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Spotlight Mid-term Assessment Report using ROM review

Type of ROM review	**Projects and Programmes**
Project title	*Spotlight Initiative - Tajikistan*
Project reference	
EU Delegation in charge	*Tajikistan*

Key information	
Domain (instrument)	Region: Central Asia
DAC Sector	Human and Social Development: « Gender Equality »
Zone Benefitting from the Action	Tajikistan
Type of Project/Programme	Geographic
Geographic Implementation	Single-country
Contracting Party	SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE
EU contribution	$4,900,000 (for Phase 1)

Project Implementation Dates (Phase 1)	**Start Date**	1 January 2020	**End Date**	31 December 2022
ROM expert(s) name(s)	Zulfiya Bakhtibekova (national expert), Alice Behrendt (regional team leader)			
Data collection phase	**Start Date**	08 April 2022	**End Date**	23 May 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/FGD**	**Survey**
EU Delegation	2	0
Partner country government	7	5
UN agencies (including RCO)	10	26
CSO reference group	3	5
Implementing partners	9	8
Final Beneficiaries	20	n/a
Other	5	2

Key documents[1]	**Number**
Essential documents	9
Other documents	40

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

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A. PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES, LIMITATIONS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

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

The purpose of the MTA is to assess the programme at country 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 14 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

Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) remains one of the most common human rights violations in Tajikistan. According to Human Rights Watch Report, it often takes severe forms, including femicides and incitement to suicide[2]. The most common types of domestic violence reported by survivors are physical, psychological, sexual and economic violence (deprivation of means). The perpetrators are often husbands or partners, but also mothers-in-law and other family members[3]. Apart from domestic violence, harmful traditional practices, such as early and forced marriages are widespread in the country. According to estimations published by UNFPA, an estimated 10-20% of all marriages in Tajikistan involve girls under the age of 18[4]. The Constitution of Tajikistan guarantees equal rights to both men and women and the principle of non-discrimination is enshrined in the legislation, but the norms and attitudes are still strongly influence by the traditionally patriarchal society, in which girls are raised to become housewives and mothers.

The Spotlight Initiative programme commenced in Tajikistan in January 2020. The implementation of the programme, however, was delayed for 1.5 years and most of the activities planned for 2020 had to be suspended. Government approval was only granted through an exchange of note in July 2021. The annual

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[2] Human Rights Watch Report. *"Violence with Every Step" Weak State Response to Domestic Violence in Tajikistan.* September 2019
[3] International Partnership for Human Rights. *He left his footprint on my life' Domestic violence in Tajikistan: Time to right the wrongs.* March 2017.
[4] Child Marriage in Tajikistan (Summary), UNFPA,
http://eeca.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pubpdf/unfpa%20tajikistan%20summary.pdf

work plan was approved at the Steering Committee meeting in August 2021 and only in September 2021 the actual implementation started. The programme works at the national level and covers four districts in Dushanbe and six districts in Khatlon, Sughd and Districts of Republican Subordination (DRS).

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 Discussion [FGD]), an online survey and a document review. A total of 46 stakeholders (35 women and 11 men) participated in the online survey. The UN stakeholders had the strongest representation in the survey with 26 participants (1 from the RCO, 3 from the Spotlight Coordination Team and 22 from RUNOs).

The on-site data collection for the MTA took place in Dushanbe, Gissar and Vose. The data collection sites were selected following a convenience sampling approach. Due to the limited time for the data collection, only sites close to Dushanbe could be included.

KIIs and FGDs were conducted with seven government institutions (five at national and two at the local level), six Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), four UN organisations, the Spotlight Initiative Coordination Team, the European Union Delegation (EUD) and 20 beneficiaries of the programme. A total of 58 respondents participated in the KIIs and FGDs, consisting of 38 (65 per cent) women and 20 (35 per cent) men. Seven FGDs were conducted with the following groups: RUNO technical team members, CSOs and members of the Civil Society Reference Group (CSRG), members of local/grassroot organisations, programme consultants and beneficiaries.

Challenges, limitations and measures taken:

- Expenditure data are reported by the RUNO headquarters through the MPTF portal according to UNDG budget lines as agreed in the contract with the EU. Expenditures of the country programme are not reported per outcome as this is not required under the current reporting system. This meant that a financial analysis of the respective outcomes was not feasible and is formulated as a recommendation for future monitoring of the programme.

- Due to time and budget limitations, we did not have time to work with reverse translation techniques from quotes from Tajik and Russian to English.

- Due to the delayed start of the Programme, the implementation period to be assessed was only 8 eight months (starting from September 2021 after the approval of the National Steering Committee in August 2021) and not 18 months which were intended for the MTA. To mitigate the impact of this limitation, we considered what can be realistically expected in such a short period of time when determining the ratings for the evaluation questions.

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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

According to key informants from different stakeholder groups, a consultative approach was applied during the design phase. The four RUNOs worked closely with the government, CSOs, the EUD and other donor organisations working on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) in the country. Relevant existing projects were analyzed to pinpoint gaps, to consider existing materials on SGBV and to conduct a district mapping for the identification of target districts.

The focus of the design phase was to build on the experiences, lessons learned, best practices of organisations working on SGBV including CSOs, state institutions, UN and other donor organisations. Consultations with the government were conducted to ensure that the proposed activities were aligned with national priorities and strategies. This was not without challenge due to staff rotations within the government. According to UN key informants, the design phase was too short to consult beneficiaries and grassroot organisations, but an interim National Civil Society Reference Group was set up and consulted to represent civil society voices from different levels. In addition, some national CSOs were consulted by the RUNOs to provide input on their experiences and the realities at the local level. An extensive document review was carried out. It included recent thematic, analytical and synthesis reports from the government, academia and civil society, such as, for instance, the State CEDAW Report, the Alternative Report from CSOs on CEDAW, the State Report on Beijing+25 and a Knowledge, Attitude and Practice Survey on Gender Equality and VAW conducted by Oxfam in Tajikistan in 2016.

The online survey results corroborated that the design process for the Tajikistan programme followed a consultative approach involving multiple stakeholders. The survey included a question on the extent to which different stakeholder groups were involved in the design. According to most respondents, three stakeholder groups - the EUD, CSOs and UN organisations - were involved 'to a great extent' in the design phase. 'Somewhat involved' were women's organisations as well as relevant government institutions and relevant ministries at the central and the local level. For the remaining stakeholder groups (e.g., men, women, adolescents, the Prime Minister's Office), there were mixed perceptions on whether or not they had been somewhat involved in the design or not at all. The detailed results including percentages are available in Annex 4. Furthermore, over 90 per cent of the respondents also estimated that people from marginalised groups had not been consulted during the design phase. The examples provided for groups not included in the process were people with disabilities, HIV positive women, single women, women living in rural or low-income areas and children exposed to violence in their homes. Some respondents also perceived that men as well as adolescent girls and boys had not been sufficiently consulted (see also evaluation question 3).

The close collaboration with other organisations working on SGBV in different regions of the country resulted in a selection of project sites that fit the seven programme criteria. In terms of geographic scope, the programme covers three out of the four regions in the country. In each region, the programme focuses on two districts with the aim of reaching tangible results within the duration of the programme. To avoid

duplication and to extend the coverage of services to marginalised groups, areas with existing UN interventions were prioritised in the selection process. Some key informants from CSOs indicated that the geographical scope of the programme could have been extended to include regions and districts that are not yet covered by the Recipient UN agencies (RUNOs). They felt that the selected districts were a 'playing safe' choice because of previous SGBV interventions, while working in a district new to the RUNOs would require more work and efforts. The choice of districts, however, was linked to the limited time given for the development of the programme as well as the categories defined for the selection. According to key informants from CSOs and RUNOs, the hard-to- reach regions would have been covered if there had been more time for the design process.

Key informants from RUNOs, CSOs and the CSRG agreed that the period given for designing the programme in Tajikistan was too short. The team worked, thus, under considerable time pressure. The write up of the document was outsourced to an international consultant who had experience in formulating Programme Documents for the Spotlight Initiative and was hired from the UN Headquarters vetted roster of consultants.

Alignment with the 16 principles of the Spotlight Initiative

The results of the online survey, the KIIs and FGDs indicate that the Tajikistan programme is generally well aligned with the 16 Spotlight Initiative principles. The online survey showed that most respondents estimated that the principles were incorporated in the programme design. For each principle, at least 74 per cent of the respondents somewhat or strongly agreed that the programme is aligned to it. A detailed overview of these results for each principle is provided in Annex 3. The principle on gender responsiveness was rated highest of all principles (91 per cent). The two principles with the lowest ratings were "the programme applies a survivor centred approach that promotes recovery by ensuring agency in decision-making" and the principle "the programme strengthens, supports, protects and engages the women's movement, as well as autonomous women's organisations, and encourages them to access and develop long term financing strategies that blend public and private grants and social investment funds". The result on the principle related to the survivor centred approach can be partially explained by the relatively low delivery rate of the programme on Pillar 4 (assistance to survivors of GBV, see also evaluation question 7 and 8)[5]. Similarly, according to some CSOs at both national and local level as well as some of the state officials interviewed, the assistance to survivors should be a stronger focus of the programme and should be strengthened in the next phase. Key informants from civil society highlighted that the development of new services and the improvement of existing services to survivors of SGBV are the most critical intervention for the girls and women concerned. Some online survey respondents also perceived that the programme did not sufficiently reach marginalised women with the interventions targeting survivors of SGBV.

As for the principle of strengthening the women's movements, the interventions were generally perceived positively, however, their scope was perceived as too limited by the interviewed civil society stakeholders. While the innovative approach of building the capacity of emerging and less resourced CSOs through well-capacitated national organisations was appreciated, the number of CSOs supported through this initiative was estimated as too low. The lower ratings on the principle on supporting women's organisations can also be explained through the fact that the programme has focussed on strengthening the capacity and networks of CSOs, but not yet on the development of long-term financing strategies which is part of the principle. There was also the perception among online survey respondents that the selection process of IPs mainly resulted in the recruitment of "the old NGOs", i.e., well known organisations which had previous

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[5] The delivery rate under Pillar 4 was at 35 per cent by end of 2021. According to key informants, some of the activities under this Pillar 4 had been shifted to 2022.

working experience with the UN while smaller organisations with feminist approaches were not selected. This is corroborated by data from the KIIs, FGDs and the document review. Most interviewees from CSOs, state institutions and some of the RUNOs agreed that the programme mostly works with the CSOs that have been active for years and have experience of working on similar projects with the UN agencies or other donors. Once an Expression of Interest (EoI) is announced, the new and less experienced CSOs either did not apply at all or they did not meet the institutional requirements of the RUNOs[6]. At times, the initiative had to re-advertise the EoIs to receive additional applications (see also evaluation question 10). According to one key informant, the innovative character of the interventions outlined in the TORs under the EoIs (e.g., conducting a Gender Action Learning System or an ethnographic review on EVAWG and social norm holders-influencers) was also a restraining factor as few CSOs were knowledgeable about these approaches and even fewer had experience in implementing them.

The principle of Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) is mainstreamed in the outputs and results of the programme. In addition, one of the seven selection criteria for the geographic scope of the programme was 'prioritising those furthest behind' in the VAWG response. The Country Programme Document (CPD) includes a mapping of different marginalised groups which explains how and to what extent they will be reached by the programme. The annual reports provide consistent evidence on LNOB mainstreaming in activities. The LNOB principle was well known to interviewed stakeholders and FGD participants, but perceptions varied regarding its effective implementation. The focus on the inclusion of girls and women with disabilities as one of the most discriminated groups in the Tajik society was highlighted as a strength of the programme.

Key findings:

- A consultative approach was applied during the design phase which involved all relevant segments of the government, RUNOs and the civil society. Direct beneficiaries, including those from marginalised groups, were not involved in the process, but an interim CSRG had been set up to represent civil society stakeholders from all levels. Representatives of CSOs specialised on working with different types of marginalised groups were also consulted.

- An extensive document review including reports and publications from the government, academia and CSOs was conducted.

- The programme design is aligned to the Spotlight Initiative principles as listed in the Spotlight Initiative Fund ToRs. Key informants from civil society perceive that there is a need to adopt a stronger focus on the assistance to survivors of SGBV and to scale up capacity strengthening of local CSOs.

Recommendations:

(The stakeholder group responsible for implementing the recommendation is indicated in brackets at the end of each recommendation.)

- In the design process for Phase 2, it is recommended that RUNOs, government stakeholders and IPs review the scope and type of interventions implemented under Pillar 4 to strengthen the focus and/or scope of the interventions in support of SGBV survivors. The action under this Pillar should involve all critical stakeholders involved in essential service provision (RUNOs, IPs).

- (A recommendation regarding the scaling up of capacity strengthening of grassroot organisations is provided under evaluation question 10).

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[6] The CSOs did also not attend the pre-bidding zoom calls organized by the RUNOs.

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2A. Are the Initiative's deliverables aligned with the UN agencies' mandate, 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, priorities and expertise in the country? Are the right UN agencies involved?

Four Recipient UN Organisations (RUNOs) are signatory to the Spotlight Initiative in Tajikistan: UN Women, UNFPA, UNDP and UNICEF. An analysis of the expertise, experience and strategic priorities of the four RUNOs is presented in Table 1 below. It shows that the RUNOs' experiences, priorities and expertise are both critical and complementary for implementing the six pillars. UNDP brings strong expertise for Pillar 1, 2, and 4 , UNFPA's expertise is critical for Pillar 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, UNICEF's expertise is a specific asset for Pillars 3 and 4 while UN Women's mandate and expertise are relevant to all pillars, in particular to Pillar 6. The four agencies also have a history of collaboration and joint project implementation which predates the Spotlight Initiative. The four RUNOs have supported jointly, for example, the reform of the civil registration system in Tajikistan. UNDP, UNICEF and UN Women have also collaborated on a joint programme on cross-border cooperation for sustainable peace and development. UNICEF and UNDP have also joint working experience in the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities and UN Women and UNDP partnered from 2014 to 2016 on a project that aimed at strengthening the rule of law and human rights in the country. According to a UN key informant, UN Women and UNDP also partnered in 2019 for a programme on the prevention of domestic violence against women. The results of this project provided important foundations for the Spotlight Initiative in Tajikistan. This included, for example, a mapping of existing services for survivors of domestic violence and GBV and the development of concrete provisions on necessary amendments relating to criminal liability for GBV against women.

The UN Country Team (UNCT) in Tajikistan – which has been active for 28 years - has also been an important facilitator for the design and implementation process. During the design phase, the UNCT including its eight UNDAF Result Groups as well as its UN Inter-Agency Thematic Groups on Gender, HIV/AIDS which offered platforms for consultation and knowledge sharing. This contributed to meaningful UN stakeholder engagement in the process.

Table 1.   Priorities, expertise and experience of the four RUNOs

RUNO	Priorities, expertise and experiences in the country
UNDP	UNDP's country plan (2016 – 2020) for Tajikistan has four priorities: (1) improved governance, rule of law and access to justice; (2) sustainable and equitable economic growth; (3) social equity and protection of vulnerable groups from violence and discrimination; and (4) resilience and environmental sustainability. Under priority 3, the programme specifically aims at reducing the incidence of domestic violence and at empowering CSOs to participate in policy dialogue for addressing and preventing VAWG. UNDP also commits to contributing to the availability of quality disaggregated data to inform policy decisions on marginalised groups.
	In terms of expertise and experience, UNDP has a strong track record on governance reforms and institutional strengthening, on population data, primary legal aid services for SGBV survivors, as well as on community development and partnerships. The agency has also completed a gender review of the country's National Development Strategy in 2018.
UNICEF	UNICEF's country programme (2016 – 2020) prioritises the areas of early childhood development, inclusive quality learning, youth participation, child protection with a strong emphasis on social protection and on ending violence against children, in particular girls. This includes national, district

	and community level interventions. UNICEF covers a wide scope of thematic areas that go far beyond the scope of the Spotlight Initiative, but the following expertise and experience position the agency as a natural fit for Pillar 3: - It has a strong record on child and youth participation and on behaviour change interventions (including on positive parenting); - It has a presence in all regions of the country and - It has partnerships with 20 CSOs on girls' empowerment and ending violence against children.
UNFPA	UNFPA's strategic plan aims at achieving transformative results in four areas: (1) sexual and reproductive health; (2) adolescents' and youth's rights; (3) gender equality and women's empowerment and (4) population dynamics. The third area focuses on the strengthened capacity of institutions to deliver multisectoral services to SGBV survivors as well as on the prevention of VAWG. The fourth area aims at strengthening national capacity to collect and use quality disaggregated population data (including on SRH and gender) for evidence-based policies. UNFPA in Tajikistan has extensive experience in the development of SOPs and clinical protocols for the health sector response to SGBV survivors, in the establishment of Victim Support Rooms for SGBV survivors, in increasing access to services in remote areas, in social norm change interventions targeting men and boys, and in working on quality population data that can inform policies on SGBV. The experience and expertise of the agency are valuable to all Pillars, but particularly to Pillar 2, 3, 4, and 6.
UN Women	The UN Women Office in Tajikistan is a programme presence (PP) which does not require a country programme document. The available project reports from 2014 – 2019 indicated, however, that the agency has substantial expertise and experience in interventions related to all Pillars. This included a UNDP project on the prevention of domestic violence and mobilisation of Communities to which UN Women was a partner. Under this project, UN Women delivered substantial analytical work on VAWG data to harmonise national data for five key structures on VAWG, but also worked with communities, on government capacity strengthening (CoWFA and Ombudsman), conducted a mapping of existing services for survivors of VAWG and domestic violence and provided gender expertise on the review of the existing Law "On the prevention of violence within the family" that resulted in development of concrete provisions on necessary amendments relating to criminal liability for GBV against women. Another programme on supporting the civil registration system reform (2016 – 2019) showcased how UN Women successfully delivered interventions relevant for the implementation of Pillar 1, 2, 3 and 4 (including UN Women's analysis of the judicial formulations allowing the registration of early marriages under the CRR project). UN Women also has a longstanding partnership and cooperation with the country's women's movement and is well connected with CSOs committed to EVAWG which positions the agency as a key partner for Pillar 6.

The agreed division of labour among RUNOs for the delivery of the Spotlight Initiative is described in Table 2. Unlike for other country programmes, there has been no agency assigned to lead the work on specific pillars. The responsibility for each output and outcome indicator, however, has been assigned to one of the four RUNOs in the CPD. The distribution of responsibilities is generally aligned to the strategic priorities and previous work of the four RUNOs in Tajikistan (as described in the previous table). The budget distribution among RUNOs under each pillar also appears to be in line with their experience and areas of expertise. Considering UNFPA's strong expertise on service strengthening for SGBV survivors, it is questionable why its budget allocation under Pillar 4 is relatively small (25%). Considering UNFPA's extensive experience in this area, the rationale for allocating 40% of the budget to UNDP is not evident.

Table 2. Agreed Division of Labour for the Spotlight Initiative			
Outcome / Pillar	**Focus of activities**	**Participating Agencies[7]**	**Percentage of budget**
1. Laws and Policies	Legislative and policy frameworks, based on evidence and in line with international human rights standards, on all forms of violence against women and girls and harmful practices are in place and translated into plans.	UNDP (80%), UN Women (20%)	10%
2. Institutions	National and sub-national systems and institutions plan, fund and deliver evidence-based programmes that prevent and respond to violence against women and girls and harmful practices, including in other sectors	UNDP (33%), UNFPA (34%), UNICEF (13%) UN Women (20%)	10%
3. Prevention	Gender equitable social norms, attitudes and behaviour change at community and individual levels to prevent violence against women and girls and harmful practices.	UNDP (15%), UNFPA (19%), UNICEF (55%), UN Women (11%)	31%
4. Services	Women and girls who experience violence and harmful practices use available, accessible and quality essential services including for long term recovery from violence	UNDP (40%), UNFPA (26%), UNICEF (19%), UN Women (15%)	26%
5. Data	Availability of comparable data on different forms of violence against women and harmful practices, collected, analysed and used in line with international standards to inform laws, policies and programmes.	UNFPA (86%), UN Women (14%)	11%
6. Women's Movement	Women's rights groups and civil society organisations, including those representing youth and groups facing intersecting forms of discrimination, more effectively influence and advance progress on GEWE and EVAWG	UNFPA (21%), UN Women (79%)	12%

Are programmes implemented in line with the UN System reform?

The accountability for the Spotlight Initiative in Tajikistan lies with the UN Resident Coordinator (RC). The role of the RC is to (co-)chair the steering committee meetings, to ensure high level engagement of key stakeholders and to ensure that all RUNOs coordinate their work and demonstrate commitment to the implementation of the programme. This strategic set-up is well aligned with the UN Development System (UNDS) reform as all UN agencies are under the overall supervision of the RC. Most of the online survey participants (92 per cent)[8] agreed that the RC effectively steers and oversees the action, which is in line with key informants from RUNOs, CSOs and the CSRG. The online survey results also indicated that there was commitment from RUNO senior management to deliver the programme in an integrated fashion. The engagement and support of RUNO country representatives to the Spotlight Initiative was estimated to be high by 87 per cent of respondents, and the collaboration between the RUNOs and the RCO was rated as good or excellent by 82 per cent. The online survey findings were corroborated by key informants and the document review. The majority of the respondents considered the RC to be supportive, effective and 'strong'. The collaboration between the RCO and RUNOs was described as excellent which RUNOs described as a motivating factor.

To operationalise an integrated programme approach, a Programme Coordination Unit (PCU) of two members (Spotlight Coordinator, Programme Specialist) was set up. The two positions are fully funded by and dedicated to the Spotlight Initiative. Communications support has been provided by the RCO Communications Analyst. A Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) associate from UNFPA has provided overall M&E support to the programme. The position is also fully funded by the Spotlight Initiative.

The PCU has ensured streamlined communication and coordination of all RUNOs under the strategic leadership of the RC. Technical coherence of the programme is ensured by both the PCU and UN Women. The latter is the entity accountable for technical coherence. The Spotlight Coordinator has a technical reporting line to UN Women and a strategic reporting line to the RC with whom she shares updates monthly. All programmatic documents are reviewed by the PCU's programme specialist. Additional guidance in relation to technical coherence is provided by the Spotlight focal point at UN Women, with support from the UN Women regional focal point, their head of office and communications.

The online survey responses from the 26 RUNOs participants indicated that knowledge about the responsibility for technical coherence of the Spotlight Initiative in Tajikistan was inconsistent. While 15 respondents correctly identified UN Women as the agency responsible for technical coherence, the remaining 11 were misinformed or selected the 'do not know' option. Interestingly, one of the respondents who selected the 'do not know' option was from UN Women. Four respondents marked that the responsible agency was UNDP, two selected the RCO and two respondents opted for UNICEF and UNFPA respectively. According to a UN key informant, this misinformation was due to staff turnover. New personnel had not been systematically briefed on the management structure of the Spotlight Initiative.

The interviewed key informants from RUNOs appreciated UN Women's contribution to technical coherence. According to a RUNO key informant, "UN Women's guidance is always timely and relevant". At UN Women, it is perceived that the technical coherence role is a natural fit as ending VAWG is at the center of their mandate.

The Coordinator and the Programme Specialist were initially part of the RCO structure but then moved under the UN Women structure, as a technical coherence for the programme. The M&E Programme Associate works from the UNFPA office. According to PCU staff, it has been beneficial to their work to be based at the UN Women office. It enabled them to directly draw on and connect with the support functions available in UN Women. Key informants from UN Women also perceived the PCU location in their office as an advantage. Having the PCU in the same building facilitates communication as well as guidance and feedback.

Key findings:

- The capacities, strategic priorities and experiences of UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women and UNICEF are well aligned with the six pillars of the Spotlight Initiative.

- The assignment of activities, outputs and outcomes to specific RUNOs is coherent and grounded in their institutional capacity, experience and expertise. Under Pillar 4, UNFPA's expertise and experience positions the agency for ensuring the implementation of a more substantial part of the interventions.

- The Spotlight Initiative has harnessed existing UN mechanisms to operationalise the UNDS reform and put in place structures and processes to deliver the programme in an integrated fashion. Coordination structures have been put in place through the PCU and the technical coherence oversight. While the technical coherence responsibility executed by UN Women was appreciated by key informants, the online survey results indicated that not all RUNO staff were informed about it.

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[7] The percentage numbers in this column represent the budget percentage allocated to each of the participating agencies.

[8] To include only respondents who were knowledgeable on the UN collaboration in the analysis of this question, all participants who responded "I don't know" to this question were not included in the calculation.

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> **Recommendations:**
>
> *(The stakeholder group responsible for implementing the recommendation is indicated in brackets at the end of each recommendation.)*
>
> - In the design process for Phase 2, discuss the option to extend UNFPA's responsibility and intervention scope under Pillar 4 to fully harness the agency's expertise and experiences on multi-sectoral SGBV services (RCO, RUNOs).
>
> - Communicate UN Women's role and responsibilities as responsible entity for technical coherence among (new) RUNO staff to foster better understanding about its purpose (PCU).

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

Overall, over 90 per cent of the online survey respondents agreed that all relevant groups and key stakeholders were included in the Spotlight Initiative. The survey results also indicated that key stakeholders were involved to varying extent in the design, monitoring and implementation of the programme. A detailed overview of the results per stakeholder group is provided in Annex 4. Apart from the Prime Minister's Office, all stakeholder groups are involved to some or to a great extent in the implementation. Most stakeholder groups also participate in the monitoring of the action with the exception of beneficiaries, who are represented through the CSRG members, and, again, the Prime Minister's Office. For the latter, the Executive Office of the President has assigned the Committee on Women and Family Affairs (CoWFA) as the national coordinating body. The CoWFA contributes actively to the programme monitoring (see also evaluation question 4). The majority of stakeholder estimated that the CSRG is involved somewhat or to a great extent in the implementation and monitoring of the programme which indicates its active participation in the programme (see also evaluation question 11).

These findings were by and large corroborated by key informants who agreed that key stakeholders, such as CSOs and state representatives have been engaged in the design, monitoring and implementation. In line with EU requirements, the design was also carried out in close collaboration with other international organisations working on similar issues in the country. Direct beneficiaries (women and girls who have been exposed to sexual and gender-based violence) as well as other community stakeholders, were not consulted due to time constraints. Instead, CSOs and international organisations with expertise on SGBV in the selected districts provided their experiences and data on the needs of the vulnerable groups (see also evaluation question 1). The beneficiaries who participated in FGDs confirmed they had not been included in the design of the program but perceived that interventions against SGBV were relevant for them because of the high incidence in their communities. The FGDs with beneficiaries also revealed that the latter were not well informed about the programme and had little information about the Spotlight Initiative. In two out of four FGDs with beneficiaries, participants stated they did not need to know the programme details as long as it covered their needs.

According to key informants from CSOs and RUNOs, the programme was built on existing interventions against SGBV that had shown to be successful in the country context.

CSOs, state representatives and beneficiaries perceived that the first phase of the initiative has come to an end without significant changes in improving the service provision to SGBV survivors. In their view, the interventions under Pillar 4 should focus more strongly on strengthening service provision, particularly access to shelter as well as to health, psychological and judicial support services which are currently very limited outside the capital. For them, this should be the priority of Phase 2. According to interviewees from CSOs, there are only two functional shelters in Tajikistan, which are donor dependent, and which are not supported by the government.

The initiative works mostly via national and well established CSOs. The interviewees from national CSOs shared in a FGD that there are only few CSOs active on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) at district level. The programme created knowledge among these CSOs about new opportunities which increased their overall interest to develop their work further. But it was reported by RUNOs and IPs that they were unable to submit proposals due to the procedural and recruitment requirements of the RUNOs. Applying organisations were requested to have organizational policies on gender or sexual harassment, which is rarely the case of small, local organisations (see also question 10). While it is envisaged in the programme to increase the capacity of the local grassroot women's CSOs on bidding requirements and other procedural requirements via stronger capacitated national CSOs, this approach has to date only reached a relatively small number of grassroot organisations.

Some CSOs at the national level and some state representatives also reported concerns that certain CSOs should have been part of the Spotlight Initiative due to their experience and mission on ending VAWG but were omitted. Several national IPs believed that 'prioritising' some NGOs while leaving out others contributed to creating a competition among national CSOs. In addition, it was perceived that this might have discouraged the non-selected CSOs to continue their challenging work related to providing direct services to the survivors of SGBV.

Feedback mechanisms

One third of the online survey respondents were not informed about the programmes' feedback mechanisms. They did not know whether feedback was collected and fed back to different stakeholder groups. The online survey data also indicated that feedback mechanisms with beneficiaries require strengthening: 32 per cent of the respondents did not know whether they existed and about the same percentage asserted that feedback was either not collected at all or that it was only collected, but not fed back to beneficiaries. The data from the key informant interviews supported these findings. The beneficiaries who participated in FGDs had no knowledge about feedback mechanism. They reported that they shared their stories, experiences and results with '*anyone who would ask'* but did not know what the information was used for. Their understanding was that information was collected to 'check the quality of the services provided by the NGO'. According to UN key informants, the programme offers two feedback mechanisms for beneficiaries. The first is a hotline (#1313) for SGBV survivors connected to the CoWFA resource center. The second is facilitated through the CSRG. Its members have conducted monitoring visits at community level, collected feedback and reported it back to the PCU and some corrections were made or incorporated under Phase II activities.

Feedback mechanisms among civil society partners, on the other hand, were comparatively well known by online survey respondents. National level stakeholders were consulted for feedback during design and implementation. Key informants from the CSRG confirmed that there is a good feedback mechanism established and that their views are often considered for the implementation of interventions. The CSRG has taken an active part in the monitoring of the programme and shared its observations with all engaged parties.

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The interviewed IPs also confirmed that they were consulted for feedback during monitoring activities. Those at the local level, however, are not sure whether their feedback was considered and used for improving the programme as information is not fed back to them.

"I *am not sure anymore if my feedback on the programme is useful or if it is taken into account because nobody communicates back to me. We only meet representatives of either national CSOs, government or UN agencies when they need information or when they check the quality of our work. We are only being supervised it seems, while the information [provided by us] is not used to improve the situation." [key informant*, IP]

Most of the interviewed state officials, on the other hand, were not informed about formal feedback mechanisms. They reported, however, that the programme provided space for feedback via meetings with either RUNOs or the CoWFA in which they can share their concerns.

Key findings:

- Despite a very short design period, consultations were organised with different stakeholder groups. This included CSOs and government representatives as well as international organisations and donors working on EVAWG. Beneficiaries were not directly involved in the design phase, but their views were represented through CSOs. According to the interviewed beneficiaries, the interventions that they have observed are relevant to their needs, but their knowledge on the Spotlight Initiative was limited.

- There are mixed viewpoints on the extent to which the programme responds to the needs of the direct beneficiaries. According to key informants from civil society and some of the state representatives, interventions under Pillar 4 require strengthening in terms of scope and focus. According to them, interventions to improve access to shelters and quality services for SGBV survivors should be prioritised in Phase 2.

- Key informants from civil society and the government shared concerns about the exclusion of certain CSOs from the implementing process. This viewpoint was not shared by RUNOs or the PCU.

- At the national level, feedback mechanisms have been established and were appreciated by key informants. Some government stakeholders were not informed about these processes but appreciated coordination meetings as spaces for feedback. CSOs working at the district level reported that they were consulted for feedback, but without information being fed back to them. Community level feedback mechanisms are in place, but were not well known among the consulted beneficiaries, CSOs, civil servants and some of the RUNO personnel.

Recommendations:

(The stakeholder group responsible for implementing the recommendation is indicated in brackets at the end of each recommendation.)

- The interventions under Outcome 4 aiming at the provision of survivor-centred essential services to SGBV survivors should be reviewed in a participatory manner. For the design of Phase 2, it is recommended that RUNOs, government stakeholders and IPs review the interventions implemented under Pillar 4 to strengthen the focus or scope of the interventions (RUNOs, IPs).

- In line with the global grassroot action plan of the Spotlight Initiative, it is recommended that all RUNOs explore mechanisms such as women funds, small grants schemes or sub-contracts from national CSO to less capacitated CSOs to enable smaller and grassroots organisations as well as

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informal unions such as school councils or activist groups to connect to the Spotlight Initiative (RUNOs).

- 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 Tajikistan Country Programme. This should include feedback mechanisms available to 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

Government

Due to several factors including the COVID-19 pandemic and staff rotations, the government revision process of the CPD was lengthy (18 months). Since the approval of the document, the engagement of the government for the programme has been visible. The commitment of the Spotlight Initiative Focal Point at the CoWFA was in particular highlighted. Online survey respondents as well as key informants described the CoWFA as instrumental for the coordination of the action with other ministries and departments. The CoWFA has built working relationships for the coordination of SGBV interventions with all state institutions and ministries both at the national and local levels. It was described as an effective coordinating body between the government, UN agencies and the private sector.

Key informants from RUNOs and IPs emphasized that there has been more engagement from state institutions for the Spotlight Initiative than for previous SGBV programmes. They also reported that the programme created new approaches for collaboration which was highlighted as a positive result. The joint work of CSOs, government institutions and UN agencies on SGBV, for example, has opened a dialogue between the different structures. This is particularly visible in the collaboration between state representatives and CSOs. It was observed that state institutions have gained more trust in the work of CSOs and that issues related to VAWG are discussed openly. This has generated a better understanding of the difficulties and realities of both sides.

Civil Society

Since the start of the programme, RUNOs established formal collaborations with 16 CSOs in different capacities (IPs and grantees). The majority of the online survey respondents estimated that CSOs effectively contribute to steering the implementation of the Spotlight Initiative. The work of the CSRG which acts as representatives of the civil society in meetings was greatly appreciated and cited as one of the two foundations for CSOs ownership of the programme[9]. The other foundation are the CSOs that were selected as IPs. Their experience was estimated as critical by online survey respondents for advancing the implementation of the different actions. Data from KIIs are in line with this finding. The interviewees from CSOs, RUNOs and government strongly highlighted the commitment of the CSRG. The CSRG members

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[9] The contributions of the CSRG are analysed in more detail under evaluation question 11.

work on a voluntary basis yet have supported the implementation of the programme with commitment and passion.

The majority of interviewees from different stakeholder groups shared that the CSOs selected as IPs have been empowered by the project. While most of the recruited national CSOs had strong capacity prior to the Spotlight Initiative, the programme gave them a platform to demonstrate their knowledge and experience to other stakeholders including state officials. As described by key informants from RUNOs, the IPs were capacitated to engage the government in a constructive dialogue and to advocate for policy changes on VAWG. The dialogue between government and CSOs on tasks related to VAWG is seen as a positive impact of the initiative. Additionally, RUNOs reported that their collaboration with CSOs has evolved to a partnership level on which they consult with them regularly for problem solving and planning of next steps.

UN Agencies

According to key informants from all stakeholder groups, the RUNOs have demonstrated strong ownership and are the principal driving force of the programme. Some government representatives perceived this as to be 'expected' or 'usual', while key informants from CSOs advocated for passing on progressively more ownership to the government and civil society.

EU Delegation

According to key informants from the UN, the EUD has been very supportive despite frequent staff turnover. In the online survey, all participants estimated that the EUD has made relevant contributions to the steering committee. The KIIs with CSOs, RUNO and government officials confirm the active representation and support of the EUD. The guidance from the EUD has been particularly strong at the design stage, where the requirements of the EUD had to be understood and integrated in the programme approach. In the 2021 annual report, the EUD was described as 'not only a donor, but an insightful, involved and supportive partner from programme design to its implementation'.

Key findings:

- The government has been engaged in the programme since its design. The CoWFA has shown commitment and support for its coordination and implementation. The increased dialogue between civil society stakeholder and state representatives on ending VAWG was also positively highlighted.

- The RUNOs, CSOs and the EUD have effectively contributed to steering the action in alignment with their role defined in the CPD.

 Recommendations:

(The stakeholder group responsible for implementing the recommendation is indicated in brackets at the end of each recommendation.)

- We recommend maintaining the current level of efforts to strengthen and consolidate government commitment to the Spotlight Initiative. To facilitate the engagement of new state officials after staff turnover, it is also recommended to develop a set of briefing materials on the Spotlight Initiative in Tajik, including information on government and CSO commitments and their areas of collaboration (PCU, RUNOs, RCO, EUD).

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	☐ Very Good – Good
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?	☒ Problems
	☐ Serious deficiencies

Is the programme Theory of Change well developed?

The Tajikistan programme covers the six pillars of the global Spotlight Initiative Theory of Change (ToC). For each of the pillars, a contextualised ToC narrative has been developed and integrated in the CPD. There is no country specific visualisation or figure of the ToC. Interviewed stakeholders from RUNOs conveyed that the global ToC with its six pillars is useful as a holistic framework which helps to address violence against women and girls in a more integrated way. They also perceived that the country-specific ToC as formulated in narrative form in the CPD was received positively by CSO and government partners. The ToRs of all IPs include the narrative ToC segments related to their interventions. The majority of key informants from state institutions and IPs, however, had limited understanding about the programme's ToC or its overarching intervention logic. They perceived the Spotlight Initiative as 'very complex'. The ToC was unknown to key informants at the district level. They were only knowledgeable on specific activities to which they had been associated but ignored the holistic approach of the initiative.

Key informants who were knowledgeable about the ToC, observed two problems. First, the objectives of the programme are too ambitious and cannot be achieved within the time frame of the Spotlight Initiative. Second, it is not sufficiently contextualised to the country's realities and does not sufficiently reflect the socio-cultural dimensions influencing VAWG.

"The ToC sounds great, but it also sounds too general and not context specific. It gives an impression that all countries are being assessed similarly while ignoring their differences. It would be beneficial to fine tune this to the local realities." [Key informant, CSO]

"Some objectives are either too broad or too ambitious. For example, for Pillar 4, the ToC claims that if services are provided and women and girls are aware and are empowered to use their right to services, it will lead to many changes including changes in social norms. Unfortunately, as we have worked in this field for years, knowledge of rights or access to services does not mean much if stereotypes towards women are engrained in society and are exercised by the service providers themselves, for example the police." [Key informant, CSO]

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

The Tajikistan programme uses 22 output and 9 outcome indicators, which is an adequate number for a programme of this scope.[10] The indicators were selected from the global Spotlight Initiative Results Framework in order to allow for global aggregation and reporting. The CSOs and RUNOs reported that the indicators are not adapted to the country context. They were described as either not relevant, difficult to measure or insufficient for measuring the achievement of results. Indicator 2.3., for instance, measures the extent to which VAWG/ harmful practices are integrated in the development plans of six sectors. In Tajikistan, however, there are no annual sector-specific development plans. Longer-term development plans are mainly developed by consultants and UN staff only gets access one time during its development phase. The indicators were also perceived inapt for the monitoring of qualitative results. While qualitative data to showcase progress is reported in the annual report, the available output indicators do not enable

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[10] See https://unsdg.un.org/resources/technical-briefs-aligned-results-based-management-handbook for more information.

monitoring of the latter which leads to a gap between the qualitative narrative in the annual reports and the reported progress under the output indicators. The PCU made several attempts to share these concerns with the Spotlight Secretariat but did not receive support for improving the M&E framework. While country programmes have the flexibility to identify programme specific indicators to report on at national level, this option was not known to the country programme team at the time of the MTA.

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

The performance data for 2021 as entered in the global platform conveys that data are mostly accessible and have been collected. Data was missing only for one outcome indicator under Outcome 3.

Key findings:

- While the RUNOs consider the Theory of Change useful as a comprehensive framework to address VAWG in Tajikistan, key informants from the government and IPs were either not knowledgeable about the ToC and its six-pillar approach or perceived that it does not sufficiently reflect the socio-cultural context.

- There was consensus among key informants from RUNOs and CSOs that the indicators do not allow the accurate measurement of outputs and outcomes.

Recommendations:

(The stakeholder group responsible for implementing the recommendation is indicated in brackets at the end of each recommendation.)

- During the design of Phase 2, the M&E Specialist of the PCU should organise a workshop with RUNOs, IPs, CSRG members and government representatives involved in the monitoring of Spotlight funded interventions. With the support from M&E officers and SGBV specialists, they should review the ToC, ensure that it is thoroughly contextualised and that its link to the indicators and targets of the global performance monitoring framework are visualised in a simplified manner. One of the outcomes of such a workshop could be a subsidiary national M&E framework with indicators that are considered by IPs as relevant to their activities and context while maintaining the link to the global framework (PCU).

- To ensure that government and CSO partners gain a more holistic understanding of the programme, it is recommended to develop concise and simple communication material on the ToC and its key interventions in Tajik and in Russian language (PCU).

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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

Risk management

The country risk management register uses four types of risk categories: contextual, programmatic, institutional and fiduciary risks. At least one mitigatory measure has been identified for each risk. The risk register was revised and updated in annual reports to monitor existing risks and to add new risks (for example, the COVID-19 pandemic was added in 2020). Overall, key informants agreed that relevant risks had been assessed and that effective mitigation measures have been formulated. Some risks were highlighted in KIIs in relation to their impact on the programme results. These risks are discussed in the following paragraphs.

The risk management report (2021) rates the impact of the risk on 'resistance from family, community, traditional and religious leaders' as moderate. Key informants from CSOs and some RUNOs, however, reported gender stereotypes and harmful gender norms at all levels of society, including government officials and civil servants. According to key informants from CSOs, government officials tend to avoid the topic of SGBV. Their hesitant or reluctant attitudes towards the issue resulted repeatedly in delayed or denied approval of activities.

Discussions with the beneficiaries confirmed the relevance of the risk on 'stigmatisation of victims of GBV at community level, resistance from family and unwillingness to seek professional support'. Its impact has been adequately rated as 'high'. Beneficiaries testified in FGDs that survivors of domestic violence are often discouraged to seek help by family members. As a result, they do not contact institutions to find support, such as police or health services and continue to be exposed to domestic violence.

"Domestic violence is a family matter, that is all we hear when working with domestic violence survivors. We even had a case where a mother hid her daughter in her house because she was severely beaten by her husband just so that nobody else sees and reports the case anywhere. When we asked the mother why she did this, she told us: "Are you going to look after my daughter if her husband leaves her and her children?" [Key informant, CSO at the local level]

The dissuasive impact of family members on help seeking behaviour of SGBV is, thus, substantial and requires closer monitoring to assess its impact on the intervention on Pillar 4.

In the category of programmatic risks, one high-impact risk has been added to monitor the impact of the delays which the programme has accumulated. It is defined as the 'quality of programme interventions affected as a result of an accelerated delivery due to reduced implementation period from 24 months to 6 months. While it is too early to fully gauge the impact of this risk, key informants from CSOs and the government shared observations that the density of activities has been a major issue. KIIs with CSOs, State representatives and some RUNOs indicated that the pace of the implementation had a negative impact on the quality of the deliverables. While key informants agreed that the amount of work delivered in a short period of time has been 'impressive', they also acknowledged that the pressure to deliver on time

has resulted in insufficient planning and after-action reflection for activities which in turn affected the quality of outputs.

"Due to the strong reduction of the implementation timeframe, budget absorption has become stressful, people are working on weekends and many activities do not have the logical pauses needed to complement and learn knowledge, skills, etc. The capacity of the implementers (UN and NGOs) is excellent, at a high level. We do not have the right to break procurement, recruitment, and other financial rules and regulations for execution in a very tight timeframe. This severely affects both quality and budget utilisation (delays), as well as the regularity of implementation of action plans on commitments and contracts." [online survey respondent]

Further risks of high impact that were raised in KIIs by CSOs, RUNOs and state representatives were the following: (a) 'funding and services not available after Initiative ends due to lack of resources', (b) acquired capacity and knowledge not translated in transformative action' and (c) 'lack of technical and financial resources including to improve service delivery'. Some key informants from CSOs and RUNOs perceived that the high level of government staff rotations and changes might be a risk for the sustainability of capacity strengthening interventions.

Delays of the programme and their consequences

The Tajikistan programme was only formally approved by the government on July 1st, 2021. The first meeting of the National Steering Committee (NSC) took place in August 2021. The implementation of the programme only fully commenced in September 2021. At the time of the programme approval in July 2021 all COVID-related restrictions had been lifted in the country.

In the absence of formal government approval, most of the interventions that were planned for 2020 had to be suspended, but some activities were carried out, COVID-19 response plan approved by donor and government. In response to the pandemic, the planned in-person delivery modalities for prevention, risk mitigation and gender-based violence response were adapted to remote modalities. These activities implemented in 2020 included

- a participatory review of key legislations related to SGBV,
- support to accessible quality services for SGBV survivors through direct assistance of six women's centers and of the '1313' hotline, trainings sessions for volunteers, staff and health care providers as well reconfirmation of referral pathways with actors in six districts and the capital.
- Advocacy for the establishment of additional short-term shelters for girl and women survivors of SGBV which resulted in the government commitment to create 10 new Victim Support Rooms (VSR).
- Capacity strengthening of 120 volunteers in COVID-19 prevention and guidance on support services for survivors of SGBV.
- Awareness raising activities on social media on positive parenting practices during the pandemic with emphasis on girls' development, mental health and education.
- Set-up of the permanent CSRG.

Delays over negotiations of the CPD had been somewhat anticipated and acknowledged in the programme's risk management report. To accelerate the approval process at governmental level, the EUD, including the EU ambassador in Tajikistan and the UN lobbied on behalf of the Spotlight Initiative. The members of the CSRG made a collective request to the President's Office to advocate for the importance of the programme. Several meetings with government stakeholders were organised by the UN/ EUD and the CSRG for this purpose. In addition, the Secretariat in New York sent official communications to the highest level of government in favour of the Spotlight Initiative. The joint advocacy for the approval of the

CPD by CSOs and RUNOs prior to approval of the Initiative built a strong collaboration between RUNOs and CSOs.

Because of the delayed approval of the CPD, the time span for implementing activities has been much shorter than originally planned. The density of activities to be delivered by IPs is high. This puts them under pressure to deliver their interventions within the agreed timelines. This has not only been stressful for CSOs, but also for the communities and government officials, who had to accommodate and support the roll out of a high number of activities in a short period of time (see question 7 for more information).

Key findings:

- Relevant risks were considered in the programme design. The risk register has been updated on an annual basis to respond to contextual changes and implementation circumstances. Key informants perceived the formulated risk mitigation measures to be mostly effective, but also indicated that the risks related to community resistance, help-seeking behaviour, density of activities and the availability of sustained technical and financial resources might require stronger mitigation measures.

- The programme has been substantially delayed due to a lengthy government revision and approval process. After joint advocacy efforts of the UN agencies, the EUD and CSOs, the programme document was approved in July 2021. To catch up on the lost time, IPs have been tasked to deliver their activities in a shorter time frame. This is perceived to have impacted negatively on the quality of some of the outputs and reduced time for learning and reflection.

Recommendations:

(The stakeholder group responsible for implementing the recommendation is indicated in brackets at the end of each recommendation.)

- During the design process of Phase 2, undertake a participatory review of the programme's risk register to discuss if the risks related to conservative attitudes, socio-cultural barriers to help seeking behaviour of SGBV survivors, density of activities and sustained technical and financial resources require stronger or different mitigation measures (PCU, RUNOs, CSOs).

- To strengthen the management of the risk related to resistance from family, community, traditional and religious leaders and the risk regarding help seeking behaviour, we recommend to (a) continuously raise awareness about the complaint mechanisms at community and school levels and (b) to strengthen behaviour change interventions which focus on the de-stigmatization of SGBV survivors and the importance of help seeking at the community level (RUNOs).

- Conduct a rapid feedback exercise with IPs, government and community representatives to explore the impact of the high density of activities since September and develop mitigative measures, if indicated (PCU, RUNOs).

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 results against the approved work plan

According to the global performance monitoring data provided to the MTA by the Spotlight Secretariat, the Tajikistan programme monitors and reports against 22 output indicators and 9 outcome indicators. The MTA analysed monitoring data for the first two years of the programme (until 31st December 2021). If indicator 2021 milestones were set to the same level as the baseline data, the result was rated as "no progress planned". The table below outlines the progress towards output targets for each of the six pillars for the 2021 milestones.

Despite the late start of programme interventions, considerable progress was made towards the milestones in 2021. The data show that satisfactory progress has been made for Outcome 2, 3 and 6 (see Table 3 below). The performance under the remaining outcomes was less consistent. For Outcome 1 (legislation and policy environment), one of the three outputs were in progress (over 50% achieved) and two were not achieved (less than 50% achieved). For Outcome 4 (quality essential services), progress was also inconsistent: out of four outputs, one was achieved, one was in progress and two were not achieved. The performance data for the outputs of Outcome 5 (data) are a reason for concern as none of the three output indicators had been achieved by December 2021. The absence of data for one output indicator under Outcome 3 also required follow up by the end of 2021, but the milestone for this indicator had been achieved at the time of the MTA according to UN key informants.

Table 3.   Achievement of output targets in 2021

Progress	Achieved	In progress	Not achieved	No data	No progress planned	Total number of outputs
Result 1	0	1	2	0	0	3
Result 2	3	0	0	0	1	4
Result 3	2	1	0	0	1	4
Result 4	1	1	2	0	0	4
Result 5	0	0	3	0	0	3
Result 6	3	0	1	0	0	4

Is the quality of outputs satisfactory?

To respond to this evaluation question, data on the quality of outputs were collected in interviews and during the document review. As the MTA was limited to KIIs at the national level and a two-day visit to two municipalities, the results cannot be interpreted as a thorough assessment of the quality of all outputs of the Spotlight Initiative. The available evidence needs to be further explored in a more extensive assessment exercise.

Key informants from RUNOs, CSOs and government highlighted unanimously the relevance and quality of actions delivered under Pillar 6. The establishment of the School of Gender Activists, for example, was estimated to be 'long waited for', 'crucial' and 'timely'. The need for this type of establishment has been demonstrated by the high number of motivated activists who applied for enrolment. With support from the CSRG, a diverse group of 18 participants were selected including two students with disabilities who were provided with transportation fees to attend the classes. The majority of the interviewees among CSOs and RUNOs emphasised the importance of mobilising funding beyond the Spotlight Initiative to ensure its sustainability.

"Only when working on selecting people for the training, we realised how necessary the school actually is. It has always been difficult to find Gender Specialists or Advocates particularly in the regions. The School attracted many people who wanted to learn and acquire new skills and we made sure the selection is fair and includes both men and women of various ages." [Key informant, CSRG]

The development of the first Civil Society Strategy on EVAWG was estimated to be an important milestone which created enthusiasm and enhanced networking and collaboration among CSOs according to key informants from CSOs, the CSRG and RUNOs. More than 40 CSOs from different regions came together for this occasion and agreed on a strategic vision and priority actions. The participation of the CSRG members was considered a great asset for the mainstreaming of the LNOB principle. Its members represent different types of vulnerable and marginalised groups who ensured that their needs were integrated in the vision and the action plan.

CSOs at the district level also highlighted the quality of the training provided by national level CSOs. They described the process as 'extensive learning' that enabled them to benefit from the experiences and knowledge of more established organisations. They also appreciated the mentorship provided to them. According to one representative from a local CSO the mentoring *"gave me confidence that I can also develop and find funds for running the CSO"*.

The reach and quality of the awareness raising campaigns implemented under Pillar 3 were also emphasised in KIIs with CSOs, the CSRG and state representatives. According to the interviewees, the messages of the campaign reached even remote parts of the country and was observed to have positive impacts on families' behaviour. This observation was supported by beneficiaries during FGDs.

"I would mark the awareness raising campaign as extremely positive. I have seen many educational and awareness raising efforts but what I observed within this programme is outstanding." [Key informant, CSRG]

The majority of the CSOs, CSRG representatives and RUNOs estimate that the efforts of changing social norms need to be continued in the next phase. Sustainable attitude and norm changes are outcomes that most of the CSOs perceived as 'difficult to reach' within the program timeframe. Some CSOs, particularly at the district level observed that the attitudes of people in rural areas – including state officials - have become more traditional and less favourable towards women's rights compared to previous years.

The quality of trainings provided under Pillar 1 and 2 needs to be improved according to key informants from CSOs, the CSRG and government representatives. The acceleration of the implementation (see also question 6) resulted in the lack of coordination and a high density of different capacity strengthening initiatives. Most interviewees from CSOs, CSRG and state institutions described the training and capacity building activities as 'not being coordinated' and 'not well-planned'. According to interviewees from state agencies, the training schedule obliged them to attend one training after another which impacted negatively on the delivery of their own work at their respective institutions. Interviewees from

government and CSOs also voiced concerns related to the relevance and the format of the training sessions.

"The training and capacity building was carried out, but it was not well planned. The training for Law Enforcement Agencies, for example, was planned for the whole day which is not feasible. Such training should focus on a specific topic and be directed specifically at those who need the training." [Key informant, CSO]

The CSOs also expressed reservations about the quality of training at district level. They reported that the training sessions were not attended by the 'right people'. Their perception was that the capacity building activities were mostly attended by 'random' people who did not work for the right governmental departments. For some training sessions, the training language was also assessed as inappropriate by key informants from CSOs and state institutions. They were conducted in Russian even though most participants only had limited Russian language skills.

Key findings:

- The output delivery is satisfactory for Pillar 2, 3 and 6. It is inconsistent for Pillar 1 and 4 and low for Pillar 5.

- Key informants unanimously highlighted their satisfaction with the behaviour change campaign implemented under Pillar 3 and of the CSO strengthening initiatives under Pillar 6.

- Interviewees from government and CSOs reported concerns about the quality of training activities delivered under Pillar 1 and 2. Insufficient planning and coordination of capacity building initiatives resulted in overlaps and tight sequencing of sessions which were difficult to manage for CSO and government participants. For some trainings, there were also concerns regarding the relevance of the training content, the profile of the participants and the training delivery in a language which was not accessible to all participants.

 Recommendations:

(The stakeholder group responsible for implementing the recommendation is indicated in brackets at the end of each recommendation.)

- It is recommended to develop a master capacity strengthening and training plan that captures capacity building activities across all Pillars. The plan should include information on training content, location, language, profile of participants and duration. The PCU with support from UN Women (in its function as technical coherence lead) should ensure that trainings are well sequenced, planned and ensure that training is provided in Tajik when necessary (PCU with support from UN Women).

- A recommendation related to the low output delivery under Pillar 5 is provided under evaluation question 8.

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

Progress against the approved work plan by outcome area

We analysed the data from the reporting against the results framework for 2021 (Year 2) obtained from SMART platform through the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat. Figure 1 below provides a summary for each outcome by showing the **percentage of outcome and output indicators** which were fully achieved, in progress (over 50% achieved) and not achieved (less than 50% achieved) and those for which no data were available, or which no progress had been planned for the year 2021. The data indicate that important progress has been made against the 2021 milestones for the outcome indicators of pillar 1, 2, 3 and 6. All outcome indicators, but not all output indicators, have been achieved for the first three pillars. For Pillar 6, out of two outcome indicators, one has been achieved and one has not been achieved.

The delays encountered at the start of the programme have resulted in underachievement of some of the outcome targets in 2021. The outcome targets under Pillar 4 and Pillar 5 require management attention. For both pillars, they had not been achieved by December 2021. This is probably linked to the patchy output delivery for these two pillars which has been described under the previous evaluation question.

Figure 1: Progress against milestones
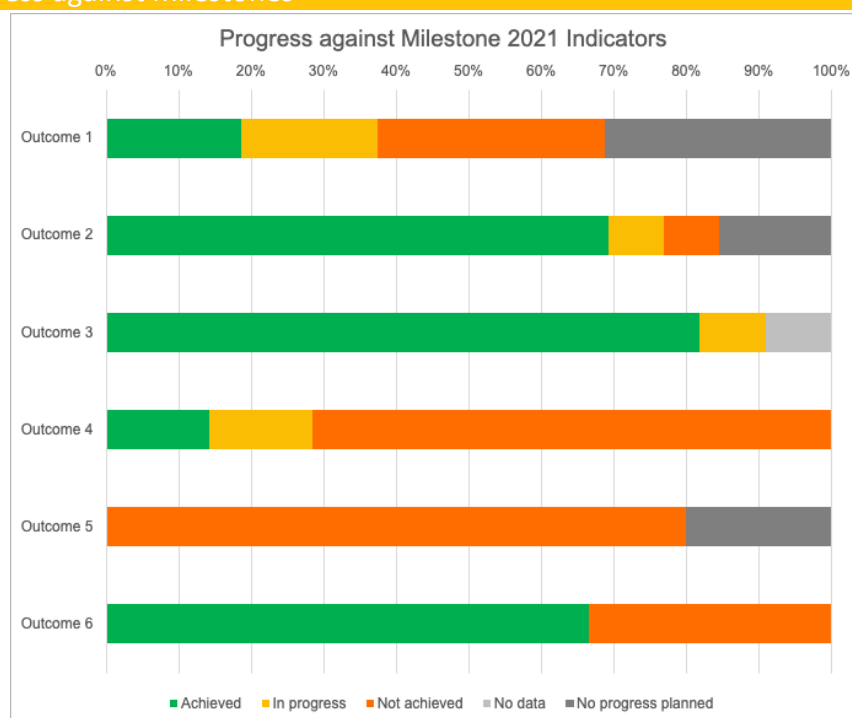
To summarise the main achievements of the Spotlight Initiative in Tajikistan, we analysed the 2020 and 2021 annual reports, the M&E framework as well as data from the KIIs.

According to interviewed key informants, the delivery of the work plan was largely on track. Delays were reported for the deliverables under Pillar 5. The targets for this Pillar were perceived as very ambitious and potentially not achievable within the programme timeframe. For activities under all pillars,

implementing partners, RUNOs and the PCU reported high pressure to implement the programme on time as most activities could only commence in August 2021 (see also evaluation question 6).

For Pillar 1 on legal and policy work, key areas of progress included the (1) strengthening of district development programmes through incorporation of priority response and prevention measures to SGBV, (2) contribution to mainstreaming of the gender equality and LNOB component of the Mid-Term Development Programme (MTDP) for 2021-2025 that was adopted by the Government in April 2021 and (3) mapping of stakeholders and legislation policies related to SGBV in the sectors of justice, security, health, education and labour. Key informants from the government appreciated the work that has been done under Pillar 1. They are supportive of the legislative changes that the programme advocates for and perceive that they will happen eventually. Key informants from CSOs and the CSRG perceive, however, that it is unrealistic to achieve legislative changes within the programme's timeframe. They suggested to change the programme outcome from 'legislations being in place' to 'being promoted, advocated for and recommended'.

Under Pillar 2 (capacity strengthening of state institutions) various capacity strengthening initiatives have been implemented which are listed in Table 4. Important achievement include the (1) development and finalisation of a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy which has been submitted for review to state agencies, (2) the establishment of working group under the Commissioner on Child Rights to elaborate complaint mechanisms for respective ministries, (3) legal support to nine child survivors of sexual crimes via legal representation during the investigation and court cases.

Under Pillar 3 (prevention and norm change), multiple interventions have been documented, including (1) awareness raising activities with community and district level target groups, (2) the establishment and implementation of complaint mechanisms in 35 schools.

Under Pillar 4 (quality services), multiple capacity strengthening interventions were conducted which targeted a wide range of stakeholders involved in the assistance of girls and women survivors of SGBV (see Table 4 for more detail). A working group for the development of the Law of the Guardianship was also established and a four-day training session was carried out for potential families that will receive children under their guardianship. 10 new victim support rooms were established in partnership with the MoHSP. The rooms have been equipped and the focal points have been trained on provision of quality and coordination services several times in 2020 and 2021. More than 1800 women and girls of reproductive age were covered by the mobile health clinics in remote areas of the Spotlight target district, where beneficiaries received quality SRH and GBV services.

On Pillar 5 (data), the current state of government data collection on SGBV has been assessed. Apart from that, activities have been substantially delayed due to lengthy negotiations with the government on where to host the SGBV database.

The outputs to be achieved under this Pillar were also considered as too ambitious by most respondents from CSOs, RUNOs and state institutions. While it was considered feasible to set up a national data base, key informants agreed that the production and use of timely and quality gender disaggregated data on SGBV is not realistic.

Under Pillar 6, Women's Movement, several outputs have been successfully delivered: (1) the opening of a School of Gender Activists, (2) development of a Civil Society Strategy, (3) training for local CSOs on Project Cycle, Monitoring and Evaluation, and Fundraising.

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Table 4. Key achievements and obstacles per Pillar		
Pillars	**Key achievements in Phase I**	**Issues arising / obstacles to address in Phase II**
Outcome 1	• Participatory review of Tajikistan's legislation on SGBV in five key sectors of justice, security, health, education and labour with further assistance to the GoT on the adoption of new and/or strengthened laws and policies on GBV in the above-mentioned sectors. • Contributed to the mainstreaming of gender equality and LNOB response to violence component of the Mid-Term Development Programme (MTDP) for 2021-2025 that was adopted by the Government in April 2021. • Contributed to strengthening three District Development Programmes through incorporating priority response and prevention measures to SGBV. Two out of three have been adopted by local administration in December 2021.	• The staff of state institutions identified for working on the programme at the national and local levels have been trained, the programme goals and objectives have been explained to them and the collaboration between civil servants, CSOs and RUNOs established. Staff rotations of civil servants, however, might jeopardise this achievement. • It is recommended to offer regular capacity building sessions for civil servants to ensure continued government participation in the activities of the programme objectives under Pillar 1 (RUNOs). • Key informants perceive it to be unrealistic to achieve legislative changes within the timeframe of the programme. We recommend adding a country specific indicator to track legislative changes which are 'being promoted, advocated for and recommended' (PCU). • Another challenge under Pillar 1 is that existing laws are sometimes not implemented. The law on the minimum age for marriage, for example, is not enforced and child marriages still happen. We recommend including advocacy interventions for the allocation of funds and the implementation of existing laws on EVAWG in the activity portfolio of Phase 2 (RUNOs).
Outcome 2	• The capacity needs assessment of four key ministries and the Committee on Women and Family Affairs was finalised. • An institutional training module on gender discrimination and SGBV was developed and tested. • 88 employees of key state partners (MoHSPP, MoES, and CoWFA), participated in four three-day trainings to gain knowledge on transformative leadership to promote gender equality and the elimination of SGBV. • The capacity of 336 representatives of Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Justice has been strengthened to transform policies on promoting gender equality and non-discrimination, and response to GBV through inter-agency coordinated efforts and application of international standards in addressing SGBV.	• The challenges and quality gaps related to the roll out of training activities have been described under the previous evaluation question.

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	• The Gender Mainstreaming Strategy for CoWFA and key line ministries (MoJ, MoIA and Judiciary system) that is expected to promote increased access of women to decision-making positions in state institutions and to prepare them to increase their competence on the prevention of violence against women and girls, for the period up to 2030, is finalised and submitted for review to state bodies. • A state working group consisting of six ministries and agencies was established under the Commissioner on Child Rights with the goal to elaborate complaint mechanisms for children, especially girl survivors of SGBV. The working group elaborated draft complaint mechanisms for their respective ministries. • Legal support to nine child survivors of sexual crimes was provided via legal representation during the investigation and court cases. • A training module on Islam and Gender has been developed in collaboration with the Committee of Religious Affairs and Regulations of Traditions to build the capacity of Muslim Religious Leaders on VAWG/SGBV. • Round tables chaired by the CoWFA with participation of representatives from line ministries and agencies at the national and regional levels, UN agencies and CSOs representatives have been conducted to support the work on EVAWG of the multi-stakeholder national and sub-national coordination groups.	
Outcome 3	• Engagement of state bodies in the awareness raising activities on women's right to access quality essential services by wide dissemination of the case management mechanism to respond to SGBV. • The local referral mechanism to respond to cases of violence against women and girls was used in other UN joint programmes as best practices and was recommended to be included in the Action Plan of UNSDCF 2023-2026. • A training module on "Ways and methods of positive upbringing without violence and discrimination" was approved by the Republican	• Challenges related to persisting traditional norms and attitudes have been discussed under evaluation questions 6 and 7.

Educational and Methodological Center (Center) of the MoES in 2021.

- 600 teachers were trained on Positive Parenting to pilot the module.
- 14 educational theatre performances were conducted to teach positive parenting practices and positive masculinity, including information sessions for parents to learn to speak with their children about selected Healthy Lifestyle Education (HLSE) topics in cooperation with the MoES.
- More than 1,705 people were reached via social media with videos developed to promote positive masculinity and to challenge traditional norms among young people.
- Complaint mechanisms have been established in 35 schools in target districts for girls and boys to raise issues of violence, including sexual violence with schoolteachers - mentors. The programme has trained 58 mentors on how to handle complaints by children with application of confidentiality, 'do no harm' principle and the best interest of the child, especially on sensitive issues like SGBV.
- Hundreds of complaints were received during the school year of teachers' corporal punishments, negligence, bullying/violence by peers and also of parents not allowing children, especially girls, to attend school. All complaints were reviewed by the RVC that has been trained on handling the complaints.
- Two sports summer camps were organised for Taekwondo athletes and para-badminton players to increase their knowledge about relevant gender issues and develop skills combating gender-based violence and discrimination.
- 46 representatives of mass media, including journalists and bloggers were trained on gender sensitivity, survivor-centred reporting, and usage of gender-sensitive language.
- Through engagement of national and local CSOs, community mobilisation campaigns were organised to raise awareness and to positively change existing gender inequitable social norms and stereotypes, attitudes, and behaviours in target areas.

Outcome 4	• 35 "support teams" established in pilot districts. The capacity of 163 service providers has been strengthened. • Collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Science to establish a Working Group for the development of the Law on Guardianship • A four-day training session for 58 potential families that will accommodate children as guardians was carried out. • 20 focal points of the 10 new Victim Support Rooms (VSRs) (within maternity houses) received refresher training on provision of quality and coordinated services for survivors of GBV/SGBV • Three shelters were assessed to determine needs and targeted needed interventions • Over 1800 girls and women received SRHR services free of charge • 126 girl and women survivors of SGBV participated in trainings for their socio-economic reintegration.	• FGDs with beneficiaries and some CSOs at the national and local level revealed the urgency for further developing services for survivors of SGBV. The majority of respondents among beneficiaries and CSOs perceived that holistic services for SGBV survivors were still lacking. More details on this point are discussed under evaluation question 3.
Outcome 5	• An assessment of the current status of data collection on sexual and gender-based violence in Tajikistan was conducted, including a participatory review and mapping of existing administrative data, identification of data gaps and procedures	• According to the majority of CSOs, CSRG members and some state representatives, staff changes in state institutions, a high workload of civil servants and the absence of a coordinating body within the government have been barriers to the roll out of interventions under Pillar 5. We recommend supporting the government in setting up a coordination body for overseeing the data collection and analysis (UNFPA).
Outcome 6	• The first-of-a-kind School of Gender Activists (SGA) in Tajikistan has been opened • Development of first ever Civil Society Strategy • Strategy and its Action Plan were presented by the implementing partner to the RUNOs • As part of the Civil Society Strategy, six CSOs have been selected to implement small-scale projects on behaviour change related to SGBV. • 140 CSO representatives participated in the training on the Project Cycle, Monitoring and Evaluation, and Fundraising	• The School of Gender Activists is currently run by CSOs. Sustainability and quality of the school should be maintained through establishing partnership between CSOs and the government (UN Women). • Sustainable support to the implementation of the Civil Society Strategy has not yet been established. We recommend integrating measures in the programmes sustainability plan to ensure that the strategy can be fully implemented (PCU, UN Women).

Key findings:

● According to RUNOs and the PCU, the delivery of the work plan was reported to be largely on track.

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- The programme has achieved important progress and achievements under all pillars except for Pillar 5. Overly ambitious targets and staff changes in government institutions were named as the main reasons for the delays of outcomes under Pillar 5.

Recommendations:

(The stakeholder group responsible for implementing the recommendation is indicated in brackets at the end of each recommendation.)

- Due to the barriers in delivering the activities planned for Pillar 5, it is recommended to organise a participatory working session with representatives from CSOs, government and the RUNOs to revise the targets and interventions under Pillar 5 for Phase 2 (UNFPA with support from UN Women and from the Global Secretariat).

- Recommendations to tackle specific challenges are available in Table 3 (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?** | ☒ Very Good – Good |
| **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?** | ☐ 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 the second quarter of 2022.[11] As per the quarter 1 data, the budget delivery (expenditure and commitments) was at 61 per cent for all RUNOs combined (see Figure 2 below). UNFPA and UNICEF had lower expenditure/commitment rates at 50 per cent and 59 per cent respectively than UNDP (76 per cent) and UN Women (64 per cent). The programme is relatively close to reaching the 70 per cent target for the end of Phase 1.

Figure2.Tajikistan budget vs expenditure

Tajikistan budget vs expenditure (up to 31 March 2022)
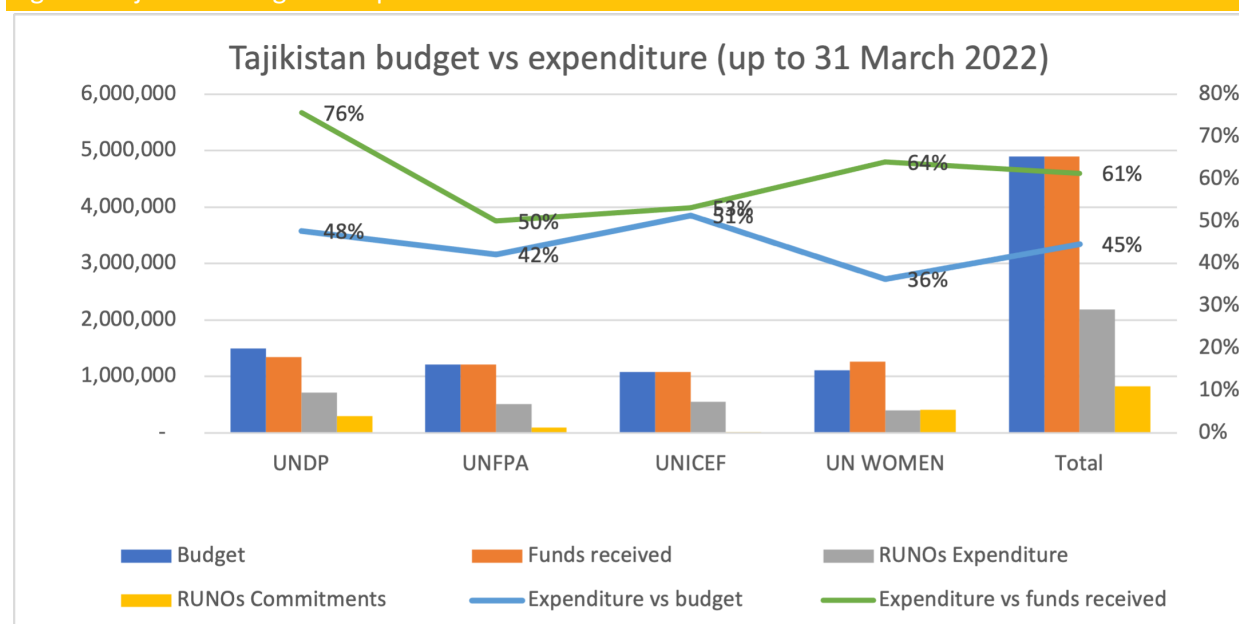
Absorption capacity and other obstacles limiting successful implementation of programme

Government

Over 90 per cent of the online survey participants consider the capacity of the central government to be at least fair and 47 per cent consider it to be good or excellent. This was confirmed by key informants from all stakeholder groups. There was consensus that the institutional and technical capacity of the government is sufficient at the central level.

Most online survey respondents (81 per cent) assessed the local government capacity to be at least fair. Key informants perceived, however, that the government at the local level has more limitations in terms of technical and institutional capacity than the central level government institutions.

Civil society and implementing partners

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[11] The MTA reports only use data from global platforms which have been validated by the Secretariat. These might differ from the monitoring data used at country level. The extracted data represents the status as of October 2021.

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The institutional and human capacity of national-level IPs was evaluated consistently positively. Almost 80 per cent of the online survey respondents rated it as either good or excellent while slightly over 20 per cent consider it to be fair. None of the respondents considered it to be poor or very poor. The KII confirmed these results. The national IPs were considered to have strong capacity (civil servants, RUNOs and CSOs). Key informants from RUNOs described their national CSOs as equal partners with extensive human and institutional capacity. The interviewed state key informants agreed that the capacity of CSOs was excellent due to their long experience, their networks with the civil society, the UN and the government which were successfully harnessed by the Spotlight Initiative.

The perceptions on the capacity of grassroot organisations at the local was rated quiet positively in the online survey, but estimated to be rather low by key informants. In the online survey, the capacity of local and grassroot and women's rights organisations was evaluated almost as positive than for national CSOs. For local and grassroot organisations, 54 per cent assessed it as 'good' or 'excellent', 36 per cent estimated it to be 'fair'. Only one outlier rated it as 'poor'. Women's rights organisations were rated by 67 per cent of the participants as 'good' or 'excellent', by 36 per cent as 'fair' and by 3 percent as 'poor'. KIIs and FGDs with RUNOs indicated the opposite. First, there are very few grassroot, local and women's rights organisations at district and community level which work on ending VAWG. Second, the few which are there were described as having limited resources and capacity.

RUNOs

About two thirds of the online survey respondents perceived RUNOs to be sufficiently staffed to execute the Spotlight Initiative. One third, however, contradicted this perception. In their view, critical functions in the areas of finance, administration, M&E and communication were understaffed. Two causes were identified for these shortcomings by online survey respondents and key informants from the RUNOs. The ceiling of 18% management costs did not allow to budget for sufficient personnel.

Key informants from all stakeholder groups shared the perception that RUNO personnel had to cope with high workloads. The interviewed IPs stated that the support provided to them by the RUNOs was insufficient for smooth implementation. Lengthy response times from RUNOs to their requests has led to delays in the implementation and frustration among the IPs. In addition, some IPs - both at the national and local level - reported that funding was often transferred with considerable delays. To implement activities on time, IPs felt obliged to use their own resources or to incur debts to pre-finance activities in order to complete the activities within the agreed timeframe. CSO key informants also observed varying levels of dedication among RUNOs staff from one agency to another. Two of the UN agencies were described as effective in their collaboration with partners. This included timely communication and regular meetings. The two RUNOs were perceived by IPs as unavailable at times. Responses to requests came often late and only after reminders had been sent. Key informants from the CSRG also perceived that the response time from these two RUNOs were too slow. According to them, this was associated with bureaucracy and the internal operational procedures of the four UN agency involved.

Key findings:

- According to the Q3 financial data, the programme has achieved a budget delivery (expenditure and commitments) of 61 per cent for all RUNOs combined. Considering the delayed start of the programme, this is a remarkable achievement. UNFPA and UNICEF had lower expenditure rates than the other two UN agencies.

- The technical and institutional capacity was assessed as sufficiently high for the central government and as fair for district state representatives.

- There was consensus that the absorption capacity of IPs at the national level is high. It was estimated to be considerably lower for grassroot organisations at the community level.

- The Spotlight Initiative is associated with high workloads for RUNOs. Some functions are understaffed because of the 18 per cent ceiling for management costs.

Recommendations:

(The stakeholder group responsible for implementing the recommendation is indicated in brackets at the end of each recommendation.)

- As technical expertise for RUNOs can also be budgeted under outcomes for Phase 2, we suggest implementing a workforce planning exercise in its design process. This will allow to identify critical gaps in RUNO teams and to plan for sufficient RUNO staffing for the next phase of the Spotlight Initiative (PCU, RC, RUNOs).

- To address capacity gaps of government partners at sub-national level, we suggest integrating key measures and actions to improve their capacity to coordinator and monitor the interventions on SGBV. Other country programme under the Spotlight Initiative, for instance, support the local government in (a) organizing regular cluster meetings of all actors working on SGBV to ensure coordination and complementarity of actions and to enable inter-institutional learning and (b) to in collecting monitoring data from all local actors so they can prepare quarterly updates for downward and upward accountability purposes. These measures and actions should be identified in a participatory manner (RUNOs).

- A recommendation regarding the work with CSOs is available under evaluation question 10.

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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

Chosen implementation mechanism

The programme budget (not including management costs) is split into five delivery mechanisms: 65 per cent of the budget are transferred to CSOs, 9 per cent are payments to individual consultants, 8 per cent are payments to a consultancy company, 4 per cent are designated to the government and 14 per cent are classified as "other" (delivered by RUNO). The requirement of the Spotlight Initiative to channel 50 to 70 percent of CSO funding to national and grassroot organisations has, thus, been fully achieved.

The RUNOs operate according to their own internal procedures. For working with CSOs, the UN National Implementation Modality (NIM) is applied. New funds are disbursed to implementing partners once activities have been completed and narrative reports have been sent to the RUNOs. These reports feed into the programme reports. CSOs partners are contracted as either IPs or grantees and have been selected based on a competitive tender process.

At the time of the evaluation, 16 CSOs were contracted; nine as IPs and seven as grantees. Two of the CSO partners (PO Gender and Development and Hamsol ba Hamsol) are contracted by two RUNOs while all other IPs are contracted by one of the RUNOs. All but three of the IPs were classified in the category "women-led/ women's rights organisation or feminist CSO". The majority of the contracted CSOs had partnered with the RUNOs prior to the Spotlight Initiative (13 out of 16). Most of them (13) were categorised as National CSOs. One was marked as a local/ grassroot organisation, one as a regional organisation and one as an international organisation. One of the national CSO partners from UN Women (PO Gender and Development) has sub-contracted grants to six other CSOs. Four of them are national CSOs and two of them are grassroot organisations. According to the annual report for 2021 and the information shared by UN Women about funding allocated for sub-contracting CSOs, 79 per cent of the amount awarded to CSOs has been disbursed to National CSOs and 8 per cent to grassroot organisations (including sub-grantees). The aim of the Spotlight Initiative to channel 50 to 70 per cent of CSO funding to national and grassroot organisations has, thus, been achieved although the funding proportion channelled to grassroot organisations is rather small with 8 per cent.

Key informants from RUNOs and the PCU reported that the UN agencies' procedures and requirements for recruiting partners are too demanding for local/grassroots and community-based organisations that are often not registered and have not previously worked in an international partnership. It was also highlighted, however, that RUNOs were not sufficiently staffed to capacitate smaller new partners with considerably lower capacity, in particular in light of the pressure to deliver the interventions in a short timeframe. RUNO key informants stated that adopting less stringent procedures and requirements for local CSOs and grassroot organisations would expose them to the risk of negative audit reports in case of fraud cases.

The budget is spread out quite evenly across the IPs; only two IPs receive larger shares. One of them is 'PO Gender and Development' which has sub-granting contracts with other CSOs. Since the programme start, it received 20 per cent of the overall budget awarded to CSOs. The second IP with a larger budget allocation

is 'Good Neighbors Tajikistan', an international NGO, which received 9 per cent of the budget allocated to IPs.

The funding allocated to the government is 4 per cent of the programme budget. Most of the funding is not transferred to the government, but managed by the RUNOs. An exception is the funding for the SGBV survivor hotline which is executed through a letter of agreement (LoA) between the government and UNDP based on agreed ToR.

Staffing levels for Spotlight and Management Cost

The ceiling for programme management cost is set at 18 per cent of the overall budget for the Spotlight Initiative at the global level. According to the revised budget approved by the global operational steering committee, this ceiling has been complied with in Tajikistan. In the approved budget, there are 11 personnel who are dedicated to the Spotlight Initiative on a full-time basis. In addition, 22 personnel are partially funded by the Spotlight Initiative. Each of the RUNOs recovers costs for both programmatic and operational support under the programme, which is a good practice.

Key findings:

- The Tajikistan programme applies adequate implementation mechanisms with their partners (NIM for CSOs and a LoA for funding directly allocated to the government).

- Out of the programme budget, 65 per cent has been channelled to national and grassroot organisations. Most of the IPs are National Civil Society Organisations which have worked with the UN agencies prior to the Spotlight Initiative. Grassroot organisations are underrepresented among the IPs and only 8 per cent of the CSO funding was channelled to local and grassroot level organisations in 2021. The ambition of the Spotlight Initiative to better reach and engage local and grassroots organisations as funding recipients has, thus, only been partially met by the Tajikistan programme. The underrepresentation of grassroot organisation among the IPs is rooted in (a) the RUNO recruitment and funding processes and procedures which are difficult and sometimes impossible to comply with for local CSOs and (b) in the ambitious objectives of the programme that might not be met when working with grassroot organisations of considerably lower institutional and technical capacity. Considering the required acceleration of the programme due to its delayed start, this approach is reasonable. In Phase 2, however, more efforts should be deployed to reduce the barriers for grassroot organisations to access funding from the Spotlight Initiative.

- The management costs for the Spotlight Initiative are at 18 per cent which complies with the threshold set for country programmes.

Recommendations:

(The stakeholder group responsible for implementing the recommendation is indicated in brackets at the end of each recommendation.)

- It is recommended that UNFPA, UNICEF and UNDP explore mechanisms such as women's funds and sub-granting to enable more grassroots organisations to become eligible as IPs during the design of Phase 2. The Phase 2 proposal should outline how the Tajikistan programme will implement the Global Grassroot Action Plan with the aim of increasing the number of small, sub-national CSOs that will contribute to implementing the Spotlight Initiative. This could be done, for instance, through small grants schemes which have been successfully implemented in other country and regional programmes under the Spotlight Initiative, including, for instance, the

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Central Asia Regional Programme. To mitigate associated risks, the risk matrix should also be updated (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

Support from the Global Secretariat

The collaboration between the Global Secretariat and the Spotlight Coordination unit was assessed by the majority of UN online survey respondents (86 per cent) as good or excellent. This finding was confirmed by key informants from the RCO and the RUNOs. The assistance and guidance provided by the Secretariat was described as timely and helpful. The knowledge management platform and WhatsApp group were also appreciated and frequently used.

"A lot of information is already in the platform, in the virtual library. So, you just go and look at people's examples […] anything you need, you just go there, […] And then you find a lot of information there, which I think has been very helpful to us." [key informant, PCU]

Guidance and feedback on operational and technical management issues have been clear and sufficiently detailed except for the M&E framework. The PCU reported to the Secretariat that they experienced difficulties with the global indicators which they found difficult to measure and not adequate for the country context. The response provided did now allow the PCU to improve the M&E framework and they did not understand that it was possible to add indicators for country level monitoring.

Governance mechanism

National Steering Committee (NSC)

The National Steering Committee (NSC) is co-chaired by the CoWFA and the UN RC. Further members are the EU Ambassador, national government officials from the Executive Office of the President, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Country Representatives from the four RUNOs and two representatives from the CSRG. It has been set up after the programme approval in July 2021 and met for the first time in August 2021 to discuss and approve its ToR, the programme's annual workplan, the budget, and the programme communication and visibility strategy. Difficulties and challenges as well as potential solutions were also discussed. The NSC members met separately at the Deputy Minister level to update the programme, ensure their support and nominate technical focal points from line ministries for the programme. The KII and FGDs with CSOs, RUNOs, CSRG and state officials perceived the role of the NSC positively. They viewed it as a high-level oversight body with enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and experienced members. As the NSC only had one meeting, it is too early to assess its effectiveness.

Civil Society Reference Group (CSRG)

The design process was accompanied by an interim civil society reference group. It was replaced by the permanent CSRG after the project approval. The CSRG is composed of 10 members, nine women and one man who were selected through nomination and voting. The group has geographically diverse

representation with at least one member from each of the intervention districts. In the selection process of its members, emphasis was also placed on the LNOB principle. The members include representatives from the women's movement, youth, leaders of marginalised groups (e.g., disability) and grassroot organisations.

The CSRG has developed an action plan for its activities. A budget of 15,000 USD has been allocated for its execution. The 10 members of the group are not compensated for their work, but receive stipends for transportation and accommodation during travel, for equipment and food during meetings. The CSRG works closely with the PCU and receives updates on a monthly basis.

Online survey respondents and key informants from all stakeholder groups agreed that the CSRG has fully played its role and has been instrumental in both the design and the implementation phase. They have displayed proactiveness, professionalism and strong commitment to EVAWG. Already in the design phase, the CSRG members submitted a joint letter from national CSOs to the government to advocate for the programme approval. Since the programme approval, they have organised various meetings, participated in the 16 days of activism and initiated monitoring visits to learn more about the implementation of the activities at district level. They participated actively in coordination meetings and provided valuable input and recommendations to the RUNOs and the PCU which were highly appreciated by the latter. Most key informants perceived the CSRG model to be a good practice which should be replicated in other programmes.

Management of the Programme

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

- The PCU which includes the Spotlight Coordinator, a Programme Specialist, a Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Associate based at UNFPA[12], and a Communications Officer position which was vacant at the time of the MTA. To fill the void of the vacant communication position, the Communication Analyst from the RCO has supported the communication related to the Spotlight Initiative. The PCU ensures the overall coordination of all interventions under the supervision of UN Women as technical coherence lead and the RC as the accountable entity for the programme.

- The technical team includes technical focal points from all RUNOs as well as the PCU members. It meets bi-monthly, coordinated by the PCU that coordinates activities and identifies joint implementation approaches. On a monthly basis coordination meetings are chaired by the RC and attended by the Heads of Agencies and technical staff, discussing the progress, operational and implementations and solutions. These have become the main coordination mechanism for steering and implementing the programme at the technical level.

- The Spotlight Coordinator coordinates the programme implementation through RUNOs and reports back to the UN RC who oversees the overall programme implementation. Apart from being a RUNO, UN Women also provides technical guidance to other UN agencies engaged in the programme.

In addition to its internal management structure, the programme has also harnessed an existing coordination platform. It used the established key interagency coordination mechanism on gender equality, the UN Gender Theme Group (GTG), which is composed of UN organisations, international and national NGOs, and the National Women's Movement. The Spotlight Initiative was presented at a meeting of the GTG to ensure synergy and coordination with other interventions. The Spotlight Initiative also

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[12] Due to lack of funding for the M&E position, it was decided to integrate an M&E officer of UNFPA in the PCU.

coordinated planned activities with the GTG group for the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence.

For the implementation of the partnership with the EU, the Spotlight Coordinator and the Gender Specialist from the EUD have been assigned as focal points. According to the 2021 report, regular technical meetings have been organised to update the EUD on challenges and progress and to discuss technical matters as well as communication and visibility events. After the departure of the gender focal point at the EUD in October 2021, the meetings continued with the Deputy Ambassador until the arrival of the new focal point in 2022.

Key findings:

- The NSC has been set up but has only met once due to the late approval of the programme. It is too early to assess its effectiveness.

- The CSRG is a diverse and active group that has made substantial contributions to the design and implementation of the Spotlight Initiative in Tajikistan. Key informants from all stakeholder groups agreed about its added value to the programme.

- The UN has set up an efficient internal coordination structure and draws on the UNGTG group to coordinate its interventions with other actors. Regular technical meetings are organised between the EUD and the Spotlight Coordinator.

Recommendations:

(The stakeholder group responsible for implementing the recommendation is indicated in brackets at the end of each recommendation.)

- To share the success story of the CSRG with other countries and programmes, it is suggested to explore, document and share the key building blocks of its success (PCU).

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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 (RCO and RUNOs)

The set-up of the PCU and the Technical Team is described under the previous evaluation question. The PCU was appreciated as dedicated, skilled and motivated by key informants from RUNOs, CSOs and government. All key informants reported positive working relationships with the PCU. This is in line with the online survey results in which respondents agreed that the PCU effectively ensures collaboration between different stakeholders. The collaboration between the PCU and the RUNOs was also appreciated as effective by almost 90 per cent of the participants.

The new approach of working together was perceived positively by key informants from RUNOs. The coordination and sharing of responsibilities was described as complicated and work intensive during the design stage, in particular during the budget development. The design stage also enabled the RUNOs, however, to learn about how they can be complementary to each other in terms of technical knowledge and experience. The distribution of responsibilities for interventions under each Pillar was built on the expertise and strengths of each agency. This effective distribution of interventions enabled the RUNOs to efficiently set up interventions after the delayed approval of the programme and to effectively accelerate the roll out of the programme.

Most of the online survey participants (84 per cent) reported that the RUNOs work well together. This was confirmed in KIIs. RUNOs and CSOs perceived that CSO partnerships were well established and that RUNOs were clear on their respective responsibilities in implementing the Spotlight Initiative. That notwithstanding, over half of the online survey respondents also perceived that RUNOs mostly implemented their activities in siloes. While RUNOs were observed to work well together in coordinating the programme at a strategic and technical level, online survey participants and key informants observed siloed approaches in the operational planning of some activities, in particular trainings (as described under evaluation question 7).

Did the new delivery mechanisms lead to increased efficiency?

To ensure coherence and synergies, the RUNOs produced joint annual work plans in 2020 and 2021. For the partner engagement, a 'one UN interface' was set up through an RC-led team which reached out to potential CSOs partners of the programme.

The collaboration of RUNOs led to increased efficiency in different ways: Long Term Agreements (LTAs) of one RUNO were 'piggybacked' by other RUNOs which was reported to save time and efforts during the selection of service providers. In the selection process of CSO partners, RUNOs consulted micro-assessments conducted by other UN agencies which saved staff time and level of effort during the recruitment and contracting procedures of CSOs. The Agora online training platform was reported as a useful resource which was harnessed by all RUNOs for capacity development purposes which also allowed to some extent to harmonise training content. The RUNOs also established intervention synergies across the Pillars. The gender activists trained under Pillar 6, for example, were later engaged for community

outreach activities under Pillar 4. In their collaboration with the Ombudsman office, UNICEF identified gaps in legislation and communicated this informant to the consultant conducting a legal review for UNDP.

Key informants and online survey respondents also reported that the new way of working was cumbersome for the back-office functions. Key informants from CSOs reported delayed communication and fund transfers from RUNOs which had not occurred under previous partnership agreement. RUNOs also explained that the different operational procedures of the four agencies make it work intensive to deliver interventions in an integrated manner. Consequently, it increased their workload.

Key findings:

- The coordination mechanism between the RCO, the PCU and the RUNOs have been set up and are functional. The PCU ensures effective collaboration between the different stakeholder groups.

- The new way of working has led to increased efficiency in different ways due to a more efficient use of the available technical and operational resources of the four RUNOs and to synergies across interventions of the different pillars. The different operational processes and procedures of RUNOs, on the other hand, have made joint actions at times cumbersome for staff.

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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.

The MTA team did not find evidence that additional resources had been secured for the future of the Spotlight Initiative in Tajikistan. 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 international expertise. About a third of respondents did not know whether sufficient capacity has been built. Among the remaining respondents, 58 per cent perceived that the government's capacity had been 'somewhat sufficiently' or 'sufficiently' built. The percentage was similar for the women's movement and grass root organisations (56 per cent), and slightly higher for CSOs for which 64 per cent of the respondents estimated that sufficient capacity had been built.

The key informants shared views similar to the online survey but provided more nuanced responses. As described under evaluation question 9, national CSOs already had strong technical and institutional capacity at the start of the Spotlight Initiative while it was reported as inconsistent at the level of local and grassroot organisations. The main barrier to sustainability which was highlighted at the level of the civil society was financial resources. As the government has not yet allocated additional funding to interventions for EVAWG, CSOs continue to depend on international donors to pursue their work in this area.

It is important to acknowledge that the programme has achieved highly promising results despite its short implementation period. The following achievements were highlighted by key informants which will be critical to further advance to ensure their sustainability during Phase 2:

- the establishment of a school of gender activists,

- the development of a civil society strategy including an action plan,

- the complaint mechanisms set up for children to report incidences of violence and

- the training and mentorship for the younger CSOs provided by established and more experienced CSOs

- the adopted mid-term development programme with strengthened measures for EVAWG and indicators.

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.

- Relevant achievements have been made despite the short implementation period, but it is too early to assess their sustainability.

- While the Tajikistan programme has made important contributions for strengthening the capacity of the civil society to work jointly for EVAWG, financing mechanisms to sustain civil society actions are lacking. Considering the short implementation period of the programme, however, it would not be realistic to expect this type of result within less than a year of implementation.

Recommendations:

(The stakeholder group responsible for implementing the recommendation is indicated in brackets at the end of each recommendation.)

- During the development of the sustainability plan, it is recommended to ensure strong ownership of local actors (national CSOs and the government). The actions of the sustainability plan should be integrated in the annual work plan and should be fully funded by the Spotlight Initiative (unless funding from other sources can be secured) (PCU, RUNO).

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

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F. KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- **PROGRAMME DESIGN**:

Main findings:

1. Despite a very short design period, consultations were organised with different stakeholder groups. This included CSOs and government representatives as well as international organisations and donors working on EVAWG. Beneficiaries were not directly involved in the design phase, but their views were represented through CSOs. According to the interviewed beneficiaries, the interventions that they have observed are relevant to their needs, but their knowledge on the Spotlight Initiative was limited.

2. The programme design is aligned to the Spotlight Initiative principles as listed in the Spotlight Initiative Fund ToRs. Key informants from civil society perceive that there is a need to adopt a stronger focus on the assistance to survivors of SGBV and to scale up capacity strengthening of local CSOs.

3. There are mixed viewpoints on the extent to which the programme responds to the needs of the direct beneficiaries. According to key informants from civil society and some of the state representatives, interventions under Pillar 4 require strengthening in terms of scope and focus. According to them, interventions to improve access to shelters and quality services for SGBV survivors should be prioritized in Phase 2.

4. Key informants from civil society and the government shared concerns about the exclusion of certain CSOs from the implementing process. This viewpoint was not shared by RUNOs or the PCU.

5. At the national level, feedback mechanisms have been established and were appreciated by key informants. Some government stakeholders were not informed about them but appreciated coordination meeting as spaces for feedback. CSOs working at the district level reported that they were consulted for feedback, but without information being fed back to them. Community level feedback mechanisms are in place, but were not well known among the consulted beneficiaries, CSOs, civil servants and some of the RUNO personnel.

6. While the RUNOs consider the Theory of Change useful as a comprehensive framework to address VAWG in Tajikistan, key informants from the government and IPs were either not knowledgeable about the ToC and its six-pillar approach or perceived that it does not sufficiently reflect the socio-cultural context.

7. There was consensus among key informants from RUNOs and CSOs that the indicators do not allow the accurate measurement of outputs and outcomes.

8. Relevant risks were considered in the programme design. The risk register has been updated on an annual basis to respond to contextual changes and implementation circumstances. Key informants perceived the formulated risk mitigation measures to be mostly effective, but also indicated that the risks related to community resistance, help-seeking behaviour, density of activities and the availability of sustained technical and financial resources might require stronger mitigation measures.

9. The programme has been substantially delayed due to a lengthy government revision and approval process. After joint advocacy efforts of the UN agencies, the EUD and CSOs, the programme document was approved in July 2021. To catch up on the lost time, IPs have been

tasked to deliver their activities in a shorter time frame. This is perceived to have impacted negatively on the quality of some of the outputs and reduced time for learning and reflection.

Recommendations:

Conduct a rapid feedback exercise with IPs, government and community representatives to explore the impact of the high density of activities since September and develop mitigative measures, if indicated (PCU, RUNOs).

Recommendations:

In the design process for Phase 2, it is recommended

a) that RUNOs, government stakeholders and IPs review the scope and type of interventions implemented under Pillar 4 to strengthen the focus and/or scope of the interventions in support of SGBV survivors (RUNOs, IPs).

b) to undertake a participatory review of the programme's risk register to discuss if the risks related to conservative attitudes, socio-cultural barriers to help seeking behaviour of SGBV survivors, density of activities and sustained technical and financial resources require stronger or different mitigation measures (PCU, RUNOs, CSOs).

c) that the M&E Specialist of the PMU should organise a workshop with RUNOs, IPs, CSRG members and government representatives involved in the monitoring of Spotlight funded interventions. With the support from M&E officers and SGBV specialists, they should review the ToC, ensure that it is thoroughly contextualised and generate a common understanding of the ToC and its link to the indicators and targets of the global performance monitoring framework. One of the outcomes of such a workshop could be a subsidiary national M&E framework with indicators that are considered by IPs as relevant to their activities and context while maintaining the link to the global framework (PCU).

d) To strengthen the management of the risk related to resistance from family, community, traditional and religious leaders and the risk regarding help seeking behaviour, we recommend to (a) continuously raise awareness about the complaint mechanisms at community and school levels and (b) to strengthen behaviour change interventions which focus on the de-stigmatization of SGBV survivors and the importance of help seeking at the community level (RUNOs).

e) It is also recommended to conduct a rapid feedback exercise with IPs, government and community representatives to explore the impact of the high density of activities since September and develop mitigative measures, if indicated (PCU, RUNOs).

f) To ensure that government and CSO partners gain a more holistic understanding of the programme, it is recommended to develop concise and simple communication material on the ToC and its key interventions in Tajik and in Russian language (PCU).

g) 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 Tajikistan Country Programme. This should include feedback mechanisms available to beneficiaries. It should also provide minimum standards regarding the frequency and content of feedback mechanisms available to IPs (PCU).

h) In line with the global grassroot action plan of the Spotlight Initiative, it is recommended that all RUNOs explore mechanisms such as women funds, small grants schemes or sub-contracts from national CSO to less capacitated CSOs to enable smaller and grassroots organisations to connect to the Spotlight Initiative (RUNOs).

2. GOVERNANCE:

Main findings:

1. The government has been engaged in the programme since its design. The CoWFA has shown commitment and support for its coordination and implementation. The emergence of exchanges between civil society stakeholder and state representatives on ending VAWG were also positively highlighted.

2. The RUNOs, CSOs and the EUD have effectively contributed to steering the action in alignment with their role defined in the CPD.

3. The NSC has been set up but has only met once due to the late approval of the programme. It is too early to assess its effectiveness.

4. The CSRG is a diverse and active group that has made substantial contributions to the design and implementation of the Spotlight Initiative in Tajikistan. Key informants from all stakeholder groups agreed about its added value to the programme.

5. The UN has set up an efficient internal coordination structure and draws on the UNGTG group to coordinate its interventions with other actors. Regular technical meetings are organized between the EUD and the Spotlight Coordinator.

Recommendations:

a) To share the success story of the CSRG with other countries and programmes, it is suggested to explore, document and share the key building blocks of its success (PCU).

b) We recommend maintaining the current level of efforts to strengthen and consolidate government commitment to the Spotlight Initiative. To facilitate the engagement of new state officials after staff turnover, it is also recommended to develop a set of briefing materials on the Spotlight Initiative in Tajik, including information on government and CSO commitments and their areas of collaboration (PCU, RUNOs, RCO, EUD).

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3. PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT:

Main findings:

1. The capacities, strategic priorities and experiences of UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women and UNICEF are well aligned with the six pillars of the Spotlight Initiative.

2. The assignment of activities, outputs and outcomes to specific RUNOs is coherent and grounded in their institutional capacity, experience and expertise. Under Pillar 4, UNFPA's expertise and experience positions the agency for ensuring the implementation of a more substantial part of the interventions.

3. The Spotlight Initiative has harnessed existing UN mechanisms to operationalise the UNDS reform and put in place structures and processes to deliver the programme in an integrated fashion. Coordination structures have been put in place through the PCU and the technical coherence oversight. While the technical coherence responsibility executed by UN Women was appreciated by key informants, the online survey results indicated that not all RUNO staff were informed about it.

4. The coordination mechanism between the RCO, the PCU and the RUNOs have been set up and are functional. The PCU ensures effective collaboration between the different stakeholder groups.

5. The new way of working has led to increased efficiency in different ways due to a more efficient use of the available technical and operational resources of the four RUNOs and to synergies across interventions of the different pillars. The different operational processes and procedures of RUNOs, on the other hand, have made joint actions at times cumbersome for staff.

6. The management costs for the Spotlight Initiative are at 18 per cent which complies with the threshold set for country programmes.

7. The Tajikistan programme applies adequate implementation mechanisms with its partners.

8. Out of the programme budget, 65 per cent has been channelled to national and grassroot organisations. Most of the IPs are National Civil Society Organisations which have worked with the UN agencies prior to the Spotlight Initiative. Grassroot organisations are underrepresented among the IPs. Only 8 per cent of the CSO funding was channelled to local and grassroot level organisations in 2021. The ambition of the Spotlight Initiative to better reach and engage local and grassroots organisations as funding recipients has, thus, only been partially met by the Tajikistan programme. The underrepresentation of grassroot organisation among the IPs is rooted in (a) the RUNO recruitment and funding processes and procedures which are difficult and sometimes impossible to comply with for local CSOs and (b) in the ambitious objectives of the programme that might not be met when working with grassroot organisations of considerably lower institutional and technical capacity. Considering the required acceleration of the programme due to its delayed start, this approach is reasonable. In Phase 2, however, more efforts should be deployed to reduce the barriers for grassroot organisations to access funding from the Spotlight Initiative.

Recommendations:

a) In the design process for Phase 2, discuss the option to extend UNFPA's responsibility and intervention scope under Pillar 4 to fully harness the agency's expertise and experiences on multi-sectoral SGBV services (RCO, RUNOs).

b) It is recommended to communicate UN Women's role and responsibilities as responsible entity for technical coherence among RUNO staff to foster better understanding about its purpose (PCU).

c) The Phase 2 proposal should outline how the Tajikistan programme will implement the Global Grassroot Action Plan and increase the number of small, sub-national CSOs that will contribute to implementing the Spotlight Initiative (RUNOs).

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4. PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND RESULTS:

Main findings:

1. According to RUNOs and the PCU, the delivery of the workplan was reported to be largely on track.

2. The programme has achieved important progress and achievements under all pillars except for Pillar 5. Overly ambitious targets and staff changes in government institutions were named as the main reasons for the delays of outcomes under Pillar 5.

3. Key informants unanimously highlighted their satisfaction with the behaviour change campaign implemented under Pillar 3 and of the CSO strengthening initiatives under Pillar 6.

4. Interviewees from government and CSOs reported concerns about the quality of training activities delivered under Pillar 1 and 2. Insufficient planning and coordination of capacity building initiatives resulted in overlaps and tight sequencing of sessions which were difficult to manage for CSO and government participants. For some trainings, there were also concerns regarding the relevance of the training content, the profile of the participants and the training delivery in a language which was not accessible to all participants.

5. The technical and institutional capacity was assessed as sufficiently high for the central government and as fair for district state representatives.

6. There was consensus that the absorption capacity of national CSOs is high. It was estimated to be moderate for local and grassroot organisations at the district and the community level outside the capital.

7. The Spotlight Initiative is associated with high workloads for RUNOs. Some functions are understaffed because of the 18% ceiling for management costs.

8. No sustainability plan or exit strategy has been developed at the end of the first phase; it will be developed in Phase 2.

9. Relevant achievements have been made despite the short implementation period, but it is too early to assess their sustainability.

10. While the Tajikistan programme has made important contributions for strengthening the capacity of the civil society to work jointly for EVAWG, financing mechanisms to sustain civil society actions are lacking. Considering the short implementation period of the programme, however, it would not be realistic to expect this type of result within less a year of implementation.

Recommendations:

a) Due to the barriers in delivering the activities planned for Pillar 5, it is recommended to organise a participatory working session with representatives from CSOs, government and the RUNOs to revise the targets and interventions under this Pillar (UNFPA with support from UN Women).

b) It is also recommended to develop a master capacity strengthening and training plan that captures capacity building activities across all Pillars. The plan should include information on training content, location, language, profile of participants and duration. The PCU with support from UN Women (in its function as technical coherence lead) should ensure that trainings are well sequenced, planned and ensure that trainings are provided in Tajik when necessary (PCU with support from UN Women).

c) As technical expertise for RUNOs can also be budgeted under outcomes for Phase 2, we suggest implementing a workforce planning exercise in the design process for Phase 2. This will allow to identify critical gaps in RUNO teams and to plan for sufficient RUNO staffing for the next phase of the Spotlight Initiative (PCU, RC, RUNOs).

d) During the development of the sustainability plan, it is recommended to ensure strong ownership of local actors (national CSOs and the government). The actions of the sustainability plan should be integrated in the annual work plan and should be fully funded by the Spotlight Initiative (unless funding from other sources can be secured) (PCU, RUNO).

e) To address capacity gaps of government partners at sub-national level, we suggest integrating key measures and actions to improve their capacity to coordinator and monitor the interventions on SGBV. Other country programme under the Spotlight Initiative, for instance, support the local government in (a) organizing regular cluster meetings of all actors working on SGBV to ensure coordination and complementarity of actions and to enable inter-institutional learning and (b) to in collecting monitoring data from all local actors so they can prepare quarterly updates for downward and upward accountability purposes. These measures and actions should be identified in a participatory manner (RUNOs).

f) To increase the sustainability of the programme, we recommend that the EUD invests in EVAWG programmes beyond the four years lifespan of the programme (EUD).

G. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Spotlight programme documents (essential documents)	Availability
Country Programme 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 reports	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	No
Knowledge management workplan	Yes
National CSO Reference Group workplan	Yes
CSO Reference Group Bios	Yes
Communication workplan	No
Stories directly from the Calendar	No[13]
Other documents	
Civil Society Reference Group First meeting PPT	
Innovative promising and good practices report, January 2021-December 2021	
Minutes of the First National Steering Committee meeting of the Spotlight Programme in Tajikistan	
Civil Society Reference Group First meeting PPT	
Civil Society Reference Group Contact Details	
List of Stakeholders	
List of Implementing Partners	
Results Framework, 2020	
Risk Management Report January 2020-December 2020	
Risk Management Report, January 2021 – December 2021	
CSO Engagement Report January 2020-December 2020	
CSO Engagement Report, January 2020-December 2021	
Innovative promising and good practices report, January 2020-December 2020	
Innovative promising and good practices report, January 2021-December 2021	
Annual Work Plans	
Spotlight Tajikistan Interim Annual Report 2021	
Final Narrative Report to UNDP Tajikistan. Support to Civil Registration System Report in Tajikistan. May 2016-May 2019	
Final Progress Report to UNDP, 2016. Strengthening Rule of Law and Human Rights to empower people in Tajikistan.	
PBF, Project Progress Report, 2020	
Selection Criteria for RUNO, UN Women	
Criteria for Country Selection for the Spotlight Initiative	
Final Narrative Report, 2019. Strengthening Community Security and Prevention of violence against women in Tajikistan. UN Women.	
UNDP, Country Programme document for Tajikistan, 2016-2020	
UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2021	
Гендерный обзор национального доклада о ходе реализации стратегических целей национальной стратегии развития республики Таджикистан на период до 2030 года и программы среднесрочного развития республики Таджикистан на 2016-2020 годы в контексте целей устойчивого развития. 2018	
UNDP Annual Report, 2018	

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[13] The calendar was consulted, but we did not find any stories from Tajikistan in the Calendar.
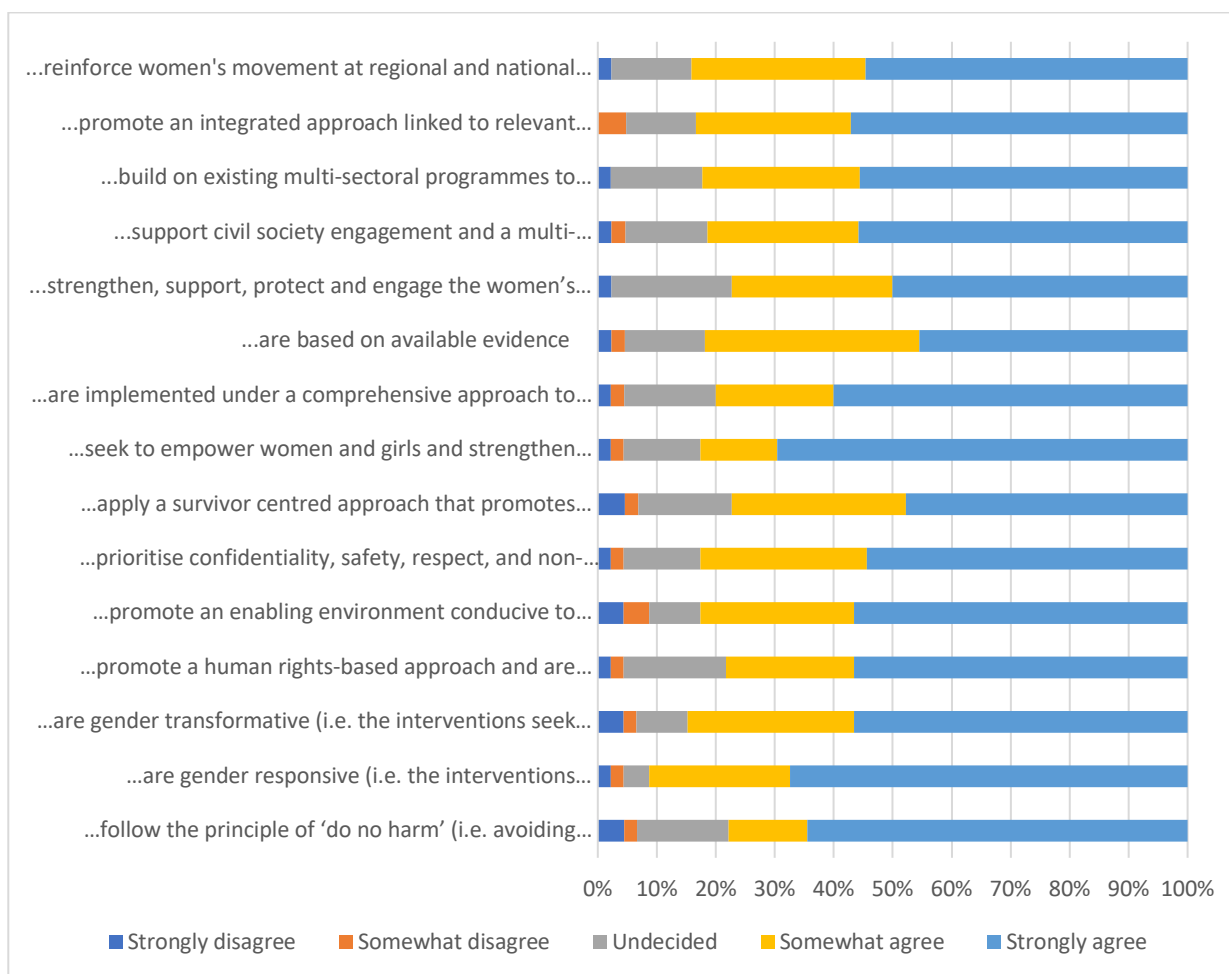
Аналитический отчет. Оценка ситуации по проявлению гендерного насилия в отношении женщин и девочек в целевых районах республики Таджикистан
UNFPA. Strengthening civil society organizations and Government Partnerships to Scale Up Approaches. Engaging Men and Boys for Gender Equality and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
Mapping UNFPA Leadership on Ending Gender-Based Violence. Getting to Zero. Technical Division, 2021
Spotlight Initiative Selection Criteria for RUNOs, UNFPA
UNFPA. How Changing Social Norms is Crucial in Achieving Gender Equality. Technical Brief Based on a Compendium to Support Programming on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.
United Nations Population Fund. Country programme document for Tajikistan
UNFPA, 2021. Technical Brief. Bodily autonomy: a cornerstone for achieving gender equality and universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights
UNFPA, Country Programme Evaluation Tajikistan. CP Period 2016-2020
UNFPA, 2016. Women, Faith and Human Rights.
UNICEF, 2021. Violence against children and women during COVID 19 Pandemic.
S.Sood, C. Cronin, A. Sengupta, S. Stevens, M. Gordon, N. Figueroa, & D. Thomas, 2018.Global Guidance for C4D Programmes Addressing Violence against Children
UNICEF, 2020. Guidelines on responsible representation and reporting of violence against women and violence against children
UNICEF, Country Document, 2016
UNICEF Tajikistan. Country Office Annual Report. 2018

ANNEX 2: LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED

Stakeholder group	Institution / organisation	Name	Position
UN		Ms. Sezin Sinanoglu	United Nations Resident Coordinator
	UNFPA	Ms. Bahromzoda Nilufar	Programme Analyst on Gender
	UN Women	Ms. Diana Ismailova	Programme Coordinator
	UNDP	Ms. Gulchehra Ziyaeva	National Project Officer
	UNICEF	Mr. Saidahmad Ikromov	Child Protection Officer
	UN Women	Ms. Aziza Hamidova	Country Program Manager
	Spotlight Coordination team	Ms. Marziya Baydulloeva	Spotlight Coordinator
	Spotlight Coordination team	Ms. Nargis Babaeva	Spotlight Programme Officer
EU	EUD Tajikistan	Ms. Petra Gasparove	Deputy Ambassador
		Mr Amirbek Saidbekov	Spotlight Initiative Focal Point
Government Central level	Committee of Women and Family Affairs	Ms. Javohir Akobirova	Head of International Relations Department
	Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population of RT	Mr. Bandaev Ilhom	Department of Reform, Primary Health Care and International Relations
	Committee of Religious Affairs and Regulations of Traditions	Mr. Bakhtiyor Yunusov	Head of the legal department
	Ministry of Internal Affairs,	Mr. Kholmurodzoda Dilshod	Head of Public Order Protection Department
Government Local level	Main Department of Education of the city of Dushanbe	Mr. Bobozoda Asomiddin	Department of preschool and post-secondary educational institutions
	Education Department, Hissar	Ms. Hakimova Mavjuda	Head of Education Department in Hissar
	Hukumat in Vose	Ms. Bibiniso Gulmurodzoda	Deputy Chairperson of Hukumat in Vose

Stakeholder group	Name		
CSO Reference Group	Ms. Azimdjon Saifiddinov		
	Guljahon Bobosadykova		

Stakeholder group	Institution / organisation	Name	
CSO Implementing Partners	INGO Good Neighbours Tajikistan	Faroghat Mirzoeva	
	Tajik Family Planning Association	Salohiddin Saibov	
	PO Gender and development	Nargis Saidova	
	PO Jahon	Shahlo Abdunabizoda	
	PO "Legal Initiative" Public Foundation Tahabbusi Hukuki	Gulchehra Rakhmanova,	
	League of Women-Lawyers	Kanoat Hamidova,	
	PO MIR-Offic of Initiatives for Development"	Azizhodja Khodjaev	
	Association "Women and Society"	Muyasara Bobokhonova,	

Stakeholder group	Institution / organisation	Name	
Beneficiaries	n/a	20 women beneficiaries	

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ANNEX 3: ALIGNMENT WITH THE SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE PRINCIPLES

Chart: Alignment with the Spotlight Initiative principles. Response categories: Strongly disagree, Somewhat disagree, Undecided, Somewhat agree, Strongly agree.

Items:
- ...reinforce women's movement at regional and national...
- ...promote an integrated approach linked to relevant...
- ...build on existing multi-sectoral programmes to...
- ...support civil society engagement and a multi-...
- ...strengthen, support, protect and engage the women's...
- ...are based on available evidence
- ...are implemented under a comprehensive approach to...
- ...seek to empower women and girls and strengthen...
- ...apply a survivor centred approach that promotes...
- ...prioritise confidentiality, safety, respect, and non-...
- ...promote an enabling environment conducive to...
- ...promote a human rights-based approach and are...
- ...are gender transformative (i.e. the interventions seek...
- ...are gender responsive (i.e. the interventions...
- ...follow the principle of 'do no harm' (i.e. avoiding...

ANNEX 4: STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION IN DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

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 average values.