Spotlight Mid-term Assessment Report using ROM review

Type of ROM review	**Projects and Programmes**
Project title	*Spotlight Initiative – Africa's Response to Addressing VAWG, SGBV, HP, SRHR including FGM and Child Marriage*
Project reference	
EU Delegation in charge	EU Delegation to the African Union

Key information	
Domain (instrument)	Region: Africa
DAC Sector	Human and Social Development: « Gender Equality »
Zone Benefitting from the Action	Regional Programme Africa
Type of Project/Programme	Geographic
Geographic Implementation	Multi-country
Contracting Party	SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE
EU contribution	25,620,000 $ (for Phase 1)

Project Implementation Dates (Phase 1)	**Start Date**	17 July 2020	**End Date**	31 December 2022
ROM expert(s) name(s)	Faty Kane (regional expert), Alice Behrendt (regional team leader)			
Data collection period	**Start Date**	1st of May 2022	**End Date**	5th July 2022

Scoring overview: green (good)   orange (problems)   red (serious deficiencies)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Relevance	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟠	🟢

	7	8	9
Effectiveness	🟠	🟢	🟠

	10	11	12
Efficiency	🟢	🟢	🟢

	13
Sustainability	🟢

Persons interviewed and surveyed	Interviews.	Survey
EU Delegation	3	0
AUC	4	0
UN agencies	23	17
CSO reference group	8	3
Implementing partners	9	6
Final Beneficiaries	1	n/a
Other	0	3

Key documents[1]	Number
Essential documents	12
Other documents	35

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[1] Please consult Annex 1 for details on essential documents and other documents.

Purpose and objectives of the Mid-term Assessment (MTA):

The purpose of the MTA is to assess the programme at regional level as soon as it reaches the end of phase I, to take stock of where the Spotlight Initiative is vis-à-vis its initial programme and to assess the new ways of working to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The specific objectives are to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the programme, based on the agreed MTA questions, and to formulate relevant recommendations to improve subsequent project implementation.

As per the Terms of Reference, the MTA uses the EU Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM) methodology as an approach to ensure that the results are comparable (across countries) and easy to interpret. However, the questions to be answered for the MTA are different from standard ROM methodology questions and were agreed in advance by the EU and the Spotlight Secretariat. The 13 MTA questions are grouped by Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability, which form the main headings of the report.

The ROM methodology uses the following criteria for grading the questions:

Table 1.   Grading reference table for criteria and monitoring questions

Qualitative	Grading reference table for criteria and monitoring questions
Good/very good	The situation is considered satisfactory, but there may be room for improvement. Recommendations are useful, but not vital to the project or programme.
Problems identified and small improvements needed	There are issues which need to be addressed, otherwise the global performance of the project or programme may be negatively affected. Necessary improvements do not however require a major revision of the intervention logic and implementation arrangements.
Serious problems identified and major adjustments needed	There are deficiencies which are so serious that, if not addressed, they may lead to failure of the project or programme. Major adjustments and revision of the intervention logic and/or implementation arrangements are necessary.

Context of the Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme (SIARP)

The SIARP is a tripartite agreement between the EU, the UN and the AUC with a continental scope that enhances a regional approach to end Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG), Sexual Gender-Based Violence, and Harmful Practices, as well as strengthening Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). It made the strategic decision to bring onboard the AUC from inception in recognition of and to capitalise on its political convening power.

The regional programme is designed with a continental scope allowing it to extend the impact of the Spotlight Initiative beyond the eight countries that have country programmes (Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Uganda and Zimbabwe). The SIARP strengthens existing regional strategies and initiatives for eliminating violence against women and girls, such as:

- The Africa Union (AU) Gender Strategy 2017-2027,
- Agenda 2030, Agenda 2063,
- the Maputo Plan of Action on the Operationalisation of the Continental Policy Framework for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (2016-2030),

- the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol),
- the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and other regional human rights instruments.

The SIARP was designed in two streams. **Stream 1** supports the overall regional response to addressing Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) while **Stream 2 builds** on the UNICEF-UNFPA joint global programmes on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Child Marriage and contributes to the regional response towards the prevention of these two harmful traditional practices. The work under both streams focuses on three of the six pillars of the Spotlight Initiative: **Pillar 1** (Legislation and Policies), **Pillar 5** (Quality and Reliable Data) and **Pillar 6** (Supporting the women's movement and relevant civil society organisations).

Methodological approach used for the MTA

The MTA involved a combination of three methodological approaches: qualitative data collection (Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD)), an online survey and a document review. A total of 48 respondents participated in the KIIs and FGDs, consisting of 38 women and 10 men. They included one representative of the UN Development Coordination Office (UNDCO), three representatives of the European Union Delegation to the African Union (EUD), four representatives of the African Union Commission (AUC), three staff of Programme Coordination Unit (PCU), 18 staff of the four Recipient United Nations Organisations (RUNOs), one staff of the Global Spotlight Secretariat, six members of the Civil Society Regional Reference Group (CSRRG), nine implementing partners (IP) and one beneficiary. To ensure confidentiality of the key informant groups with few stakeholders, it was decided to use the same label ('UN key informant') for key informant quotes from RUNOs, the UNDCO, the PCU and the Global Spotlight Secretariat. The number of key informants from the AUC and the EU were also limited. Quotes from these two groups were both labelled as 'programme partner'.

The online survey was available in English, French and Portuguese. A total of 29 stakeholders (25 women and 4 men) participated in the survey. The UN participants had the strongest representation in the survey with 17 participants (3 from the PCU and 14 from RUNOs).

The document review included three types of data sources:

(1) programme planning documents and reports (including SOPs and meeting minutes): we included all available documents until June 2022;
(2) Monitoring data from the global SMART platform (Annex A): we used the latest validated monitoring data which were available until December 31st 2021;
(3) Financial data extracted from the MPTF gateway: the data were extracted in Quarter 2 of 2022.

Limitations and measures taken:

- The scheduling of key informant interviews took more time than planned for the data collection. Some interviewees had to be sent multiple reminders before responding while others did not reply at all despite supportive emails from the PCU. As a result, we were not able to secure an interview with senior officials of the AUC and only managed to interview one beneficiary. Multiple opportunities were offered to beneficiaries including WhatsApp options, but among those who confirmed an interview appointment only one showed up. To reach enough key informants, the data collection period was extended by one month.
- Many of the proposed key informants had only a partial view of the programme and more senior staff were added to the list to complete the picture. None of the key informants initially selected for interviews were involved in the design phase so the list of key informants had to be extended once again to reach out to senior UN staff at headquarters.

- Expenditure data are reported by the RUNO headquarters through the MPTF portal according to the UNDG budget lines as agreed in the contract with the EU. The current financial reporting system does not require expenditure reporting by outcome. This limits the financial performance analysis and a recommendation for reporting of expenditures by outcome has been formulated for future monitoring of the programme.

- The response rate to the online survey was not sufficient for a meaningful quantitative data analysis. We extracted frequencies and analysed the qualitative data of the open-ended survey questions.

- The performance data as retrieved from the SMART platform (Annex A) were not fully comprehensible due to the reformulation of eight indicators that are not applicable to regional programmes (see evaluation question 5, 7, and 8 for more information). This imposed limitations on the analysis of progress towards output and outcomes milestones. To mitigate this issue, we analysed the data for each indicator individually.

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B. RELEVANCE

1.Does the action align to the principles of the Spotlight Initiative as listed in the Spotlight Initiative Fund TORs?	⊠ Very Good – Good
	☐ Problems
	☐ Serious deficiencies

The design process

The SIARP was designed with a multi stakeholder approach with the ambition to pull together the strengths of different actors and to enhance synergy and complementarity of different partners and the UN agencies.

Two initial consultations between UN agencies, the African Union Commission (AUC) and civil society stakeholders took place in 2018. During these consultations, the investment plan, which represents the guiding framework of the SIARP, was developed. The initial discussions resulted in the decision to have two programme streams: Stream I with a generic focus on ending VAWG and Stream II with a specific focus on FGM and child marriage. The latter has been built on the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage and the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation. This is a particularity of the SIARP. It capitalises directly on and sustains certain interventions of the two existing joint global programmes while drawing on the collaborative experience between the AUC and the UN teams that have been built.

At the start of the design phase, UNFPA was assigned the responsibility of leading the process including the negotiations with the AUC. However, this decision was revised after challenges emerged in the collaboration between UNFPA and the AUC. Some UN key informants perceived that the AUC had not yet been '*properly engaged*' at this stage and that it required a different approach to build up ownership at their level.

"So, there was a pause in 2019 during the design phase because we realised that the relevant consultations weren't really being done properly or were not sufficient. And we wanted to make sure that especially the AU, which is a critical partner for the programme, has ownership of the programme. And for that to happen, we had to reflect and think, especially as the UN, in terms of who does what and who coordinates which agencies, etc..." [UN key informant]

UN key informants described the design process as challenging as they had to manage their internal engagement process with their four RUNO partners including their respective West and Central Africa as well as Eastern and Southern Regional Offices in addition to the external stakeholder engagement with the AUC and the EUD. In 2019, the Deputy Secretary-General agreed with the involved UN agencies that the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNAOU) should take up the political leadership for engaging with the AUC on behalf of the UN.

While the UNAOU and the EUD coordinated the relationship building and high-level strategic discussions with the AUC, UNFPA continued in its lead function for the technical content of the programme.

In December 2019, the funding was approved by the Operational Steering Committee and the agreement was officialised through a joint tripartite letter by AUC, EU and UN in April 2020. Whilst the programme contractually started in July 2020, it was only officially launched in October 2020 in a High-Level Inception Meeting co-chaired by the AUC and the UNOAU. It was attended by senior officials of the UNOAU, the UN Development Coordination Office (UNDCO) Africa and the four RUNOs. During the programme inception meeting, the UNOAU handed over UN leadership to the UNDCO Africa, which has been overseeing

stakeholder relationships and ensuring programme coordination while UNFPA continues to ensure the technical coherence across Stream I and Stream II (see also question 2).

Key informants (UN, EUD, AUC) reported unanimously that the design process including the negotiations for signing off the SIARP were time intensive and delayed the programme start. It took about one and a half years to complete the process. They pointed to several factors to explain the causes of the delay. These include

- internal processes within the UN and the lack of an overarching structure within the agencies at the regional or pan-African level which could lead the design of a programme of continental scope.

- The design approach itself: While initial consultative meetings took place in 2018, some key informants highlighted that the AUC should have been more closely involved in the process of defining the scope and of developing the key interventions. It was perceived that engaging its key actors in a participatory way during the design from the start might have shortened the negotiation and approval period.

"I would say possibly for the future, I think a more inclusive preparatory process would have made us lose less time in negotiating and coming to an agreement with the AU." [programme partner]

- Some of the SRHR terminology used by the UN in the programme document proved to be contentious at the time of the signature. The AUC was opposed to use of language that has no consensus on the continent on any minority groups. According to one key informant, 'all partners should have been sensitive to the continental language positions' to tackle this challenge.

- the internal processes at the AUC: The AUC required time to organize their own internal consultations to decide which entity was most suitable for leading the programme and how other departments would be engaged and coordinated. It also took time to engage the AUC in the development of the key interventions for Stream I.

- The COVID-19 pandemic: The contract restrictions as well as the time required for setting up their COVID-19 responses impacted negatively on the availability of some key actors. Discussions had to be moved to online meetings which made it more challenging to discuss sensitive topics and to conclude on complex topics.

While the negotiations between AUC, UN and EU in the development of the SIARP were time intensive, they were also instrumental to building a common understanding of the programme which key informants highlighted as critical for the successful delivery of the programme.

"It's been a long process, but this is the first time we have the ownership of the African Union at the highest level for a programme document that has been signed by the AU. They [the AU] have such ownership of the programme right now. So that also, you know, it took time, but it was worth it because now you can see the EU, AU and the UN - that tripartite partnership at the highest level on GBV is really an achievement. So, it is quite complex. But I think when you look at the impact so far that is being made it, I think it's kind of worth it in a way." [UN key informant]

Alignment with the 16 principles of the Spotlight Initiative

The results of the online survey, the KIIs and FGDs indicate that the SIARP is generally aligned with the Spotlight Initiative principles. Across all 16 principles, the majority of online survey respondents estimated that they were well incorporated in the programme design (see Annex 3 for an overview of the responses for each principle). The programme is overall gender responsive in its design and key informants estimated that the key interventions have gender transformative potential if implemented as planned. The set up and

management approach as outlined in the Programme Document strives to implement the United Nations Development System (UNDS) reform. This includes a management structure with the UNDCO in Ethiopia being accountable for the programme, a Programme Coordination Unit with a reporting line to the UNDCO as well as a technical coherence function under UNFPA. A more detailed analysis on the modelling of the UNDS reform in the SIARP are provided under evaluation question 2 and 12.

The programme design built on existing regional, intercontinental policies as well as joint UN programmes, notably the two joint global programmes on FGM and child marriage spearheaded by UNICEF and UNFPA, but also UNDP's Joint AU-UNDP project on 'Accelerating the Ratification and Domestication of African Union Treaties', UNFPA's 'Safeguard Young People (SYP) programme' and three of UN Women's initiatives: (1) 'Gender Responsive Budgeting', (2) 'Engaging African traditional leaders to End Child Marriage' and (3) the 'Knowledge Platform', a Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence against Women and Girls.

Key informants and the document review indicated that compromises had been made regarding the implementation of the leaving no one behind (LNOB) principle. Due to political and cultural sensitivities, there were limitations in listing marginalized population groups, considering different global definitions of the same. After consultations with the AUC, there was consensus for all terms referring to sexual and reproductive health and rights sensitivities to be updated in the Programme Document (Prodoc). Current language in the programme document on this read as; "Groups facing discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnic group, color, sex, language, religion or political opinions or other status" (Prodoc, page 6). The Prodoc proposes an intersectional approach for the implementation of the LNOB principle. This remains, however, quite vague. An analysis of specific challenges followed by tailored interventions are only included for one group (women with disabilities).

Key findings:

- The **design** process took a consultative approach. It was described as lengthy and cumbersome due to challenges related to the number of stakeholders and institutional entities to be involved at both UN and AU level. These challenges were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. While the lengthy design process substantially delayed the start of the programme, its results were described as both an important achievement and requirement for the programme as it enabled building strategic consensus and common understanding of the programme.

Recommendations:

- For future programmes, it is recommended to ensure a comprehensive approach to implementing the LNOB principle by conducting a mapping of marginalized groups. Specific activities to ensure the reach of marginalized groups should be added. This type of exercise should be done in collaboration with IPs using a participatory approach (RUNOs).

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2A. Are the Initiative's deliverables aligned with the UN agencies' experiences, priorities and expertise? Are the right UN agencies involved? **2B. Are programmes implemented in line with the UN System reform?**	☒ Very Good – Good ☐ Problems ☐ Serious deficiencies

Are the Initiative's deliverables aligned with the UN agencies' mandate and priorities? Are the right UN agencies involved?

Four RUNOs are signatory to the SIARP: UN Women, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNDP. An analysis of their expertise, experience and strategic priorities on the African continent is summarised in Table 2. It shows that the RUNOs' experiences, priorities, and expertise are critical and to some extent complementary for implementing the three pillars. UNDP brings strong expertise for Pillar 1, UNFPA's expertise is critical for Pillar 5 while UN Women's mandate and expertise are relevant to all pillars, but in particular to Pillar 6. UNICEF offers cross-sectoral experience which can be harnessed under all three pillars.

Table 2.   RUNOs priorities, expertise and experience in the African region

RUNO	Priorities, expertise and experiences in the region
UNDP	UNDP's programmes in the region aim at strengthening human rights mechanisms at national, regional and pan-African levels. In the African Region, UNDP has built substantial expertise and experience in ● support to the Ratification and Domestication of African Union Treaties including human rights related instruments through its Multi Year Joint AU-UNDP Regional Project. ● capacity strengthening of the AUC on advancing gender equality and women's empowerment through its regional UNDP-AUC 2018 -2021 project. ● building up prevention and response mechanisms to violent extremism through a four-year regional programme. UNDP's extensive global, regional and national experience in advocating for policy and legislative changes as well as in improving women's access to justice and provision of support services to SGBV survivors puts the agency in a strategic position lead on Pillar One.
UNICEF	UNICEF's work spans across health, education, social protection, child protection, nutrition, Communication for Development (C4D), HIV/AIDS and water, hygiene and sanitation sectors. In the agency's Gender Action Plan (2018-20), child marriage is defined as a corporate priority. UNICEF has built substantial expertise and experience in ● working with governments to support development, budgeting, and implementation of national action plans on child marriage, and in advocating for legislative shifts ● systems strengthening in education, child protection/ social protection, C4D, nutrition and gender equality. ● Advocacy, policy and community behaviour change programmes against child marriage, FGM and other areas of child-centred community development UNICEF's experience is relevant to all three Pillars of the SIARP.
UNFPA	UNFPA has 54 country offices on the African continent. Its strategic focus is on (1) Ending Preventable Maternal Deaths, (2) Ending Gender Based Violence and Other Harmful Practices, and (3) Ending Unmet Need for Family Planning. In the African Region, UNFPA has built substantial experience and expertise in ● building capacities of partners in population dynamics, data and knowledge management. ● The utilisation of evidence based SRHR analysis ● The application of the GBV module in DHS surveys

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	● Advocacy, policy and community behaviour change programmes against child marriage, and FGM ● Assistance to GBV survivors, for example, through the provision of an integrated and multisectoral approach to GBV, including through the One-Stop-Centre Model. . ● Support to legal reforms on all forms of gender-based violence ● Support to women-led and youth-led organizations working on SRHR, GBV, harmful practices The experience and expertise of the agency are valuable to all three Pillars, but particularly to Pillar 5.
UN Women	As the convener for gender equality within the UN, UN Women strives to advance women's rights and empowerment. In the African Region, UN Women's work has focused on improving gender data and statistics, women economic empowerment, women's political leadership and participation, youth engagement, and ending VAWG. UN Women also has a longstanding partnership and cooperation with the women's movement, gender equality advocates, women's groups and organisations at country and regional level as well as with national and regional women's machineries. This positions the agency as a lead for Pillar 6.

There are strong overlaps in the agencies' experiences under the three Pillars. According to key informants, this resulted in extensive discussions and negotiations between the four RUNOs to find an agreement which agency would lead on which component and on how the budget should be distributed. The agreed division of labour among RUNOs for the delivery of the Spotlight Initiative is described in Table 2. It is quite complex as each RUNO contributes substantively across the 3 pillars, offering a cross-sectoral experience. UN Women is the overall lead for Stream I with UNFPA as co-lead. In addition, one lead agency for each of the three Pillars has been defined (see Table below). Under Stream II, UNFPA ensures the coordination for the interventions under the joint FGM programme and UNICEF does the same for the child marriage programme, but there is no overall lead agency. The distribution of responsibilities is mostly aligned with the strategic priorities and previous experience of the four RUNOs (as presented in the Table 3). The budget distribution among RUNOs under the three Pillars, however, is less consistently aligned with their experience and respective areas of expertise. Considering UNFPA's strong expertise on GBV data, it is questionable, for example, why their budget allocations under Pillar 5 are considerably smaller (3 per cent) than for UNDP (29 per cent) and for UNICEF (63 per cent). The same applies to Pillar 6, for which the Pillar lead UN Women only received 27 per cent of the budget whereas 38 per cent were allocated to UNICEF and 35 per cent to UNFPA. According to a UN key informant, the budget allocations were negotiated and agreed. The rationale for the budget allocations were not documented.

Table 3.   Agreed Division of Labour for the Spotlight Initiative

Outcome / Pillar	Lead Agency Stream I	Lead Agency Stream II	Participating Agencies	Percentage of budget
1. Laws and Policies	UNDP with, UN Women as co-lead	UNFPA for FGM and UNICEF for child marriage	UNFPA, UNICEF	39
5. Data	UNFPA with UNICEF as co-lead	UNFPA for FGM and UNICEF for child marriage	UN Women, UNDP	34
6. Women's Movement	UN Women	UNFPA for FGM and UNICEF for child marriage	UNFPA, UNICEF	28

Are programmes implemented in line with the UN System reform?

The programme is implemented under the oversight of the UNDCO Africa. The UNDCO co-chairs the Africa Regional Programme Steering Committee with the AUC. It is accountable for the implementation of the

programme and for overseeing the coordination and collaboration of RUNOs, the EU and the AUC. The UNDCO also harnesses its convening power to coordinate RUNOs internally and to create spaces for RUNOs to discuss and align ahead of Steering Committee meetings. In addition, a regional Programme Coordination Unit (PCU) which is based at the UNDP regional service centre in Addis Ababa has been set up. The PCU is composed of five staff members: (1) a programme coordinator, (2) an M&E specialist, (3) a knowledge management and communication officer, (4) a gender and data specialist as well as a (5) programme associate. The programme coordinator has two reporting lines. The position reports to the UNDCO for strategic programme oversight and to the Deputy Regional Director of UNFPA for Eastern and Southern Africa for technical and performance management purposes. This strategic set-up with the UNDCO overseeing the SIARP is aligned with the UN Development System (UNDS) reform as the UNDCO ensures a coordination function of all national UN Resident Coordinators (RC) in Africa.

"So basically our [the DCO's] role is to co-chair the steering committee. This is done by the regional director of DCO and we provide support to him. So, it goes from the preparation of the steering committee as well as servicing, participating, and then ensuring that there is oversight in terms of follow up on recommendations and action points. We also have regular meetings and provide advice to the Programme Coordination Unit, to the coordinator to make sure that there is coherence between the streams of the programme." [UN key informant]

The technical coherence function

The responsible entity for technical coherence of the programme is with UNFPA. Unlike for other Spotlight Initiative programmes, the SIARP does not have a technical coherence specialist. The KII and online survey responses suggested that neither the role nor the responsible entity for the technical coherence function were clear. In the online survey, less than half of the UN respondents (8 out of 17) were informed that UNFPA was the responsible entity. Two participants reported that UN Women was the responsible entity, one reported that it was UNICEF, two reported that it was UNDP and the remaining three respondents perceived the technical coherence role as a joint function of all four RUNOs.

KIIs with PCU and UNFPA staff revealed that the roles and responsibilities for assuring technical coherence were also not clear. Some key informants stated that the PCU was responsible for technical coherence, while some stated that this responsibility was assigned to the UNFPA Regional Team for Eastern and Southern Africa, and others thought that there was a joint responsibility. Views about the scope of the responsibilities differed among informants and included the recruitment of PCU staff, the management of the PCU, the facilitation of fund replenishment, financial and work plan reporting, senior management support for internal stakeholder engagement and dialogue, or ensuring the quality and alignment of the interventions.

The document review did also not help to clarify the content of the technical coherence function and the role of the PCU and UNFPA. In the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Governance, the functions of the PCU include to "*coordinate joint planning and implementation of activities across the two streams to ensure technical coherence, synergy and complementarity*". This makes the PCU a contributor to technical coherence, but it does not necessarily make it responsible for it. In the Prodoc, on the other hand, the scope of the PCU included ensuring technical coherence, but without providing additional information on what this would imply. Furthermore, the functions of the Civil Society Regional Reference Group (CSRRG) (as defined in the SOP for governance) also include to "ensure strategic and technical rigour and coherence across Stream I and II". UNFPA's responsibilities for executing the technical coherence function are not mentioned in any of the documents made available to the MTA team.

Collaboration among RUNOs

There were mixed perceptions on the strength and quality of collaboration between the four RUNOs. Among the online survey respondents, 15 out of 25 respondents estimated that the four RUNOs work well together whereas 10 (out of 25) perceived that the RUNOs continue to operate in silos. Some of the key informants highlighted that the SIARP strengthened synergies across interventions on ending VAWG and that it enabled identifying new opportunities for joint programming.

"I think the regional programme is fully aligned with the UN reform efforts. The UN reform efforts are to encourage inter-agency coordination to deliver as one so we can get to the ultimate point of joint programming on gender equality. Now, maybe some of that could have happened even without the programme, but I think the programme has given us even some kind of boost, both financially, but also politically […]. I think, it also strengthened some of the synergies because through the interagency pillar meetings we are able to discuss areas across streams and across pillars. And this tends to facilitate the identification of areas for joint programming. And joint programming is one area that the UN reform pushes quite hard." [UN key informant]

"If for instance, when we are working with UNDP on developing the data collection toolkit, they are also sharing that with UNFPA, who are more towards data on sexual reproductive health to review the toolkit that we have already developed or in consulting them on some aspects of the toolkit that we might include. So, there is that collaboration, they are really working together. […]. But again, when we meet, when implementing the activities, I can say they [the RUNOs] are really working together. [IP key informant]

There was agreement among UN key informants that UNFPA and UNICEF's collaboration under Stream II was more efficient than the collaboration of the four RUNOs under Stream I. This was perceived to be based on their long-term experience of working together on the delivery of the two joint global programmes on FGM and child marriage.

Several key informants and online survey respondents also highlighted that the complexity of the coordination structure and the high number of stakeholders and offices involved made it challenging to ensure meaningful engagement of RUNO personnel. This applied in particular to staff who were only temporarily involved for supporting the delivery of specific interventions. Unlike for other regional programmes, the SIARP involves two regional offices (Western and Central Africa [WCARO] and Eastern and Southern Africa [ESARO]) for each RUNO (except for UNDP which has only one regional office). There are, thus, a total of eight regional offices in addition to the UNDCO and UNOAU which are involved in the coordination of activities and the governance of the programme. The high number of RUNOs' offices and personnel involved made the coordination of the action cumbersome and slow.

Moreover, some respondents perceived that the distribution of interventions and lead functions among RUNOs to one specific stream and under each stream to one specific pillar made the coordination structure difficult to understand and implement. Despite the integrated implementation structure with several RUNOs working under each Pillar, some key informants and online survey respondents still perceived that RUNOs implemented their activities in siloes with focus on fulfilling their agency's targets instead of ensuring alignment and complementarity with the interventions delivered by other RUNOs.

"It might be clearer for someone working full-time on the Spotlight Initiative but for 'contributors'/technical leads or managers of just one or two activities, the different stakeholders are not always visible and it is not clear how they relate." [online survey respondent]

"The current structure of the programme where there are different streams led by different RUNOs has made it difficult to have one coherent programme. It would have been better if the programme could have one stream. It would have also been better if one agency was responsible for all activities under a

pillar rather than the current arrangement where one RUNO is a lead, but all agencies have activities in the pillar." [online survey respondent]

"To some extent, RUNOs are so focused on delivering their specific activities, with limited focus/little concern on other activities from other RUNOs that are relevant or aligned to the index activity. There is more focus on individualised (RUNO's) targets rather than on Spotlight targets as a whole." [online survey respondent]

Key findings:

- The assignment of RUNOs roles across the three Pillars are overall consistent with their expertise, experiences and priorities. The budget allocations to RUNOs under Pillar 5 and 6 seem to some extent misaligned with their expertise. Considering UNFPA's extensive experience on GBV (including harmful practices) data (Pillar 5), the rationale for allocating 63 per cent of the Pillar 5 budget to UNICEF and only 3 per cent to UNFPA is not evident. The same applies to Pillar 6 (strengthening CSOs and the Women's movement) for which UN Women as pillar lead only receives 27 per cent.
- The SIARP has operationalised the UNDS reform by putting in place structures to deliver the programme in an integrated manner. Management and coordination structures were put in place with the UNDCO - Africa as accountable entity, the PCU for the management and the assignment of the technical coherence entity to UNFPA.
- There was neither a common understanding on the content of the technical coherence function nor on the entity responsible for implementing it. The responsibility of the PCU in contributing to technical coherence was also not clear.
- There were mixed perceptions on the quality and effectiveness of the RUNOs in the delivery of the programme in an integrated manner. The number of offices and actors involved in combination with an intervention design in which several RUNOs deliver interventions under each Pillar resulted in a coordination structure that is cumbersome and time-intensive to implement. That notwithstanding, key informants reported increased synergies and joint actions across the four RUNOs.

Recommendations:

- In the design of Phase 2, the UNDCO should ensure that budget allocations, in particular for Pillar 5 and 6, are consistently aligned with the agencies' experience and expertise (UNDCO, PCU).
- RUNOs and the PCU should discuss to what extent the full potential of the technical coherence function has been harnessed and agree on its roles and specific deliverables. It is also suggested to integrate the function in the PCU as a new position with reporting line to the Programme Coordinator. The outputs of the discussion should be documented and disseminated across RUNO teams (RUNOs).

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3. Does the action presently respond to the needs of the target groups / end beneficiaries? Are the necessary consultations taking place with key stakeholders?	☒ Very Good – Good
	☐ Problems
	☐ Serious deficiencies

Involvement of key stakeholder groups in the design, implementation, and monitoring of the action

The online survey results indicated that key stakeholders were involved to varying extent in the design, monitoring and implementation of the programme. A detailed summary of the respondents' views about the involvement of each stakeholder group is provided in Annex 4. It shows that most respondents estimated that the AUC and the EUD were greatly involved in the design phase and the monitoring of the programme, but to a lesser extent in its implementation. The RUNOs were estimated to be involved to a great extent in all phases (design, implementation and monitoring). The perceptions were similar for CSO participation with the only difference that CSOs were perceived as less involved in the monitoring of the programme. The results were quite mixed for the CSRRG for which over half of the respondents perceived that the group was not at all or only somewhat involved in the design, implementation, and monitoring of the SIARP. This result can be explained that most online survey respondents from outside the UN were not knowledgeable about the interim CSRRG which had been set up during and contributed to the design phase (see next paragraph).

The online survey responses were largely corroborated by KIIs and the document review. According to the Prodoc, CSOs were consulted on two occasions during the design phase. One CSO (Action Aid) participated in a brainstorming exercise in 2018. On another occasion, a draft of the ProDoc was shared with an interim CSRRG and its feedback was integrated. The design phase also included several consultations with directorates of the AUC to discuss their interest and commitments to contributing to the delivery of the Spotlight Initiative. The ECOWAS was also represented in one of the consultations. According to key informants and the document review, the EUD to the African Union was strongly involved during the design stage and participated actively in the negotiations with the AUC (see also question 4).

Does the action correspond to the needs of the target groups?

Overall, there was consensus among key informants from the AUC, IPs, EUD and the UN that the action was relevant and adapted to the regional context for ending VAWG and for tackling harmful practices. The strategic tri-partite partnership of the EU, UN and AUC were perceived as justified and suitable for scaling up interventions on ending VAWG. Key informants (IPs, UN, AUC) positively appreciated the complementarity of the Spotlight Initiative to the two joint global programmes on child marriage and FGM in terms of scaling up the reach of young people and the continental scope of interventions.

"I think that the Spotlight initiative, when we look at the kind of activities that we've been working on, it does address a number of the issues affecting girls and young women in these harmful practices of FGM and child marriage and looks at also the broader frameworks and policies that address these practices." [key informant, programme partner]

"And I think the Spotlight was really fantastic in that sense to really have used those funds and the platform to be able to kind of really take it to another level at the continental level. So, I think the Youth Global Consortium is one example. I think the work that we do with the Youth Innovation Incubator on FGM as well is another example. And this is really through Spotlight, the Spotlight programme Stream II, which I think is really exciting." (UN key informant)

Most online survey respondents agreed that all relevant groups and key stakeholders were included in the SIARP. Some survey respondents and key informants (UN, IPs, AUC), however, highlighted that the regional

programme follows AU language guidelines and considers socio-cultural sensitivities in its work. The approach to other marginalized groups was also criticized as vague. Groups such as people living with disabilities, refugees, migrants, and displaced people were also not sufficiently included in the programme. Some of these groups are, however, reached through interventions from RUNOs and IPs or through partnerships with umbrella organisations such as Girls Not Brides.

"I would not say that we are very, very specific in targeting women in all their diversities because we are working with groups of women's rights organisations. And at this point we haven't done a very detailed mapping, for example, to identify organisations that may be working with women who identify as transgender, lesbian or bisexual, for instance or with organisations that are working with women with disabilities or older, the elderly women. I wouldn't say that we have done that very intentional mapping." [IP key informant]

"But what I would like to say concerning the Spotlight Initiative in general - I am under the impression that the targets are only women and girls and that the target does not include, for instance, trans women. But this is in my opinion, it may be a challenge. I mean, It's not inclusive enough." [IP key informant]

The key informants and online survey respondents also perceived that the programme design is too ambitious, and interventions are too scattered at the detriment of sustainable impact of the programme. They described the programme interventions as siloed and not sufficiently connected. While each intervention was perceived as relevant, synergetic effects across the different interventions were perceived as missing. This aspect is also discussed under question 5 which describes the fragmentation of the programme in three individual projects with limited cross-stream vision and action.

"In my view, the overall number of activities should be reduced to concentrate resources in less areas with more impact. In particular, funding for Social Norms Programming is required to accelerate community engagement on Harmful Practices." [online survey respondent]

"The interventions are not well connected. There are too many stakeholders." [online survey respondent]

"The results are too ambitious for a three-year project." [online survey respondent]

In this context, key informants from the IPs and the EUD also expressed that the role of CSOs in the programme should be strengthened. IPs reported that the SIARP had not yet enabled them to effectively build relationships with the AUC for future collaboration and influencing work. It was also perceived that some of *the* regional events which were UN-AUC-led would have been more effective and stronger in terms of impact if CSOs had been in the driving seat.

"Those who do the real work are not the UN. Those that change the things on the ground are either charismatic leaders or community-based organisations. And in how far is the UN playing a too big role in this programme? How much space do they really give to those actors that will inspire others and that can better inspire others to change that way?" [key informant, programme partner]

Feedback mechanisms

The programme structure includes two types of formal feedback mechanisms: its steering committees and the CSRRG (both described under evaluation question 11). The steering committees were perceived as functional with active participation from all stakeholder groups. The contributions of the CSRRG could not yet be evaluated as it had only been inaugurated a few months prior to the MTA. In addition to the feedback mechanisms at governance level, the programme offers various opportunities for feedback through its management structures which involves different types of periodic meetings (also described under evaluation question 11).

The online survey enquired to what extent user and satisfaction feedback was collected and fed back from the following stakeholder groups: EUD, RUNOs, IPs, CSRRG, AUC and beneficiaries.[2] A detailed overview of the responses is provided in Table 4. About a third of respondents did not know if feedback was collected or fed back. Differences were most likely related to the differences in the profile of respondents. Among the other two thirds, most thought that feedback was collected and fed back, maybe less so to beneficiaries than to RUNOs, the AUC and the EUD.

Table 4. Online survey responses on feedback mechanisms				
	Feedback is collected and fed back	Feedback is collected but not fed back	Feedback is neither collected nor fed back	Do not know
AUC	11	3	1	8
UN organisations	17	1	0	6
European Delegation	12	1	0	10
Civil society organisations	16	1	0	6
CSO Reference Group	12	2	0	9
Beneficiaries	8	2	1	12

The KIIs with IPs provided more nuance to the results of the online survey. Most IPs felt that their exchanges and meetings with RUNOs offered possibilities for feedback. However, experiences related to the frequency and quality of feedback mechanism vary across IPs. Some reported being able to share feedback and discuss issues with their RUNO contact point on a regular basis and that the RUNO partners listened to suggestions and acted on the feedback.

"We have given feedback for every activity we implement. […] We always give reports and the reports are not only on what we are doing, but also on the interactions or areas that we need to improve on, and especially on the coordination aspect we need support from RUNOs and you can see there is that response or that there is that support. Again, for all the activities that we need, we engage in, we often develop concepts notes like giving a guide on how we think we are going to implement the activities and these we share with them for their feedback. And some of these include adjusting what we had in the initial concept or in the initial proposal, like recommending different ways of doing maybe implementing same activity but in a different way and that kind of feedback or that kind of suggestions, you see that they are accepted or again discussed during our weekly meetings with RUNOs every Monday. So, we share some of the experiences or some of the areas that we think need some improvement. And more often than not, we find that that feedback has been received." [IP key informant]

Some also reported that they had platforms for discussing areas of concern with RUNOs, but that the feedback from IPs was inconsistently acted upon. Generally, RUNO management was perceived as less flexible and more rigid compared to previous contracts.

"We had a regular initial meeting with the team [RUNO] where we were able to discuss everything. In some cases, they took into consideration our feedbacks and sometimes not and we don't really know why. You know, I don't think that everything depends on them. […] In my opinion, if I can compare with the past, the rigidity has increased since the Spotlight, you know, we always have to report every three months with a narrative and sign on all the procedures. But I am under the impression that this mechanism has become more rigid and more demanding." [IP key informant]

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[2] There were 23 responses for all groups, except for the UN organisations for which 24 participants responded.

Some IPs with smaller funding allocations expressed that there had been limited space to discuss issues related to the content of the interventions (quality, scope and strategic approaches) and that meetings focussed primarily on the contract administration (reporting and other funding requirements). Their requests to discuss implementation challenges and approaches were not granted.

Key findings:

- During the design phase, consultations were organized with relevant stakeholder groups.
- There was consensus that the SIARP responds to the needs of its target groups. The tripartite partnership of the AUC, the EU and the UN as well as the complementarity with the two joint global programmes on FGM and child marriage were described as particular assets. It was also stressed, however, that there was need to develop a more concrete and comprehensible approach for working with marginalized groups, that the programme interventions were too dispersed with lack of synergetic and catalytic effects and that CSO leadership in regional interventions and in engaging with the AUC should be strengthened.
- Formal feedback mechanisms are available through the four steering committees, the CS-RRG and the SIARP's management structure which includes regular meetings of key stakeholders involved in the implementation. Overall, the SIARP's feedback mechanisms were gauged as functional although they were not well known to all stakeholder groups. The feedback mechanisms with beneficiaries were not clear. IPs reported varying quality and frequency of their feedback mechanisms with their RUNO partners.

Recommendations:

- During the next annual review exercise, it is suggested to review the intervention streams to establish a stronger synergy and connection between interventions and to concentrate the efforts on interventions with the most promising outcomes. This should include a reflection on how CSOs can take more leadership in the organisation of regional events and how they can strengthen their ties with and build direct relationships with the AUC. This will be critical for the sustainability of the programme. The aim of this review should not be to downscale the action, but rather to design more comprehensive intervention packages and to harness potential synergetic effects (RUNOs, IPs).
- To increase the visibility of feedback mechanisms for all key stakeholder groups, it is suggested to develop and disseminate SOPs for the feedback mechanisms integrated in the SIARP. This should include feedback mechanisms with beneficiaries. It should also provide minimum standards regarding the frequency and content of feedback mechanisms available to IPs (PCU).

4. Do all key stakeholders still demonstrate effective commitment (ownership) and deliver accordingly?	☒ Very Good – Good
	☐ Problems
	☐ Serious deficiencies

AUC

The AUC is a strategic and programmatic collaborator of the SIARP through the Department of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development– which acts as its lead department – and the Women, Gender and Youth Directorate (WGYD). According to UN key informants, the AUC has demonstrated *'clear ownership, leadership, and strategic insights into the programme'*. At governance level, the DSA Commissioner, alongside the UNDCO Regional Director co-chairs the Steering Committee which oversees the entire SIARP.

"… You know, the programme falls under the purview of the Commissioner, which gives it quite a big weight and good visibility." [UN key informant]

Dedicated AUC staff also serve on the Regional Stream I Steering Committee, the decision-making body that oversees Stream I work (see also question 11). Stream II relies on existing governance structures for the two global programmes on FGM and child marriage which don't include representatives of the AUC.

At programme level, key informants (UN, AUC, IPs) consistently reported a growing commitment by AUC technical staff for supporting the implementation of the SIARP. The AUC has integrated SIARP activities into its workplan and provides technical input through the review of key documents and attendance of coordination meetings, supports advocacy with member states and Regional Economic Commissions (RECs), and participates in key activities and ratification missions in countries. It also hosted, co-organized and co-facilitated some key regional events such as a special consultation meeting held with the ECOWAS Commission on Social Affairs and Gender-related activities to combat GBV and eliminate FGM (Senegal, 1-2 November 2021) and the third African Girls Summit in Niamey in November 2021.

"The AU is mostly used through and adds value, especially to ratification missions. They play a major role in those kinds of missions because countries listen more to the AU than to civil society. And so that is very much critical and appreciated also in terms of addressing reporting matters, which is one of the key aspects of the implementation of the protocol, which with their presence, there is always a tendency for countries to say they will do this and that. Showing that they [AUC] are behind the regional programme is quite important for participants to know and to understand that we are not working in isolation but jointly with the AU leaders." [IP key informant]

"So, I would say that our work with the U.N. agencies has been quite good because we're all on the same page on taking the activities forward and delivering what we need to deliver to make sure that Spotlight is working and that we're achieving tangible results." [key informant, programme partner]

Even though key informants have praised the active engagement and contributions of the AUC and their support to the programme, they unanimously pointed out that the AUC has considerably slowed down the implementation of the SIARP's work plan due to its heavy bureaucracy, understaffing and staff turnover on key positions for the SIARP (see also question 6). That notwithstanding, political will at the highest level within the institution and the UN secondment of staff to the AUC who are highly engaged in delivering the SIARP have been key assets to the programme.

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"This one [Commissioner] is relatively new, but already was able to set the tone in terms of the importance of the programme, the value-added of the programme, the previous commissioner as well. She was very engaged, very involved. So, I think the programme is anchored very well in the African Union Commission at the very highest level." [UN key informant]

RECs

As described in the previous section, the AUCs have continuously engaged with the RECs in coordination meetings and advocacy efforts for ending VAWG. According to the 2021 annual report, three RECs have been participated in specific activities - the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the East African Community (EAC), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The RECs were consulted, for example, during the development of the first Regional Action Plan for Africa on Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls. They were also part of regional consultations for the content of the development facilitators' training manual on drafting, ratification, and implementation of HR instruments in relation to ending VAWG and SRHR. They also took part in a consultation meeting in October 2021 for expanding the dialogue on the importance of their partnership of the AUC, traditional leaders, and religious leaders in addressing VAWG, HP, and SRHR.

EUD

The EUD to the African Union in Addis Ababa, with support from the EU head office in Brussels (INTPA), has been a key partner to the SIARP. According to key informants (EUD, UN, AUC), the EUD was described as fulfilling its role both at the political and technical level. Its representatives have participated actively in the governance mechanisms across the two streams of the SIARP. The EUD has high-level representation in the Africa Regional Steering Committee (ARSC) through its ambassador with support from senior officials. The latter have made valuable contributions to meetings and have advocated for a more strategic orientation and facilitation of the meetings (see also question 11). The EUD also takes part in the three steering committees for both streams where it has been appreciated for technical expertise and its approach to collaborate as a partner.

"The EU comes with substantive knowledge and pertinent recommendations." [UN key informant]

During the design phase, the EUD stepped in to support the negotiation process with the AUC. It also played a key role as an active member of the Selection Committee in the selection process and establishment of the CSRRG and contributed to the Stream II advanced collaboration with specific EU countries including Italy and the Netherlands to draft and co-sponsor a resolution on child, early and forced marriage during the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly on November 16, 2020.

Furthermore, respondents reported '*really positive engagement*' of the EUD in different activities of the Spotlight Initiative Africa programme. The EU delegation participated, for instance, in the in-person consultation (19-21, October) in Addis Ababa between the AUC, regional faith-based organisations, and communities of traditional leaders to strengthen the AUC engagement in the prevention and response to VAWG, harmful practices, and promotion of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in Africa.

Civil Society

In line with its principles, the SIARP has put strong emphasis on partnerships with civil society organisations and engages them at various levels. First, CSOs were consulted during the design phase to provide their insights, expertise and perspectives on the development of the key interventions of the SIARP. Second, CSOs have been contracted as IPs to deliver specific activities. Third, CSOs are represented in the governance mechanism of the SIARP through representatives of the CSRRG. Fourth, CSOs are targeted as

beneficiaries in one-off advocacy or capacity-building activities. Examples highlighted in the 2021 annual report include training sessions of regional CSOs and Women's Rights organisations for drafting and submission of periodic reports about the rights of women and girls in Africa as well as a training manual developed by Equality Now to strengthen CSOs' capacity on alternative periodic reporting on Women's Rights in Africa (see also evaluation question 8).

IPs

According to key informants (IPs, UN), IPs have demonstrated strong commitment to the programme. The SIARP was perceived as strongly relevant to contributing to ending VAWG by IPs which naturally boosted their engagement. Their level of ownership was reported as somehow less consistent. It was stronger among partners with longer-term contracts and interventions across more than one pillar whereas CSOs which had only been contracted for less than a year to implement a set of specific activities demonstrated less ownership. They expressed frustration about delays in fund transfers, the short timeframe for implementing activities and about not having sufficient implementation support from the RUNOs.

Overall, most of the interviewed IPs expressed that they had only a partial view on the programme: They had limited information on the programme beyond their own activities or, as one IP framed it, *"everybody's doing their bit, but then we don't see the whole thing."* There had been no exchange or coordination meetings for IPs until June 2022 in which a joint annual review meeting was organized for Stream 1 where all the CSOs, RUNOs, AUC and CSRRG were brought together for exchange, learning, and sharing sessions. To improve the effectiveness of their work, IPs desired to meet regularly to be able to learn from one another and to be better informed about what was happening across three pillars.

"I think the one thing that perhaps might be useful and perhaps is beginning to happen is joint continuous monitoring, evaluation and planning sessions with all the IPs. And I think the upcoming meeting later this month [June] and bringing together all the Implementing Partners is one such avenue that can and could perhaps have been done more frequently because we've got different implementing partners, implementing under different plans, but then the opportunity to learn from each other hasn't been that intentional. So, I think that's the one area where perhaps improvements could be done." [IP key informant]

"... you could see that so many things are happening, but it's only the UNDP that holds the pieces together. So, what you need is all the others to be involved in all the activities or to be aware of what's happening so that they can see where everyone is connected and their specific role is contributing to the others or complementing one another." [IP key informant]

"So, either we would want to participate in those activities [implemented by other IPs] or we want to see the outcome documents or whatever from those activities. [...] This would help partners perhaps understand the strengths and the value add from the different implementing partners [...]. So, I think having joint reflection and projection meetings would really have helped to deal with those situations." [IP key informant]

CSRRG

An interim CSRRG for set up for providing input to the design phase. The permanent CSRRG was only officially inaugurated in February 2022 with the aim to provide advisory, technical, and monitoring support to the regional programme (see evaluation question 11 for more detailed information on its selection process and group composition). Representatives of the CSRRG have participated in two of the governance meetings in March 2022 and developed a draft work plan. Despite its late start, key informants including members of the CSRRG perceive that the group has added value to the SIARP by acting as a bridge between civil society and the governing bodies of SIARP. Its members are described as passionate to the cause and

committed to making a difference over the course of their mandate. However, they also expressed concerns about the late set-up of the group which put them in the uncomfortable position of catching up to understand the complex structure and intervention logic of the programme before they can start bringing in effectively the voice from the civil society.

"We just feel like the whole process has been designed and we are just here to validate a process and that does not sit well with some of us. At least for me, it doesn't sit well with me. […] It looks like the whole programme was already designed before we came in as the last piece of the puzzle." [Key informant, CSRRG]

"Most of the meetings we are joining in, we are trying to listen in and get ourselves up to speed. […] Maybe in the future going forward, we will be able to penetrate and influence certain things. But at the moment, we are playing catch up, you know, so because we just came in like when everything seems to have been set in place and it seems like, you know, we're just working on existing activities, but maybe in the future, now that we have just started to work on the work plan, maybe we will be able to make recommendations." [Key informant, CSRRG]

RUNOs

According to key informants from all stakeholder groups, the RUNOs have demonstrated strong ownership and have been the principal driving force of the programme. The SIARP was perceived by UN staff working under Stream II as a complementary and highly valuable contributions to the two-joint global programmes for which UNFPA and UNICEF have built up strong ownership in the past decade. Under Stream I, strong ownership had been fostered through UN Women's leadership. Overall, RUNO teams were reported as highly engaged despite competing priorities and their high workload (see also question 9).

Key findings:

- The RUNOs, CSOs, AUC and the EUD have effectively contributed to steering the action in alignment with their role defined in the Prodoc. The RECs have been continuously engaged by the AUC and participated in specific activities. IPs demonstrated strong commitment to the delivery of their activities. There was, however, varying ownership for the SIARP among them as most of them had limited insights on what is happening beyond the scope of their own action.

Recommendations:

- To ensure stronger coherence and connection among IPs, it is recommended to continue with the facilitation of coordination meetings of all IPs intervening on the same pillar to streamline interventions, build synergies and enable cross-fertilization and learning. The suggested frequency of these meetings is bi-annually (RUNOs).

- To boost the role of the CSRRG in the SIARP, it is recommended to enable their participation in a few programme activities of both streams to foster their understanding of the programme and their engagement with other programme stakeholders. This should happen in addition to their participation in governance meetings (PCU).

- To ensure that IPs have sufficient support for the delivery of the action, it is recommended to ensure that regular feedback is collected from all IPs to assess the quality of operational support from RUNOs (including the timeliness of fund transfers, the appropriateness of timeframes for implementing activities etc.) (RUNOs).

5. Is the programme Theory of Change well developed? Are the indicators to measure results well defined and relevant to measure the achievement of the objectives in line with the ToC?	☐ Very Good – Good
	☒ Problems
	☐ Serious deficiencies

Is the Theory of Change relevant and applied?

The SIARP covers three out of the six pillars of the global Theory of Change (ToC). An overarching ToC covering both Streams for the three Pillars to visualize the intervention logic of the regional programme has not been developed. The Prodoc includes three separate project documents: One for Stream I, one for child marriage under Stream II and one for FGM (also under Stream II). In the Stream I proposal, a short narrative ToC was developed for each of the three Pillars. The two projects under Stream II start with a presentation of the two ToCs for the global programmes on FGM and child marriage. This is followed by a ToC narrative for each of the three pillars. There are, thus, three separate ToC narratives for each pillar – one for Stream I, one for FGM and one for child marriage under Stream II. In the SIARP's M&E plan, the three narratives of each pillar are presented next to each other in a table format. The ToC narratives do not include assumptions in any of the documents. The areas of coherence and synergies for activities and outcome contribution are described for each of the proposals in a table format in separate sections of the Prodoc. The presentation of the SIARP through three separate projects without an overarching ToC gives the impression that three stand-alone projects were put together under the umbrella of one programme. This impression was reinforced during the interviews in which most RUNO and IP key informants explained that their perceptions were limited to the specific project they were working on. Key informants (IPs, UN) working on the projects under Stream II described the two global ToCs as instrumental for driving gender transformative change through common approaches. The ToCs have also been regularly updated in alignment with evaluation recommendations for the two global programmes.

"So, for the Stream II definitely, we have been using the theory of change of the two global programmes on FGM and child marriage. And they are extremely relevant. And as you know, the FGM phase IV is starting now, so that actually we are adopting the theory of change and we're supporting the countries to then further contextualize the theory of changes for 2020 to 2030 basically." [UN key informant]

Some key informants (RUNOs, IPs) perceived it as challenging to establish a link between the interventions and the output indicators. They also noted an information gap between the annual reports (mainly qualitative) and the indicator progress reporting (quantitative). This linkage is established in the Annual Work Plans (AWP) which contain the expected outputs as well as the activities to be carried out towards achievement of these outputs. There is also information who is responsible for carrying out the activities. There is, however, no linkage at the level of the reporting. The progress described in the annual report is presented by outcome and it is not clear to which outputs the reported activities contribute.

Are the result indicators well developed to measure the achievements of the objectives?

The SIARP developed a detailed M&E plan with a set of annexes in 2022. It outlines the approach, the roles and responsibilities of the involved stakeholders and the templates to be used. The approach is grounded in the broader frame of participatory M&E and results-based management. It includes a results matrix which, for each indicator, describes its baseline and target, the data source, means of verification, frequency of data collection and the responsible agency. The information in the document remains high level due to the complexity of the programme. For 12 of the selected indicators, more than one RUNO is responsible for the reporting. There are multiple data sources and means of verification for each indicator.

This implies a highly work-intensive, multi-stakeholder M&E system which is also rooted in the composite nature of many of the indicators.

The indicators were selected from the global Spotlight Initiative Results Framework in order to allow for global aggregation and reporting. In addition, one regional indicator (the number of alternative reports prepared by CSOs) is tracked by the SIARP. The IPs and RUNOs described the global indicators as vague, ambitious and too high level to monitor the progress of the SIARP. It was highlighted that they were designed for the country level which make them difficult and cumbersome to operationalise for regional programmes.

"So, aggregating all results and come up with the kind of comprehensive data is challenging and even the reporting platform doesn't allow us [to enter the data in a disaggregated format]. Most of the indicators are prepared for country level programmes and the global platform cannot capture complex regional indicators." (UN key informant)

IPs reported that they had reached out to RUNOs to change some indicators because they considered them either as irrelevant or as difficult to report on. Some key informants perceived that additional indicators are needed to capture the process-related results and region-specific targets. It was also perceived that some of the output targets were not realistic for the timeframe of the regional programme.

An analysis of the selected indicators and the progress reporting in Annex A of the global SMART platform corroborated that the global indicators are difficult to apply to regional programmes. According to the data extracted from the SMART platform, the SIARP reports on a total of nine outcome indicators and 19 output indicators. Under each of the three Pillars (1, 5 and 6) three outcome indicators are measured respectively. Under Pillar 1 and Pillar 5, seven outputs indicators were selected respectively. For Pillar 6, five output indicators were selected.

For the three outcome indicators under Pillar 1 and 5 respectively and for two output indicators (one under Pillar 1 and one under Pillar 5), the indicator definitions cannot be applied to a programme of multi-country scope. To tackle this issue, the SIARP developed a parallel results matrix with adjusted indicators. As the programe still has to use the global SMART platform with the standardized indicators for reporting, the values set for the baseline, milestone and target were set to the same level and the reporting notes column has been used to explain how the indicator will be measured. In addition, a narrative progress update is provided. This approach represents an adequate, yet work-intensive solution for working with the global indicator system and the standardized reporting platform. As these indicators are not measured as defined in the methodological notes of the Secretariat, there is, however, a risk that the SIARP data will induce errors in meta-analyses of progress at the global level. Another shortcoming is that the data extracted from the global platform is cumbersome to analyse as there is no consistent format for presenting the baseline, target and milestone values for the adapted indicators.

Are data for the chosen indicators accessible and have data been collected for all indicators?

As described above, the SIARP has adapted the indicators to the continental scope of the Initiative and reframed the indicator definitions to be able to measure progress. In the Annex A of the 2021 annual report, narrative progress reports were provided for all indicators and challenges regarding the accessibility of data were explained. For some of the indicators, progress was difficult to interpret as baseline and/ or target values were missing (see also question 7 and 8).

While monitoring data is available at the central level, the interviewed IPs reported that they lacked access to the programme's monitoring data which they also associated with insufficient information exchange and communication across the four RUNOs.

"We would have expected that there would be up to date information from the RUNOs, […]. And that wasn't quite the case. We still did not get updated information in some of the parameters that we were looking at. And then perhaps this information exists but given that it's not in a central repository or interconnected between the RUNOs, that would also be a factor for the lack of accessible data. Not saying that it's not there, but that it's not accessible." [IP key informant]

Key findings:

- The SIARP does not have an overarching ToC. Instead, it has developed three separate ToC narratives for Stream I as well as the FGM component and the child marriage component under Stream II respectively. The lack of an overarching ToC combined with the separate presentation of the three projects in the Prodoc creates the impression that three stand-alone programmes were merged into one large and overly complex programme. Most key informants also reported fragmented perspectives of the programme and only few of them were knowledgeable about the Theory of Change underlying the global Spotlight Initiative.

- Key informants perceived a disconnect between the qualitative annual reports and the quantitative indicator progress reporting in the SMART system.

- The SIARP complied with the Spotlight Initiative's requirement to select indicators from the global indicator menu which were experienced as little relevant and highly work intensive to report on. Despite challenges generated by the global M&E framework requirements, a coherent M&E system has been put in place for the programme. Some of the indicators, however, are no longer aligned to the global definitions which makes the data analysis both cumbersome and error prone.

- Progress data have been collected and reported on for most indicators. A few data gaps have been highlighted in the 2021 annual reports.

- IPs reported that progress monitoring data for the SIARP were not accessible to them.

Recommendations:

- It is recommended to adjust the annual reporting format to enable activity progress reporting by output and not only at the Pillar level (Global Secretariat). For the future SIARP reporting, activity reporting should be disaggregated by stream (PCU).

- It is recommended to organize a workshop with the global Secretariat and the other regional programmes to develop standardized indicators that are relevant to the regional programmes under the Spotlight Initiative. For Stream II, the indicators should draw on the Joint Global Programme result framework indicators (Global Secretariat).

- To enable more comprehensive reporting for the eight indicators that were reformulated for the purpose of the SIARP and to avoid errors in the analysis of data at the global level on the SMART platform, the PCU should discuss with the Secretariat on how these indicators can be reflected in the global system and how their values for baselines, targets, milestones and results can be consistently presented (PCU, Spotlight Secretariat).

6A. BEFORE COVID-19: Have all relevant circumstances and risks been taken into account to update the intervention logic? If there are delays, how important are they and what are the consequences? What are the reasons for these delays and to what extent have appropriate corrective measures been implemented? To what extent has the planning been revised accordingly? 6B. AFTER COVID-19: What are the consequences of COVID 19? To what extent have appropriate corrective measures been implemented? To what extent has the planning been revised accordingly?	☒ Very Good – Good ☐ Problems ☐ Serious deficiencies

Delays and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

The design process started in 2018, but the programme only started in July 2020 and was only officially launched in October 2020. The delays which occurred during the design phase are discussed under evaluation question 1. The programme was planned before the COVID-19 pandemic and commenced implementation after its start.

The ongoing COVID pandemic and associated restrictions required a revision of the programme budget and work plan. It was identified as one of the key root causes for delays after the programme start. In response to the pandemic, some of the interventions had to be adjusted. Meetings and events took place virtually or in hybrid format in periods when on-site meetings could not be organized. In 2020, all activities involving travel had to be either postponed or reprogrammed. This applied, for example, to the convening of a CSO and women's movement forum which had to be postponed and reduced in scope because of travel and contact restrictions. Travel such as technical missions of the Special Rapporteur and Goodwill Ambassador for ending child marriage also had to be scheduled to a later date. Weak internet connectivity posed additional challenges in some of the countries and resulted in the postponement of planned virtual trainings and workshops. The challenging working environment was also identified as one of the causes of the lengthy selection process of the IPs for Stream I and for delays in the recruitment of RUNO staff. As people were working from home, they were less responsive to tenders and were more difficult to reach. According to the 2021 annual report, the pandemic also exacerbated gender inequalities and led to an increase in VAWG and harmful practices.

"The main challenge is the fact that, the programme documents were designed before COVID-19 pandemic and as a result, there were a lot of travels, and in person meetings. This significantly impaired the implementation rates." [online survey respondent]

In addition to COVID-19, the following additional causes for delays were identified in KIIs, the online survey and the document review:

- UN contracting processes and RUNO internal procedures as well as late fund transfers from RUNOs to IPs were identified by IPs and RUNOs as causes for delays in the implementation.

- The selection and appointment process of the CSRRG was delayed due to the AUC requirements for the process.

- The Department of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development (formerly Social Affairs) of the AUC - which is its leading department for the SIARP - holds key responsibilities in the COVID-19 response and focused significant attention on the pandemic management which resulted in delays and postponements of some SIARP activities. In addition, civil unrest and other humanitarian crises also had to be prioritized by the AUC while SIARP activities were postponed.

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- The pace of implementation was further slowed by human resource shortages and structural changes at the AUC. In addition, administrative procedures were not fully adapted to home office work during spikes in the COVID-19 pandemic.

Except for the COVID-19 pandemic, most reasons for delays were related to the oversight function of the AUC. These delays are difficult to mitigate by the SIARP as the AUC has a complex political agenda which goes far beyond the scope of the SIARP, and which takes precedence over the programme when more urgent priorities emerge. Measures to speed up implementation were, however, agreed between the UN and the AUC. These included the secondment of two staff to the AU and the organisation of bi-monthly technical catch-up meetings to accelerate programme implementation. To support the AUC in dealing with competing priorities, the UN also requested to appoint technical focal points who would consistently ensure that the SIARP moved forward.

In general, the above discussed factors have impacted more severely on Stream I than on Stream II. As Stream II is built on existing programmes, it had the advantage of already having human resources, management systems and governance structures in place at the start of the programme. Activities under this Stream commenced immediately, whereas activities under Stream I moved only slowly during the time when staffing, as well as management and governance structures were put in place. In addition, the selection process of IPs under Stream I further generated delays. This did also not affect Stream II which opted for a non-competitive CSO selection process. To fast-track the implementation, in particular under Stream I, an acceleration plan was developed in 2021. According to the PCU, significant progress was registered in 2022. At the time of the MTA, however, some activities were still substantially delayed.

Risk management

The risk management register of the SIARP uses four types of risk categories: contextual, programmatic, institutional and fiduciary risks. The Prodoc included three different risk management assessments: one for Stream I, one for the FGM programme and one for the child marriage programme under Stream II respectively. In the 2020 inception report, the three risk assessments were merged into one and the risk register was thoroughly revised. Most risks were reformulated and new risks, for example related to the COVID-19 pandemic or the absorptive capacity of partners were added in the 2021 annual report. At least one mitigatory measure was identified for each risk. The risks and challenges raised by key informants and in the annual report were overall aligned with the risk matrix. Key informants also agreed that relevant risks had been assessed and that effective mitigation measures were formulated.

Key findings:

- The SIARP has accumulated substantial delays under Stream I which were mainly caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the limited agility and human resource availability of the AUC. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the work plan and budget were revised, and relevant adjustment measures were initiated. To accelerate interventions implemented in partnership with the AUC, relevant mitigation measures were put in place. An acceleration plan was put in place in 2021, but some activities were still substantially delayed at the time of the MTA.

- The SIARP has identified relevant contextual, programmatic, and institutional risks and mitigation measures. The risk matrix has been updated and monitored on an annual basis.

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C. EFFECTIVENESS

7. To what extent has progress towards output targets been achieved? Is the quality of the outputs satisfactory?	☐ Very Good – Good ☒ Problems ☐ Serious deficiencies

Achievement of output targets

According to the global performance monitoring data provided to the MTA by the Spotlight Secretariat, the SIARP monitors and reports against 19 output indicators and 9 outcome indicators. Three outcome indicators have been selected for each of the pillars. The MTA analysed monitoring data for the first two years of the programme (until 31st December 2021). Outputs were rated as 'achieved' if the target had been met or surpassed. They were rated as 'in progress' when over 50 per cent of the target had been achieved and as 'not achieved' if the performance was below 50 per cent of the target.

The table below outlines the progress towards output targets for each of the three outcome pillars towards the 2021 milestones. Despite the late start of the programme, some progress was made towards the 2021 milestones. As displayed in the table below, three output targets were achieved by end of 2021. One output target under Pillar six was in progress. Six output targets had not been achieved. For eight of the output indicators, the 2021 milestones were set to the same value as the baseline. There was, thus, no progress planned for them. For the output indicator under Pillar 1 for which the indicator definition has been adjusted, it was not possible to conduct a progress analysis due to the absence of baseline data. Overall, the analysis of output target achievements indicated that the programme was lagging behind under Pillar 5 and 6 by end of 2021. The data analysis for Pillar 1 did not yield meaningful information as progress could only be assessed for one indicator (which had been achieved).

According to the document review (i.e., the steering committee meeting minutes) and UN key informants, the underachievement for some of the output targets was due to implementation delays under Stream I. They were explained through the delayed start date of the programme, the COVID-19 restrictions, the lengthy selection of CSO partners for this Stream as well as staff shortages (see also question 6).

Table 5.   Achievement of output targets in 2021

Progress	Achieved	In progress	Not achieved	No progress planned for 2021	Definition of indicator adjusted	Total number of outputs
Result 1	1	0	0	5	1	7
Result 5	2	0	3	2	0	7
Result 6	0	1	3	1	0	5

Is the quality of outputs satisfactory?

To respond to this part of the evaluation question, the MTA team analysed data from KIIs, the online survey and the document review. None of these tools have an explicit focus for assessing the quality of outputs. As the MTA did not include case studies or onsite visits to assess the quality of interventions, the findings presented below should be further investigated through onsite observations as well as interviews and focus group discussions with beneficiaries.

Key informants from RUNOs and IPs highlighted unanimously the relevance and quality of the interventions delivered under the three Pillars. Some of the IPs emphasized the fluent communication

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with the RUNOs and their willingness to integrate feedback. The participatory approach to developing products (e.g., training manuals) while involving actors from the AUC, civil society and several RUNOs was also highlighted as an element of quality. This included a training manual for CSOs for developing alternative reports for the AUC as well as the Regional Action Plan on ending VAWG and an associated training manual.

"And we have developed a civil society organisations training manual that would act as a resource guide for reference by NGOs when they're developing their reports, but also as a facilitator's guide when training other civil society organisations on the development of shadow reports to the African Union Commission. That training manual has undergone a very rigorous process in its development right from the capacity needs assessment to the inclusion of feedback from civil society organisations, but also the AUC and other RUNOs, mostly UNDP, and we've also had peer reviews." [key informant, IP]

"*The Regional Action Plan on violence against women and the training manual that's related to it are currently underway. First, drafts have been received and are being reviewed by the different stakeholders. […] This is also going to be very useful for the programme because it plays out at a continental level on what ought to be a model to be replicated by the member states.* "[key informant, IP]

Neither the document review nor the key informants or online survey respondents indicated any quality concern related to the activities implemented under the SIARP. Concerns were raised, however, in relation to the lack of coherence and synergy within and across pillars including the duplication of certain activities. These concerns are analysed in detail under evaluation question 3 and 12.

Key findings:

- The analysis of output target achievements showed that the programme had not achieved three output targets under Pillar 5 and 6 respectively by end of 2021. The progress under Pillar 1 could not be assessed in a meaningful way due to data limitations.

- The quality of the outputs was consistently described as positive. No substantial concerns were reported apart from the lack of interconnection between activities (as discussed under evaluation question 3, 8 and 12).

Recommendations:

- As recommended under question 3, it is recommended to continue the facilitation of bi-annual coordination meetings of all IPs intervening on the same pillar to streamline interventions, build synergies and enable cross-fertilization and learning (RUNOs).

- It is also recommended to monitor closely the indicators for which the 2021 milestones had not been achieved. If their targets are estimated as unrealistic, they should be reviewed (PCU, RUNOs)

8. To what extent has progress towards the outcome targets been achieved? Are the outputs still likely to lead to the expected outcomes?	☒ Very Good – Good
	☐ Problems
	☐ Serious deficiencies

Progress towards outcome targets

The progress towards output targets has been described under the previous evaluation question. The assessment of progress towards outcome targets based on the data from the global SMART platform was challenging and had limitations in terms of providing a comprehensive overview. This is due to the requirement to select indicators from the global indicator menu which are not adapted to regional programmes (see also evaluation question 5). Out of the 9 outcome indicators, 6 indicators – the Pillar 1 and Pillar 5 indicators - applied definitions that are different from the global indicator definitions. There are no baseline data, but only status narratives for these indicators in the Annex A retrieved from the SMART platform. An analysis of these six indicators showed that:

- Pillar I: For two of the outcome indicators, the baseline, milestone, target and result were set to the same value in Annex A. For the third indicator, no progress had been planned by end of 2021. The progress towards outcome milestones could, thus, not be assessed.

- Pillar 5: For the three outcome indicators under Pillar 5, targets had been provided, but were challenging to interpret in the absence of baseline data. The results achieved were close to the 2021 milestones which might be an indication of good progress.

The data sets for the three outcome indicators under Pillar 6 were complete. The 2021 outcome milestones had been achieved for two of the three indicators. On the third indicator, the programme had not made signification progress towards its outcome target.

Main achievements of the SIARP

The document review as well as information received during the online survey and KIIs were explored to analyse the key results of the programme. A detailed overview is provided in Table 6. The MTA analysis showcased that a few initiatives were perceived as the main achievements of the programme. These include the launch of the Global Youth Consortium against FGM, the launch of the Saleema Youth Victorious Ambassadors (SYVA) programme and communication campaign under Pillar 1. Despite challenges in identifying IPs with the necessary capacity under Pillar 5, a series of trainings has been delivered for strengthening the capacity building of stakeholders involved in collecting and analysing GBV and harmful practice data. This also included the revamping of the Gender observatory. Under Pillar 6, a substantial number of activities in the areas of research, knowledge creation and dissemination and development and piloting of tools were implemented. A few key informants also mentioned the establishment of the civil society reference group as an achievement itself.

"The establishment of the Civil Society Reference Group is one of them [main achievements], which is key for ensuring the vision of civil society engagement in the governance of the program function. So, the fact that there is now that structure established and that that group has been connecting to other parts of Spotlight in terms of participating [is an achievement]." [UN key informant]

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Table 6.	Key achievements and obstacles per Pillar	
Pillars	**Key achievements in Phase I**	**Issues arising / obstacles to address in Phase II and recommendations**
Outcome 1	- Partnership of the SIARP with the AU campaign to end child marriage and the AU Saleema initiative on elimination of FGM to engage governments to develop and implement national strategic frameworks and plans of actions on SGBV, child marriage and FGM. - Development of the first-ever evidence-based Regional Action Plan (RAP) for Africa with a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework on Eliminating Violence against Women and Girls (EVAWG) including SGBV/HP and (SRH&RR). - Development of the regional Accountability Framework to provide guidance to contribute towards stronger Member States accountability on the elimination gender-based violence of harmful practices, particularly FGM and child marriage, with a clarified process, guidelines and measures on action and measures on the ground). - Collaboration with the AU Campaign focal points in governments and national CSOs to develop and utilize advocacy materials including provision of technical support to governments which resulted in 5 countries (Eritrea, Central African Republic, Kenya, Niger, South Sudan) finalizing the costing and launch of their evidence-based national action plans with M&E frameworks to end child marriage. - Existence of a regional evidenced-based mapping and assessment covering 18 member states on the status of implementation /enforcement of laws and policies, action plans, financing, and capacity to deliver on EVAWG by Regional Partners and Members States. - Facilitators' training manual on drafting, ratification, and implementation of human rights instruments in relation to EVAWG/SRHR (UNDP) - The African Union Report and Score Card: Getting to Zero Female Genital Mutilation in Africa: Strengthening Human Rights, Accelerating Efforts and Galvanizing Accountability - Launch of the Global Youth Consortium against FGM	- Both RUNOs and IPS pointed to the various overlaps between some of the activities under Outcome 1 and Outcome 5. Some of these overlaps have been addressed by developing an integrated work plan in collaboration with implementing partners under Pillar 1 and Pillar 5 activities but IPs reported instances where duplication couldn't be avoided. - Recommendations to address these overlaps are provided under evaluation question 3 and 12. - The SIARP under Stream I has faced limited availability and capacity of regional CSOs to implement the activities. The programme is addressing this by headhunting CSOs and provides close follow-up and support to enhance the selected CSOs' capacity to accelerate action and implement in a fast-tracked manner. SIARP has also recently recruited a Civil Society Engagement Coordinator to provide technical leadership and guidance to CSOs given the critical role that civil society plays in the regional programme. - To further tackle challenges related to IPs' capacity, we recommend scaling up peer-to-peer support: IPs which have demonstrated stronger capacity, can be supported to mentor IPs of weaker capacity. - Implementation has been delayed due to the AUC's lack of sufficient human resources, delayed decision making and shifting of priorities due to COVID-19. The delayed sign off on the workplan for the Child Marriage Ambassador and the Child Marriage Rapporteur by the AUC for over 1 year, for instance, adversely affected the delivery rates. This challenge is being addressed by expanding support from one focused AUC Division and Department (AU Health, Humanitarian Affairs & Social Development) to other 'more favourable' Divisions e.g., AU Youth Division and the AUC Women, Gender and Youth Directorate. - Overall, the significant delays caused by the AUC have been mitigated through virtual meetings, close follow up and secondment of staff.
Outcome 5	- UNFPA in collaboration with the UN Volunteers Programme launched the "Population data, FGM data and research" fellowship initiative.	- Under this pillar, the recruitment of IPs was particularly challenging due to a low number of applicants. One of the identified IPs has shown, however, strong capacity and it can be expected that the

	- Development of a cost and impact modelling exercise to determine the level of investment required to eliminate FGM by 2030. - Strengthening of the AUC regional data and research gender observatory and scorecard platform to ensure periodic, inclusive, and quality reporting of member states and CSO's on VAWG/SGBV/HP and SRH&RR. - Training on data collection and analysis aimed at building capacity of child marriage and FGM data users (government personnel in key decision-making positions, CSO programme managers, UNFPA and UNICEF programme staff) and data generators (national statistical officers) - Production of a curriculum on VAWG and training of professionals from academia, civil society organisations and government to plan and regularly collect data related to SGBV, child marriage, FGM in line with international and regional standards to inform laws, policies, and programmes, and to track progress towards national, regional, and continental commitments to address these issues. - Establishment of the Annual Continental Coordination Platform for National Spotlight Initiative programmes in Africa. Its main goal is to share innovative, promising, or good practices of the national Spotlight Initiative programmes related to implementation and partnership development at country levels. - Development of a Gender-transformative-accelerator-tool brief. - Training manual on alternative periodic reporting on Women's Rights in Africa	- ongoing training initiative as well the upcoming online platform will help to address this capacity gap. - Given the specificity of the expertise required under this pillar, we recommend exploring partnership options with universities or other institutions based in or outside the continent to support capacity building specifically aimed at research and statistical institutions. The Central Asia Regional Programme, for example, partners with a university in Australia which has developed teaching modules in English on collecting and analysing VAWG data as part of this collaboration. This could potentially also be harnessed by the SIARP (RUNOs).
Outcome 6	- Desk review on the status of civic space in Africa: In collaboration with APHRC, the SIARP carried out a desk review on the status of the civic space in selected countries, policymaking efforts to eliminate VAWG, AU instruments on ending VAWG, the status of ratification, domestication, and implementation; status of capacity-building efforts and tools to capture data on VAWG. - Policy research to identify gaps in engaging men and boys in national and regional laws and policies including the development of a scorecard - Community of Practice Results of the International Stakeholders Dialogue (ISD) on FGM - Pilot workshop to test a toolkit aiming at building capacity of national and regional	- There are two types of activities which have been delivered under this Pillar: (1) research and knowledge dissemination and (2) the development and piloting of new tools. While the new knowledge and tools are useful to CSOs for their work, the direct contribution of these activities to the SIARP's Pillar 6 outcomes is not yet evident. As further activities will be rolled out in 2022 and 2023, it can be expected that this gap will be closed.

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CSOs to manage knowledge, exchange information, and advocate for accountability in relation to ratification, domestication, and reporting on AU instruments on ending VAWG and promoting SRHR. - Development and launch of a Journalists' Handbook on FGM: Guideline for Gender-Sensitive Reporting which focuses on gender-sensitive reporting for journalists and all communication practitioners working on ending FGM. The handbook offers practical illustrations on what language to use and application of the 'Do No Harm' principle and the principles of ethical reporting which aim at enduring the protection of the dignity of the survivors of FGM while reporting on their cases or stories. - Development of the 'I belong to Me -Story Book' - Set up of an innovation Hack Lab which was reported as a valuable source for scalable innovative solutions developed by young innovators to accelerate efforts towards ending harmful practices	

Key findings:

- Due to the limitations of the data available in Annex A of the SMART platform, it was not possible to conduct an analysis of progress towards outcome milestones for Pillar 1 and Pillar 5. Under Pillar 6, the 2021 outcome milestones were achieved for two out of three outcome indicators.

- Despite its delays, the programme has contributed to achievements under all three pillars.

Recommendations:

- As recommended under question 3, it is suggested to review the intervention streams to establish a stronger synergy and connection between interventions and to concentrate the efforts on interventions with the most promising outcomes (RUNOs, IPs).
- Recommendations to tackle specific challenges are available in Table 6 (in the right column).

| 9A. Do the government, implementing partners or RUNOs have sufficient capacity (financial, human resources, institutional) to ensure that implementation is going according to plan? 9B. Are there any obstacles/bottlenecks/outstanding issues on the partners' or government side that are limiting the successful implementation and results achievement of the Initiative?	☐ Very Good – Good ☒ Problems ☐ Serious deficiencies

Budget execution

The budget analysis is based on the financial data from quarter 1 of the current year (2022). The data were extracted from the MPTF Gateway in Quarter 2 of 2022. The budget delivery (expenditure and commitments) was at 64 per cent for all RUNOs combined (see Figure 1 below). This figure is, however, distorted, by a budget delivery of 156 per cent by UN Women which is mainly due to its high budget commitments which were reported to be a result of PCA agreements and payroll commitments. Combined expenditures and commitments against the budget were lowest for UNICEF (43 per cent). They were 54 per cent for UNDP and 59 per cent for UNFPA. Considering the low budget delivery by UNICEF, it was not certain at the time of the MTA if the programme can meet its commitment to spend 70 per cent by December 2022. As Phase 1, however, has been extended to December 2023, the potential under-expenditure was not considered as a risk at the time of the MTA. Discussion on securing the extension of the programme were ongoing at the time of the MTA.

Figure 1. Budget vs expenditure (by end of Q1 2022)
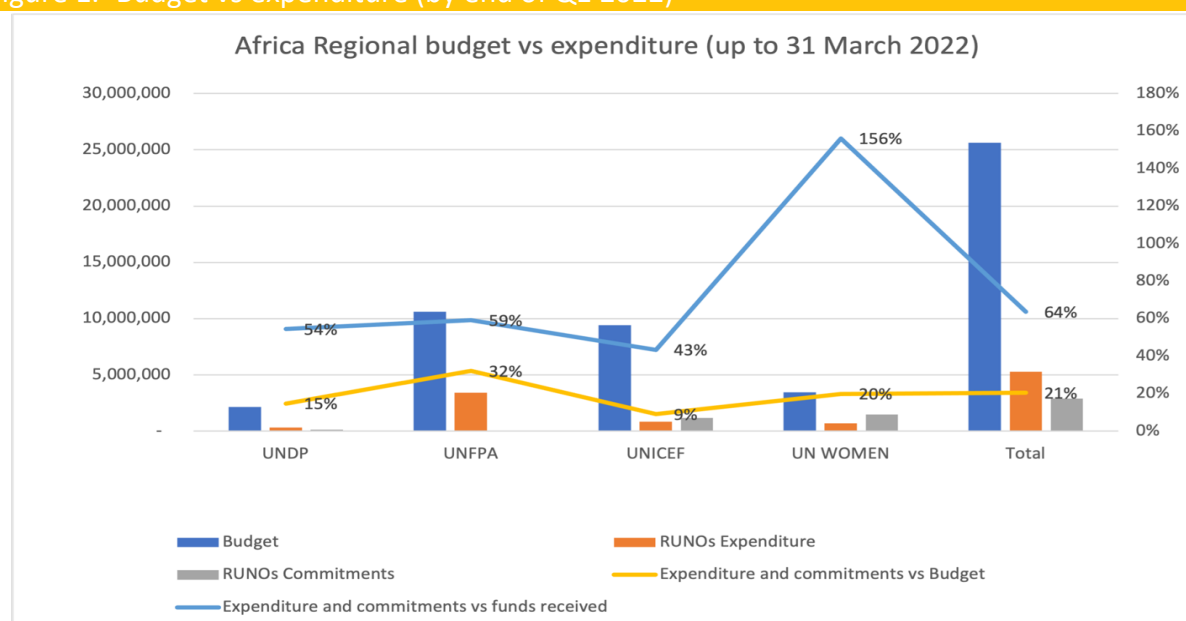
One challenge to an effective budget delivery which was highlighted by UN key informants and in the annual 2021 report was the "70 per cent rule" of the Spotlight Initiative. This rule requires a cumulative expenditure of all RUNOs to have delivered 70 per cent of received funds before the next instalment can be requested. While this is a standard requirement for pooled funding, it was experienced as a hold up in the implementation of the SIARP. Key informants reported that there were instances where one RUNO was not able to reach the 70 per cent budget delivery which consequently forced the RUNOs working on the other pillars to slow down operations. While the 70 per cent rule was cited as a root cause for delays in the availability of funding, it is important to highlight that RUNOs could have pre-funded activities while waiting for another RUNO to reach the 70 per cent. The Spotlight Initiative includes an agreement between the DSG and the RUNO headquarters under which all core agencies have committed to the DSG to balance any cash needs of their agency should there be a time lag between their agency's progress and that of the

other RUNOs and to manage cash flows across countries and regions. This agreement was, however, either not known by key informants or perceived as too cumbersome and not feasible.

Absorptive capacity and other obstacles limiting successful implementation of programme IPs

According to RUNO key informants, the recruited IPs have displayed strong motivation, commitment and fair capacity to implement the planned interventions. Their institutional and technical capacity was described to vary, but most online survey respondent rated it as either 'good' or 'excellent'. The capacity of IPs to absorb the budget received mixed ratings. Out of the 12 respondents knowledgeable on the matter, six rated it as having 'considerable' or 'great issues'. This was corroborated by the annual report which stated that the '*the capacity of the CSOs to deliver the deliberated activities at an accelerated pace continues to be a challenge*'. To mitigate the limited capacity of regional CSOs, RUNOs provided ongoing support to enhance the selected CSOs' capacities with the aim of accelerating the pace of implementation. For instance, UN Women reported pairing organisations with stronger capacity with those of weaker capacity for some activities.

According to IPs, difficulties in absorbing the budget were associated with implementation delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, RUNOs' lack of flexibility to adjust the interventions to contextual changes and an insufficient induction of first time IPs in the processes of procedures of the different RUNOs. Several IPs also reported that the accelerated timelines imposed on them by RUNOs were not realistic and that information regarding a no-cost extension were not communicated in a timely manner by UN agencies. Some also mentioned that funding transfers from RUNOs had not been on time.

"As first time IP, there was inadequate preparation for learning the systems for reporting and proposal development. Most importantly, the project gave very little room for flexibility even when there were delays from the part of [the RUNO] when we were asked to halt programming." [online survey respondent]

RUNOs

All key informants and most online survey respondents from RUNOs reported substantial issues related to their absorption capacity. Out of the 17 RUNO participants in the online survey, 12 responded that the Spotlight Initiative lacked human resources. Gaps were described both in operations and technical functions. At the time of the MTA, most of the RUNO personnel supporting the Spotlight Initiative were either only partially funded by the SIARP or not funded at all. Consequently, RUNO personnel has to deal with numerous competing priorities which resulted in a high work burden and, at times, in delays in the delivery of the action.

"At operational level, this is where further funding would have been important; the funding for those positions comes from other sources that are not always reliable/long term and that may affect the implementation of Spotlight funded activities." [online survey respondent]

"Many of the RUNOs have to rely on part time staff. Both technical and operational positions suffer from understaffing." [online survey respondent]

"Some of the assigned staffs are also responsible for other relevant programs in their agencies that make them overwhelmed and overstretched." [online survey respondent]

The main root cause identified by online survey respondents and key informants were budget restrictions of RUNO staff which were associated with the 18 per cent ceiling for programme management costs (PMC) which did not allow the SIARP to budget for sufficient personnel.

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"The Spotlight program is a very labour-intensive programme requiring dedicated staffing. However, due to the budget limitations or restrictions, many of the RUNOs do not have the required staffing to implement activities in due time." [online survey respondent]

AUC

The absorptive capacity of the AUC was perceived as a limiting factor by key informants (from both the UN and the AUC) and by online survey respondents. The number of staff to support the programme at the AUC were described as insufficient and at times struggling with competing priorities. Staff turnover at the AUC as well as bureaucratic procedures were also described to have reduced the absorptive capacity of the AUC and to have led to delays in activities.

"So, the volume of work is also quite heavy. So, there's quite a bit of heavy lifting, which I have to do on my own sometimes because the Directorate [Women, gender and youth at the AUC] is very thin on staff." [key informant, programme partner].

"So sometimes the human resource component is difficult as we don't have much human resources. And sometimes the bureaucratic processes of trying to move activities forward, you know, [there are] challenges of trying to reach different stakeholders to be part of different events or trying to reach member states for a lot of different events." [key informant, programme partner]

Key findings:

- The budget delivery analysis showed high budget commitments for UN Women which were reported to be a result of PCA agreements and payroll commitments. The three other RUNOs had budget delivery rates (expenditures and commitments) below 60 percent that were particularly low for UNICEF at 43 per cent by end of quarter 1 of 2022. At the time of the MTA, the programme was in a situation of underspending. This was, however, not considered a high risk because of the extension of Phase I for an additional year (until end of 2023).

- Key informants and online survey respondents from the UN and AUC reported a high workload and agreed that the budget allocated to RUNO staffing was insufficient for Phase 1. This resulted in insufficient human resources for operations and technical support functions and a high workload for the RUNO personnel involved in the Spotlight Initiative. A restricted absorptive capacity due to staff shortages was also reported at the level of the AUC. At the level of the implementing CSOs, there were mixed perceptions regarding their absorptive capacity. While UN stakeholders reported issues related to the absorptive capacity of CSO IPs, IPs perceived that their absorptive capacity had been hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as insufficient induction and support from RUNOs for the administrative and financial management of their contracts.

Recommendations:

- As technical expertise for RUNOs can also be budgeted under the programme outcomes in the Phase 2 budget, we suggest implementing a workforce planning exercise in its design process. This will allow identifying critical gaps in RUNO teams and planning for sufficient RUNO staffing for the next phase of the Spotlight Initiative.
- To tackle challenges related to IPs' capacity, we recommend scaling up peer-to-peer support: IPs which have demonstrated stronger capacity, can be supported to mentor IPs of weaker capacity. It should be carefully monitored that this does not overstretch the capacity of stronger IPs to deliver their own activities (RUNOs, IPs).

D. EFFICIENCY

10. Are the chosen implementation mechanisms (incl. choice of implementation modalities, entities and contractual arrangements) adequate for achieving the expected results?	☒ Very Good – Good
	☐ Problems
	☐ Serious deficiencies

Budget delivery mechanism

The programme budget (not including management costs) is split into five delivery mechanisms as displayed in the table below. Overall, 48 per cent of the budget is planned to be allocated to transfers to CSOs, seven per cent to payments to individual consultants, three per cent to payments to consultancy companies, 37 per cent is classified as "other" and eight per cent to transfers to the African Union. The guidance of the Spotlight Initiative to channel 30 to 50 per cent of CSO funding to civil society organisations has, thus, been met. The proportion of other costs delivered by RUNOs is rather high compared to other programmes.

Table 7.   Programme budget delivery mechanisms

Delivery mechanism	Stream I	Stream II Child marriage	Stream II FGM	Average
Other (delivered by RUNO)	27%	49%	35%	37%
Payment to a Consultancy Company	5%	3%	1%	3%
Payment to an Individual Consultant	9%	6%	6%	7%
Payment/Transfer to a CSO	51%	38%	54%	48%
Transfer to African Union	8%	4%	4%	5%

Selection of IPs

The Africa Regional Programme used a rigorous, competitive CSO election process for Stream I. It used a consultative approach with key stakeholders and applied a set of diversity criteria to ensure an equal representation of CSOs in terms of geographic and language representation and in terms of representation both at the regional and at the grassroot level. The selection process proved to be challenging and lengthy due to a lack of qualified applications from CSOs with regional scope. According to the 2021 annual report, experienced CSOs working at regional scope were either already partnering with other UN agencies or did not have the capacity to deliver additional contracts. There was also no francophone CSO among the applications to the first call for Expression of Interest (EoI). Among the applicants, some had insufficient institutional capacity, in particular in relation to financial systems. Other disqualified as they were under investigation for sexual exploitation and abuse. Key informants also reported the programme had to be selective CSOs applications, considering sexual and reproductive health and rights sensitivities and issues relating particular minority groups (see also questions 1 and 3).

"Now, the only thing I could speak to is that some of the organisations, depending on the selection criteria were not accepted. Going back to [sexual and gender minority groups]: So even if they [CSOs] worked

specifically on key issues that we're working on, but if there was anything related to [sexual and gender minority groups] in their organisation, the CS0 was not considered at all." [key informant, AUC]

It was decided to re-advertise the call for EoI. As a result, the RUNOs were able to shortlist seven additional CSOs after the second round. This enabled to add two francophone CSOs to the list of the selected IPs.

"For us, we also wanted to make sure that there is a presentation of the CSOs from the francophone context which had been really a daunting task, especially at the beginning. We were unable to find a very good qualified CSO from those contexts. So, we had to issue a call for proposal twice, for instance, and kind of do headhunting and try to find other ways of bringing in those CSOs in line with the 'leaving no one behind' principle." [UN Key informant]

For Stream II, a non-competitive CSO selection process was chosen. This allowed a strategic selection of CSOs with either growth potential or long-term experience and strong capacity in applying a human-rights based programming approach including a focus on advancing the principle of LNOB.

Implementation mechanisms

The RUNOs operate according to their own internal procedures. For collaborating with CSOs, the Africa Regional Programme applied two types of implementation mechanisms:

- long-term agreements (LTA's) have been used with existing partners of strong technical capacity such as AIDOS for work in areas like gender norms management, social policy and budgeting.

- leverage partnership methods: This approach was implemented under Stream II. It draws on existing partnerships from the two joint programmes on child marriage and FGM with, for example, Girls Not Brides and the African Council of Religious Leaders with the aim to pursue research and evidence generation and to improve policies and legislations.

CSOs partners were contracted as either vendors, IPs or grantees. According to the 2021 annual report 16 CSOs were contracted: three as vendors, 12 as IPs and one as a grantee. Out of the 16 CSOs, only half were classified in the category "women-led/ women's rights organisation or feminist CSO". In line with the requirement to work with CSOs of regional scope, seven of the identified CSOs operate at least in two countries while nine were categorised as international organisations. Of the amount awarded to CSOs, 50 per cent has been awarded to regional CSOs and 50 per cent to international organisations. The budget distribution of the amount awarded to CSOs is rather uneven. Three CSOs (AIDOS, APHRC and Equality Now) have been awarded 52 per cent of the funding. Equality Now alone received 25 per cent of the total amount awarded to CSOs. Considering the difficulties in finding qualified partners, the high budget allocation to Equality Now can be understood as a strategic decision to reach a larger number of CSOs engaged in the women's movement. Equality Now is the Secretariat of the Solidarity for African Women's Rights Coalition (SOAWR), a network of over 50 national, regional and international civil society organisations in 27 countries promoting the rights of African women and girls through advocacy for implementing the Maputo Protocol. Two of the CSOs (Equality Now and APHRC) signed contracts with three RUNOs (UNDP, UNFPA and UN Women). Among the selected partners, seven CSOs are new UN partners. This count includes APHRC which was an existing partner of UN Women, but a new partner to UNDP and UNFPA.

Two of the IPs planned sub-contracting agreement with other CSOs. According to information provided by the PCU, Girls not Brides sub-contracted two national CSOs. APHRC also established sub-contracting agreements with two CSOs, one works with an international and one with a regional scope. The proportion

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of the budget awarded to CSOs that was allocated for sub-contracts to additional CSOs was small at four per cent.

Key informants and online survey respondents (UN and IPs) reported several challenges related to the implementation mechanisms. The UN requirements for proposals, institutional capacity and reporting were too demanding for some organisations.

"Systems for reporting and proposal development were very challenging and put off small organisations with limited capacity." [online survey respondent]

In addition, the requirement of the Spotlight Initiative to channel 50 to 70 per cent of the funding allocated to CSOs to local and grassroot organisations could not be met as it is in contradiction to the regional programme requirement to work with CSOs which work in more than one country. While some of the IPs (Equality Now, PSH and Girls Not Brides, for example) implement interventions to strengthen the capacity of grassroot organisations and work with them through their networks and outreach, their participation in the programme had little visibility at the time of the MTA.

Some IPs received short-term contracts which were renewed (or not) on an annual basis. This involved considerable design, planning and reporting efforts, but did not allow them to deliver sustainable actions. It was also reported that disbursement delays from the Spotlight Initiative to RUNOs led to disbursement delays to IPs. Some IPs also raised limited flexibility in using the allocated resources as well as requests to add activities as issues. The lack of flexibility made it challenging to adapt the activities to contextual changes, in particular the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Short term financing which implies short term planning, monitoring, collection of data and higher burden in terms of reporting and project proposal writing as the project may be renewed year by year and even less. This implies also less opportunity to have social impact and measure it." [online survey respondent]

"Delays in the disbursement from Spotlight to RUNOs sometimes resulted into delays in disbursement from RUNOs to IPs." [online survey respondent]

"Resources budgeted were not flexible. The financial resources budgeted for are insufficient and often times, there are requests to add activities (based on arising needs) that are not budgeted for." [online survey respondent]

Staffing levels for Spotlight and Management Cost

The ceiling for programme management cost (PMC) is set at 18 per cent of the overall budget for the Spotlight Initiative at the global level. According to the budget approved by the global operational steering committee, the PMC is at 15 per cent for the SIARP.

In the revised budget of the 2021 annual report, there are 9 persons who have been hired as staff or personnel to support the Spotlight Initiative on a full-time basis. This includes four of the PCU staff[3]. Under Stream I, one pillar lead position has been hired by UNDP (Pillar 1), UNFPA (Pillar 5) and UN Women (Stream I and Pillar 6 lead) respectively, one M&E staff and one technical support position to the AUC (both with UNWomen). In addition, si RUNO staff are partially funded by the Spotlight Initiative (including four finance positions which are 20 per cent funded by the SIARP and one finance position which is 50 per cent SIARP funded). Under Stream II, UNFPA and UNICEF included staff support from 12 different functions including senior management in the budget which are funded through UN contributions. These staff time contributions are, however, relatively small (between 2,5 and 5 per cent for a period over two years and). There is one exception: UNFPA contributes 25 per cent of a Senior Advisor over two years to the

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[3] The fifth PCU staff is not included in the SIARP budget.

programme. With the exception of finance staff, no other RUNO operational support functions such as procurement, HR or administration are included in the Phase I budget of the SIARP.

Key findings:

- The SIARP meets the Spotlight Initiative requirement to channel 30 to 50 percent of IP funding to CSOs. It applies mostly adequate implementation mechanisms with their IPs (LTA's and leverage partnership methods) although some IPs reported negative impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of their work due to short-term contracts.

- The selected IPs are a mix of regional and international CSOs. Over half of the funding was awarded to three existing RUNO partners with long-term experience and strong capacity (AIDOS, APHRC and Equality Now). Demanding recruitment and reporting requirements from RUNOs as well as their requirement to partner with CSOs that have a multi-country footprint have been a barrier to fostering new partnerships with smaller CSOs. In light of the delays accumulated during the design phase and during the selection process of CSOs, this approach was adequate, however, for accelerating the programme delivery. The global grassroot action plan is currently not implemented by the programme.

- To support the implementation of the SIARP, 9 fully funded and 6 partially funded personnel have been budgeted for under Stream I. Under Stream II, minor staff support from RUNOs' ROs and HQs has been budgeted for through UN contributions. Considering the budget envelope of almost 27 m USD, the number of RUNO staff supporting the implementation of the SIARP seems insufficient.

- The PMC for the SIARP are at 15 per cent. The threshold for PMC of Spotlight Initiative Programmes is at 18 per cent and could have been slightly better harnessed for human resource support to the programme.

Recommendations:

- We recommend harnessing the design process of phase 2 to develop an approach for implementing the Global Grassroot Action Plan under the Pillar 6 interventions with the objective to ensure that CSOs at all levels are strengthened in a sustainable way. This could be, for example, based on sub-contracting arrangements. We also recommend an exchange with the Central Asia Regional Programme which has successfully reached grassroot organisations as part of their Pillar 6 action (PCU, UN Women).

- As recommended under question 9, we suggest implementing a workforce planning exercise in the design process for Phase 2. This will allow identifying critical gaps in RUNO teams and planning for sufficient RUNO staffing for the next phase of the Spotlight Initiative. It is also recommended to fully use the 18 per cent PMC budget margin for operational support functions (PCU, RUNOs).

11A. How effectively is the Initiative managed? 11B. How effectively is the Programme managed? Are the governance and management mechanisms for the Initiative at national level adequate and functioning as planned? Do partner government and other partners (please consider CSO and EU Delegation) in the country effectively participate in these mechanisms?	☒ Very Good – Good
	☐ Problems
	☐ Serious deficiencies

Management of the Initiative - support from the Global Secretariat

The Global Secretariat started to closely collaborate with the four RUNOs during the design phase and continued its support – including to the PCU – throughout the implementation. Feedback on the collaboration was consistently positive. The guidance provided in M&E, reporting, fund replenishments communication was appreciated and described as timely and of high quality. Key informants from the PCU and RUNOs also stressed that it was helpful to have specific focal points for different areas such as communication, reporting, M&E or civil society engagement. The monthly call arranged for all Spotlight coordinators was also highlighted as useful for sharing challenges and good practices.

"I would say it [the collaboration with the Secretariat] is very satisfactory. We are always in touch with the Secretariat. The communication is very clear and very timely and whenever we request for meetings or catch up or guidance, we do receive that in time. […]. They've been constantly reviewing and coming back to us, providing feedback and making adjustments or making recommendations on where adjustments need to be done. I would say it's really good." [UN key informant]

"We've been working very, very closely with the Secretariat on a number of things. For example, on the communications, they've been very helpful in terms of sharing with us, orienting us on the branding guidelines for the Spotlight programme, on the annual report.[…] And then again, we worked closely with them on the Civil Society Regional Reference Group - on the formation of that group. They've been key, part and parcel. And you would find that most of all these components that I'm talking about, there is a focal person at the Secretariat." [UN key informant]

Governance mechanisms

Steering committees

The SIARP uses four different steering committees for its governance. Two of them – the one for the joint global programme on FGM and the one on the joint global programme for child marriage have existed prior to the programme and the Spotlight Initiative draws on them for ensuring an effective governance of the Stream II activities. According to the 2021 annual report and meeting minutes received, both steering committees meet twice a year. Key informants perceived them as effective and complementary for the coordination of Stream II.

"As far as the Stream 2 is concerned, I think that it works pretty well because as we were saying this morning, the global one, I mean, the Africa Regional Program Steering Committee is very political, it's very polite. At the level of the joint programme, it's more technical and actually we can get much more description and information about the results and about what has been done and what will be expected in the next months." [steering committee member]

As governance mechanism for Stream I, a new committee, the 'Stream I Steering Committee' was set up. It is chaired by UN Women and its meeting frequency is bi-annually. The agency also acts as Secretariat for the Committee. It is composed of representatives from the four RUNOs (regional directors), one EUD representative, one AUC representative and two CSRRG members. Its purpose is to approve the Stream I annual work plans and reports (and sub-sequent revisions), to ensure effective collaboration and

engagement of Stream I stakeholders and to support advocacy and resource mobilization efforts. The committee was only put in place recently and met for the first time in April 2022. During this first meeting, the ToR for the Committee as well as the 2022 Annual Work Plan (AWP) were adopted.

The overall governance mechanism for the SIARP is the Africa Regional Steering Committee (ARSC). It is co-chaired by the UNDCO and the AUC and includes one regional representative of each of the four RUNOs, two representatives of the EUD and the AUC respectively, as well as three representatives of the CSRRG. The PCU serves as its secretariat. The functions of the ARSC are to ensure coherence and coordination across the two streams, to provide strategic and political oversight, to oversee reporting and to support resource mobilization for the two streams. The meeting frequency is bi-annually. Since the start of the programme, the ARSC has been convened twice, in May 2021 and in March 2022. The second meeting was planned for November 2021 but had to be postponed due to the non-availability of the AUC. According to the 2021 meeting minutes and key informants, the documents to be discussed were shared too late for both meetings. Key informants perceived that the ARSC is overall a functional governance mechanism. Some respondents described it as too formal, superficial, and focused on information sharing only. They felt that the content of the presentations did not allow to understand the implementation progress of the programme and that it was not used for strategic solution development to tackle barriers and challenges.

"*I think it is the Africa global one that is too formal. It is high level, but it's also too formal the way it's being prepared. […]. Sometimes it lacks even proper organisation - having all documents well in advance, but also make sure that there are some really specific questions being asked where advice is being searched and not just presentations and everything is fine. So, I think it's on the global one on which there is some work to be done, even if it's delicate. […] So, I think that level of the two streams, it looks like it is working but on the global one, we need to do some, efforts to make it not just an info event.*" [observer to the ARSC]

There were mixed perceptions regarding the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the governance set-up for the SIARP. For some key informants, the four steering committees were an appropriate approach for overseeing the programme. Other key informants perceived it as inefficient to draw on four different structures. In their view, the Stream I Steering Committee was of limited added value and could be removed as the participants were the same or of similar profiles to those of the ARSC.

CSRRG

The CSRRG is another governance mechanism of the SIARP with an advisory, advocacy and accountability role. It is composed of 15 members who were selected by a Selection Committee (including representatives from the UN, EUD and AUC) through review and evaluation of their applications including diversity criteria such as geography, gender, age and language. The selection process was lengthy. It was launched in February 2021, but only completed at the end of the year due to demands of the AUC to have a more formalized selection process including a selection committee plan of action. The selected members are 14 women and one man. The CSRRG was formerly inaugurated in February 2022. It was initially agreed that CSRRG members will not be remunerated for their work. According to the PCU, the remuneration guidance note for CSRRG members developed by the global Secretariat will, however, be rolled out. The interviewed CSRRG members were not (yet) informed about this. The CSRRG is supported through one of the IPs (Partners for Sexual Health (PSH)) a civil society organisation based in South Africa.

At the time of the MTA, all CSRRG members had signed a code of conduct for their work and prepared an ambitious draft work plan including activities in the areas of institutional strengthening of the CSRRG, communication and visibility, advocacy, increasing investments for ending VAWG as well as monthly

meetings of the group. The draft did not yet include a budget. As the CSRRG was just starting its work at the time of the MTA, it was too early to gauge their contributions to the Spotlight Initiative. Key informants perceived the CSRRG as a critical structure for the governance of the programme that should be sustained beyond the duration of the programme. From the perspective of the CSRRG members, they were still in the process of acquiring a full understanding of their role and of the Spotlight Initiative. They expressed regret that the group was set up only after the start of the implementation instead of being involved in the design process (see also evaluation question 4). Representatives of the CSRRG have started participating in the first governance meetings (the ARSC and the Stream I steering committee meetings in March 2022) and perceived that their participation was taken seriously by other stakeholders as their concerns and comments were captured in the meeting minutes. Overall, the CSRRG members were optimistic to be able to influence the course of the action. They also highlighted, however, that the timeframe of the initiative was too short to achieve sustainable changes.

Management of the Programme

To explain and clarify the programme management approach, a series of SOPs were developed. They outline the rules and processes for governance, partnerships, communication and visibility, M&E and reporting, CSO engagement as well as coordination. A content analysis of the SOP shows the complexity of the programme and its fragmentation created by the two streams. The SOPs for Stream I and II are different and some of the SOPs such as the SOP on CSO engagement only apply to Stream I.

For programme coordination purposes, the following structures have been put in place:

- **PCU:** The PCU is the responsible entity for the overall programme coordination. Its composition is described under evaluation question 2. It is responsible for building and sustaining linkages across the two streams and to act as a communication liaison between UN, EUD, DCO and the global Secretariat. The PCU organizes quarterly inter-agency coordination meetings bringing together technical staff from the four RUNOs as well as a Joint Annual Review meeting and Planning.

- **Stream Leads:** To coordinate the work under each stream, one RUNO has been designated as stream lead. The RUNO stream lead for Stream I is UN Women. For Stream II, it is UNFPA. The two stream leads have the responsibility to coordinate and oversee all work taking place under their respective stream. They are the responsible entity for stream-related information management and for strengthening capacity of other UN actors, if required. The stream leads organize monthly inter-agency coordination meetings including relevant staff from the RUNOs' regional offices, headquarters and Liaison Offices. To fulfil their role, the stream leads liaise with Pillar leads under their respective stream.

- **Pillar Leads:** For Stream I, one Pillar lead has been appointed for each outcome: UNDP for Pillar 1, UNFPA for Pillar 5 and UN Women for Pillar 6. Their responsibilities include the support and monitoring of all activities under their respective pillars. They work closely with the Stream leads to keep them updated about progress and challenges and invite them to the Pillar Coordination meeting when required.

- **For Stream II,** regular meetings are organized to coordinate interventions and review progress for both programmes. They include participants from the PCU, UNFPA, UNICEF and the AUC. For the FGM programme, a monthly meeting bringing together UNFPA and UNICEF staff based in Addis Ababa is also organized to monitor progress and challenges. The AUC is invited to these meetings.

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- **Agency coordination structure and meetings:** In addition to the PCU, stream lead and Pillar lead, each agency has set up an internal coordination structure bringing together operations and programme functions to support the roll out of the SIARP. This includes monthly meetings.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Work Group**: this group brings together M&E focal points from the four RUNOs. It works across the two streams. The M&E working group is chaired in rotation of M&E focal from RUNOs. This group was set up during the programme inception, but has not met regularly in 2021. It was revived in February 2022.

- The 2021 annual report also refers to **different task forces** bringing together the RUNOs technical teams to tackle challenges and for joint problem solving while engaging with CSOs. The technical focal points from the four RUNOs have also prepared a joint knowledge management strategy.

Meeting minutes are prepared in different formats and varying detail. A review of the minutes made available to the MTA team showed that monitoring of actions which were agreed in previous meeting was not coherently documented. While all meeting minutes documented new actions points or priority actions, the updates provided do rarely refer to actions agreed in previous meetings.

Key informants and online survey respondents had mixed perceptions about the management structure of the programme. Some UN key informants felt that it enabled effective inter-agency collaboration and information sharing across pillars and streams. They also highlighted that the structure strengthened the collaboration with the AUC and was helpful for ensuring their continuous involvement in the action.

Others were not fully satisfied with the quantity and content of the coordination meetings. They criticized its cumbersome nature, the repetitive content of meetings in which feedback from beneficiaries was lacking. Some UN key informants expressed meeting fatigue. In their view, the sheer quantity of meetings as well as the reporting requirements (including meeting minutes) left insufficient time to actually do their work related to the implementation of the initiative such as technical support to CSOs, stakeholder engagement or reviewing and improving interventions. This applies in particular to RUNO personnel who are not or only partially funded by the SIARP who reported it as both 'extremely stressful' and inefficient to see their time absorbed by numerous meetings. They proposed more full-time positions dedicated to the SIARP at the level of the RUNOs to address this problem. Some also reported that the content of the meetings needed to be improved. The coordination meetings mostly focused on activity reporting and information sharing while there was insufficient space for strategic thinking and identification of good practices and lessons learnt.

"I think it is too many meetings. I think, since the transition from COVID 19, we do meetings for everything. And for me, the issue is that the process is becoming the result. Everything is about the process which are meetings. We have those meetings, and we report that we have those meetings. The issue is that there is no time to connect the dots." [UN key informant]

"[There are] many meetings that feel repetitive and focused on activities, but with little information on results and feedback from benefitting populations." [online survey respondent]

From the perception of other stakeholders (AUC, EUD) it was difficult to understand how the responsibilities were shared across the RUNOs. While the PCU was perceived as a helpful element, the task sharing across RUNOs and who to approach for specific issues lacked clarity.

"I'd especially like to understand for the programme who was in charge of what and when and who should I talk to for this or for that? It's very complicated. I think the Programme Coordination Unit is helping and

things are easier. We can approach them then they might redistribute the questions. So, it's helping. But the problem is still there. There is no background to understand who is doing what." [EUD key informant]

While the AUC, CSRRG and the EUD participate in the governance and management structure of the SIARP, the same does not apply to IPs who are not foreseen to participate in any of the structures described above although they have sometimes been invited on an ad hoc basis.

Key findings:

- Key informants from the PCU and RUNOs described a positive, conducive working relationship with the Global Secretariat. Its guidance was described as timely and useful.

- The SIARP draws on four steering committees to ensure its governance. It capitalizes on the two steering committees of the joint global programmes on FGM and child marriage and has set-up a separate steering committee for Stream I and one overarching steering committee, the ARSC. While some key informants and online survey respondents perceived that the governance mechanisms were functional and adequate, others voiced that its efficiency and effectiveness could be improved. They perceived that there was limited added value of having a Stream I steering committee and that the content of the ARSC was not sufficiently strategic and results-focused.

- The CSRRG has only been inaugurated in early 2022. It has drafted an ambitious work plan and started participating actively in governance meetings. As their participation started recently, it was not yet possible to assess its effectiveness as an advisory, advocacy and accountability mechanism.

- For its management structure, the SIARP has set up coordination meetings at programme, stream, pillar and agency level. This has enabled to communicate and discuss progress on activities and to share critical information at different levels. For some UN key informants, the meeting structure is too work-intensive and activity-focused leaving them with insufficient time for technical support to partners and strategic monitoring. To them, reducing the number of meetings was, however, not necessarily the right option and suggested that full-time RUNO positions dedicated to the SIARP should be augmented. While the AUC is represented in different management meetings, IPs are only sporadically involved. The documentation of meetings and follow-up on actions documented in meeting minutes is inconsistent.

Recommendations:

- To boost the effectiveness of the ARSC committee, it is proposed to design performance dashboards for both streams to visualize progress towards milestones and to discuss underlying problems of activities that have not made satisfactory progress (PCU).

- To boost the efficiency of the management structure, we suggest discussing the frequency of the different coordination meetings with the objective of downscaling it, where possible. The frequency of Stream lead meetings, for example, could be decreased from a monthly to a quarterly basis (PCU, RUNOs).

- To increase the effectiveness of meetings, it is recommended to ensure that the standardized reporting template is consistently used for all coordination meetings. It is also suggested to include a section for the tracking of the actions decided in previous meetings (PCU).

12. Are the chosen implementation and coordination mechanisms (a "new way of working", in line with UN Reform) contributing to efficiency?	☒ Very Good – Good
	☐ Problems
	☐ Serious deficiencies

Set-up and working of UN Team (PCU, DCO and RUNOs)

The set-up and coordination mechanisms of the UN team (PCU, stream leads, pillar leads etc.) is described under the previous evaluation question. The management function of the PCU was reported to be well implemented by key informants and online survey respondents although the late recruitments of some of its positions were noted as a challenge. The PCU has ensured the organization of regular programme coordination meetings and has held monthly planning meetings with the UNDCO and UNFPA which oversees the staff performance of the PCU. It has facilitated the communication between the EU, RUNOs, the UNDCO and the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat and coordinated the engagement of the AUC. During reporting periods, the PCU has collected input from the four RUNOs and compiled them into comprehensive reports. In November 2021, the PCU also convened a meeting of the RUNOs' Regional Directors (RD) to foster inter-agency collaboration and senior management leadership support for the SIARP. The engagement and collaborative efforts of RUNOs' headquarter and regional office staff to support the PCU in its tasks, in particular from the UNFPA ESARO, were also highlighted.

While the programme management related work of the PCU was acknowledged by key informants and online survey respondents, its responsibility for ensuring technical coherence of the interventions was unclear (see also evaluation question 2). The PCU facilitated effective communication and information sharing on activities among RUNOs, but the technical coherence of the action was estimated to require improvement. IPs, the EUD and RUNOs perceived that linkages across and within streams as well across pillars are not fully leveraged. IPs described overlaps and duplications of activities. According to them, they had reported these issues to their RUNO partners and shared suggestions to group activities, but corrective measures had not yet been implemented at the time of the MTA. As outlined under evaluation question 3 and 5, the design of the programme with two separate streams and scattered interventions across multiple countries created the risk of a fragmented programme with limited opportunities for catalytic effects.

"Then, the challenge that we did experience right from the beginning was that we noticed that there was a lot of overlap with the activities that we are implementing across the different UN agencies and across the different activities within the pillars. And this also cuts across activities that are being implemented by the different partners within the same pillar. And so for our particular activities, there was a lot of duplication." [key informant, IP]

"Some activities within the programme are too similar, yet, being led by different RUNOs and implemented by the same or different implementing partners. This causes a lot of duplication." [online survey respondent]

"There also seems to be some duplication across partners that could be addressed by creating regular forums where implementing partners can interact and identify areas of synergy." [online survey respondent]

Have the new delivery mechanisms led to increased efficiency?

There was consensus among UN key informants that the Spotlight Initiative has been harnessed to improve inter-agency coordination and streamline processes. There are concrete examples of how RUNOs worked together and delivered in an integrated manner. The selection processes for the IPs for Stream I and for the CSRRG members were named by some UN key informants as success stories of the application of the UNDS reform. For the selection process for IPs, for instance, the RUNOs worked together in developing a joint tender for EoIs. The submitted applications were reviewed and scored by representatives from all RUNOs. The selection of the IPs was also conducted jointly. The joint UNDP-UN Women capacity-building training on data as well as the set-up of the global youth consortium on FGM were other examples that were mentioned in interviews as examples for a successful delivery of the UNDS reform.

The joint actions were described as powerful for information sharing, establishing relationships and were estimated to be effective in terms of the results achieved. They did not, however, result in increased efficiency. The development of a joint tender for EoIs for the selection of the IPs, for example, was described in the 2021 annual as a lengthy process that impacted programme implementation. UN key informants confirmed this by stating that the implementation of an integrated programme was more work-intensive for RUNO staff. This increased workload had not been sufficiently considered in the design phase. IPs also observed that the efficiency of RUNOs had decreased under the Spotlight Initiative. They described the selection, contract signature and funding release processes as slower than what they experienced in the past in their partnerships with the same UN agencies.

For IPs that partner with more than one RUNO, the administrative burden increased due to different reporting requirements and contract start dates.

"Implementing partners supporting activities led by different agencies have contractual agreements with the different agencies. The timelines for implementing activities and reporting are therefore different, which increases the administrative burden for such implementing partners. This could have been overcome by having one agency oversee all contractual aspects." [online survey respondent]

The different implementation paces of the RUNOs as well as differences in their operational procedures have also been in some instances a barrier to the efficient delivery of activities. Differences in security measures (e.g. travel and movement permissions), in recognising expenditure rates or in procurement processes have been described as obstacles to joint activities. In most instances, these were overcome due to personal commitment and dedication of the RUNOs' teams and of the IPs.

Key findings:

- The PCU has effectively ensured its programme management function and facilitated communication among the RUNOs, the EUD and the AUC. The RUNO team have demonstrated commitment to coordinate the roll out of the action, but the technical coherence within and across pillars and streams was assessed as fragmented and in need of improvement. This issue is probably linked the lack of clarity on the technical coherence function of the programme (described under evaluation question 2).
- With the aim of implementing the UNDS reform, the RUNOs have jointly implemented several processes (CSRRG and IP selection, for example) and jointly developed documents such as the knowledge management plan for the programme. While joint endeavours were reported to be more effective, they were also observed as more time-consuming, cumbersome and at times stressful for both the UN and their IPs as RUNOs still work each with their own procedures.

Recommendations:

- As recommended under evaluation question 2, RUNOs and the PCU should discuss to what extent the full potential of the technical coherence function has been harnessed and agree on its roles, specific deliverables and whether it should be integrated or separated from the PCU. The outputs of the discussion should be documented and disseminated among RUNO teams (PCU, RUNOs).
- As recommended under evaluation question 3, it is suggested to review the intervention streams to establish a stronger synergy and connection between interventions and to concentrate the efforts on interventions with the most promising outcomes during the next annual review exercise of the SIARP. The aim of this review should not be to downscale the action, but rather to streamline interventions and to harness potential synergetic or catalytic effects (RUNOs, IPs).
- As recommended under evaluation question 4, it is recommended to facilitate bi-annual coordination meetings of all IPs intervening on the same pillar to streamline interventions, build synergies and enable cross-fertilization and learning.

E. SUSTAINABILITY

13. Is sufficient capacity being built so that local actors, such as government as well as CSOs, the women's movement and groups representing women and girls that face intersecting forms of discrimination, will be able to manage the process by the end of the Initiative without continued dependence on international expertise?	☒ Very Good – Good ☐ Problems ☐ Serious deficiencies

The programme does not yet have a sustainability plan or an exit strategy. A sustainability plan will be developed in Phase 2. We also did not find any evidence that additional resources had been secured for the future of the SIARP.

In the online survey, respondents had mixed perceptions on whether sufficient expertise was being built among local actors to manage the process by the end of the programme without the expertise of international organisations. The number of respondents who selected the 'do not know' option was substantial, in particular for the AUC. This can be explained through the fact that IPs and CSRRG members are not involved in the UN-AUC partnership and have little visibility over potential sustainability parameters at this level. Among those who responded to the question, most selected the options 'somewhat sufficient' or 'sufficient', but there were also respondents who perceived it as 'somewhat insufficient' or as 'neither insufficient nor sufficient', in particular for marginalized groups (see Table 8 below).

Table 8. Online survey results: has sufficient capacity been being built to manage the process by the end of the Initiative without international expertise?

	Insufficient	Somewhat insufficient	Neither insufficient nor sufficient	Somewhat sufficient	Sufficient	Do not know
AUC	0	1	1	8	1	11
CSOs	0	3	1	12	3	4
Grassroots organisations	0	3	2	9	3	6
Women's movements	0	4	1	9	3	6
Marginalized groups	0	4	3	6	3	7

Considering the relatively short implementation timeframe, the programme has achieved promising results and has put in place a number of mechanisms and processes that could outlive the program. A few key informants felt SIARP has helped bringing together and creating space for various actors to collaborate on ending VAWG including the UN agencies concerned. This increased collaboration on ending VAWG which has been pushed by the SIARP might impact positively on the efficiency and effectiveness of interventions after the end of the SIARP. The CSRRG was also mentioned as an engagement mechanism to enable meaningful civil society engagement in processes and governance structures. Key informants (UN, CSRRG) advocated that it should be maintained after the end of the programme.

"I think having the structure of the Civil Society Reference Group, for example, is a good mechanism that that is important to continue and that can be valuable not only to the Spotlight programme, but also to the AUC to really think about how they engage with civil society." [UN key informant]

The program also has generated important number of capacity-strengthening tools, guidelines and knowledge sharing platforms that will remain available after the end of the programme. Questions related to the hosting and maintenance of these platforms, however, still remain to be discussed.

"[…] these platforms for sharing of knowledge and exchange practices […], the connectivity between organisations, but also understanding the processes. I think those are important practices that will be valuable beyond the initiative." [UN key informant]

"But again, the bigger question is how long can they [the knowledge-sharing platforms] be hosted, who is going to host them and where they can be easily accessible at you know, you can open access to everyone who wants to have them. So, there are plans, but I think it's also something that needs to be well-thought off and a monitoring system in place to see that there is uptake even beyond the Spotlight programme." [IP key informant].

At an institutional level, the SIARP has contributed to strengthening the AUC's capacity and leadership to coordinate the action related to GBV and harmful practices. This will continue to ensure that regional interventions remain streamlined and to increase Africa's response to ending VAWG. Furthermore, under Pillar 1, the SIARP has implemented critical work such as accelerating the ratification of key instruments (i.e., the Maputo Protocol), revamping the gender observatory and developing key actionable tools. The first-ever evidence-based Regional Action Plan (RAP) for Africa with a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework on Eliminating Violence against Women and Girls including SGBV/HP and SRHR and the regional Accountability Framework on the elimination gender-based violence and harmful practices, for instance, have been important achievements that have strong potential to outlive the SIARP.

"[…] I think, they [the Pillar I interventions] lay a very fundamental groundwork for not just for the implementation of the projects as we know them now. But for future work. So, if you're looking at the regional action plan in the EVAWG assessment and the national action plans that exist… these documents would be very useful for civil society organisations and Member States when they are working on national action plans, on any violence against women and girls, but also for linking all of these processes to other accountability and monitoring processes." [IP key informant]

The document review and KIIs also indicated that some – but not all - capacity strengthening interventions were designed to ensure sustainable results. Some of the training guidelines and sessions, such as the curriculum on VAWG and training of professionals under Pillar 5, have been developed in a participatory manner with the participation of CSOs, the UN and the AUC. These training packages require substantial time commitment from participants. Once successfully completed, certificates are delivered to validate the knowledge based on attendance. This does, however, not apply to all training interventions. Some are just one-off workshops with neither follow up nor evaluation of the learning and the future use of the training content.

It is noteworthy that none of the key informants or online survey respondents referred to the two joint global programmes on FGM and child marriage as a potential sustainability catalyst for the Stream II interventions of the SIARP. The strategic plans of these two programmes go, however, beyond the time frame of the Spotlight. Funding and donor commitments have also already been partially secured. There is, thus, a possibility to anchor the sustainability of at least some of the SIARP's Stream II interventions in future actions of the two joint programmes.

Key findings:

- No sustainability plan or exit strategy has been developed at the end of the first phase; it will be developed in Phase 2. Important results have been achieved despite the relatively short implementation period, but it is too early to assess their sustainability.
- Some of the work that is being done under the programme is foundational whether at the institutional level with the AUC or in terms of capacity strengthening of CSOs. The establishment of stakeholder coordination mechanisms, knowledge management platforms, training manuals and guidelines on VAWG, FGM and children marriage have the potential to have sustainable impact beyond the SIARP.
- Capacity strengthening of the AUC and civil society actors is at the heart of the programme. The approaches to the development of guidelines and tools and to the delivery of trainings are inconsistent and are likely to have variable impact in terms of sustainability.
- The two global joint programmes on child marriage and FGM have a longer time frame than the Spotlight Initiative and can be harnessed to sustain at least certain Stream II interventions.

Recommendations:

- It is recommended to start the development of the sustainability plan immediately and not wait for the start of Phase 2. During its development, it is suggested to ensure strong ownership of regional civil society organisations, the CSRRG and the AUC. The sustainability plan should include a strong focus on making products developed under the SIARP available to a large number of actors. This includes systematic translation to French and Portuguese. Arrangements for the hosting and maintenance of knowledge sharing platforms should be agreed on. The actions of the sustainability plan should be integrated in the annual work plan and should be fully funded by the Spotlight Initiative or by the two joint programmes on FGM and child marriage (unless funding from other sources can be secured). (PCU, RUNO)
- To increase the sustainability of the programme, we recommend that the EUD invests in GBV programmes beyond the four years lifespan of the SIARP. This will allow to consolidate the results and to achieve further progress in changing attitudes and behaviours which requires a longer-term investment (EUD).
- To ensure that some of the capacity strengthening interventions are sustainable, it is recommended to develop a set of minimum standards outlining quality indicators for stakeholder participation, the selection of participants, the evaluation of the training as well as longer-term follow up on the use of the training content. The application of these standards should be monitored on an annual basis (PCU).

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F. KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. PROGRAMME DESIGN:

Main findings:

1. The design process took a consultative approach. It was described as lengthy and cumbersome due to challenges related to the number of stakeholders and institutional entities to be involved at both UN and AU level. These challenges were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. While the lengthy design process substantially delayed the start of the programme, its results were described as both an important achievement and requirement for the programme as it enabled building strategic consensus and common understanding of the programme.

2. There was consensus that the SIARP responds to the needs of its target groups. The tripartite partnership of the AU, the EU and the UN as well as the complementarity with the two joint global programmes on FGM and child marriage were described as particular assets. It was also stressed, however, that there was need to develop a more concrete and comprehensible approach for working with marginalized groups, that the programme interventions were too dispersed with lack of synergetic and catalytic effects and that CSO leadership in regional interventions and in engaging with the AUC should be strengthened.

3. Formal feedback mechanisms are available through the four steering committees, the CS-RRG and the SIARP's management structure which includes regular meetings of key stakeholders involved in the implementation. Overall, the SIARP's feedback mechanisms were gauged as functional although they were not well known to all stakeholder groups. The feedback mechanisms with beneficiaries were not clear. IPs reported varying quality and frequency of their feedback mechanisms with their RUNO partners.

4. The SIARP does not have an overarching ToC. Instead, it has developed three separate ToC narratives for Stream I as well as the FGM component and the child marriage component under Stream II respectively. The lack of an overarching ToC combined with the separate presentation of the three projects in the Prodoc creates the impression that three stand-alone programmes were merged into one large and overly complex programme. Most key informants also reported fragmented perspectives of the programme and only few of them were knowledgeable about the Theory of Change underlying the global Spotlight Initiative.

5. Key informants perceived a disconnect between the qualitative annual reports and the quantitative indicator progress reporting in the SMART system.

6. The SIARP complied with the Spotlight Initiative's requirement to select indicators from the global indicator menu which were experienced as little relevant and highly work intensive to report on. Despite challenges generated by the global M&E framework requirements, a coherent M&E system has been put in place for the programme. Some of the indicators, however, are no longer aligned to the global definitions which makes the data analysis both cumbersome and error prone.

7. Progress data have been collected and reported on for most indicators. A few data gaps have been highlighted in the 2021 annual reports.

8. IPs reported that progress monitoring data for the SIARP were not accessible to them.

9. The SIARP has identified relevant contextual, programmatic, and institutional risks and mitigation measures. The risk matrix has been updated and monitored on an annual basis.

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Recommendations:

a) For future programmes, it is recommended to ensure a comprehensive approach to implementing the LNOB principle by conducting a mapping of marginalized groups. Specific activities to ensure the reach of marginalized groups should be added. This type of exercise should be done in collaboration with IPs using a participatory approach. (RUNOs)

b) During the next annual review exercise, it is suggested to review the intervention streams to establish a stronger synergy and connection between interventions and to concentrate the efforts on interventions with the most promising outcomes. This should include a reflection on how CSO can take more leadership in the organisation of regional events and how they can strengthen their ties with and build direct relationships with the AUC. This will be critical for the sustainability of the programme. The aim of this review should not be to downscale the action, but rather to design more comprehensive intervention packages and to harness potential synergetic effects (RUNOs, IPs).

c) It is recommended to adjust the annual reporting format to enable activity progress reporting by output and not only at the Pillar level (Spotlight Secretariat). For the future SIARP reporting, activity reporting should be disaggregated by stream (PCU).

d) It is recommended to organize a workshop with the global Secretariat and the other regional programmes to develop standardized indicators that are relevant to the regional programmes under the Spotlight Initiative. For Stream II, the indicators should draw on the Joint Global Programme result framework indicators (Global Secretariat).

e) To enable more comprehensive reporting for the eight indicators that were reformulated for the purpose of the SIARP and to avoid errors in the analysis of data at the global level on the SMART platform, the PCU should discuss with the Secretariat on how these indicators can be reflected in the global system and how their values for baselines, targets, milestones and results can be consistently presented (PCU, Spotlight Secretariat).

f) To increase the visibility of feedback mechanisms for all key stakeholder groups, it is suggested to develop and disseminate SOPs for the feedback mechanisms integrated in the SIARP. This should include feedback mechanisms with beneficiaries. It should also provide minimum standards regarding the frequency and content of feedback mechanisms available to IPs (PCU).

2. GOVERNANCE:

Main findings:

1. The RUNOs, CSOs, AUC and the EUD have effectively contributed to steering the action in alignment with their role defined in the Prodoc. The RECs have been continuously engaged by the AUC and participated in specific activities. IPs demonstrated strong commitment to the delivery of their activities. There was, however, varying ownership for the SIARP among them as most of them had limited insights on what is happening beyond the scope of their own action.

2. The SIARP draws on four steering committees to ensure its governance. It capitalizes on the two steering committees of the joint global programmes on FGM and child marriage and has set-up a separate steering committee for Stream I and one overarching steering committee, the ARSC. While some key informants and online survey respondents perceived that the governance mechanisms were functional and adequate, others voiced that its efficiency and effectiveness could be improved. They perceived that there was limited added value of having a Stream I steering committee and that the content of the ARSC was not sufficiently strategic and results-focused.

3. The CSRRG has only been inaugurated in early 2022. It has drafted an ambitious work plan and started participating actively in governance meetings. As their participation started recently, it was not yet possible to assess its effectiveness as an advisory, advocacy and accountability mechanism.

Recommendations:

a) To boost the effectiveness of the ARSC, it is proposed to design performance dashboards for both streams to visualize progress towards milestones and to discuss underlying problems of activities that have not made satisfactory progress (PCU).

b) To ensure stronger coherence and connection among IPs, it is recommended to continue with the facilitation of coordination meetings of all IPs intervening on the same pillar to streamline interventions, build synergies and enable cross-fertilization and learning. The suggested frequency of these meetings is bi-annually (RUNOs).

c) To boost the role of the CSRRG in the SIARP, it is recommended to enable their participation in a few programme activities of both streams to foster their understanding of the programme and their engagement with other programme stakeholders. This should happen in addition to their participation in governance meetings (PCU).

d) To ensure that IPs have sufficient support for the delivery of the action, it is recommended to ensure that regular feedback is collected from all IPs to assess the quality of operational support from RUNOs (including the timeliness of fund transfers, the appropriateness of timeframes for implementing activities etc.) (RUNOs).

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3. PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT:

Main findings:

1. Key informants from the PCU and RUNOs described a positive, conducive working relationship with the Global Secretariat. Its guidance was described as timely and useful.

2. The assignment of RUNOs roles across the three Pillars are overall consistent with their expertise, experiences and priorities. The budget allocations to RUNOs under Pillar 5 and 6 seem misaligned with their expertise. Considering UNFPA's extensive experience on GBV (including harmful practices) data (Pillar 5), the rationale for allocating 63 per cent of the Pillar 5 budget to UNICEF is not evident. The same applies to Pillar 6 (strengthening CSOs and the Women's movement) for which UN Women as pillar lead only receives 27 per cent.

3. The SIARP has operationalised the UNDS reform by putting in place structures to deliver the programme in an integrated manner. Management and coordination structures were put in place with the UNDCO - Africa as accountable entity, the PCU for the management and the assignment of the technical coherence entity to UNFPA.

4. There was neither a common understanding on the content of the technical coherence function nor on the entity responsible for implementing it. The responsibility of the PCU in contributing to technical coherence was also not clear.

5. The PCU has effectively ensured its programme management function and facilitated communication among the RUNOs, the EUD and the AUC. The RUNO team have demonstrated commitment to coordinate the roll out of the action, but the technical coherence within and across pillars and streams was assessed as fragmented and in need of improvement. This issue is probably linked the lack of clarity on the technical coherence function mentioned under the previous point.

6. For its management structure, the SIARP has set up coordination meetings at programme, stream, pillar and agency level. This has enabled to communicate and discuss progress on activities and to share critical information at different levels. For some UN key informants, the meeting structure is too work-intensive and activity-focused leaving them with insufficient time for technical support to partners and strategic monitoring. To them, reducing the number of meetings was, however, not necessarily the right option and suggested that full-time RUNO positions dedicated to the SIARP should be augmented. While the AUC is represented in different management meetings, IPs are only sporadically involved. The documentation of meetings and follow-up on actions documented in meeting minutes is inconsistent.

7. With the aim of implementing the UNDS reform, the RUNOs have jointly implemented several processes (CSRRG and IP selection, for example) and jointly developed documents such as the knowledge management plan for the programme. While joint endeavours were reported to be more effective, they were also observed as more time-consuming, cumbersome and at times stressful for both the UN and their IPs as RUNOs still work each with their own procedures.

8. There were mixed perceptions on the quality and effectiveness of the RUNOs in the delivery of the programme in an integrated manner. The number of offices and actors involved in combination with an intervention design in which several RUNOs deliver interventions under each

Pillar resulted in a coordination structure that is cumbersome and time-intensive to implement. That notwithstanding, key informants reported increased synergies and joint actions across the four RUNOs.

9. The SIARP meets the Spotlight Initiative requirement to channel 30 to 50 percent of IP funding to CSOs. It applies mostly adequate implementation mechanisms with their IPs (LTA's and leverage partnership methods) although some IPs reported negative impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of their work due to short-term contracts.

10. The selected IPs are a mix of regional and international CSOs. Over half of the funding was awarded to three existing RUNO partners with long-term experience and strong capacity (AIDOS, APHRC and Equality Now). Demanding recruitment and reporting requirements from RUNOs as well as their requirement to partner with CSOs that have a multi-country footprint have been a barrier to fostering new partnerships with CSOs and to strengthen the capacity of local and grassroot organisations. In light of the delays accumulated during the design phase and during the selection process of CSOs, this approach was adequate, however, for accelerating the programme delivery. Due to the requirement to work with CSOs of regional scope, local and grassroot organisations are not part of the SIARP's IPs. The global grassroot action plan is currently not implemented by the programme.

11. To support the implementation of the SIARP, 9 fully funded and 6 partially funded personnel have been budgeted for under Stream I. Under Stream II, minor staff support from RUNOs' ROs and HQs has been budgeted for through UN contributions. Considering the budget envelope of almost 27 mUSD, the number of RUNO staff supporting the implementation of the SIARP seems insufficient.

12. The PMC for the SIARP are at 15 per cent. The threshold for PMC of Spotlight Initiative Programmes is at 18 per cent and could have been slightly better harnessed for human resource support to the programme.

Recommendations:

a) We suggest implementing a workforce planning exercise in the design process for Phase 2. This will allow identifying critical gaps in RUNO teams and planning for sufficient RUNO staffing for the next phase of the Spotlight Initiative. It is also recommended to fully use the 18 per cent PMC budget margin for operational support functions (PCU, RUNOs).

b) In the design of Phase 2, the UNDCO should ensure that budget allocations, in particular for Pillar 5 and 6, are consistently aligned with the agencies' experience and expertise (UNDCO, PCU).

c) RUNOs and the PCU should discuss to what extent the full potential of the technical coherence function has been harnessed and agree on its roles, specific deliverables and whether it should be integrated or separated from the PCU. The outputs of the discussion should be documented and disseminated across RUNO teams (RUNOs).

d) To boost the efficiency of the management structure, we suggest discussing the frequency of the different coordination meetings with the objective of downscaling it, where possible. The frequency of Stream lead meetings, for example, could be decreased from a monthly to a quarterly basis (PCU, RUNOs).

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e) To increase the effectiveness of meetings, it is recommended to ensure that the standardized reporting template is consistently used for all coordination meetings. It is also suggested to include a section for the tracking of the actions decided in previous meetings (PCU).

f) It is recommended to harness the design process of phase 2 to develop an approach for implementing the Global Grassroot Action Plan under the Pillar 6 interventions with the objective to ensure that CSOs at all levels are strengthened in a sustainable way. This could be, for example, based on sub-contracting arrangements. We also recommend an exchange with the Central Asia Regional Programme which has successfully reached grassroot organisations as part of their Pillar 6 action (PCU, UN Women).

4. PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND RESULTS:

Main findings:

1. The SIARP has accumulated substantial delays under Stream I which were mainly caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the limited agility and human resource availability of the AUC. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the work plan and budget were revised, and relevant adjustment measures were initiated. To accelerate interventions implemented in partnership with the AUC, relevant mitigation measures were put in place. An acceleration plan was put in place in 2021, but some activities were still substantially delayed at the time of the MTA.

2. Despite its delays, the programme has contributed to achievements under all three pillars.

3. The analysis of output target achievements showed that the programme had not achieved three output targets under Pillar 5 and 6 respectively by end of 2021. The progress under Pillar 1 could not be assessed in a meaningful way due to data limitations.

4. The quality of the outputs was consistently described as positive. No substantial concerns were reported apart from the lack of interconnection between activities (as discussed under evaluation question 3, 8 and 12).

5. Due to the limitations of the data available in Annex A of the SMART platform, it was not possible to conduct an analysis of progress towards outcome milestones for Pillar 1 and Pillar 5. Under Pillar 6, the 2021 outcome milestones were achieved for two of the three indicators.

6. The budget delivery analysis showed an anomaly related to UN Women's commitments. The three other RUNOs had budget delivery rates (expenditures and commitments) below 60 percent that were particularly low for UNICEF at 43 per cent by end of quarter 1 of 2022. At the time of the MTA, the programme was in a situation of underspending. This was, however, not considered a high risk because of the extension of Phase I for an additional year (until end of 2023).

7. Key informants and online survey respondents from the UN and AUC reported a high workload and agreed that the budget allocated to RUNO staffing was insufficient for Phase 1. This resulted in insufficient human resources for operations and technical support functions and a high workload for the RUNO personnel involved in the Spotlight Initiative. A restricted absorptive capacity due to staff shortages was also reported at the level of the AUC.

8. At the level of the implementing CSOs, there were mixed perceptions regarding their absorptive capacity. While UN stakeholders reported issues related to the absorptive capacity of CSO IPs, IPs perceived that their absorptive capacity had been hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as insufficient induction and support from RUNOs for the administrative and financial management of their contracts.

9. No sustainability plan or exit strategy has been developed at the end of the first phase; it will be developed in Phase 2. Important results have been achieved despite the relatively short implementation period, but it is too early to assess their sustainability.

10. Some of the work that is being done under the programme is foundational whether at the institutional level with the AUC or in terms of capacity strengthening of CSOs. The establishment of stakeholder coordination mechanisms, knowledge management platforms, training manuals and guidelines on VAWG, FGM and children marriage have the potential to have sustainable impact beyond the SIARP.

11. Capacity strengthening of the AUC and civil society actors is at the heart of the programme. The approaches to the development of guidelines and tools and to the delivery of trainings are inconsistent and are likely to have variable impact in terms of sustainability.

12. The two global joint programmes on child marriage and FGM have a longer time frame than the Spotlight Initiative and can be harnessed to sustain at least certain Stream II interventions.

Recommendations:

a) It is recommended to monitor closely the indicators for which the 2021 milestones had not been achieved. If their targets are estimated as unrealistic, they should be reviewed (PCU, RUNOs).

b) It is suggested to review the intervention streams to establish a stronger synergy and connection between interventions and to concentrate the efforts on interventions with the most promising outcomes (RUNOs, IPs).

c) To tackle challenges related to IPs' capacity, we recommend scaling up peer-to-peer support: IPs which have demonstrated stronger capacity, can be supported to mentor IPs of weaker capacity. It should be carefully monitored that this does not overstretch the capacity of stronger IPs to deliver their own activities (RUNOs, IPs).

d) Given the specificity of the expertise required under Pillar 5, it is recommended to explore partnership options with universities or other institutions based in or outside the continent to support capacity building specifically aimed at research and statistical institutions. The Central Asia Regional Programme, for example, partners with a university in Australia which has developed teaching modules in English on collecting and analysing VAWG data as part of this collaboration. The products of collaboration could potentially also be harnessed by the SIARP (RUNOs).

e) As technical expertise for RUNOs can also be budgeted under the programme outcomes in the Phase 2 budget, we suggest implementing a workforce planning exercise in its design process. This will allow identifying critical gaps in RUNO teams and planning for sufficient RUNO staffing for the next phase of the Spotlight Initiative.

f) It is recommended to start the development of the sustainability plan immediately and not wait for the start of Phase 2. During its development, it is suggested to ensure strong ownership of regional civil society organisations, the CSRRG and the AUC. The sustainability plan should

include a strong focus on making products developed under the SIARP available to a large number of actors. This includes systematic translation to French and Portuguese. Arrangements for the hosting and maintenance of knowledge sharing platforms should be agreed on. The actions of the sustainability plan should be integrated in the annual work plan and should be fully funded by the Spotlight Initiative or by the two joint programmes on FGM and child marriage (unless funding from other sources can be secured). (PCU, RUNO)

g) To increase the sustainability of the programme, we recommend that the EUD invests in GBV programmes beyond the four years lifespan of the SIARP. This will allow to consolidate the results and to achieve further progress in changing attitudes and behaviours which requires a longer-term investment (EUD).

h) To ensure that some of the capacity strengthening interventions are sustainable, it is recommended to develop a set of minimum standards outlining quality indicators for stakeholder participation, the selection of participants, the evaluation of the training as well as longer-term follow up on the use of the training content. The application of these standards should be monitored on an annual basis (PCU).

ANNEX 1: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Spotlight programme documents (essential documents)	Availability
Country Programming document as approved by OSC	yes
Country Budget as approved by the OSC (may also include revised budget)	yes
Spotlight Country Programme Snapshot	yes
Inception report	yes
Annual report/s	yes
Annex A Country Report (included in the Annual Report)	yes
Ad hoc (2nd Tranche) report (may also include provisional narrative report – 2 pager)	no
Spotlight Initiative financial information on the MPTF Gateway	yes
Knowledge management workplan	yes
National CSO Reference Group workplan	yes (draft)
CSO Reference Group Bios	yes
Communication workplan	yes
Stories directly from the Calendar	yes
Other documents	
Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme. Monitoring and evaluation plan. March 2022	
Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme. Monitoring and evaluation technical working group ToR	
Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme. Results framework	
Standard Operating Procedures for Partnerships	
Standard Operating Procedures for Governance	
Standard Operating Procedures for Communication, Information Sharing	
Standard Operating Procedures for Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting	
Standard Operating Procedures for Coordination Arrangements	
Meeting minutes CSRRG 15th February 2022	
Meeting minutes CSRRG 8th February 2022	
Meeting minutes CSRRG 22nd February 2022	
Press release: SIARP: CSRRG Inaugurated	
CSRRG of the SIARP. Terms of References (ToRs)	
Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme – SIARP. Quarter Progress Narrative Report. Reporting Period – January – March 2022	
UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the elimination of FGM: acerating change. Steering committee meeting minutes. 10th November 2021	
Report Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme Steering Committee Meeting 26 May 2021	
Meeting minutes CSRRG. February 8th, 2022.	
Meeting minutes CSRRG. February 15th, 2022.	
Meeting minutes CSRRG. February 22nd 2022.	

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| Civil Society Regional Reference group work plan: March 2022 – December 2022 |
| SIARP. Monthly coordination meeting minute. February 16th 2022 |
| Draft standard operating procedure for Coordination amongst Spotlight Initiative Regional Africa Program Stream 1 RUNOs in CSOs engagement |
| UNFPA-UNICEF Joint programme on the elimination of female genital mutilation: delivering the global promise. Steering committee meeting notes. 27 April 2022 |
| 2nd Regional Steering Committee Meeting. Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme. March 15, 2022 |
| Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme Stream 1 Steering Committee Meeting Minutes, 7 April 2022 |
| SIARP. Monthly coordination meeting minute, Stream II, Feb 15 2022 |
| Minutes of the monthly monitoring meeting of SIARP stream II, 1 December 2021 |
| AUC, UNFPA, UNICEF SIARP Stream II Monthly Coordination Meeting, 14 December, 2021 |
| Spotlight Initiative: Regional Programme Stream I first coordination meeting, 4th August 2020 |
| SIARP. Final minutes of meeting with stream leads, 21 April 2021 |
| SIARP. Minutes of the Round 2 Selection Committee, 1st April 2021 (Stream I) |
| SIARP. Minutes of meeting of RUNOs with AUC (WGYD) on Stream 1 AWP for 2022, 27 January 2022 |
| SIARP. Minutes of meeting, RUNOs Coordination meeting, 16 March 2021 (Stream I) |
| SIARP. Minutes of meeting, RUNOs Coordination meeting, 26 February 2021 (Stream I) |
| SIARP. Monthly coordination meeting calendar for 2022 |

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ANNEX 2: LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED

Stakeholder group	Institution / organisation	Name	Position
UN	PCU	Julius Otim	Programme Coordinator
	PCU	Mehiret Habte	M&E Officer
	PCU	Edom Berehanu	Communication and Knowledge Management Specialist
	UNDP	Bethelhem Mengistu	Program Specialist
	Spotlight Initiative Secretariat	Heran Ayele	Capacity Development and Knowledge Management Specialist
	UNDP	Odette Kabaya	Regional gender advisor and team lead
	UNDP	Tabu Jimmy	Gender program specialist
	UNDP Service Centre for Africa	Stan Nkwain	Interim Regional Director
	UN Women	Azmera Kassahun	Spotlight Initiative Program Coordinator for Stream I
	Spotlight Initiative Secretariat	Heran Ayele	Capacity Development and Knowledge Management Specialist
	UN Women	Sunita Caminha	ESARO policy Specialist on ending VAWG
	UNFPA RO	Meltem Agduk	ESARO-WCARO Gender and GBV Technical Specialist
	UNFPA RO	Julie Diallo	ESARO Gender program specialist
	UNFPA RO	Agnes Bangali	WCARO FGM technical Specialist
	UNFPA RO	Mampe Lekholoane	Finance Specialist, ESARO
	UNICEF HQ	Joseph Mabirizi	Program manager for UNICEF Child Protection Program *and* coordinator of the Spotlight Initiative for Africa for Stream II
	UNICEF HQ	Coleen Murray	Statistics specialist, Child protection
	UNICEF HQ	Helen Belachew	Gender Program Specialist
	UNICEF RO	Massimiliano Sani	Social and Behaviour Change Specialist
	UNICEF RO	Mona Aika	Child protection specialist and Global joint program Manager for ESARO
	UNICEF RO	Karin Hessler	Child Protection Specialist WCARO
	UNICEF RO	Felicite Tchibindat	Deputy Regional Director WCARO
	UNDCO	Eskedar Nega	Strategic planner and team leader
EU	EU Delegation to the African Union	Thomas Huyghebeart	Head of Policy and cooperation
	EU Delegation to the African Union	Amandine Duhoux	Policy and Cooperation attache
	EU (Brussels)	Patricia Pennetier	Program Manager EU policies
AUC	AUC	Nena Thundu	Coordinator Harmful practices
	UNFPA secondment	Robert Kasenene	Spotlight Initiative Coordination and FGM policy and Advocacy Specialist
	UNICEF secondment to the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)	Rahel Mesfin	Program specialist

	UN Women secondment to the Women, Gender and Youth Directorate	Lindiwe Ngwenya	Program specialist
CSRRG	Advocate for Gender and Social Justice	Nneoma Albert-Benson	Chair
	President / CEo Ohaha Family Foundation	John Ede	Member
	Founder and Executive Director of the New Generations Girls and Women Development Initiative	Abimbola Aladejare-Salako	Member
	Advocate for Gender and Social Justice	Mildred Mushunge	Member
	Advocate for Gender and Social Justice	Mariama John	Member
	Advocate for Gender and Social Justice	Lilian Olivia	Member
	Advocate for Gender and Social Justice	Florence Sesay	Member
	Advocate for Gender and Social Justice	Laetitia Tonya Loe	Member
IP	Sonke Gender Justice	Mpiwa Mangwiro	Program Officer
	Equality Now	Faiza Mohamed	Director Africa Office and Global lead – End Harmful Practices
	Equality Now	Edith Kalela	Institutional Giving Associate
	Equality Now	Esther Waweru	Senior Legal advisor on the Legal Equality Program
	APHRC (African Population and Health research)	Beatrice Maina	Associate research scientist and Spotlight Initiative Program Manager
	APHRC (African Population and Health research)	Nicholas Etyang	Policy officer within the engagement and communication division
	APHRC (African Population and Health research)	Anthony Ajayi	Associate research scientist
	AIDOS	Clara Caldera	Program Officer
	FORWARD	Naana Ott-Oyortey	Executive Director
Beneficiary	AACC (All Africa Conference of Churches)	Rev. Dr. Lydia Mwaniki	Director for Gender and Women

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ANNEX 3: ALIGNMENT WITH THE SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE PRINCIPLES

The figure below uses frequencies (*n*).
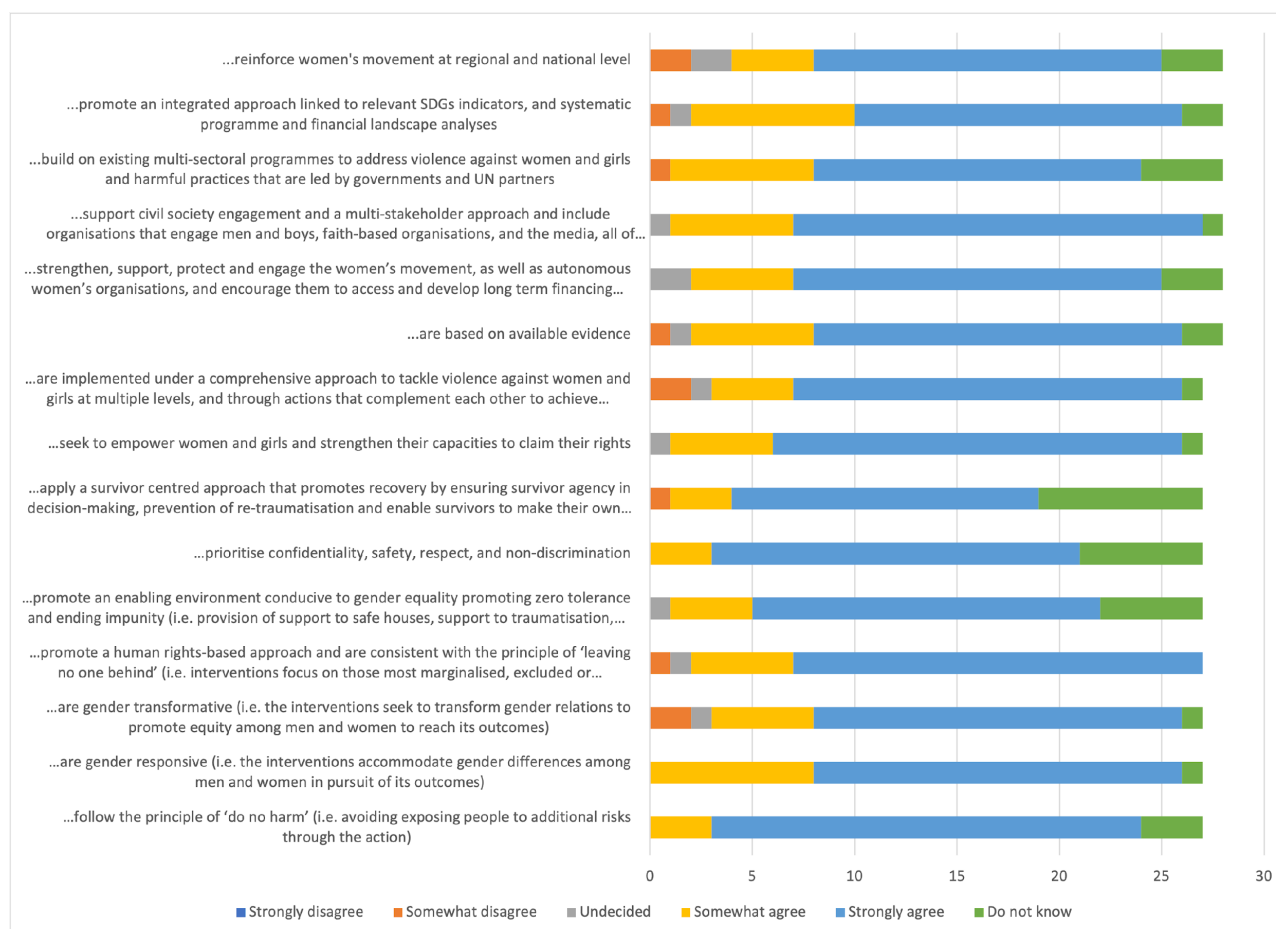
Response to the online survey question: "On a scale from 1 to 3, to what extent were the following stakeholders involved in the design, monitoring and implementation of the programme". The figure below uses frequencies.