG and preventing SGBV remain underdeveloped, there is room for improvement. The implementation of the Spotlight Programme at the regional and country levels increased demand for gender expertise in the region and revealed the lack thereof.

A twinning process to introduce the kNOwVAWdata training course in Central Asia turned out to be very challenging in many ways, specifically reaching an agreement on all details required almost a year.

- **Identified Gap: Building Capacity of National Stakeholders**



During the reporting period, through a review of programme implementation, a gap was identified in the project document, which states that the Spotlight Regional Programme will build the capacity of national non-state stakeholders on SGBV action. At the same time, the main group of state actors who are involved in the work on eliminating VAW has been omitted.

The institutional capacity of law-enforcement and social workers is being indirectly built through developing regional SOP models. However, extra learning efforts are required to bring crucial state actors (e.g., representatives of line ministries, local administration) in the region to a common understanding of gender inequality and discrimination as a root cause of violence against women and girls which is shaped by historical and structural power imbalances between women and men that exist in varying degrees across all communities.

Under Pillar 6, an annual workplan, with the budget, envisages specific activities for capacity building of non-state stakeholders as part of the reinforcement of the CSO network and women's movement. However, the budget does not contain a specifically designated budget line for building capacity of state officials. To address this inconsistency, a series of SGBV training sessions designed for state and non-state key stakeholders in the five Central Asian countries will be conducted in 2022, under the funding of MFA of Kazakhstan for the Spotlight Regional Programme. This knowledge enhancement opportunity will provide in-depth information on gender equality and women's empowerment issues to increase CSOs' understanding of the broader power structures underlying inequalities and to equip them with the knowledge and skills to critically reflect on gender norms, roles and relations.

- **Pillar 6: Strengthening CSOs capacity**

A monitoring mission was conducted in Uzbekistan in November 2021 in an effort to evaluate and assess local challenges in preventing and responding to SGBV, to check, verify and validate supporting documents submitted for the mid-term/final financial and narrative reports, and to build capacity of the Small Grant receivers through the introduction of tools to implement the project activities in a coherent and cohesive manner and in alignment with the Spotlight Regional Programme's priorities and expected deliverables. One of the key findings of the mission was that in order to build CSOs capacity in fundraising and to ensure their institutional sustainability the Spotlight Regional Programme needs to refocus its support on strengthening CSOs institutional capacities, rather than only providing support for developing a partnership network of SG receivers and a national partners network in order to create a conducive environment for forging effective partnerships in the region.



The Spotlight Regional Programme has significantly contributed to building the CSOs institutional capacity. Examples include developing internal standards and a system for evaluation of personnel, micro-purchasing and procurement procedures. An immediate result of the SGs is the existing system for documentation, monitoring, reporting, HR and procurement processes in line with international standards. Thanks to support provided by the Spotlight Regional Programme, CSO “Istiqbol” in Uzbekistan successfully applied for grants offered by a donor organization.

The monitoring mission resulted in the following key lessons learnt, among others:

- Experience needs to be exchanged with other grantees both in the country and in the region. Grantees need to present and exchange successful practices and initiatives and to incorporate them in their work. A regional session should be organized with the participation of the Spotlight Regional Programme, the Trust Fund grantees and CSOs from the region focusing on EVAWG to share their experiences and coordinate their activities. This is especially important to ensure standards are aligned and procedures synchronized between the Spotlight Regional Programme Small Grants administration and the UN Trust Fund Small Grants Administration at both country and regional levels;
- Small Grants development should clearly state in the Call for Proposals how this will contribute to better service delivery and development of CSO expertise through the implementation of social projects. This would help to avoid any confusion between a Small Grant and an institutional grant;
- While flexible and easily accessible and free from excessive bureaucracy, the SGBV procedures do not elaborate on the financial, procurement and human resources processes that grantees should utilize throughout the implementation of their project activities. Therefore, either an additional annex (attached to a contract), or a separate guide outlining the procedures need to be created to strengthen and ensure greater accountability. Moreover, the grantees need to undergo supplementary training that will cover the processes outlined above, along with financial issues and monitoring/reporting process;
- Engage other regional SGBV-focused CSO networks (e.g., the European Women’s Lobby, GBV Prevention Network from the Eastern, Southern and Horn of Africa) in sharing their experiences, success stories, challenges and lessons learned with the Central Asian practitioners through a virtual regional workshop;



- Whilst virtual and hybrid options are offered, in-person events remain a preferred model. Participants do not feel as eager to intervene in a virtual workshop as in a face-to-face gathering, given that in some instances poor internet connectivity and varied IT literacy in Central Asia countries makes the interactions and follow up processes challenging;
- The lack of experts and qualified companies (i.e., research institutions) capable of conducting regional primary research has led to several unsuccessful announcements and delays in the implementation process;
- A functional regional coordination mechanism should be further strengthened;
- Given the scarce resources available and the absence of existing regional mechanisms on SGBV that could be enhanced and used as a starting point, establishing an Alliance for Central Asia has remained problematic. To ensure a multisectoral approach, ownership and sustainability, broad regional consultations on the Alliance will be further conducted to ensure collective commitments on EVAWG and ending SGBV in the region.

## **Innovative, Promising or Good Practices**

### **Applying innovative approaches**

During the reporting period, the Spotlight Regional Programme has been exploring new ways and opportunities to provide more tangible benefits that could motivate stakeholders and beneficiaries to innovate for collaborating and capitalizing on existing successful innovative interventions and initiatives in the Central Asian region. Introducing new innovative approaches may require time to realize in practice, to institutionalize and to sustain beyond the Spotlight Initiative Programme.

The Spotlight Regional Programme utilized the processes to find innovative solutions to engage CSOs as partners for ending SGBV. Under Pillar 6, the programme organized the Ideathon, a brainstorming event requiring participants to take an active role during a session by suggesting solutions to a defined challenge. The barriers hampering effective engagement of civil society in the region were discussed and innovative solutions were suggested by the participants as well as those elaborated as part of the Strategic Approach, for example, recommendations to explore innovative type of partnerships and financing models, such as partnerships with the private sector, the media and multilateral development banks, as the largest institutional investors in the region, and financing models involving a diversification of funding models to ensure long-term sustainability of the CSO-





led SGBV response, for instance, through crowdfunding, mobile funding, corporate fundraising and other innovative community-based financing models.

Applying of an innovative MenEngage platform was successfully implemented in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and is now being expanded to other Central Asian countries. Another novelty is introducing the kNOwVAWdata online training course in the region. Under Pillar 5, the Spotlight Regional Programme is partnering with the University of Melbourne, Australia, to adapt the training course to the context of Central Asia and to introduce key concepts related to measuring violence against women, teaching how to use various tools to generate reliable comparable data and to undertake a national prevalence study. Serving as a global product for practitioners worldwide, the course provides opportunities for distance learning and building the capacity of national partners (e.g., statisticians, researchers) in Central Asia.

Internally, a team discussion was initiated on the types of violence against women to be covered under the Spotlight Regional Programme. Based on the extensive consultations and discussions held with the programme team and experts, a proposal was made to expand a list of types of VAW to be considered and reviewed within Pillar 1 on legislative review and Pillar 5 on closing the data gaps in order to strengthen the innovative programme approaches and to make them more relevant to the Central Asian region.

For the first time in Central Asia, the theme of disabilities was integrated into the regional SOPs and training package. These were reviewed by Women Enabled International, which included the provision of health and social support to persons with disabilities who are SGBV victims.

While new channels and communication methods have recently multiplied ensuring global informational connectivity, the Spotlight Regional Programme applied new technological innovations in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, using a hybrid format for convening people. Within the youth component of the Spotlight Regional Programme, a Regional Youth Forum was hosted during 18-20 November 2021 in Almaty, Kazakhstan, bringing together representatives of youth organizations from five Central Asian countries via a fusion of online and offline modes to empower youth to change gender norms and stereotypes. The forum had more extensive coverage with a wide range of stakeholders and expanded participation. While serving as a platform for learning and sharing of best practices and strategies for preventing GBV, it has also helped to create an informal alliance of youth organizations in the region. The forum included practical exercises and sessions based on the regional strategic documents, such as context analysis, advocacy strategic and communication plans. These were specifically designed for this forum and, in general, for further



use by youth organizations or movements to combat GBV and harmful practices in their communities.

An innovative grants competition entitled “Knowledge Created by NGOs for NGOs” aimed to identify NGOs with experience in working with victims of violence and in arranging peer-to-peer knowledge transfer to interested NGOs. Ten NGOs were selected as competition winners out of 30 applications, and grants were disbursed to nine organizations. A geographic distribution of winners represented four of five Central Asian countries. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan received three grants each, and Uzbekistan – one grant. However, the grant to Uzbekistan was put on hold owing to local financial regulations for NGO operations.

For NGOs from Turkmenistan grants tied to foreign currency are a problem due to restrictions on all currency exchanges. Hence, the Spotlight Regional Programme offers other means to support NGO capacity development needs in Turkmenistan. Applications offer a mix of advocacy, educational, direct support and capacity building experience.

Each successful application had its defined target group, including rural/urban women in difficult life situations, women in need of specialized social services, legal advice and other related services, youth and students, local or rural communities. All submissions described a variety of channels and means for the delivery of services, activities, and advocacy information, including through printed materials, social media, TV, radio, and IT solutions.

- **Harmful practices**

Initially, the Spotlight Regional Programme team and experts did not plan to consider religious marriages as part the of the SGBV legal review in Central Asia since the five countries are secular and do not operate under multiple legal systems. However, such a harmful practice as early marriage is directly linked to the wide-spread practice of religious marriages in the region.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) General Recommendation No. 35<sup>9</sup> on gender-based violence reiterates that at the legislative level, according to article 2 (b), (c), (e), (f) and (g) and article 5 (a), States are required to adopt legislation prohibiting all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls, harmonizing domestic law with the Convention. This legislation should consider women victims/survivors as right holders and include

---

<sup>9</sup> General recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19 [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/1\\_Global/CEDAW\\_C\\_GC\\_35\\_8267\\_E.pdf](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/1_Global/CEDAW_C_GC_35_8267_E.pdf)





age and gender-sensitive provisions and effective legal protection, including sanctions and reparation in cases of such violence.

The CEDAW also requires the harmonization of any existing religious, customary, indigenous and community justice system norms with its standards, as well as the repeal of all laws that constitute discrimination against women, including those which cause, promote or justify gender-based violence or perpetuate impunity for these acts. Such norms may be part of statutory, customary, religious, indigenous or common law, constitutional, civil, family, criminal or administrative law, evidentiary and procedural law, such as provisions based on discriminatory or stereotypical attitudes, or practices that allow for GBV against women and girls, or mitigate sentences in this context.

Hence, a proposal was put forward to include this harmful practice in the legal review document. Religious marriages are covered under Pillar 1 through a gap analysis on existing legal provisions officially prohibiting religious marriages without official state registration. Recommendations were formulated that where necessary a provision be introduced in the national law prohibiting such discriminatory practices and making them illegal.

Such unregulated practices can lead to multiple marriages, early marriages, marriages with minors, among others, and suppress women's rights, contributing to gender discrimination and their vulnerable position in society. The current situation in some Central Asia countries, whereby religious marriages are neither officially recognized, nor officially prohibited, provides a loophole for such harmful practices to flourish in certain marginalized communities, based on the principle that what is not prohibited by the law is permitted. Even though religious marriages are not officially recognized by the law, they need to be regulated in the legislation. Hence, a proposal was made to develop a recommendation pertaining to the CEDAW Article 5<sup>10</sup> to introduce an amendment to the civil law requiring clerics to obtain an official marriage certificate registration prior to conducting religious practices.

- **Digital Violence**

Through the coherence discussions organized by the Spotlight Regional Programme team, digital violence, as a type of violence, was included into the regional programme, although it was not initially envisaged in a programme document since the standard definition of VAW was taken from the CEDAW, which was invoked in 1979 to eliminate violence against women and girls, in general.

---

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cedaw.aspx>



However, digital violence is an increasing concern in modern society and needs to be regulated to ensure safe spaces for women and girls in public, private spaces, including online. Since digital violence is not explicitly covered in the CEDAW, consequently, it is not reflected in the national SGBV legislation in the Central Asian countries. Hence, it seems expedient to recommend to states to pay attention to ensuring safe spaces for women and girls, including cyberspace.

The Spotlight Regional Programme utilized the process of co-creating solutions to engage CSOs as partners in ending SGBV. Under Pillar 6, the programme organized the Ideathon, a brainstorming event requiring participants to take an active role during a session by suggesting solutions to a defined challenge. Barriers hampering effective engagement of civil society in the region were discussed and participants proposed innovative solutions as well as those elaborated as part of the Strategic Approach, e.g., recommendations to explore innovative type of partnerships and financing models. These include partnerships with the private sector, media, and multilateral development banks, as the largest institutional investors in the region, to consider a diversification of funding models to ensure long-term sustainability of the CSO-led SGBV response, such as through crowdfunding, mobile funding, corporate fundraising, and other innovative community-based financing models.

- **Addressing gender-based violence through education, collaborative thinking and use of digital technologies**

The Spotlight Regional Programme for Central Asia and Afghanistan stresses the importance of the increased use of Information Communication Technologies (ICT) to prevent the spread of violence against women and capitalizes on its experience in launching hackathons, which are becoming powerful drivers for change and generating solutions that contribute to more egalitarian societies. While capitalizing on its accomplishments achieved in this area in 2021, the Spotlight Regional Programme will host the first regional Spotlight Digital Challenge under Pillar 5 on closing the data gaps on SGBV to focus, among other priorities, on overcoming the gaps in VAWG data and exploring innovative ways of data collection and data visualization, highlighting the existing gaps and needs to educate, protect, and provide support for victims and survivors of violence. Partnering experts in EVAWG will join various sessions on the personal, societal and economic impact of violence and acute problems in prevention, response and collecting data on GBV, and serve as facilitators/mentors for the participants and, finally, as the Jury of the Spotlight Digital Challenge.

- **Building or strengthening partnerships**



## **Inter-agency cooperation**

During the reporting period, cooperation among the three RUNOs increased in many ways: in planning, designing, and implementing of activities. The Spotlight Regional Programme continued to heighten its collaboration and engagement with UNICEF and UNHCR, by agreeing on a number of joint strategic actions that leverage these agencies' strengths and expertise. As a follow-up to the Regional Director's meeting held earlier last year, the first meeting of the Spotlight Regional Programme RUNO's regional technical leads was organized in September 2021 with the participation of focal points from UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women and UNICEF Regional Offices and the RCO Team Leader in Afghanistan.

## **Regional communication:**

To ensure a participatory approach, a more fluid communication mechanism was established with all six countries, particularly with the UN RCO in Turkmenistan and UNCTs, which greatly contributed to the Spotlight Regional Programme.

A partnership has been established with the newly formed regional 'NeMolchiAsia' (Don't be silent) Coalition on ending SGBV which expressed its willingness to support the Central Asia Alliance on EVAWG and ending SGBV.

The OSCE Secretariat expressed its interest in supporting the Alliance and contributing through its own collaborative project on combating GBV in the Central Asian region.

## **Interregional cooperation and interregional partnership**

An informal network, the Alliance of youth organizations for preventing GBV and changing negative social norms and gender stereotypes, was established and will serve as part of the regional alliance on GBV.

A partnership with University of Melbourne and American University of Central Asia was strengthened to adapt and translate the kNOwVAWdata training course into Russian and deliver it to national partners from the five Central Asian countries. This partnership also contributes to knowledge-sharing with the Asia and Pacific region.





The Spotlight Regional Programme worked closely and coordinated activities with the UN country offices in the Central Asian countries and regional advisors, thereby strengthening exchange of experiences between the Central Asian and Eastern European countries.

The only regional platform specifically focusing on addressing SGBV across Central Asia is the movement NeMolchi (Don't Keep Silent), which was established in 2018 upon signing the Memorandum of Understanding between the NeMolchi movements in the four Central Asian countries. In 2021, the #Ne MolchiAsia Coalition was established with over 300 members led by the NeMolchi.kz movement, which is the Spotlight Regional Programme partner and a recipient of a Small Grant.

▪ **Resource Mobilization: Voluntary Contribution to the Spotlight Regional Programme by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan**

In June 2021, a regional consultation for Central Asia and Afghanistan was organized as part of preparatory work for the Generation Equality Forum (GEF) held on 30 June – 2 July 2021 in Paris. Seventeen leaders joined the GEF Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence (AC on GBV) as of 19 April 2021. Members include the European Commission representing international organizations and UN Women and WHO representing UN Agencies.

From the Central Asia region, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan registered as commitment-makers under the GEF AC on GBV. The participation of Central Asia in the Spotlight Regional Programme helped create a solid foundation for the robust regional movement, which contributes to the fulfilment of targets pursued by the GEF and encourages other member States and partners to join these game-changing forces.

The main purpose of the regional consultation was to discuss how the Spotlight Regional Programme for Central Asia and Afghanistan could support the regional mobilization and movement for transformative change for the elimination of violence against women and girls, and how partners could make national commitments to contribute to the enforcement of targets and actions designed by the Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence. To that end, a new partnership has been established with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, one of the commitment-makers to the GEF AC on GBV from Central Asia.

In his statement at the GEF, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev announced Kazakhstan's joining the Action Coalitions on GBV and Economic Justice and Rights, respectively, and initiated the creation a Central Asian Regional Knowledge Platform for sharing state-of-the-art violence



prevention, response expertise and women's empowerment collaborative programmes. He confirmed his resolute commitment to the noble cause of advancing gender equality, women's safety and empowerment, as well as Kazakhstan's readiness to make financial contributions to the Spotlight Initiative Regional Programme for Central Asia and Afghanistan.

Through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Government of Kazakhstan has made a contribution to the Spotlight Regional Programme to build the capacity of the regional CSOs and to support the implementation of Pillar 6 activities to further engage CSOs, with a special focus on responding to SGBV in the context of COVID-19 and beyond.

- **Promoting Visibility and Cooperation in the Region**

During the reporting period, a number of public campaigns and events were organized in cooperation with UNHCR in Kazakhstan, with the participation of representatives from crisis centres and shelters, NGOs service-providers, human rights defenders, bloggers and the media to raise public awareness of VAWG, and to establish broader partnerships in the Central Asia region for further exchange of experiences and best practices. The Spotlight Regional Programme used the global 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign as an opportunity to raise general public awareness of VAWG and to engage with new audiences in the region.

The Spotlight Regional Programme established a partnership with a prominent regional celebrity and public activist, Manizha Sangin, UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador, who established a public foundation named "SiSila" to assist the survivors of domestic violence and migrant women from Central Asia. As part of the foundation's promotion, Manizha was invited to Kazakhstan to exchange experiences with local women's initiatives and activists from the region.

- **Regional Cooperation: Spotlight Initiative Regional Programme RUNO's Regional Technical Leads Meeting**

As a follow up to the Regional Director's meeting held earlier last year, the first meeting of the RUNOs' regional technical leads was organized in September 2021 with the participation of focal points from UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women Regional Offices and UN RCO Team Leader in Afghanistan. The key objective of the regional meeting was to identify critical areas where the RUNOs Regional Offices' technical inputs and engagement could leverage, or complement, the Spotlight Regional Programme initiatives and expected deliverables. The team reported on the progress of the regional programme implementation and RUNOs' Technical Leads presented their ongoing EVAWG programmes/projects at the regional level. Based on the discussions, a matrix





was produced with the Regional Offices' ongoing EVAWG initiatives and their potential complementarities with the Spotlight Regional Programme. It was agreed to conduct these meetings on a quarterly basis to regularly follow up on the programme progress, to identify problems in timely fashion, to adjust areas for the contributions of the RUNOs Regional Offices, and to support effective programme implementation.

During the reporting period, under Pillar 6, three representatives of CSOs in Afghanistan were actively engaged in a Virtual Regional Workshop “Convening a Civil Society Network for Central Asia and Afghanistan to End SGBV” held on 31 May - 3 June and in an Ideathon organized on 30 June. They also participated in the meetings of the Small Working Groups to develop a Regional Network Roadmap.

Another type of engagement consisted of individual interviews with the international consultants:

- Our partners in Afghanistan provided their views about civil society in the country, on the role of their organizations in eliminating violence against women and girls, the main challenges encountered and accomplishments, membership in networks, and experience in cooperation with other organizations at both country and regional levels. Their feedbacks were included in the analytical overview of the CSO collaboration on SGBV led by an international consultant;
- Another international consultant conducted interviews with the EU Delegation to Afghanistan and OSCE Senior Engagement Support Adviser in Afghanistan on the Spotlight Regional Programme implementing organizations and CSOs in Afghanistan. Their inputs were integrated in the Strategy for engagement with CSOs.

The Afghanistan Spotlight Country Programme team has been very supportive and actively engaged in initial national consultations on the institutionalization of the Central Asia Alliance to end all forms of sexual and gender-based violence. On 16 June 2021, the three RUNOs, UNICEF and RCO attended the consultation, which followed by receiving consolidated feedback from the Afghanistan Spotlight Country Programme team in July 2021 on draft Concept Note for the Central Asia Alliance. From their perspective, a regional dialogue would be mutually beneficial and the real added value of the Alliance is in bringing stakeholders together, sharing information and lessons learned, and supporting joint advocacy, given the differences in the laws, policies, access, and language, among other factors.



Hence, vibrant Central Asia Alliance could create harmonized advocacy campaigns and social media platforms to raise awareness and offer learning opportunities to bring women together on key issues and create a network that will underpin support from the three RUNOs within their country programmes to further women's rights in the region. The regional Alliance could also provide support to conduct mapping of existing models, good practices, and promising GBV strategies for effective prevention and response.

While Afghanistan's context remains distinct from Central Asia, a shared ethnic and cultural heritage, as well as increasing avenues for CSO partnerships bridging the Afghanistan - Central Asia borders will be capitalized upon. The Spotlight Regional Programme will further stand ready to engage with partners in Afghanistan for sharing of experiences, best practices, and knowledge management.

### **Good practices**

Strong coordination and complementarity among the three implementing RUNOs ensured cohesion and consistency between the Spotlight Regional Programme activities implemented by RUNOs under different pillars.

The youth component of the Spotlight Regional Programme is implemented by youth-led organizations, which better understand the needs, aspirations, and interests of youth, and help to effectively mobilize youth organizations from all Central Asian countries.

Implemented in Kazakhstan (since 2019) and Kyrgyzstan, the innovative MenEngage concept is a novelty for the region and the notion has evoked interest in the platform.

In some instances, the offline format proved to be more effective, compared to online mode, as it allowed to expand the network of partners and beneficiaries.

### **Communications and Visibility**

Communications and visibility activities were mainly focused on comms support of RUNOs' activities and events, developing internal communications and capacity-building, building partner/donor relations, developing capacity building of grantees, and supporting 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign.





The EU Delegation to Kazakhstan was invited to all events and requested to make a welcoming speech. The carried out joint activities, including training sessions, discussions, workshops, steering committee meeting, were covered in the mass media and RUNOs' social media accounts and websites.

### ***Internal communications***

The SOPs on external communications and a newsletter were finalized and introduced in May 2021 to ensure a comprehensive and well-designed communications strategy that complies with the UN and the Spotlight Initiative requirements and procedures. In addition, Communications Officers conducted training on the Spotlight Initiative branding requirements for the team and grantees, and storytelling training for the grantees.

Three newsletters were released in 2021 to achieve the Spotlight Regional Programme's Objective 4 focusing on a wide dissemination of best practices among countries, donors and partners, and its recipients included the EU Delegations in the region, UN RCOs, Heads of RUNOs and Regional RUNO Offices, the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat, regional programme team, and two national programmes teams in the region, GTGs in the region, and CS-RRG members (making over 200 emails in total).

### ***External communications***

Thirty-eight articles and stories covering, or mentioning, the Spotlight Initiative activities in the region were published by 27 media outlets and websites across, at least, six countries. A total of 19 (51 percent) of media stories directly acknowledged the EU's role in the Spotlight Initiative, including 4 hits (11percent) which captured the Spotlight Initiative investments, both regionally and locally.

The Spotlight Initiative was promoted on both the social media channels (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube) and websites of the EU Delegations to the Central Asian countries, UNCTs in the Central Asian countries, RUNOs in Kazakhstan, UN Women Central Asia, NeMolchi (DontBeSilent) movement, IDEA youth organization, and Wonder Women organization as well as thematic Facebook groups (e.g., NGOs, human rights, mass media), and on grantees' pages. In 2021, 283 posts were published reaching, at least, 3.7 million views (organic) and 296,000 engagements (organic). The total number of the followers/readers of all involved channels exceeded 151,000 - 75 percent of the audience were female, while 25 percent were male.





*Output Indicator 3.3.1:* Number of news outlets that develop standards on ethical and gender-sensitive reporting – 5.

*Output Indicator 3.2.2:* Number of people reached by campaigns challenging harmful social norms and gender stereotyping - 3.7 million.

*Output Indicator 3.2.5:* Number of campaigns challenging harmful social norms and gender stereotyping, including women and girls facing intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination, developed and disseminated – 1.

Other indicators are not available, due to the early stage of the project. No public opinion surveys and marketing research have been conducted as yet.

### **a) Messages**

- The Spotlight Initiative is a global, multi-year partnership between the EU and UN to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls by 2030.
- The Spotlight Initiative is responding to all forms of violence against women and girls, with a particular focus on domestic and family violence, sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices, femicide, trafficking in human beings and sexual and economic (labour) exploitation.
- The Spotlight Initiative is addressing legislative and policy gaps, strengthening institutions, promoting gender-equitable attitudes, and providing quality services for survivors.

The messages targeted mass media and wider audiences. The messages had a clear structure, focusing on: (i) an innovative project by two high-profile globally known organizations; (ii) partnerships with the governments and NGOs; and (iii) pressing issues addressed by the Spotlight Regional Programme. The messages were widely covered in the media.

### **b) Media and visibility events**

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, most of the events were conducted online, or in a hybrid format.



The Small Grants component was launched online on 5 May 2021. Fifteen representatives of grant recipient organizations from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan presented their activities and upcoming events. This event launched the Small Grants provision and outputs of the first Call for Proposals, in particular. The event brought together ninety-five representatives, including from the EU Delegation, government institutions, international organizations, and mass media.

A virtual regional consultation "Building Game-Changing Commitments and Mobilizing Partners" was held on 21 June. Over one hundred representatives of civil society and government agencies identified key areas of cooperation and commitments to achieve the goals of the Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence.

The Tajikistan-born singer Manizha [Sangin], the Eurovision finalist and UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador, visited Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan on 8-9 December 2021 to exchange experience with local women's initiatives and present her Foundation which assists domestic violence survivors. On 9 December, the UN Resident Coordinator in Kazakhstan attended a press conference to raise awareness about violence against women and girls in Central Asia. The event was widely covered in social media platforms.

### **c) Campaigns**

The annual 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign is the culmination of an effort to analyze, report and highlight major interventions of women activists and grassroots NGOs in combatting GBV. The following activities were conducted throughout the campaign:

- Ahead of the campaign, the Spotlight Regional Programme jointly with IDEA Central Asia convened a Regional Youth Forum, with a supporting communication campaign – 12 posts and 3 videos were published on social media, reaching 14,283 views and 1,727 engagements (all are organic). Participants were also encouraged to broadcast and post on their social media using the Spotlight Initiative's official hashtags;
- The Spotlight Regional Programme and Wonder Women organization created 135 posts/stories and 5 videos, reaching 16,549 views and 1,384 engagements. On 9 December, a conference on "Gender discrimination in the labour market" brought together 50 participants and turned the spotlight on the newsbreak and measures taken in the private sector in the Central Asian countries to eliminate violence against women.



In addition, 30 cards for social media were created and shared with RUNOs, 8 of them were shared with the Tajikistan Spotlight Country Programme. Cards contained quotes from the statements made by the EU Delegation representatives, UN RCs, high-level UN representatives, and Ambassadors, including statistics and definitions.

d) **Human interest stories:**

*Stories were written in Russian. A headline and a lead were translated. All MSWord and PDF-published versions are available here:*

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1sr34Fp\\_71L74gNmPh5UoptLqE3PvZeWF?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1sr34Fp_71L74gNmPh5UoptLqE3PvZeWF?usp=sharing)

**1. Youth organizations from Central Asia form an informal alliance to combat sexual and gender-based violence**

The Regional Forum for representatives of youth organizations brought together 38 participants from five countries of Central Asia to Almaty. For Fotima Shamsuddinova, chairman of the “Youth with Disabilities “Noil” public organization from Tajikistan, this was the first event she participated in and exchanged experiences with youth organizations from the region.

**2. Empowered woman rediscovers hope for a better life for herself and her son**

Late in the evening, a young woman came into the Jizzakh Regional Centre for Social and Legal Support for Women and Families with a six-year-old child. The woman looked tired and exhausted. The head of the Centre, Nodira Alimova, invited the woman to tell what had happened to her.

**3. An Uzbek grassroots organization found partners at the Youth Forum**

A large group of the representatives of youth organizations of Central Asia visited Almaty, Kazakhstan, to learn and share best practices and experiences in combating GBV. Nigina Khudaibergenova from Uzbekistan continued to volunteer at the Downside Sport Informational project for five years. She is very enthusiastic about networking and acquiring knowledge on communication strategies.

**4. A domestic violence survivor is ready to leave her husband**

Nodira has been married for nine years, but almost from the outset of her family life her husband abused her psychologically and physically. For many years, she could not decide on a divorce, as she was under intense pressure from relatives, although even her young children asked her to leave her abuser-husband.



## 5. Parental support means the world to a sexually assaulted woman

Dana (name has been changed), a petite and beautiful woman, came to the Doktor S.N. Public Foundation's office. Her large eyes were full of bitterness and fear. "I don't want to live" were her first words.

### e) *Testimonials:*

#### **Kazakhstan President Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev:**

Over 30 years of independence, Kazakhstan has implemented progressive women-oriented policies. We established a robust legal framework, notably the Concept of Family and Gender Policy until 2030. Last month, I signed a Decree on Further Human Rights Measures, with gender equality as one of its major focus areas. Kazakhstan also promotes gender issues as a foreign policy priority in the regional dimension. Kazakhstan is ready to financially contribute to the UN and EU-led Spotlight Initiative Regional Programme for Central Asia and Afghanistan.

#### **Ms. Michaela Friberg-Storey, UN Resident Coordinator in the Republic of Kazakhstan:**

The Spotlight Initiative Regional Programme was officially launched on 8 December 2020. Since then, the Programme, with support of the EU, has made important steps towards ending violence against women and girls in the region. For example, the Regional Programme launched a situation analysis of gender-based violence, reviewed the existing Standard Operating Procedures in health, psychosocial and justice sectors for SGBV case referral and case management response in the Central Asian countries, and collated best practices available in the region to design regional model SOPs to respond to GBV in Central Asia.

The Regional Programme analyzed the best practices in police response to GBV in the region and promoted knowledge exchange programmes for the representatives of law enforcement sectors. Furthermore, the Spotlight Regional Programme awarded 15 grassroots organizations from Central Asia with small grants. Besides the key partnership with the European Union, the Regional Programme developed and strengthened its partnerships with the Governments of the Central Asian countries, national women's mechanisms, Parliaments, civil society, and the wider Spotlight Initiative global network.

#### **Ambassador Sven-Olov Carlsson, Head of the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan:**

The Spotlight Initiative in Central Asia and Afghanistan aims at changing the root causes of SGBV and harmful practices, following a multisectoral, comprehensive approach, evidence-based and survivors' centred with particular attention to the most vulnerable and marginalized. Every woman and girl should be able to realize her full potential in a violence-free, gender-responsive and inclusive





environment. This will, however, require existing national legislation to be transformed so that implementation is comprehensive and meaningful in preventing and protecting against SGBV and harmful practices.

The success of the Spotlight Initiative in Central Asia depends on sound coordination among actors at all levels through active engagement, dialogue, and knowledge sharing. We need the government, civil society, and the local authorities to be in the driving seat.

**Mr. Johannes Stenbaek Madsen, Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan:**

Violence against women and girls is one of the greatest injustices of our time, which touches all countries, cultures, communities, and families. It is one of the greatest barriers to achieving sustainable development for all. This is why we put a spotlight on this scourge and help women and girls to step out into the light. And this is one of the reasons why the EU has teamed up with the UN to fight against the most prevalent forms of violence against women and girls.

The Spotlight Initiative strives to create an inclusive environment where there is zero-tolerance for sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices and where each woman and girl enjoys equal rights and equal opportunities. I believe this programme will serve as a platform for learning, for sharing of best and successful cross-country practices in combating gender-based violence with the aim of devising novel effective mechanisms in this area.

**Mr. Vitalie Vremis, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative in Kazakhstan:**

UN Agencies are committed to fighting gender-based violence with the Spotlight Initiative being one of the most important examples that is implemented in 26 countries. The COVID-19 crisis forced us to look for innovative ways to fight gender-based violence and the Spotlight Initiative Regional Programme for Central Asia and Afghanistan presents a multilayered approach to do it.

**Ms. Orzu Ganieva (Tajikistan), representative of the Spotlight Initiative Civil Society Regional Reference Group:**

The Spotlight Initiative mobilizes the countries of Central Asia in partnership with Afghanistan, aims to create a common platform for responding to cases of sexual and gender-based violence. We hope that, with support of the Spotlight Initiative's Civil Society Regional Reference Group, the measures to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence will be secure and doable.

**Ms. Aida Tynychbekova, Project Coordinator at IDEA Central Asia:**

IDEA Central Asia has been cooperating with the Spotlight Initiative Regional Programme for Central Asia and Afghanistan since July 2021. Working with the Spotlight Initiative is a great



pleasure. Our partner always supports, helps, and guides us to achieve the project results. We enjoy our consultations, meetings, and cooperation within this project.

**f) Photos:**



Launch of a Study Tour on prevention and response to sexual and domestic violence for representatives of the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic  
*(photo credit: UNDP Kazakhstan)*



Participants of the Youth Forum from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan  
*(photo credit: UNFPA Kazakhstan)*



Press conference with Manizha [Sangin], the Tajikistan-born singer and the UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador  
*(photo credit: Spotlight Regional Programme for Central Asia and Afghanistan)*

**g) Videos:**

- Small Grants Launch Event <https://youtu.be/QqY20LmyUo>
- Youth Forum - <https://youtu.be/FihcVtBU4cw>; [https://youtu.be/Ek\\_3RVWjKx8](https://youtu.be/Ek_3RVWjKx8); <https://youtu.be/rExclIPLQpA>
- Press conference of Manizha [Sangin], the Tajikistan-born singer and the UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador - <https://fb.watch/9P3ZMOqLxz>
- Conference on “Gender discrimination in the labour market” - <https://youtu.be/Jidbkye-srs>



## **Next Steps**

The Spotlight Regional Programme will capitalize on the lessons learned, results, and accomplishment achieved in 2021 to effectively deliver the collaborative commitments as follows:

### **Pillar 1:**

National reviews will inform the gap analysis of the regional particularities, designing a strategy and formulating clear-cut recommendations on how to strengthen the scope and application of SGBV legislation, harmonizing it with international norms and standards and recommending actions for criminalizing SGBV in the region.

The methodology, final report, and recommendations will be presented at the regional expert meeting. The legal review results and recommendations will be visualized in the user-friendly manner and promoted among stakeholders and via mass and social media to foster progress towards legislative transformation and state-driven prevention and response to SGBV and protection from harmful practices.

### **Pillar 2:**

The Spotlight Regional Programme will consult with national government agencies on the establishment of the Central Asia Alliance is institutional set-up and appropriate modus operandi. National and regional discussions with various stakeholders including CSOs, OSCE, researchers and academia are planned to ensure a participatory approach for finalizing a Concept Note on establishing the Alliance and ensuring its effective operationalization, sustainability, and ownership.

The Alliance will be strengthened by the informal regional youth alliance on GBV, a regional network of police and judges on SGBV, and a regional CSOs network established within the Spotlight Regional Programme.

Kazakhstan may convene the Alliance Launching Conference in 2022 where the Alliance participating countries could agree on hosting annual conferences on a rotational basis, which will support the institutionalization of the Alliance.

Based on the initial consultations with the Kyrgyzstan Spotlight Country Programme team and UN Women Regional Office, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan were selected for a case study to analyze selected sectoral or departmental plans and budgets in response to SGBV. It will also capture the extent to which COVID-19 has been influencing the government response to SGBV. The Spotlight



Regional Programme plans to conduct consultations with stakeholders and partners, including CSOs, national women's machineries to inform the analysis and validate findings.

A guidance with recommendations on building up monitoring systems with indicators for subsequent use by key actors among government agencies, CSOs, international organizations and expert communities in Central Asia, and recommendations for further promotion of GRB will be developed.

A virtual knowledge platform will be designed and launched in 2022. The Spotlight Regional Programme plans to explore and define an effective approach to ensure the platforms' ownership, maintenance, and sustainability.

The Spotlight Regional Programme team will organize a regional forum to introduce regional model SOPs, the training package, and mapping of statistical sources on GBV for participants from the Central Asian countries and build the capacity of national partners in various aspects of GBV prevention and response.

A regional youth alliance on GBV will be further strengthened, including improving its communications approaches, to involve more youth in preventing and responding to GBV.

### **Pillar 3:**

The Spotlight Regional Programme will undertake the following activities:

- Closely work with CSOs from the region to expand the *#Don't Be Silent* movement in Kazakhstan to support SGBV survivors, speaking out and breaking through the stigma associated with SGBV;
- Continue its support for applying the *MenEngage* platform, as well as developing a respective strategy and communication plan for the Central Asian countries to provide a collective voice for the region on the need to challenge harmful gender norms and advocate for gender-transformative policies at all levels;
- Develop and implement *HeForShe* regional advocacy campaign to challenge toxic masculinities, which will lay out phases of engagement, starting with a strong launch phase, building to a progressive increase of intensity momentum towards the end, including incentives for users to remain engaged. The campaign's creative concept will be used to fully develop: 1) a visual identity; and 2) an articulated media and social media content taking into account the media and social media market in the region. A set of concrete tools, via mass and social media content and engagement, will be utilized. Visibility of the campaign will be achieved through engaging the mass and social media actors in the regional advocacy campaign. The *HeForShe* regional advocacy campaign will be used as a toolkit





for discussions on identifying lessons learned as part of the regional EVAWG advocacy campaign.

### **Pillar 5:**

- ✓ In an effort to continue closing the data gaps on SGBV, the Spotlight Regional Programme for Central Asia and Afghanistan will host the first regional Spotlight Digital Challenge in April 2022 which, among other priorities, will focus on overcoming the gaps in VAWG data and include a component on innovative ways of data collection and data visualization.

One of the overarching goals of the challenge is to increase awareness of young people that digital technologies have the potential to address GBV, whilst these technologies pose new threats of GBV in cyberspace (IT-facilitated violence). Designed as an educational event for students and recent graduates from the five Central Asian countries, the Spotlight Digital Challenge aims to explore the potential of digital technologies in data collection, prevention, and response to violence.

Specifically, the Spotlight Digital Challenge will:

- Welcome newcomers to the EVAWG community,
- Provide an opportunity for participants to learn about the problem, and
- Provide a space and time for participants to make headway on the VAW problems.

During two days of a Learning Bootcamp preceding the “IT vs Violence” Digital Challenge, participants will learn about the divides and inequalities sustained through gender-biased social norms and practices. Experts in EVAWG who are cooperating with the Spotlight Regional Programme will join for a talk on the personal, societal and economic impact of violence and acute problems in prevention, response and collecting data on GBV, and highlight existing gaps and needs they face in their work to educate, protect and provide support for victims and survivors of violence. The experts will also serve as facilitators and mentors for the participants and the Jury of the Spotlight Digital Challenge.

- ✓ Two multi-country studies are planned during the upcoming reporting period. Men’s perception of violence against women and girls will use the following as a reference, the Toolkit for Replicating the UN Multi-country Study on Men and Violence: Understanding Why Some Men Use Violence against Women and How We Can Prevent It, developed by UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women and UN Volunteers regional joint programme, Partners for Prevention. It will be customized where necessary to the regional and national contexts, following the recommendation on adaptation.



This research is planned for the first time ever in Central Asia, and its results will be used as knowledge to inform evidence-based policies and programmes, including programmes on men’s engagement, to prevent violence against women, as well as adopting and developing regional context research tools for further use in the investigation of violence against women and masculinities. It was suggested to form a Steering Committee to consult and receive feedback on the research. The Steering Committee could include representatives from the Spotlight Regional Programme team, Spotlight Country Programme teams, Civil Society Regional Reference Group, UN Country Teams, and other stakeholders from the five Central Asian countries to the extent possible.

The multi-country research will be based on quantitative and qualitative approaches to identify the existing data gaps on intersectionality and SGBV in Central Asia, and how intersecting forms of discrimination impact vulnerability to SGBV and access to services, support and justice. The research findings will be further validated at a regional workshop, promoted and disseminated among stakeholders.

Both studies will introduce the adopted, developed, and piloted regional context oriented research tools, which could be leveraged in the future to compare results and define national and regional trends, and further used in the investigation of violence against women, from the perspectives of masculinities and intersectionality, respectively.

- ✓ The Russian version of the kNOwVAWdata online training course will be launched in April-May, in partnership with the University of Melbourne and American University of Central Asia in Kyrgyzstan.
- ✓ Religious leaders will be actively engaged and involved in the collaborative regional efforts for prevention and response to GBV. The Spotlight Regional Programme will conduct an analysis and review of existing practices in involvement of religious leaders and convene a regional meeting with participation of religious leaders from all Central Asian countries to sensitize them on EVAWG and ending GBV.

In 2022 and beyond, the Spotlight Regional Programme will further regional cooperation to transform adverse gender social norms, gender-backlash trends and strengthen social contracts in Central Asia and Afghanistan by identifying and addressing challenges of common concern and maintaining the primacy of national solutions, while reflecting country specifics and deploying innovative approaches to foster gender transformation in the region.



## **ANNEXES**

Annex A: Results Framework

Annex B: Risk Matrix

Annex C: CSO Engagement Report

Annex D: Promising or Good Practices Reporting Template

Annex E: Annual Work Plan

Annex F: Spotlight Initiative Regional Programme for Central Asia Alignment with Spotlight Initiative Country Programmes in the Region

