



2025 ANNUAL NARRATIVE PROGRAMME REPORT

PROGRAMME TITLE:

SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE'S HIGH-IMPACT PROGRAMME FOR
VIOLENCE ELIMINATION BY 2030 (THE HIVE PROGRAMME)

PROGRAMME START DATE: 1 JANUARY 2024

Spotlight Initiative's High-Impact Programme for Violence Elimination by 2030 (HIVE Programme)

Joint Project Document

| | |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Joint programme title: | Spotlight Initiative's High-Impact Programme for Violence Elimination by 2030 (HIVE Programme) |
| Outcomes(s): | The achievements and results of the Spotlight Initiative are sustained and contribute to increased global awareness, comprehensive and effective country programmes, knowledge sharing and networking on EVAWG. |
| Duration: | 3 years |
| Anticipated start and end dates: | Start: 1 January 2024 End: 31 December 2026 |
| JP Team <i>PUNOs:</i> | UNDP, UN Women |
| Fund management modality: | Pass-through |
| » Administrative Agent: | MPTF Office |
| » Convening Agent: | Executive Office of the Secretary General (EOSG) |
| Total estimated budget¹: | USD 17,498,250 |
| Out of which: | |
| » Funded | USD 17,498,250 |
| » Un-funded | N/A |
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| » Donor 1: European Commission | USD 17,498,250 |

¹ Includes programme costs and indirect support costs

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ACT Programme | UN Women’s Advocacy, Coalition Building, and Transformative Feminist Action Programme |
| EU | European Union |
| EVAWG | Ending violence against women and girls |
| GAP | Gender Action Plan |
| HIVE | High-Impact Programme for Violence Elimination by 2030 |
| IOC | International Olympic Committee |
| IOM | International Organization for Migration |
| ITUC | International Trade Union Confederation |
| OCHA | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Human affairs |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-ordination and Development |
| OECD-DAC | Organisation for Economic Co-ordination and Development’s Development Assistance Committee |
| PMER | Participatory monitoring, evaluation, and reporting |
| SHINE | Strategic Hub for International Networking and Engagement |
| SSIPA | Spotlight-Specific Integrated Protection Approach |
| TFGBV | Technology-facilitated gender-based violence |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDCO | United Nations Development Coordination Office |
| UNEP | United Nations Environment Programme |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNFPA | United Nations Populations Fund |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children’s Fund |
| UNODC | United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime |
| WHO | World Health Organization |
| VAWG | Violence against women and girls |

1. Executive Summary

Background and Context

Spotlight Initiative’s “High-Impact Programme for Violence Elimination by 2030” (the HIVE Joint Programme) has been operating in an increasingly challenging global environment marked by rising needs. While new World Health Organization (WHO) data show reductions in violence against women and girls in some contexts, the global lifetime prevalence of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence among women and girls aged 15 and older remains high at 30.4 per cent.

Progress towards eliminating violence against women and girls (EVAWG) has stagnated or reversed in many countries, with one in four reporting a backlash against women’s rights. At the same time, official development assistance continues to contract and reductions by major bilateral donors have disrupted programmes and services and reduced resources available to civil society, governments, and the United Nations System. [Equal Measures 2030](#) has shown that democratic backsliding and setbacks to gender equality reinforce each other: “Between 2019 and 2022 nearly [40 per cent of countries](#) – home to over 1 billion women and girls in 2022 – stagnated or declined on gender equality.” The [Transnational Institute \(TNI\)](#) – in “Weaponising Gender” – has echoed the same: “Direct attacks on feminist movements are real. Over 70 per cent of the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women grantees reported experiencing backlash in 2024, ranging from systemic obstruction (budget cuts, policy freezes) to denial and distortion (token reforms, misinformation) and outright repression (evictions, criminalisation, cyber-attacks).”

In a context of intersecting crises and rising authoritarianisms, the HIVE Joint Programme worked to expand the uptake of Spotlight Initiative's comprehensive programming model, by supporting United Nations Country and Regional Teams to design coordinated, multisectoral programming. Through global advocacy, knowledge-sharing, and strategic partnerships, the HIVE Joint Programme worked to protect hard-won gains, sustain momentum, and scale coherent United Nations (UN) action to end violence against women and girls despite a constrained and uncertain funding environment.

Key Achievements in 2025

In 2025, the HIVE Joint Programme continued to contribute to efforts to end violence against women and girls. The Initiative supported United Nations Country and Regional Teams to develop (and implement) evidence-based, comprehensive programmes, produced and shared key research and learning, and amplified this issue (and the need to robustly finance efforts to end violence) through strengthened partnerships to sustain critical support and build momentum.

Key highlights include a [seminal report](#) on the sustainability of the Initiative's model and results achieved during its first phase. The report found that 97 per cent of Spotlight Initiative programmes sustained achievements after programme closure. The report also sets out 18 sustainability-enabling factors for future EVAWG programmes to replicate for sustained change. These efforts were complemented by the development of a range of knowledge briefs, including a brief on the linkages between violence against women and girls and the climate crisis - which generated widespread global interest, including an interview with Spotlight Initiative's Global Coordinator in [Le Devoir](#) – and a brief on the importance of domestic public financing to sustainably end violence against women and girls.

Following a deeply consultative year-long process, a newly revised Spotlight Initiative Results Framework was launched. This framework provides Spotlight Initiative programmes (and the sector more broadly) with indicators to better track and capture meaningful change in efforts to end violence against women and girls across diverse contexts.

Led by Spotlight Initiative and the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, a multi-stakeholder UN-wide task force developed a draft unified UN funding framework to drive more predictable funding to diverse civil society organizations at the forefront of efforts to end violence and advance rights in their communities and globally.

In the last quarter of 2025, the HIVE Joint Programme formally launched a high impact “Leaving No One Behind” applied research study. The study – to be conducted throughout 2026 - will result in an operational guide and capacity-building series to help Spotlight Initiative programmes (and others working to end violence against women and girls) ensure that the principle of “leaving no one behind” is meaningfully implemented across programming, partnerships, and governance, particularly in rights-restrictive contexts where space for civil society and women’s rights activism face heightened challenges.

The Initiative also rolled out strengthened tools and guidance to better support interested UN Country and Regional Teams and Spotlight Initiative programmes to design and deliver comprehensive, evidence-based programmes. This included expanding the Learning Centre and updating the “Compendium of Good Practices”, revised and streamlined technical guidance and templates (focused on knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting), and targeted technical support.

Alongside this, the HIVE Joint Programme continued engagement with the global EVAWG community through discussions within the Strategic Hub for International Networking and Engagement (SHINE), as well as events, and webinars, strengthening knowledge exchange and fostering a global community of practice to share knowledge and evidence to accelerate progress.

Spotlight Initiative’s outreach, capacity strengthening, technical guidance, and partnership engagement helped promote comprehensive EVAWG programming globally. Over 80 UN Country and Regional Teams have expressed interest in Spotlight Initiative’s programmatic model to date and, of these, 24 UN Country and Regional Teams developed concept notes for new programmes in 2025 alone² and are currently seeking funding.

Spotlight Initiative has a portfolio of six programmes: three programmes launched in 2025 (in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Zambia) joining ongoing programmes in Uganda and Ecuador and a sixth programme – the Africa Regional Programme 2.0 – officially launching in January 2026. Secured donor funding for the six programmes reached USD 83.3 million at the end of 2025.

As funding continues to tighten, and the backlash against women’s rights and gender equality expands, partnerships, collaboration, and coordination remain at the heart of the Initiative’s success in 2025. The Initiative worked to deepen collaboration at global, regional and country levels, including by fostering UN interagency collaboration to deliver joint action to end VAWG, and expand global and regional strategic partnerships to accelerate momentum. A diversified partnership base, engaging new and non-traditional partners to help secure investments at global, regional, and country levels, remained a priority throughout 2025, as well.

Collaboration with governments and civil society organizations continued throughout 2025, including deepened support to, and engagement with, the Initiative’s civil society reference groups. The HIVE Joint Programme supported the Initiative’s Civil Society Global Reference Group in consolidating a shared advocacy agenda, advancing analytical work, and amplifying civil society leadership in key international policy spaces. Tailored support also enhanced the design and implementation of civil society engagement strategies across



PHOTO: Smart Girls Centre Spotlight Uganda Programme. Spotlight Initiative/Flo Carson

² These are: Afghanistan, Arab States Regional, Bhutan, Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Ecuador (third phase), Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Morocco, Rwanda, Samoa, Southern Africa Multi-Country Concept Note (comprised of Eswatini, Botswana, Namibia, Lesotho, South Africa), Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Venezuela.

Spotlight programmes, strengthening accountability to civil society at the forefront of transformative and sustained action.

Global campaigns, high-level events (in which the Initiative underscored the urgency of addressing violence against women and girls), and extensive media engagement further reinforced these efforts. As noted below, the Initiative received coverage in 710 media outlets across 93 countries, including 395 media mentions of the European Union related to the Spotlight Initiative across 55 countries. These efforts contributed to raising the visibility of this critical issue, emphasizing the continued need to invest in efforts to end gender-based violence as a matter of human rights, as a matter of justice, and as a prerequisite for peace and sustainable development.

The HIVE Joint Programme - in close collaboration with the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund Secretariat - supported UN Country and Regional Teams to ensure that they are better equipped and have the technical resources and support to implement transformative programming to end violence against women and girls. This support helped Spotlight Initiative programmes achieve notable results, including in Ecuador and Uganda, where programmes contributed to stronger legal frameworks on violence against women and girls, shifts in social norms, enhanced cross-sectoral institutional commitment and response to violence, expanded leadership of grassroots civil society organizations, and improved access to justice for survivors. Initial results from new programmes in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Zambia are expected in March 2026.

Challenges and Mitigation Measures

The HIVE Joint Programme encountered several challenges in 2025, each addressed through targeted mitigation strategies. Key challenges and adaptive responses are presented below, with the full list of challenges and accompanying mitigating measures in the Challenges, Mitigation Measures, and Lessons Learned chapter.

- **Challenging political environment and evolving forms of violence:** Efforts to end violence against women and girls are taking place amid shrinking civic space, tightening funding, and growing backlash against gender equality and human rights. At the same time, violence against women and girls remains a pervasive and universal rights violation, with emerging risks (such as technology-facilitated gender based violence) and the continued use of sexual violence in conflict settings requiring urgent, coordinated action. The HIVE Joint Programme worked with UN partners, governments, civil society, and donors to sustain political commitment and strengthen coordinated action. This included finalizing a framework for programming in fragile contexts, convening partners to exchange lessons on operating in complex environments, and providing targeted guidance and support to UN Teams to design and deliver EVAWG programming, while maintaining global advocacy and knowledge-sharing on emerging forms of violence.

- **Severe funding contraction:** As mentioned, the decline in official development assistance (particularly for advancing gender equality and human rights) and increased donor earmarking — constrained the roll-out of new Spotlight programmes. In response, the Initiative diversified its donor engagement strategy, expanded outreach to non-traditional partners (Gulf states, international financial institutions, private sector), and developed a resource mobilization inception package to support UN Teams in structuring funding approaches at the country level.
- **Balancing the ability to aggregate impact across the Initiative with contextual flexibility:** While allowing programmes to track and measure more context specific change, variations in Spotlight programme results frameworks limited global aggregation of joint results. The Initiative addressed this by mapping existing Spotlight programme indicators to the revised Initiative-wide results framework, developing accompanying methodological notes for standardized measurement, and integrating minimum standards into concept note and inception processes to ensure quality from programme design onward.

Looking Ahead to 2026

Looking to 2026, the HIVE Joint Programme will continue to drive evidence-based, comprehensive EAWG programming amid continued institutional uncertainty and financial constraint. The Initiative will provide bespoke technical and management support to ongoing Spotlight programmes in Ecuador, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Uganda, and Zambia, as well as the newly launched (in early 2026) Africa Regional Programme, and engaging additional UN Teams to design and fund new Spotlight programmes.

The HIVE Joint Programme will also continue to support meaningful civil society engagement, including of the Initiative's civil society reference groups, and through support to the protection of women human rights defenders, while finalizing a UN-wide funding framework to better resource women's rights organizations.

Global advocacy and strategic communications will be sustained to maintain momentum and visibility, including by delivering the “Mind Your Moves” digital activation targeting boys and young adolescents on the Roblox platform. In parallel, efforts will also focus on expanding resource mobilization to sustain and scale comprehensive EAWG programming globally, including in fragile and complex contexts, and reinforcing the Initiative's positioning in key policy moments including the 70th Commission on the Status of Women and the 81st UN General Assembly.

In 2026, the Initiative will continue to produce and advance the uptake of research and learning to end VAWG, including at SVRI, where the Initiative's high impact research on leaving no one behind in EAWG programming will be discussed. The HIVE Joint Programme will also expand multilingual dissemination of knowledge products, and piloting AI integration on the SHINE knowledge-sharing platform. To further enhance

monitoring, accountability, and learning, the Initiative will continue to promote its newly revised results framework and improved online reporting systems.

The full list of priorities for 2026 can be found in the related Looking Ahead chapter.

2. Background and Context

Spotlight Initiative’s “High-Impact Programme for Violence Elimination by 2030” (the HIVE Joint Programme) continues to operate in a complex and challenging environment with rising needs. New [data](#) from the World Health Organization (WHO) indicates that, while there have been some reductions in the prevalence of violence against women and girls in certain places, the global prevalence estimate of lifetime intimate partner violence and/or non-partner sexual violence for women and girls 15 years and older remains high at 30.4 per cent. New estimates show that femicide is one of the most extreme and widespread forms of gender-based violence. In 2024, [137 women and girls were killed](#) on average each day by their partner or a close relative.

While the need for sustained, coordinated action to end violence against women and girls and advance women’s and girls’ rights remains urgent and universal, in many countries progress towards eliminating violence has stagnated or reversed, with [one in four countries](#) reporting a backlash against women’s rights. 2025 also saw one of the sharpest reductions in global aid. The Organisation for Economic Co-ordination and Development ([OECD](#)) estimated that net official development assistance would fall by between 9 and 17 per cent in 2025, representing a decline of up to USD 35 billion compared to 2024. The suspension of official development assistance by donors such as USAID, historically one of the world’s largest bilateral development funders, has disrupted programmes, halted partnerships, and diminished resources available to civil society, the United Nations, and governments.

A 2025 [UN Women survey](#) of 411 women’s rights and women-led organizations found that 90 per cent had, unsurprisingly, been impacted by these new funding cuts, and almost half said they could be forced to shut down within six months if current funding levels continue. Corroborating this, a survey run by the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women found that, among 92 civil society organizations [73 per cent had suspended or closed shelters](#), crisis centres, legal aid services and psychosocial and healthcare support due to immediate funding gaps.³

³ In February 2025, the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women conducted a rapid impact assessment with its active portfolio. Of the 92 grantee partners across 53 countries that responded to the survey, 60 per cent reported being directly impacted by global funding cuts. Impacts ranged from essential service reduction (78 per cent) to suspended or closed shelters and crisis centres, legal aid services, and psychosocial and healthcare support due to immediate funding gaps (73 per cent). Many partners reported that they were struggling to meet rising demand for services with reduced staff capacity and burnout. (Additional details are available on Page 8 of the following [report](#)).

These political funding decisions have had a severe impact on women’s rights organizations and feminist movements, most of which already received minimal funding for essential, life-saving work. Prior to 2025, funding for feminist movements accounted for [less than 1 per cent](#) of all aid dedicated to gender equality.

The Initiative also operated in a context of increasing active conflict. Data from 2024 show that around [676 million women](#) lived within 50 kilometres of a deadly conflict zone, a higher number than at any point in recent history. From Gaza to Myanmar, women and girls faced disproportionate risks of sexual violence and exploitation amid displacement and insecurity.

Against this challenging background, events in 2025 reaffirmed the endurance and relevance of the global women’s rights agenda, which marked multiple important occasions celebrating three decades of international commitments on gender equality, including the thirtieth anniversary of the “Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1995”, (Beijing+30) and the 25th anniversary of “UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security”. The year was a moment to reflect on progress made as well as look ahead and renew commitments. At the “80th Session of the UN General Assembly”, world leaders pledged [191 commitments](#) to advance progress for all women and girls under the Beijing+30 Action Agenda, with one in three commitments submitted focusing on EVAWG. In February 2025, the African Union also adopted the “Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls”, an important, comprehensive legal instrument for the prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls in the region.

The 80th anniversary of the United Nations was celebrated in 2025, renewing calls for institutional reform, reduced fragmentation, and more responsive, integrated support. At the same time, the reform process – combined with significant funding cuts – has placed considerable strain on the UN System, with restructurings and budget reductions affecting institutional capacity.

Against a backdrop of shrinking resources, escalating conflict, increasing climate shocks, and political instability, the HIVE Joint Programme’s emphasis on building collaborative partnerships, strengthening technical capacity and knowledge, and driving much-needed resources to this work has helped to ensure that survivor-centred, evidence-based programming continues to reach women and girls as needs intensify.

3. Governance, Coordination, and Collaboration

Coordination and collaboration are central to the HIVE Joint Programme’s ability to sustain, scale and amplify results. Through collaborative partnerships and inclusive governance mechanisms, the Initiative aims to deliver coherent programming on EVAWG for transformative results.

3.1 Governance

HIVE Joint Programme governance is anchored in a Joint Programme Steering Committee, established to provide overall strategic direction and oversight of the programme, and to coordinate with Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund's governance structures (the Advisory Board and the Operational Steering Committee). The Steering Committee is chaired by a designate (currently the Director of the Sustainable Development Unit) from the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. The Steering Committee convenes at least once a year, or more frequently when required, to ensure effective coordination and timely decision-making. In addition to the chair, members include:

- A representative from the European Union
- A representative from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Women, the two UN agencies implementing the HIVE Joint Programme
- Two Recipient UN Organizations of the Spotlight Initiative Fund (currently the United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF))
- Two civil society representatives, nominated by Spotlight Initiative's Civil Society Global Reference Group, representing 20 per cent of the Steering Committee membership.

In 2025, the HIVE Joint Programme Steering Committee approved the HIVE Joint Programme's revised logical framework, strengthening global-level results reporting and accountability. Additionally, the HIVE Joint Programme Steering Committee and the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund Operational Steering Committee held a joint session in which members were briefed on and discussed Spotlight Initiative's programme progress and results, as well as its financial delivery. The joint session also focused on emerging strategic priorities relevant for both governing bodies.

Joint Programme Steering Committee meetings reaffirmed the Initiative's critical role in advancing knowledge, data, and technical expertise on ending violence against women and girls, and delivering support to more than 80 UN Country Teams at a time of shrinking official development assistance and increasing backlash, and underscored the urgency of sustained financing to end violence against women and girls (as a driver of sustainable development). The Steering Committee proposed the extension of the HIVE Joint Programme beyond 2026, alongside more coordinated donor engagement in the context of the "UN80 Initiative" and the reforms.

The Joint Programme Steering Committee provided strategic oversight throughout 2025, reinforced collaboration among key partners - including the United Nations, the European Union, government and civil society - and helped sustain collective commitment in a constrained and rapidly evolving context. The Steering Committee also supported the positioning of the Initiative as a UN System-wide enabler of efforts to end violence against women and girls.

3.2 Coordination and Collaboration to Foster Impact

HIVE Joint Programme's coordination with the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund

The HIVE Joint Programme works closely with the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund to sustain and scale the achievements of Spotlight Initiative across its programme portfolio, including supporting new programmes that come on board. The Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund is a UN Secretary-General's Trust Fund and a multi-donor, inter-agency financing mechanism, anchored in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and administered by the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office. Concurrently, the HIVE Joint Programme provides critical support to new and ongoing programmes – offering technical guidance, tools, and knowledge resources – to promote coherent EAWG programme design and delivery (in line with UN reform principles) and to support sustainable results.

In 2025, the HIVE Joint Programme and the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund worked closely across governance, programmatic, and operational priorities through regular, day-to-day coordination between the HIVE Joint Programme team and the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund Secretariat. Coordinated workflows allowed for more integrated planning and programming and enabled the delivery of more timely, responsive, standardized technical support and guidance to Spotlight Initiative programme teams and interested United Nations Country Teams. This close collaboration reduced fragmentation, strengthened coherence across both new and ongoing programmes, and supported efficient, results-focused delivery under Spotlight Initiative 2.0.

HIVE Joint Programme coordination with the UN Women's Advocacy, Coalition Building, and Transformative Feminist Action Programme (ACT Programme)

Throughout 2025, the HIVE Joint Programme worked closely with the UN Women's "Advocacy, Coalition Building, and Transformative Feminist Action Programme" (ACT Programme) to align priorities, share learning on strengthening women's movements, and ensure complementary advocacy.

The ACT Programme – a collaboration between UN Women and the European Union, serving as co-leaders of the "Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence" – directly invests in feminist movements and intersectional alliance-building. Coordinated engagement between the ACT Programme and the HIVE Joint Programme amplified collective impact and reinforced shared objectives.

The HIVE Joint Programme and the ACT Programme strengthened their collaboration through global convenings, including the "69th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women" and the "United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development" (High-Level Political Forum), where joint advocacy reinforced shared priorities on

accountability to survivors and “whole-of-society” approaches to ending violence against women and girls. This included holding a joint, high-level side-event in March 2025, marking the thirtieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration. Co-organized with the Group of Friends for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls, the event elevated survivor and civil society voices and highlighted evidence on what works to end impunity for violence against women and girls. Members of the ACT Programme’s Civil Society Advisory Board and the Spotlight Initiative’s Civil Society Global Reference Group worked together to advance collective demands, underscoring the importance of strong legislative frameworks and adequately funded, collaboratively developed, multisectoral national action plans. Further details are provided in the Results section below.

At the regional level, the HIVE Joint Programme participated in ACT Programme-led dialogues with EU Delegations across Western and Central Africa, Eastern and Southern Africa, and Latin America. These exchanges deepened understanding of Spotlight Initiative’s comprehensive model and strengthened alignment and collaboration between the United Nations, the European Union, and regional- and country-level stakeholders, ensuring more coherent, coordinated responses.

HIVE Joint Programme coordination with the European Union

In 2025, the HIVE Joint Programme continued to deepen its strategic collaboration with the European Union. Monthly structured coordination meetings with the European Commission’s Directorate-General for International Partnerships provided a regular space to take stock of progress, flag risks, and make timely decisions to ensure efficient programme implementation and alignment on priorities. Monthly coordination meetings were complemented by joint engagement in high-level UN meetings, including at the “68th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women” and at the “80th Session of the UN General Assembly”. This collaboration helped align advocacy messages, reinforce shared priorities, sustain visibility and build momentum in efforts to end violence against women and girls at a time of political pressure and constrained funding.

Coordination also extended to key events showcasing achievements and best practices of the first phase of Spotlight Initiative, including the launch of the Spotlight Initiative’s flagship sustainability report, “A Sustainable Legacy” in Brussels in December 2025. Joint preparation and outreach to EU Member States helped position the launch as a space for critical learning and joint advocacy, and underscored the importance of future, predictable investment to ensure sustained results. This reinforced shared accountability and commitment to well-resourced, coordinated action to end violence against women and girls.

Spotlight Initiative contributed to the European Union’s “Gender Action Plan III” review, sharing evidence on its support to women’s rights organizations in fragile contexts, and highlighting the Initiative’s prioritized partnership with civil society, including through flexible funding and partnerships with UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, and

the Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund, and its strong engagement with women’s movements.

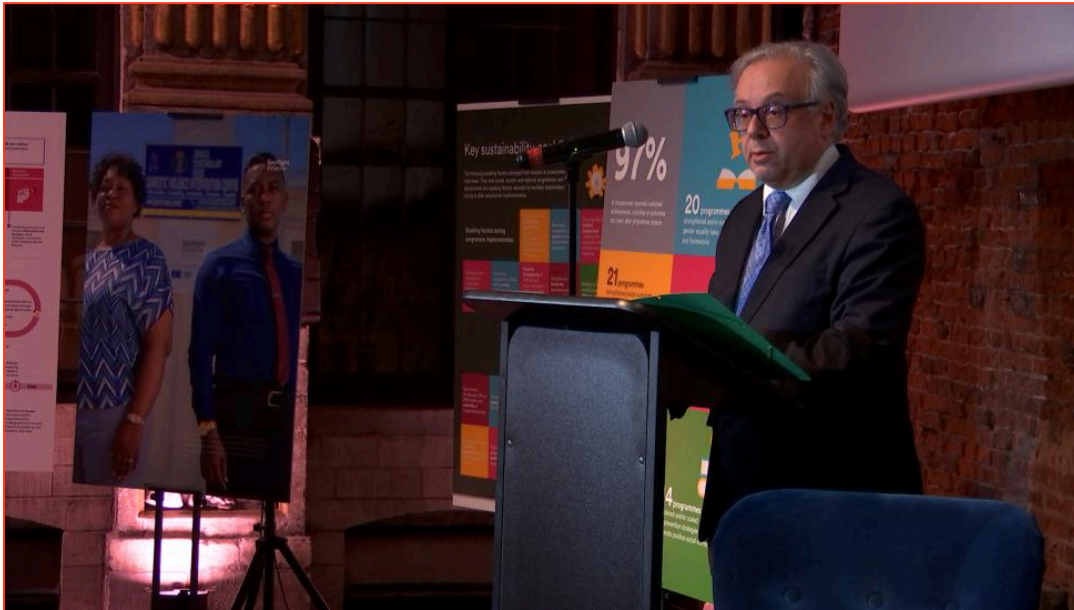


PHOTO: Deputy Director-General for International Partnerships from the European Commission, Martin Seychell. Photo: Spotlight Initiative

Moreover, as noted above, the European Union’s participation in the monthly coordination meeting of the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund Operational Steering Committee and the HIVE Joint Programme Steering Committee further amplified political commitment and demonstrated the European Union’s catalytic role in engaging new donors.

At country and regional levels, close coordination with EU Delegations helped streamline collaboration and leverage synergies for stronger programme development and implementation. European Union engagement supported the coordinated roll-out of Spotlight Initiative country and regional programmes, including streamlined contracting and progress on fund transfers, and ensured challenges and bottlenecks were more readily addressed. Working closely at the country level also helped both the United Nations and the European Union demonstrate the added value of pooled funding and joint, coherent programming – aligned with the [“Team Europe” approach](#) – in driving sustained progress and results for women and girls.

The European Union’s engagement extended beyond oversight and strategic direction to technical advice on the Initiative’s work to end violence against women and girls, including on approaches to measuring progress and sustaining gains, discussed further below. This advice and direction helped strengthen the Initiative’s impact, and its ability to model the reforms for aligned joint UN action.

HIVE Joint Programme coordination with UN agency focal points and the broader UN System

Throughout 2025, the Initiative’s UN agency focal points, representing the 13 UN agencies engaged in Spotlight Initiative, served as critical partners in advancing joint UN action to end violence against women and girls (in line with the reforms) during a period of significant organizational transition and restructuring. A country programme development workshop at the start of the year set a clear vision for agency focal points’ engagement in programme design and quality control, enhancing Spotlight Initiative programme quality and delivery overall.

Regular monthly meetings with agency focal points provided an important platform for trying to maintain dialogue and sustain system-wide engagement despite the current regressive global context and financial uncertainty. These meetings helped facilitate bilateral and director-level exchanges and supported agency participation in key global and regional events. Together, these meetings (and broader agency focal point collaboration) aim to contribute to advancing a “One UN” approach to ending violence against women and girls. Further details on these strategic engagements are provided below.

Agency support to a range of governance and programmatic processes allowed the streamlined development of concept notes for new Spotlight Initiative programmes and helped successfully launch several Spotlight Initiative 2.0 programmes in 2025. Moreover, cross-agency collaboration at global and country levels helped increase United Nations Country Team interest in Spotlight Initiative programming, discussed in more depth below.

Technical coordination with agency focal points helped ensure the Initiative’s work remained aligned with the latest global evidence and best practice. Agency focal points provided technical advice on developing a framework to support Spotlight Initiative programmes operating in fragile settings, bringing together the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian affairs (OCHA) and the “gender-based violence area of responsibility”, alongside Spotlight Initiative 1.0 colleagues, to ensure the results framework was grounded in lessons learned and responsive to evolving humanitarian contexts.

Agency focal points also supported the revision of the Spotlight Initiative Results Framework, strengthening joint ownership, coherence, and use across both country and regional programmes. Importantly, agency focal points also contributed technical insights to the Initiative's newly launched sustainability report, reflecting on both sustained achievements and key bottlenecks to achieving an enduring impact from the Initiative’s first phase.

In parallel, the HIVE Joint Programme sustained system-wide coordination through regular monthly engagement with the UN Development Coordination Office, alongside close collaboration with the UN System Staff College. This engagement focused on embedding lessons and good practices from Spotlight Initiative – particularly participatory approaches to programming – into UN System-wide guidance, learning products, and platforms. In doing so, the HIVE Joint Programme supported uptake beyond Spotlight Initiative programmes, strengthening comprehensive EVAWG programming and human rights-based approaches to leaving no one behind across the UN System. Further detail is provided in

the Results section below.

4. Results

4.1 Overview

In 2025, the HIVE Joint Programme strengthened global- and country-level efforts to end violence against women and girls by advancing evidence, supporting the roll-out of comprehensive programmes, and reinforcing partnerships in an increasingly constrained funding and political environment.

Key results include a strengthened technical foundation of Spotlight Initiative through a set of complementary evidence, learning, and results measurement initiatives. These included the initiation of a “Leaving No One Behind” applied research study, the launch of a sustainability report, “A Sustainable Legacy”, confirming that 97 per cent of programmes sustained results after closure, and the roll-out of a revised Initiative-wide results framework to better track and demonstrate change across diverse contexts.

At the UN System-wide level, Spotlight Initiative and the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women led the development of a UN-wide feminist funding framework to support more predictable financing for civil society organizations. The HIVE Joint Programme also expanded direct support to UN Country and Regional Teams: over 80 UN Country Teams expressed demand for, and increased awareness of, the Spotlight Initiative programming model to date; 24 country teams developed new programme concept notes in 2025; and three new programmes launched in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Zambia, with a regional Africa programme launching in early 2026.



Partnerships, advocacy, and communications further amplified these efforts, generating global media coverage across 710 outlets in 93 countries and reinforcing the urgency of sustained investment to end gender-based violence.

Global-level technical support across programming portfolios also helped Spotlight

Initiative teams drive results, particularly in Uganda and Ecuador, including stronger legal frameworks, improved institutional responses, amplified civil society leadership, and improved access to justice for survivors. Initial results from new programmes in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Zambia are expected in March 2026. These contributions and results are further detailed in the sections that follow.

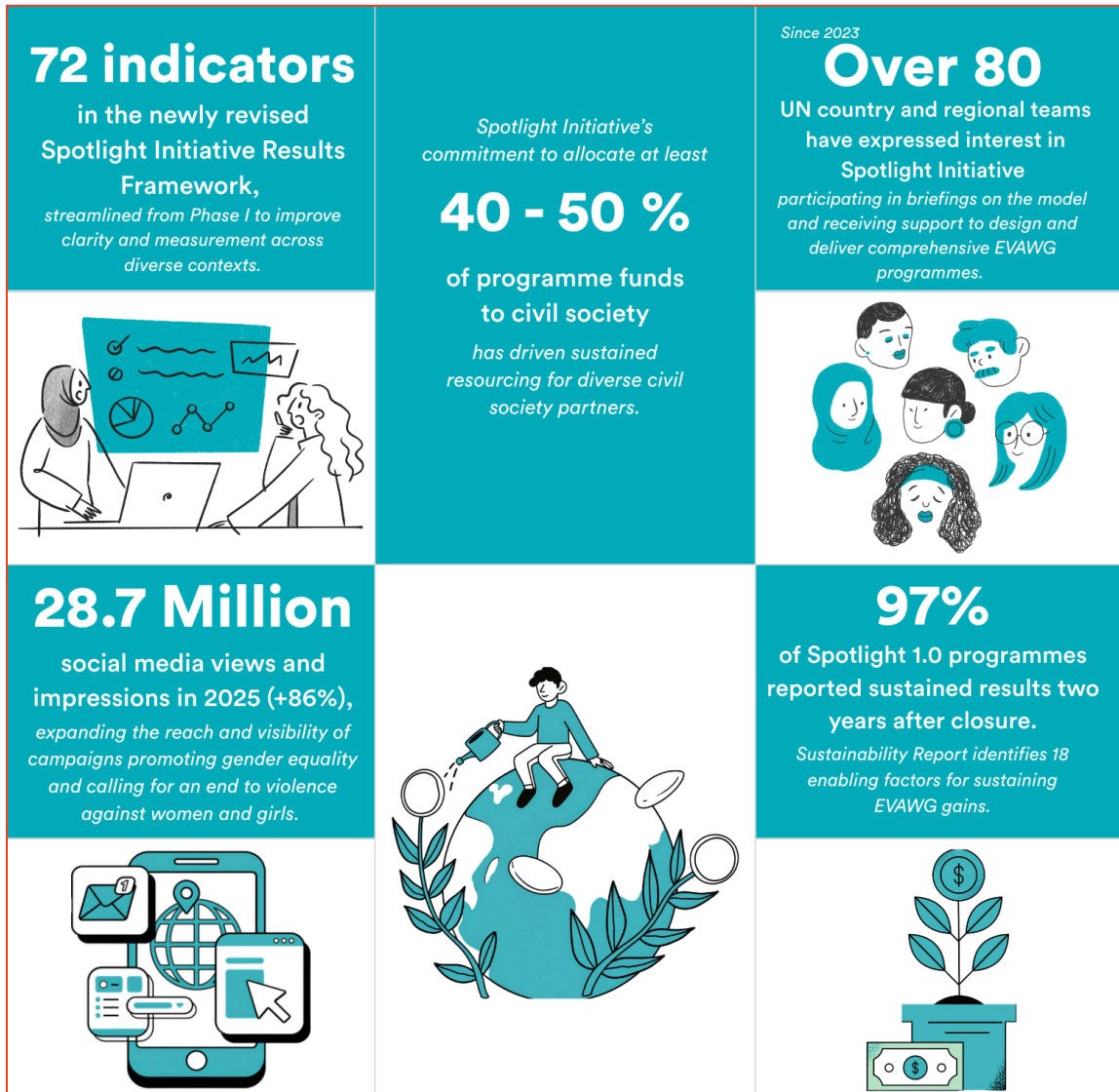


IMAGE: HIVE Joint Programme 2025 results highlight

4.2 Strengthening Evidence, Learning, and Practice to End Violence against Women and Girls

Result 1: The HIVE Joint Programme has strengthened evidence generation and results-based reporting on ending violence against women and girls

Strengthened results measurements for Spotlight Initiative through a participatory approach

The HIVE Joint Programme deepened participatory approaches to monitoring, evaluation, and reporting (PMER) across the Initiative and the wider sector.

In 2025, a major milestone was the development and launch of the [Spotlight Initiative Results Framework](#). Informed by months of consultations – including with UN agencies (including UNFPA and UN Women, representing the wider group of 13 Spotlight Initiative UN agency focal points), specialized agencies (such as WHO), civil society, EVAWG researchers, government partners, the European Union, the World Bank, and others – along with participatory data collection and analysis, the revised framework strengthens the Initiative’s ability to track progress and capture change across diverse contexts.

Revisions were further informed by the experiences of Spotlight Initiative 1.0 programmes and findings from multiple evaluations, including mid-term assessments and the final evaluation. The revision process included a series of online consultations and culminated in an in-person validation workshop in Brussels in May 2025, fostering ownership critical to dissemination and uptake across country and regional programmes. While designed for Spotlight Initiative programmes, the framework also offers a rigorously developed set of indicators that can be used more broadly across the prevention of gender-based violence sector to measure the impact of comprehensive programmes.



PHOTO: Participants at the Spotlight Initiative Results Framework Validation Workshop, Brussels, May 2025.

Responding directly to the final evaluation of the Initiative's first phase, the framework simplifies the previous six-outcome model into four pillars, with refined indicators and a streamlined approach to measurement, detailed in accompanying methodological notes emphasizing disaggregation. The introduction of a regional menu of indicators addressed a key gap under Spotlight Initiative 1.0, thereby now better capturing the work of regional programmes. The framework balances flexibility and the ability to capture Initiative-wide impact through a smaller set of mandatory core indicators that support global reporting while remaining adaptable to diverse contexts. A common results framework and set of core indicators enables programme-level results to be aggregated and interpreted at scale, allowing the Initiative to measure its contribution to change globally, while remaining responsive to diverse contexts.

Thematic coverage was strengthened through indicators on: women's economic empowerment; private sector engagement; prevention of sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse; movement-building; protection of women human rights defenders; and humanitarian contexts. A notable innovation is the introduction of Spotlight Initiative "Ways of Working" metrics (listed at the [bottom of the Initiative-wide Results Framework](#)), which capture how programmes operationalize UN Reform principles in practice, strengthening accountability for participatory and collaborative approaches alongside programme-level results.

Sector-wide promotion of participatory monitoring, evaluation, and reporting

The HIVE Joint Programme also contributed to scaling practitioner capacity beyond the Initiative through an ongoing collaboration with the UN System Staff College established during the first phase of the Initiative. Participatory monitoring, evaluation, and reporting (PMER) content was integrated into the system-wide course "[Improving People's Lives through UN Country Programming: Integrating the UNSDCF guiding principles with a focus on a human-rights based approach, gender equality and women's empowerment, and leaving no one behind](#)". With HIVE Joint Programme support, in 2025, the PMER module was revised to ensure it remained grounded in country-level experience and aligned with the latest evidence and best practice.

The HIVE Joint Programme also held a webinar "[Power in Practice: Drawing lessons from Spotlight Initiative's Approach to Participatory Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting for Grassroots Accountability](#)" co-hosted with the Sexual Violence Research Initiative and the Australian Volunteers Programme. Drawing on Spotlight Initiative experience with PMER at global and country levels, the webinar offered practical tools (rooted in feminist PMER principles) to help strengthen practitioner capacity to apply participatory, rights-based monitoring approaches to efforts to end violence against women and girls across the sector.

Turning to participatory and inclusive reporting, the HIVE Joint Programme also engaged with the UN Development Coordination Office (UNDCO) data team to explore improved

interoperability between Spotlight Initiative reporting and UN INFO, aiming to reduce duplication, support sustainability, and enhance the visibility and consistency of EVAWG results, a collaboration set to continue in 2026.

In 2025, Spotlight Initiative data and evidence also informed a range of UN System-wide reporting and coordination processes, including on the Initiative's "One UN" approach (as an inter-agency initiative), as well as its contributions toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through, for example, "The [Pact for the Future](#)". The Pact outlines 56 actions to accelerate progress on the goals, with the Initiative reporting on its contributions to EVAWG.

Strengthened results-based monitoring and reporting

In addition to global-level promotion of PMER, the HIVE Joint Programme supported Spotlight Initiative programmes to expand and amplify their use of participatory approaches to monitoring and reporting.

The HIVE Joint Programme also provided bespoke induction webinars for new Spotlight Initiative programmes focused on ensuring that participatory approaches are utilized in programmes' monitoring, reporting, and evaluation activities. In addition to induction sessions, the programme delivered reporting-focused webinars supporting annual reporting and the use of the online results reporting system, with recordings made available to all Spotlight Initiative programme teams [via the Virtual Library](#). Webinars were followed by ongoing monitoring and evaluation (and reporting) support, providing technical guidance and quality assurance, including on programme results frameworks, the conduct of baseline studies, and annual reporting. Tools and templates were revised as well, to better support the uptake of participatory approaches within programmes.

To further support learning and knowledge-sharing, the programme maintains the shared Virtual Library featuring a [dedicated section on monitoring, evaluation, and reporting](#), which collates all guidance and tools. Regularly updated throughout 2025, a [live monitoring and evaluation FAQ](#) section (along with a [reporting FAQ section](#)) further strengthened practitioner capacity on the same, while reinforcing shared standards for ethical and rigorous data collection and evidence generation across the Spotlight Initiative portfolio.



To better support results-based programme reporting, strengthen the quality and disaggregation of data, in the spirit of leaving no one behind, the HIVE Joint Programme continued to strengthen data collection processes and streamline reporting across the Initiative. Building on improvements introduced in previous years, further improvements were made to the online results reporting system.

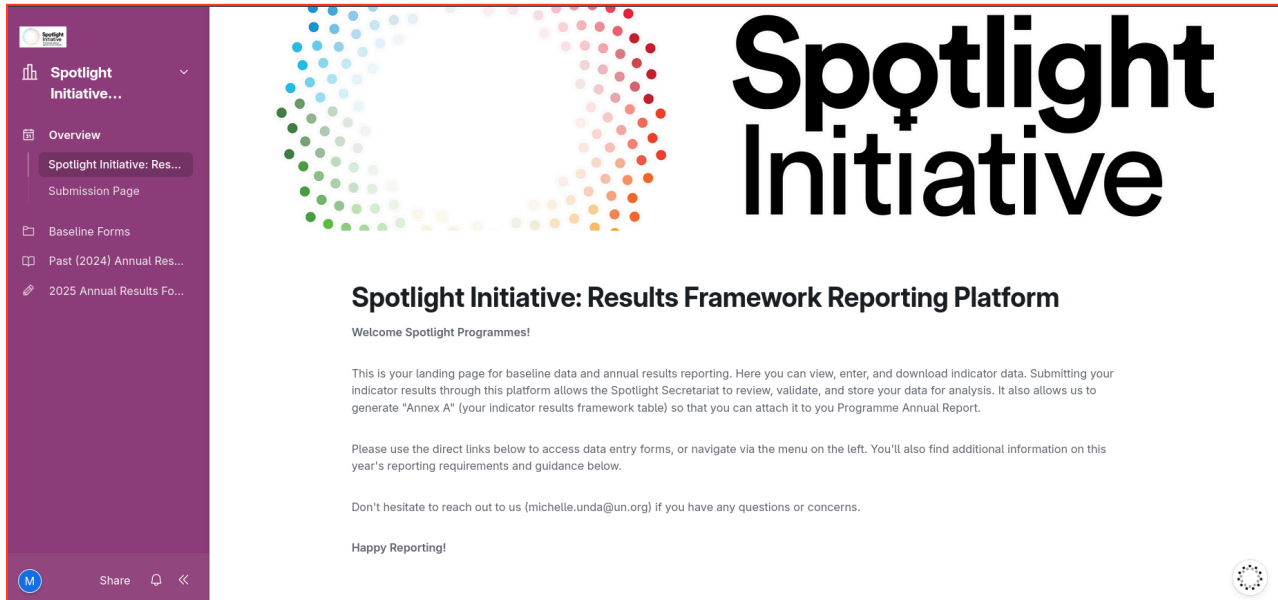


IMAGE: Spotlight Initiative online Results Framework Reporting Platform programme landing page.

The updated online reporting system now integrates Spotlight Initiative programme monitoring and evaluation data (baseline and reporting) with information on civil society engagement, thereby providing a single, consolidated platform that enhances cohesion and accessibility. Intuitive interfaces, dedicated overview pages, and clear guidance on data entry, timelines, and deadlines, all make it easier for programme teams to navigate, validate, and share their data. These improvements strengthen data quality, and streamline reporting processes, equipping Spotlight Initiative programmes with reliable tools to track progress, support learning, and demonstrate accountability.

Embedding evaluative evidence to strengthen programming and coherent United Nations action

Throughout 2025, the HIVE Joint Programme advanced the use of evaluative evidence to strengthen decision-making and accelerate action to end violence against women and girls.

In response [to recommendations from the final evaluation](#) of the Initiative's first phase, the HIVE Joint Programme applied evaluative learning across its core frameworks and knowledge ecosystem. This included updating monitoring and evaluation frameworks and reporting tools – including the Spotlight Initiative Results Framework (as described above)

– as well as revising technical guidance, strengthening and refining the Initiative's approach to operating in fragile contexts (laid out in the fragility framework), and updating the context of the [Learning Centre](#). These updates helped ensure that programme design, implementation, and system-wide support were grounded in the latest evidence and responsive to identified gaps.

In December 2025, Spotlight Initiative also participated in a [joint UN System-wide webinar](#), “From Evidence to Action – Leveraging Evaluation for Effective Responses to Gender-Based Violence,” convened by the UN System-Wide Evaluation Office. The event brought together senior representatives from the Government of Malawi (Ambassador Chimbiri-Molande,



Permanent Representative to the United Nations), UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the European Union, and Spotlight Initiative to reflect on lessons from recent evaluations and their implications for future UN action. Spotlight Initiative’s final evaluation was featured prominently, highlighting the Initiative’s comprehensive, partnership-driven approach as driving coherent, evidence-informed UN System-wide action to end violence against women and girls.

Additionally, the HIVE Joint Programme continued to advance evaluative learning across the UN System through engagement with the UN Development Coordination Office (including messaging for the Resident Coordinator system) and the UN System-Wide Gender Equality Acceleration Plan Secretariat. Targeted briefing materials were developed to demonstrate how the Initiative’s evidence-based and evolving model aligns with – and offers a practical pathway to operationalize – the “System-Wide Gender Equality Acceleration Plan” at the country level. By translating evaluation findings into actionable guidance, the HIVE Joint Programme helped ensure that learning from the Spotlight Initiative could inform broader system-wide efforts, thereby strengthening coherent, evidence-informed action to end violence against women and girls and advance gender equality.

Generating evidence to end violence against women and girls

In 2025, the HIVE Joint Programme worked to launch new research and adapt existing studies for diverse audiences to promote evidence-based learning across the sector. An assessment of gaps in research and learning conducted in 2024 and presented in a [learning agenda brief](#) anchored this work. Throughout 2025, the HIVE Joint Programme

used this learning agenda, together with a range of evaluative evidence, to guide research efforts.

As noted, in the last quarter of 2025, the HIVE Joint Programme prepared to launch its first large-scale study focused on operationalizing the principle of leaving no one behind. Engaging UN agencies, civil society, researchers, international development partners, and other key stakeholders in the development of the study’s approach and objectives, the study will examine how the principle of leaving no one behind can be advanced across contexts, including in more rights-restrictive environments. Operational guidelines and a capacity-building series to support programmes to centre this principle in their efforts to EVAWG will also be developed. To advise on and accompany the study, a reference group of diverse experts has been convened. The study is expected to run to the end of 2026, with more detailed information found in the Looking Ahead section below.

In addition to the new study on leaving no one behind, the HIVE Joint Programme worked to repackage various briefs and studies to improve accessibility for diverse audiences and share the findings and research widely. This is discussed further below in Result 2.

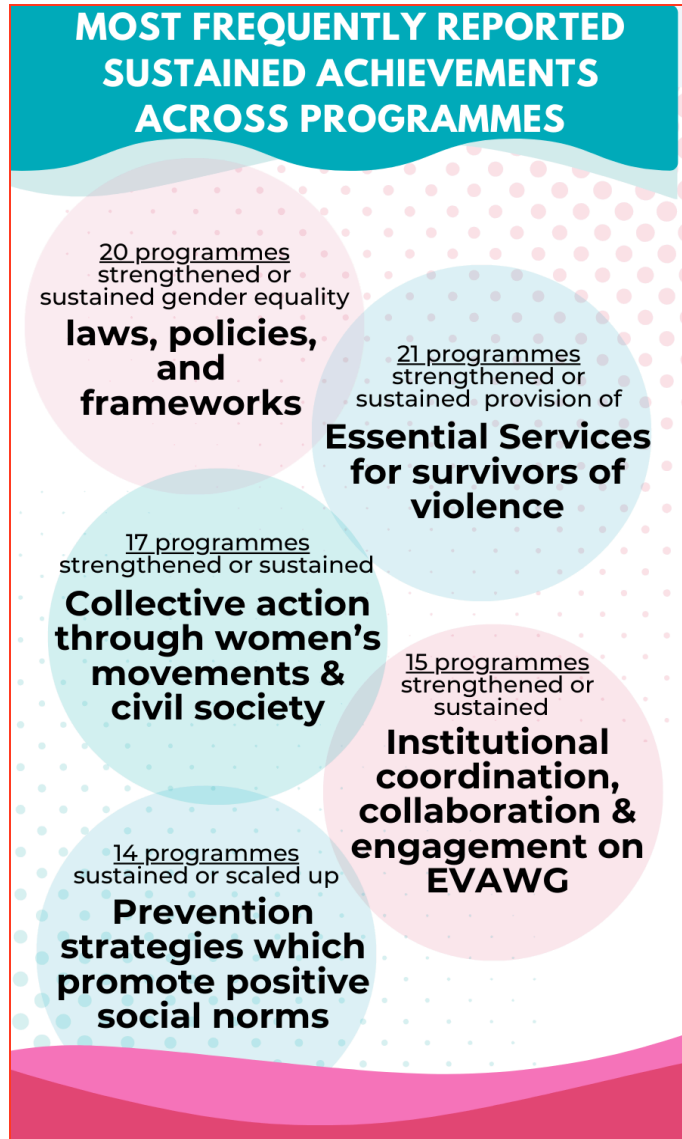
Result 2: Strengthened knowledge and capacity on comprehensive gender-based violence programming.

As noted above, throughout 2025, the HIVE Joint Programme continued to consolidate existing knowledge and tools aligned with the revision recommendations outlined in the final evaluation of the Initiative's first phase. This included improving the accessibility of technical guidance, convening learning exchanges, developing Spotlight Initiative’s new sustainability report, and supporting comprehensive, evidence-based action in countries.

Strengthening the global evidence-base for sustained results: Launching “A Sustainable Legacy”

In 2025 the HIVE Joint Programme launched its new sustainability report “[A Sustainable Legacy: Insights and evidence from seed investments to end violence against women and girls](#)”. Drawing on the insights of more than 100 stakeholders from the United Nations, government, civil society and the European Union and spanning all former 32 country and regional programmes and two civil society grant-giving programmes, the report explores the sustainability of Spotlight Initiative’s first phase of programmes. Stakeholders reported that 97 per cent of programmes sustained achievements, activities or outcomes after closure. The report surfaced 18 sustainability-enabling factors.

Conducted primarily as a learning exercise, the sustainability report offered a rare opportunity to revisit programmes and results two years after closure. Interviews and surveys highlighted the long-term value for money of investments to end violence against women and girls, with stakeholders from 21 programmes reporting sustained improvements in essential services and 20 programmes reporting enduring legal and policy reforms. The report also underscored how governance and accountability structures established as part of the Initiative – such as civil society reference groups – continued to support collaboration between the United Nations, governments, and women’s rights organizations in some settings beyond the life of the programme. At the time of writing, "A Sustainable Legacy" has reached over 300 people through direct distribution. Despite its relatively short time available online (under two weeks at the time of writing), the report already has some of the highest LinkedIn engagement of the year.



Source: "A Sustainable Legacy" report

To recognize the achievements set out in the report and generate interest, the HIVE Joint Programme, in coordination with the UN Office in Brussels and the European Union, hosted a launch in Brussels, alongside events marking the review of the EU "Gender Action Plan III" and the "16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence". Speakers at the event included a Spotlight Initiative Civil Society Global Reference Group member, UNFPA’s Executive Director, UN’s Malawi Resident Coordinator and Spotlight Initiative’s Technical Advisor, in addition to representatives from the European Union and the Belgian Government. As noted by Deputy Director-General for International Partnerships from the European Commission, Martin Seychell at the launch: "In a time of shrinking budgets, conflict and growing backlash against gender equality, this evidence is invaluable. It tells us two things: first, that sustainability is possible; and second, that we know what works."



PHOTO: Journalist Federica di Sario; European Commission Head of Unit Gender Equality, Human Rights and Democratic Governance, Chiara Adamo; UN Resident Coordinator for Malawi, Rebecca Adda-Dontoh; Spotlight Initiative Technical Advisor, Heran Ayele; Spotlight Initiative Civil Society Global Reference Group Coordinator, Shamah Bulangis.

Developing accessible technical guidance and knowledge products

The HIVE Joint Programme continued to update resources and ensure that knowledge products are relevant and accessible to practitioners. In 2025, the [“Spotlight Initiative Technical Guidance: Implementing across the outcomes”](#) was updated to: reflect the new outcome structure of Spotlight Initiative programmes; focus on technical principles (doing no harm, survivor-centred approaches, intersectionality, and leaving no one behind); and signpost new evidence. The technical guidance was translated into Arabic, French, Portuguese, and Spanish. Its relaunch was supported through broad dissemination to over 3,000 stakeholders through Spotlight Initiative’s [monthly newsletter](#).



Source: Spotlight Initiative Monthly Newsletter, Issue #58.

Other technical guidance developed includes Spotlight Initiative’s “[Sustainability Guidance Note](#)”, which was updated to provide Spotlight Initiative programmes with templates to support planning and integrate findings from “A Sustainable Legacy”. This guidance is being directly used by the Ecuador and Uganda country programmes as they strengthen their transition and sustainability plans. It is also being integrated much earlier into programme cycles, as part of programme inception webinars, as further described below under Result 4. The HIVE Joint Programme also revised the “[Knowledge Management Work Plan Guidance](#)”, providing additional guidance on how to leverage and disseminate knowledge and evidence generated through programmes to have a transformative impact. The guidance document provides a workplan template with sample activities to assist programmes in formulating and implementing activities relevant for their own context and needs.



The Initiative promoted further engagement with several key technical publications as well. These included: a study on “[Why domestic public resources are key to ending violence against women and girls](#)”, which highlighted practical lessons for increasing public investment in EVAWG; as well as a modelling study on “[Colliding Crises: How the climate crisis fuels gender-based violence](#)”. Findings from these were shared widely, including through SHINE discussions and LinkedIn, as well as through panels and “brown-bag” sessions with UN agency staff members.

Findings were also promoted more broadly, including through engagement with the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) in support of advocacy for the adoption of “[ILO Convention 190](#)” (discussed further below), as well as at the “Fourth International Conference

on Financing for Development” in Spain, the “Second World Summit for Social Development” in Qatar, and in a dialogue with private sector companies on prevention and response convened by the “United Nations Global Compact”, also referenced further below.

In 2025, the HIVE Joint Programme developed a framework to guide its work in humanitarian and complex settings. An online workshop in August 2025 brought together UN gender equality humanitarian leads and colleagues who had implemented Spotlight Initiative programmes in fragile, conflict-affected or crisis settings in the first phase (for example Afghanistan, Papua New Guinea, and the Pacific). This was an opportunity to reflect on how Spotlight Initiative’s comprehensive model can be applied in complex

settings and its linkages with the broader humanitarian architecture. Following this discussion, the HIVE Joint Programme team developed a [high-level framework](#), which set out some core considerations and minimum requirements for Spotlight Initiative programmes. This was designed to support UN Country and Regional Teams as they determine the feasibility of programming in their contexts and whether the model is appropriate. This guidance is supporting broader engagement with interested UN Country Teams as they develop concept notes or discuss programmes, for example in Sudan and Syria.

The HIVE Joint Programme also worked with UN Women to assess UN System progress on ending VAWG between 2019 and 2024. Drawing on the “[Inventory of UN Activities to End Violence against Women and Girls](#)”, analysis of data identified patterns in thematic actions by institutions and joint programmes, including Spotlight Initiative. The analysis highlighted the Initiative's significant contributions to UN System-wide action to end violence against women and girls. The report of this analysis is expected to be launched in 2026.

Technical support and knowledge exchanges

The HIVE Joint Programme supported UNFPA-led global work on technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), including through participation in the UNFPA TFGBV Advisory Board and supporting agenda-setting for the “Third Global Symposium on TFGBV” in March 2025. Among the participants were former Spotlight Initiative stakeholders – including a legal expert from Argentina who shared insights on legal reforms generated with the support of the Initiative. Insights from the symposium informed updates to the Initiative’s guidance on “[Best practices in addressing TFGBV](#)”, helping to ensure alignment with emerging global evidence.

Building on this, Spotlight Initiative and UNFPA hosted a [public webinar](#) on TFGBV, developed in response to interest from Spotlight Initiative Zambia, which was anticipating increased technology-facilitated gender-based violence during national elections. The webinar reached nearly 120 participants, including representatives from the Government of Zambia, civil



Source: Spotlight Initiative Best Practices in Addressing TFGBV. Photo: UNICEF/Gilbertson VII

society, and international partners, and was designed to be inclusive through sign language interpretation and an in-person viewing session in Zambia. Speakers included representatives from the Government of Ireland and experts from civil society. Together, these engagements strengthened coordination across UN agencies and partners, widened access to learning (recognizing broader demand), and reinforced the Initiative’s role in

coordinating to address evolving priority areas. Additional notable learning exchanges include an internal “brown bag” session for the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), where Spotlight Initiative presented on the linkages between climate change, gender equality and ending violence against women and girls (building on the [Initiative's brief](#) on the same). Toward the end of 2025, and as noted above, the Initiative joined up with the “UN Global Compact” in a webinar on private sector leadership in addressing violence against women and girls in Africa. These engagements, alongside knowledge exchanges on participatory monitoring, evaluation, and reporting, and on the economic costs of violence – in an internal discussion with trade unionists through ITUC mentioned above, – helped position Spotlight Initiative as a trusted source of cross-sector evidence and experiential insight.

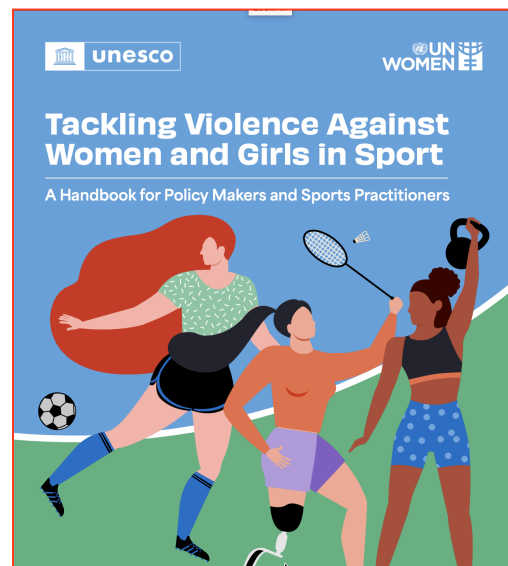
In addition, Spotlight Initiative and the Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund co-hosted a panel in Australia at the “[Justice Denied Conference: Fighting Widespread Impunity for Conflict-Related Sexual Violence](#)”. Featuring human rights defenders, women’s rights activists and academic experts (pictured below), the panel focused on [the role of civil society organizations in survivor service delivery in fragile contexts](#). The session reached over 200 in-person participants – and many more on the [SHINE](#) hub (where a concurrent discussion was held to accompany the event) – helping amplify frontline perspectives, inform the Initiative's fragility framework, and position the Initiative as a contributor to global policy and practice on ending violence against women and girls in fragile and crisis-affected contexts.



PHOTO: Justice Denied panellists: Human rights defender and Spotlight Initiative Civil Society Global Reference Group member Shamah Bulangis; Director of Kup Women for Peace, Angela Apa; Postgraduate student in Global Public Health at Griffith University, Aiko Nagae.

This SHINE discussion was one of the most successful discussions of the year (totalling nearly 450 views). Through this combined in-person and online convening, Spotlight Initiative leveraged momentum to build recognition for civil society organizations as frontline actors and positioning the Initiative as a contributor to global policy and practice on survivor-centred responses to conflict-related sexual violence and ending violence against women and girls in fragile settings. Recognizing increased interest in the Initiative’s comprehensive model from UN Country and Regional Teams working in fragile settings, the findings from these discussions informed Spotlight Initiative’s fragility framework.

The HIVE Joint Programme also participated in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Global Safe Sport Taskforce, providing technical inputs – rooted in the Initiative’s experience using sport as a platform to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls – to shape global sports standards that are safer, more inclusive, and gender-responsive for athletes. Building on this partnership, in September 2025, the Initiative spoke at a [webinar](#) hosted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Olympic Committee (available in English, Arabic, French and Spanish) on the role of sports in preventing gender-based violence. Recognizing demand and interest from the sports sector, the HIVE Joint Programme updated the Learning Centre to include a [new section](#) on working in and through sports to prevent violence against women and girls. Engaging sports stakeholders represents a strategic expansion into a high-impact, previously under-engaged sector for violence prevention.



Source: UNESCO and UN Women (2023). Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls in Sport: A Handbook for Policy Makers and Sports Practitioners. Cover design: Playing Field.

Leveraging Spotlight Initiative’s Learning Centre and SHINE hub to support evidence-based EVAWG programming

Throughout 2025, the [Learning Centre](#) was actively maintained as a trusted, up-to-date online space supporting both modular learning and practical guidance for EVAWG practitioners. The platform recorded 4,626 views and 2,321 active users (1 Jan to 21 Dec 2025) with sustained use driven by consistent promotion through webinars, technical support engagements with United Nations Country Teams, and Spotlight Initiative’s

LinkedIn presence. The Learning Centre has been a valuable tool, its evidence and resources have been the basis for concept note webinars, inception webinars and broader technical support to UN Country and Regional Teams as they develop initial plans for their programmes.

As a live platform, the Learning Centre is continually updated with new resources (for example, the [“RESPECT Framework”](#), and Spotlight Initiative’s [“Best Practices in Responding to Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence”](#) and new module pages that respond to changing interest in the EVAWG sector (for example, the [role of the sports sector](#)). By regularly updating the resources and guidance on the Learning Centre, it becomes a trusted tool for practitioners who can rely on the tools and information made available to them and ensure they are implementing evidence-based activities.

In parallel, the HIVE Joint Programme continued the collaboration with the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women through the SHINE hub – a multilingual knowledge-sharing and dialogue platform with users in 186 countries. In 2025, Spotlight Initiative hosted five online SHINE discussions and polls, and created two new pages (the [partner page](#) and the [Spotlight Initiative Group](#)), leveraging the platform’s global reach to expand inclusive learning, exchange practice-based knowledge, and connect diverse stakeholders across regions. Notable SHINE exchanges included:

- [“From Commitments to Action: Ensuring Accountability and Strengthening Movements to End Harmful Practices”](#). To mark the “International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation”, the HIVE Joint Programme hosted a discussion moderated by global advocates, including representatives from Girls Not Brides, Equality Now, OHCHR, and UNFPA.
- Reflective of SHINE users’ feedback to focus exchanges on women’s movements, in May 2025, the HIVE Joint Programme launched a discussion [“Supporting Civil Society Organizations to Deliver Survivor Services and Comprehensive EVAWG Programmes in Fragile Contexts”](#). As noted above, this was held alongside the “Justice Denied conference” in Australia.
- [“Reflections & Moments: A Collective Journal from the World Conference on Women’s Shelters”](#). Live journalling was piloted during the World Conference on Women’s Shelters in September 2025.
- [“How can gender-transformative climate action support ending violence against women and girls?”](#) Ahead of the “Thirtieth Conference of the Parties”, Spotlight Initiative and the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women hosted a discussion on the intersections of gender equality, ending gender-based violence, and driving climate action.

Experience on SHINE in 2025 generated important learning, demonstrating that live journalling can expand access to global convenings by enabling near real-time engagement, while external moderators can enrich discussion and increase participation, albeit with the

requirement of additional coordination. Overall, the HIVE Joint Programme continued to amplify and enhance SHINE and the Learning Centre as global public goods – expanding civil society participation, supporting learning and bridging evidence, policy, and practice to advance efforts to end violence against women and girls.

Result 3: The HIVE Joint Programme progressed strategic partnerships to advance efforts to end violence against women and girls.

Partnerships are at the core of the Initiative's achievements. Collaboration and partnership with government and, particularly, civil society, have been pivotal in ensuring relevance, responsiveness, and grounding in lived experience while also amplifying critical knowledge, evidence-based, and innovative approaches and sustained impact.

To strengthen civil society's influence across Spotlight Initiative, the HIVE Joint Programme focused on strategic connected priorities: (i) support the Initiative's Civil Society Global Reference Group to develop a shared advocacy agenda and collective analytical work and embed across the Initiative's governance, technical workstreams and strategic decision-making; and (ii) strengthen meaningful civil society participation and resourcing in new Spotlight Initiative programmes through targeted support to programmes in their civil society engagement strategies.

Spotlight Initiative's Civil Society Global Reference Group's influence in the Initiative's governance and decision-making

Launched in 2024, Spotlight Initiative's Civil Society Global Reference Group plays a key role within Spotlight Initiative. Through regular convenings and an in-person retreat alongside the "69th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women", the Civil Society Global Reference Group aligned priorities, clarified roles and working modalities, and strengthened coordination with the Initiative across its workplan priorities.

The in-person "Civil Society Global Reference Group Retreat" held in New York on the margins of the "Commission on the Status of Women" further consolidated this collective work. The retreat provided a strategic space for the group members and the Secretariat to: reflect on the evolving global context; refine solidarity-based advocacy priorities; advance discussions on co-design and co-implementation for Spotlight Initiative 2.0; and strengthen internal accountability, governance representation, and coordination across working groups. Outcomes from the retreat informed the Civil Society Global Reference Group's advocacy positioning and its engagement with Spotlight Initiative governance and technical teams for the remainder of the year.

To advance its collective advocacy agenda, the Civil Society Global Reference Group organized its work into four thematic working groups: human rights, monitoring and evaluation, research and learning, and communications. This work strengthened protections for women human rights defenders through: updates to the "Spotlight-Specific

Integrated Protection Approach ([SSIPA](#))”; improved tracking of the Initiative’s alignment with civil society’s co-designed demands through collectively developed indicators; informed revisions to the results framework and the Initiative’s sustainability report; and shaped key advocacy messages. Collectively, these efforts reinforced the Civil Society Global Reference Group’s influence, ensuring civil society perspectives shaped Spotlight Initiative’s governance, learning, and strategic direction in its second phase.

Civil Society Global Reference Group representatives actively participated in all Spotlight Initiative governance meetings throughout the year, including the Advisory Board and Operational Steering Committee, sharing collective positions agreed in advance by the full group and exercising voting rights on strategic decisions. Beyond formal governance, members of the Civil Society Global Reference Group also influenced informal and high-level engagements, including with the Deputy Secretary-General and the European Union, embedding civil society perspectives to influence decision-making.

The Civil Society Global Reference Group’s high-level international engagements

Throughout the year, members of the Spotlight Initiative Civil Society Global Reference Group played a strategic role in advancing Spotlight Initiative’s priorities across key international policy, advocacy, and learning spaces, both within and beyond the UN System. Their sustained presence ensured that feminist, survivor-centred and civil society perspectives informed global discussions on ending violence against women and girls, while strengthening Spotlight Initiative’s influence, visibility, and networks.

At the “Commission on the Status of Women” in New York, Civil Society Global Reference Group members played an active and visible role across official and parallel events, with two thirds serving as panellists. Targeted bilateral engagements with UN agencies (including UN Women, UNFPA, UNDP, UNICEF, UNODC, UNESCO, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNDCO) and leading civil society networks and organizations (such as the Association for Women’s Rights in Development, the Coalition for the UN We Need, Fos Feministas, and regional feminist coalitions) strengthened policy dialogue, messaging, and alliance-building around Spotlight Initiative’s comprehensive approach to ending violence against women and girls.

Civil Society Global Reference Group members also contributed to key multilateral policy spaces throughout the year. At the High-Level Political Forum, two members participated, including one as a panellist, in a high-level side-event co-organized with the European Union and UN Women – the ACT Programme (as noted above), showcasing evidence on the impact of well-resourced, multisectoral national action plans in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals. At the “UN General Assembly”, six Civil Society Global Reference Group members engaged in public and closed-door discussions, including a Civil Society Global Reference Group-convened dialogue with feminist organizations from other sectors to reflect on policy strategies in a challenging global context, alongside participation in Spotlight Initiative events.

Regional and thematic engagements further reinforced Spotlight Initiative’s influence and promoted cross-regional learning. Civil Society Global Reference Group members represented Spotlight Initiative as panellists at the “XVI Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean”, the “African Forum on Sustainable Development” in Kampala, the “European Humanitarian Forum in Brussels”, the “Justice Denied Conference” in Australia (as noted earlier), and the “Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development”, supporting advocacy, networking, and outreach. Participation in the “World Conference on Women’s Shelters” and the “International Conference on Family Planning” supported learning on critical issues – such as online violence and harmful masculinities – and strengthened cross-movement collaboration.

Collectively, these events offered the opportunity to strengthen partnerships – including with feminist organizations and movements – influence global policy spaces and amplify evidence of what works to end violence against women and girls, strengthening collective demands for accountability and justice.

Strengthening civil society engagement across Spotlight programmes

The HIVE Joint Programme supported Spotlight Initiative programmes to strengthen meaningful civil society engagement and influence within Spotlight programming. Targeted onboarding and technical support enabled programmes to design and implement civil society engagement strategies grounded in lessons learned from the Initiative’s first phase.

Technical guidance from the Initiative helped streamline and strengthen the process of establishing civil society reference groups, including in Sierra Leone, where the reference group is expected to be formally constituted in early 2026. In Liberia, the HIVE Joint Programme participated as an observer at the outset of a civil society-led reference group selection process, providing guidance on key requirements to ensure a transparent and representative process. As a result, the recruitment process was relaunched to strengthen alignment with the Initiative’s standards. In Zambia, the HIVE Joint Programme engaged the newly established civil society reference group to support the development of a costed workplan aligned with core Spotlight Initiative principles.

These efforts contributed to tangible progress: four of the five current Spotlight Initiative 2.0 programmes have established civil society reference groups, three of which have developed costed annual workplans supported by dedicated budgets.

The HIVE Joint Programme also reinforced adherence to Spotlight Initiative’s core financing commitments to civil society. UN Country Teams were reminded of, and supported in operationalizing, the Initiative’s commitment that at least 40–50 per cent of total programme budgets be delivered through diverse civil society organizations. By emphasizing these thresholds during programme design and budget planning, the Initiative helped promote predictable and meaningful resourcing for diverse civil society organizations.

In parallel, and at the global level, Spotlight Initiative, together with the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, led the development of a system-wide funding framework for civil society. Drawing on promising practices across UN entities, the framework aims to improve the quality, coherence, and sustainability of resourcing for women’s rights organizations and feminist movements, while strengthening alignment between funding modalities and feminist, survivor-centred principles.

Expanding strategic partnerships to strengthen resource mobilization to end violence against women and girls

Global partnerships for resource mobilization

In 2025, the HIVE Joint Programme helped advance partnerships and resource mobilization efforts through strategic engagement with key partners at the global level. This centred on consistent and targeted outreach – supported by UN agency and civil society partners – to broaden engagement with both established and emerging donors. This work was undertaken in the context of the “UN80” reform agenda, shrinking official development assistance, and the sharp reductions in aid budgets since 2024, as noted previously.

In the current resource-constrained environment, the Initiative continues to sharpen its value proposition, diversify its donor base, and align its work with national priorities and financing trends to support humanitarian-development-peace coherence. While the HIVE Joint Programme’s engagement in global events and meetings is addressed elsewhere in the report, this section focuses on how these engagements strengthened the Initiative’s positioning and visibility in support of current and future resource mobilization.



PHOTO: Global Director of Gender Equality UNDP, Ms.Raquel Lagunas; Deputy Executive Director UN Women, Ms.Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda; Global Coordinator Spotlight Initiative Ms.Erin Kenny; Hon.Deputy Minister for Economic Management Liberia, Dehpue Zuo; UN Resident Coordinator Jamaica, Mr.Dennis Zulu; UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador and Biotechnologist, Dr.Hayat Sindi; Minister of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Zimbabwe, Hon. Ms.Monica Mutsvangwa; CEO Population Action International (PAI), Ms.Nabeeha Kazi Hutchins; Chair, Safe Sport Steering Committee IOC, HRH Prince Feisal Al Hussein of Jordan; Civil Society Representative, UN Women ACT, Dr. Mabel Bianco; Commissioner, Strategic Coordination Implementation, Office of the Prime Minister Uganda, Mr. Edward Walugembe; Vice President for International Programmes Ford Foundation, Mr.Martin Abregú; Deputy Director General for Operations IOM, Ms.Ugochi Daniels.

In 2025, these engagements translated into a set of strategically leveraged global moments that positioned Spotlight Initiative as a credible, high-impact model for coordinated action to end violence against women and girls. Spotlight Initiative was present at the following: the “Africa Regional Sustainable Development Forum” in Kampala; the “European Humanitarian Forum” in Brussels; and the “OECD-DAC GenderNet Conference”, and the “Fourth Ministerial Conference on Feminist Foreign Policy”, which were both in Paris. These events convened governments, multilateral partners, civil society, and financial institutions and, during them, the Spotlight Initiative model demonstrated its alignment with regional development, and humanitarian and financing priorities. High-level moments at the “69th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women” and the “80th Session of the UN General Assembly” further elevated Spotlight Initiative’s visibility with Member States and donors, showcasing leadership from programme country governments and civil society and reinforcing the Initiative’s relevance within global policy and financing debates. The launch of the [“Domestic Resource Mobilization Study”](#) at the “Fourth Financing for Development Conference” in Seville, together with participation in the “World Summit for Social Development” in Doha, created additional entry points to engage non-traditional partners,

including international financial institutions and Gulf-based actors. Collectively, these engagements strengthened Spotlight Initiative's positioning with both traditional and emerging partners and supported follow-up discussions linked to current and future resource mobilization efforts.

In addition to engagement with public sector partners the Initiative held a series of global briefings with donor governments to maintain visibility and reinforce its value proposition in a constrained funding environment. These briefings, including with the European Union and with Australia, Belgium, Canada, Catalonia, Denmark, France, Germany, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Qatar provided opportunities to present Spotlight Initiative's approach and key achievements to decision-makers and support ongoing and future funding discussions.

In parallel, the HIVE Joint Programme fostered new relationships with potential partners to raise the visibility of Spotlight Initiative's model and seek new sources of funding. This engagement included public sector partners outside the traditional OECD-DAC donor group, including member states in the Gulf region, as noted above, and expanded engagement with the private sector.

The Initiative worked to strengthen its relationship with international financial institutions, including the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, and the Asian Development Bank, expanding entry points for future financing and partnerships. Simultaneously, the Initiative sought to expand its engagement with other EU actors, particularly the Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf and the Directorate-General for Enlargement and the Eastern Neighbourhood. Taken together, these efforts helped strengthen the foundation for future resource mobilization opportunities and financial investment in Spotlight Initiative country and regional programming.

Spotlight Initiative also pursued private sector partnerships, particularly with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to deliver joint programming on preventing violence in and through sports, with a focus on the African continent. This dialogue will continue in 2026. The Initiative has also continued engaging foundations as part of its resource mobilization efforts, generating useful insights on philanthropic priorities. These discussions have highlighted the Initiative's ability to convene civil society and government partners, an area of particular interest to foundation leaders and a promising entry point for potential support for Spotlight Initiative. Engagement will continue in 2026 to translate these discussions into funding commitments.

In parallel, the Initiative is pursuing corporate partnerships to mobilize financial contributions for country programmes, grounded in a shared interest in advancing workplace policies that help prevent violence against women and girls across countries of operation and corporate value chains.

To support resource mobilization broadly, the HIVE Joint Programme produced targeted

analysis and evidence that clearly demonstrated the value, effectiveness, and sustainability of the Spotlight Initiative model, including the “[Impact Report](#)”, the “[A Sustainability Legacy](#)” report, and the “[Domestic Resource Mobilization Study](#)”. These products have been used to inform engagement with donors and partners and to support country programmes in mobilizing resources; the latter is discussed further below.

Strengthening country-level resource mobilization

Strengthening country-level resource mobilization efforts remained a priority, particularly given increased donor earmarking at the country level. Spotlight Initiative met with more than 20 UN Country Teams and regional offices to specifically support their resource mobilization efforts to launch new Spotlight Initiative programmes.

In 2025, this resulted in the following country-level support and enabling actions:

- Ongoing guidance provided to Resident Coordinators’ offices and United Nations Country Teams on the types and working modalities of different donors and partners
- Providing technical support for donor roundtables and country-level resource mobilization in Afghanistan, Arab States region, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Morocco, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, the Southern Africa region, Sudan, Tunisia, Western Balkans, and Zambia
- Working with the Sudan Country Team for the preparation and submission of a programme application to the Qatar Fund for Development, including technical inputs and strategic positioning
- Developing a resource mobilization inception webinar that offers a practical, step-by-step guide to initiating and structuring resource mobilization efforts when launching or scaling programmes.

Spotlight Initiative also made progress in realizing a tripartite partnership with the World Bank and the European Union, while also identifying challenges to address in 2026 in order to further Spotlight Initiative’s financing goals. One objective of the tripartite partnership is to advance global policy dialogue on gender-based violence through high-visibility events and, in this regard, the partnership with the World Bank has been fruitful. The World Bank and Spotlight Initiative teams collaborated in 2025 on the 80th session of the “United Nations General Assembly” and other global events and webinars.

Spotlight Initiative remains keen to advance shared priorities with the World Bank through investment in Spotlight Initiative country programmes. Of the priority countries jointly identified, steps were taken toward potential new commitments in Chad and Ecuador through technical-level workshops involving the World Bank, United Nations Country Teams, and headquarters counterparts. In Ecuador, momentum was constrained by the dissolution of the Ministry of Women and Human Rights, the primary government interlocutor. In Chad, further progress will require stronger inter-agency coordination prior

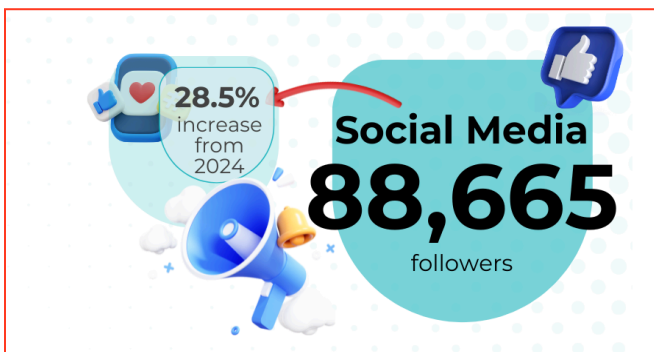
to engagement with the World Bank and bilateral partners.

Looking ahead, Spotlight Initiative, European Union, and World Bank counterparts will convene in early 2026 for a joint stocktaking to strengthen alignment, reinvigorate investment discussions, and enhance collaboration on knowledge and learning, with the aim of realizing the partnership’s full potential.

As funding constraints intensify, effective resource mobilization increasingly depends on clearly framed, evidence-based communication of results, value, and comparative advantage. In response, Spotlight Initiative has sharpened its fundraising approach by aligning country-level engagement with donor priorities, reinforcing this through targeted outreach to decision-makers based at UN headquarters in New York, and across capital cities. The Initiative is also driving coherent messaging across governments, international financial institutions, and UN partners, positioning Spotlight Initiative as a tested (and proven) evidence based model for joined up, comprehensive action to end violence against women and girls.

Communications and advocacy to amplify impact

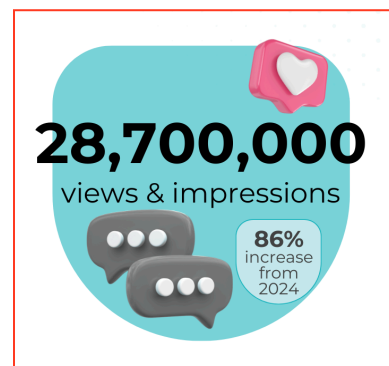
The Initiative’s communications and visibility efforts serve as a strategic enabler by shaping compelling narratives, amplifying evidence and results, and engaging the public in ways that strengthen policy influence, mobilize resources, and catalyse the social norm change required to end violence against women and girls. In 2025, the HIVE Joint Programme’s primary communications and visibility priorities focused on delivering a new global activation for the [#WithHer campaign](#) and on supporting new and existing country programmes with their outreach efforts.



The Spotlight Initiative website published 48 pieces of content in 2025, generating 474,000 page views (an 82 per cent increase from the previous year) and 390,000 sessions (an increase of almost 180 per cent). Notably, in 2025 the Initiative reached a total of 88,665 followers across Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn, reflecting a 28.5 per cent increase compared to

2024. Across platforms, the Initiative achieved approximately 28.7 million views and impressions, marking an 86 per cent increase from 2024.

A [donor contribution](#) page was added to the website to highlight the generous contributions of Spotlight Initiative’s partners, while country and regional pages were launched or



revamped for new and second-generation programmes (the Africa Regional programme, Ecuador, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Uganda, and Zambia). Instagram remained the strongest driver of reach, generating over 28.3 million views across English and Spanish accounts, while Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn collectively contributed an additional 403,000 views and impressions. X (Twitter) continued to show strong audience presence with 20,700 followers, and LinkedIn generated 55,674 impressions with 2,454 followers by the end of 2025. These results were achieved organically, primarily through collaborations with other UN partners and influencer accounts. During significant events throughout the year – such as the “UN General Assembly”, the “Commission on the Status of Women”, the “High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development”, and the “Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development”, noted throughout this report – social media content was strategically planned to leverage the traction and social media presence of partners and even attendees. Furthermore, content generated from the Samoa mission contributed to organic growth within the communities where Spotlight Initiative’s programme operated, ensuring that community members actively engaged with the Initiative’s channels.

More than 1,200 Spotlight Initiative-specific articles and stories were published in 2025 by 710 media outlets across 93 countries, reaching an audience of 1.2 billion people. Stories were published in top-tier media outlets including: AllAfrica, El Pais, Infobae, MSN, POLITICO Europe, RFI, The Associated Press, The Guardian, UN News, Yahoo! News, to name a few.

The legacy of Spotlight Initiative’s #WithHer campaign’s groundbreaking and successful series of engagements with digital creators and social media influencers continued in 2025. Examples include, “Career Ladder Ep. 377: [Her purpose needs to be talked about more](#)” with @maxklymenko (2.3 million views) “[What is image-based sexual violence?](#)” with @Uldouz, and actor Terry Crews’ [speech on masculinity](#), (9.8 million views). Spotlight Initiative partnered with the Social Good Club to develop “The Creator Playbook,” which is a step-by-step guide for development practitioners to activate impactful, creator-led campaigns. The #WithHer campaign has also developed a new activation provisionally titled “Mind Your Moves”. The activation is a planned video game experience on the Roblox platform, designed to reach boys and young adolescents with messages and actions to prevent violence.

Creative messaging and digital campaign activations effectively supported the Initiative’s communications objectives to raise awareness and catalyse global action and advocacy towards ending violence against women and girls.

Advocacy events to strengthen partnerships, share knowledge, and enhance visibility

Communications and advocacy cut across Spotlight Initiative's work, elevating the Initiative’s influence, relevance, and reach across the global EAWG ecosystem. In 2025, the HIVE Joint Programme leveraged high-level policy moments, global and regional convenings, and strategic partnerships to position the Spotlight Initiative as a leader in comprehensive, feminist, and civil society-centred approaches to ending violence against women and girls. The engagements outlined below illustrate the scope of this convening and influence, with their contribution to results reflected throughout this report.



Source: “Career Ladder Ep. 377: Her purpose needs to be talked about more” with @maxklymenko, YouTube.

Uplifting women in STEM event in New York, USA, February 2025

On 11 February, the Permanent Mission of Poland to the United Nations, Rise, and Spotlight Initiative hosted “[Impossible is just an Opinion: Uplifting women in STEM on International Day of Women and Girls in Science](#)”, an event led by women astronauts to highlight the contributions of women and girls in science, and the importance of ensuring that they are safe from gender-based violence and gender discrimination. Speakers, including science educator and television personality Bill Nye and actor and author Terry Crews, helped the event to reach a broad mainstream audience through sharing content on their social media channels.



PHOTO: 'Uplifting Women in STEM' was a historic gathering of women astronauts at the UN Headquarters in New York. Photo: Radhika Chalasani.

High-level event during “69th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women” in New York, USA, March 2025

Spotlight Initiative co-hosted a [high-level event on the sidelines of the “69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women”](#). The event, “Beijing +30: Driving accountability to end violence against women and girls”, took stock of the urgent work required to fulfil commitments made by UN Member States under the “Beijing Platform for Action to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls by 2030”. It was convened by The Group of Friends for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls, in collaboration with Spotlight Initiative and the ACT Programme.

“The Light Within” exhibition on the sidelines of 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, New York, USA, March 2025

During the “69th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women” and in celebration of “Women’s History Month”, Art Republic and Spotlight Initiative hosted a reception to launch the groundbreaking large-scale digital art installation, “[The Light Within](#)” on 4 March at the United Nations Visitors’ Lobby in New York. Works celebrated internationally renowned women digital artists.

“Ending violence against women and girls: a feminist global approach” in New York USA, March 2025

On the sidelines of the 69th session of the “Commission on the Status of Women”, Spotlight Initiative’s Civil Society Global Reference Group organized a [side event on how to](#)

[take a global feminist approach to ending violence against women and girls](#). Drawing on achievements from the Initiative’s first phase and panellists’ own experiences, the session examined systemic challenges to ending gender-based violence. It also outlined key lessons for the second phase of Spotlight Initiative.

High-level event during the eleventh session of the “Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development”, Kampala, Uganda, April 2025

Leaders from governments, international organizations such as the United Nations and multilateral development banks, and civil society met to discuss pathways for ending gender-based violence through the economic empowerment of women and girls. The high-level side event, “[Sustaining progress toward eliminating violence against women and girls through enhanced economic opportunity](#)”, took place at the Speke Resort Convention Centre in Kampala, with outcomes supporting the inclusion of regional and national perspectives at the “Fourth International Financing for Development Conference” in Seville, Spain in June 2025. It was hosted by Spotlight Initiative, the African Development Bank, the African Union Commission, and the Government of Uganda.

High-level event on the sidelines of the “European Humanitarian Forum”, Brussels, Belgium, May 2025

On May 19, Spotlight Initiative hosted an event on the sidelines of the “European Humanitarian Forum”, entitled: “[Meeting the moment: Promoting long-term investment in ending violence against women and girls in fragile settings](#)”. The event aimed to share best practices and drive collaboration between humanitarian and development actors working in humanitarian settings.

Panel discussion at the “Justice Denied: Fighting Widespread Impunity for Conflict-Related Sexual Violence” conference, in Melbourne Australia

As part of the HIVE Joint Programme’s support to global knowledge exchange and civil society engagement, Spotlight Initiative and the Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund participated in a June 2025 panel on the role of civil society in advocating for access to services for gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence. The panel formed part of the two-day conference: “Justice Denied: Fighting Widespread Impunity for Conflict-Related Sexual Violence”, hosted by the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the Australian Institute of International Affairs (Victoria).

Side-event at the “Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in Seville”, Spain, July 2025

At the “Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development” in Seville, Spain, Spotlight Initiative hosted a side event to catalyse and scale up international investment in ending violence against women and girls. “[Increasing Momentum for Ending Violence Against Women and Girls](#)” brought together high-level representatives from the United Nations, the European Union, governments, philanthropy, international financial

institutions, academia, and civil society.

High-level events on the sidelines of the “Eightieth Session of the UN General Assembly”, New York, USA, September 2025

Spotlight Initiative co-hosted a high-level side event to mobilize new commitments for gender-based violence prevention and response. “[Full Speed Ahead: A Global Partnership to Eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls](#)” was co-hosted with the European Union and African Union, celebrating the 25th anniversary of their partnership and the forthcoming launch of the Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme 2.0. Spotlight Initiative also organized [UN Global Advocate Cecilia Suárez’ intervention](#) at the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the thirtieth anniversary of the “Fourth World Conference on Women”.

Series of side-events during the “Second World Summit for Social Development”, Doha, Qatar, November 2025

During the “Second World Summit for Social Development”, Spotlight Initiative hosted a series of side events, including: a [solutions studio conversation](#) to highlight strategies for addressing gender-based violence and to share best practices for driving collaboration on protecting the rights of women and girls; a [panel discussion](#) to underscore the urgent need to strengthen universal, inclusive and gender-responsive social protections as a foundation of sustainable development; and a [press briefing](#), delivered by UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed, to promote the Initiative’s 2024-2025 results and launch its impact report: “[Beyond Progress: Securing gains to end violence against women and girls.](#)”

Launch of Spotlight Initiative sustainability report, Brussels, December 2025

Spotlight Initiative hosted “[A Sustainable Legacy](#)”, a launch event for the Initiative’s sustainability report, which found that a remarkable 97 per cent of programme countries had sustained achievements two years after the programmes ended. Speakers included the United Nations under Secretary-General and Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund Diene Keita and the Deputy Director-General for International Partnerships from the European Commission, Martin Seychell.

Collectively, these engagements helped raise awareness and strengthen political commitment, deepen partnerships, and sustain momentum for investment in ending violence against women and girls at a time of increasing backlash and financial constraint.

Result 4: The HIVE Joint Programme has increased expertise at the programme level to ensure the development and sustainability of comprehensive programmes on ending violence against women and girls in line with the Spotlight Initiative model.

Demand for Spotlight Initiative programmes

Demand for comprehensive programming to end violence against women and girls remains high, reflecting the persistent and widespread nature of violence against women and girls and its devastating impact on inclusive and sustainable development. Over 80 UN Country and Regional Teams have expressed interest in Spotlight Initiative, underscoring the model's relevance across diverse contexts, from high-income and middle-income countries to low-income, conflict-affected and small island developing states.

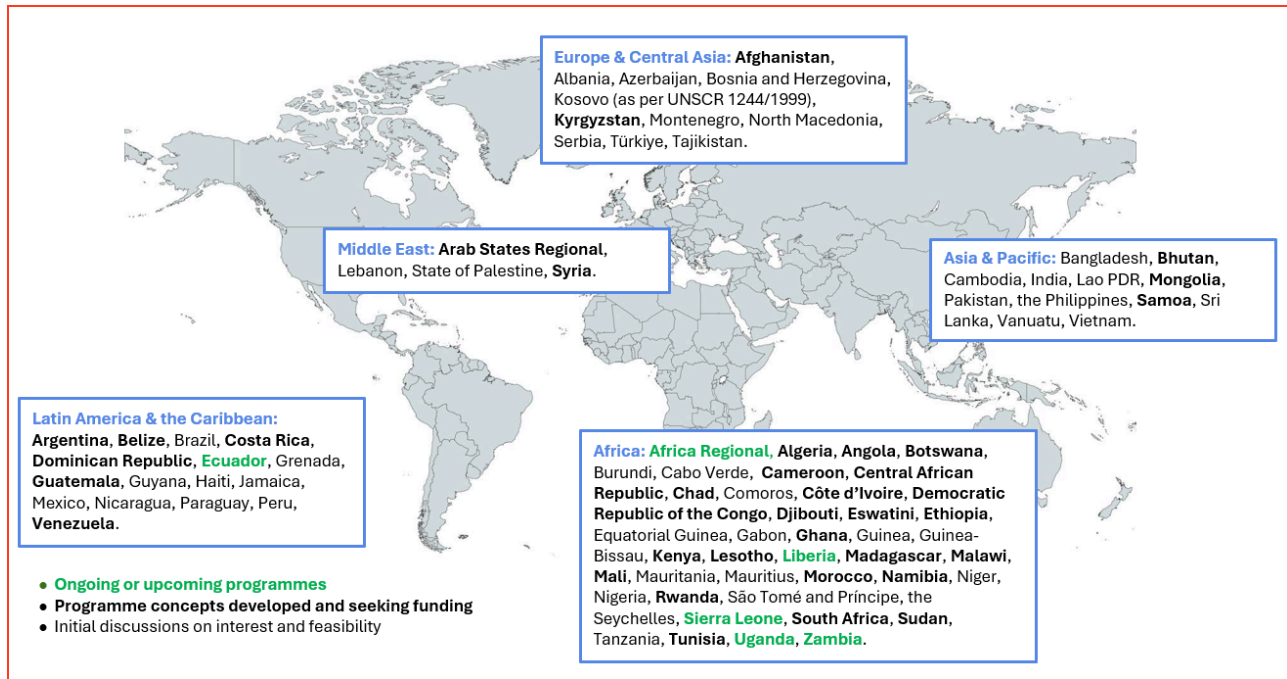
UN Resident Coordinators drive much of this demand, demonstrating the Initiative's ability to unify UN Country Teams for stronger collaboration and greater impact. Individual UN agencies, funds, and programmes also self-mobilize, generating new ideas and momentum for programmes.

Guided by a “whole-of-society” approach, deep civil society engagement, and collaboration across the United Nations and more broadly across the development sector, the HIVE Joint Programme provides tailored support to UN Country Teams, including through:

- Outreach to Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams, convening UN teams to explain the Spotlight Initiative model, highlighting its key features and added value through targeted briefings and discussions
- Targeted programmatic and technical advice, supporting the development of programme concept notes and programme documents thereby helping to strengthen quality, integrity, and responsiveness of programme design
- Assisting UN Country Teams with partner engagement and resource mobilization
- Facilitating the roll-out of new Spotlight Initiative programmes once funding has been secured.

As a result, the HIVE Joint Programme – in close collaboration with the Spotlight Initiative Fund Secretariat – has helped to:

- Launch three new Spotlight Initiative 2.0 programmes, two in Liberia and Sierra Leone (both EU-funded) and the third in Zambia (Ireland-funded). These join ongoing programmes in Ecuador and Uganda. A complementary programme component was added to Uganda's programme with additional funding from the Netherlands
- Design and contract the new Africa Regional Programme 2.0 (EUR 20 million EU investment), set to begin in January 2026
- Support 36 UN Country Teams to date (since 2024) to develop concept notes for new Spotlight Initiative programmes and seek funding (24 UN Country Teams were supported in 2025). Together these call for over USD 550 million in investment for this critical yet underfunded issue. Finalized concept notes are [available here](#)
- Engage an additional ~40 UN Country and Regional Teams in discussions on a potential Spotlight Initiative programme, exploring feasibility and momentum.



Note: This list is non-exhaustive as country conversations and status evolve rapidly with new countries expressing interest frequently.

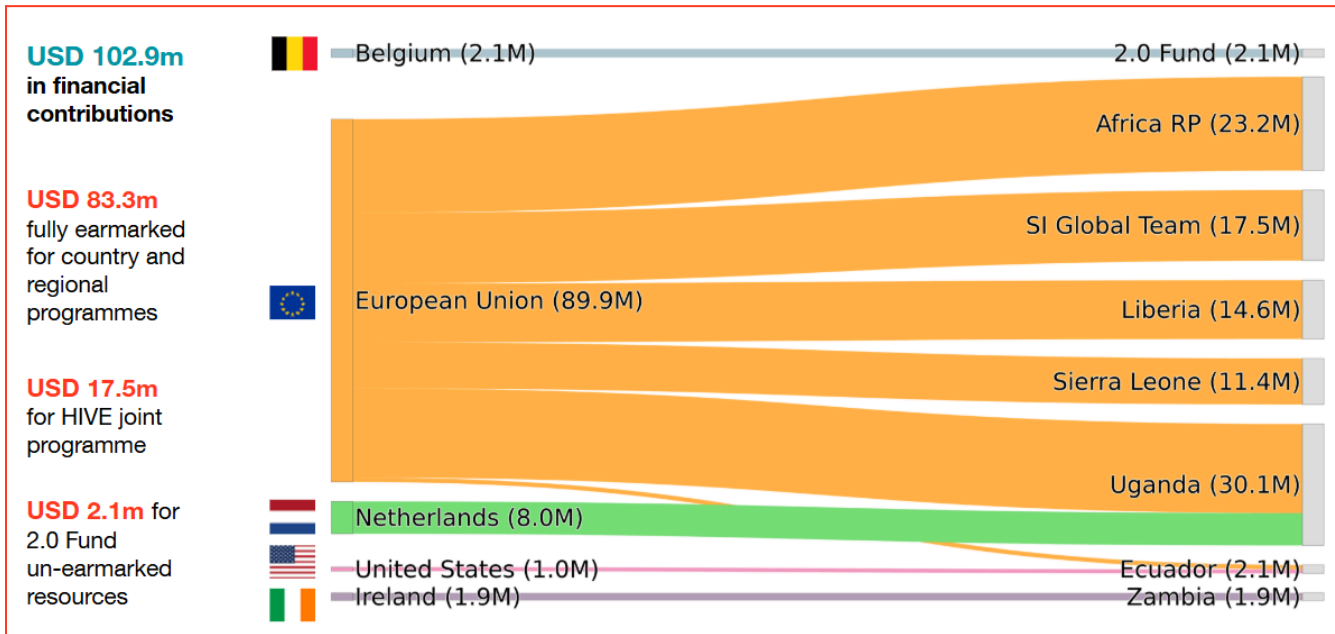
Source: engagement with UNCTs by the SI Global Team.

Demand for Spotlight Initiative 2.0 programming to date

Through these efforts, USD 83.3 million in investment has already been contracted for Spotlight Initiative 2.0 programmes (through the Spotlight Initiative 2.0 Fund and the Spotlight Initiative joint programmes in Ecuador and Uganda launched prior to the establishment of the 2.0 Fund). This investment is in addition to the USD 17.5 million investment in the HIVE Joint Programme by the European Union and the USD 2.1 investment by Belgium as unearmarked investments to the 2.0 Fund.

Donor investments to Spotlight Initiative 2.0 umbrella to date (Fund and standalone JPs)

While demand for Spotlight Initiative at the country level continues to grow, the current official development assistance landscape poses significant challenges. As noted, severe budget cuts, shifting priorities, decentralization, and a growing preference among donors for earmarked funding often conflict with the stated need for more flexible investments in pooled funding. This has required the Initiative to adapt, with a view to a longer-term resource mobilization horizon. The challenges are particularly acute in middle- and high-income countries, where traditional donor support is limited or has declined in recent years, yet the need for sustained, coordinated action to end violence against women and girls remains urgent.



Source: contractual arrangements with donors to Spotlight Initiative, MPTFO

Enhanced capacity for UN Country and Regional Teams to develop comprehensive programmes to end violence against women and girls

Programme conceptualization

The HIVE Joint Programme continued to support UN teams to design and implement Spotlight programming. These efforts helped strengthen country- and regional-level expertise, skills, and institutional knowledge for a long-term impact on ending violence against women and girls. Across 19 UN Country and Regional Teams, 190 UN personnel were engaged in technical webinars on comprehensive EAWG programming, the Spotlight Initiative model and quality concept note development. Grounded in the Learning Centre, referenced above, the sessions supported participants in strengthening their knowledge of the Initiative's model, and conceptualizing new programmes. Showcasing case studies and innovative practices from first-generation Spotlight Initiative programmes, these sessions provided guidance on key technical, governance, and management considerations of the model, contributing, as well, to quality EAWG programming beyond Spotlight Initiative.

Programme roll-out and inception

A programme inception support package has been developed to strengthen the skills and knowledge of, and provide resources to, new Spotlight Initiative programme teams. This package has seven modules (Module 1: General overview of Spotlight Initiative programming; Module 2: Civil society engagement; Module 3: Technical principles and comprehensive approaches; Module 4: Monitoring, reporting and evaluation; Module 5: Communications, advocacy and visibility; Module 6: Knowledge management and

sustainability; Module 7: Resource mobilization and partnerships), and 12 individual sessions have been delivered to date to United Nations Country Teams in Zambia, Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Programme implementation

The HIVE Joint Programme provides ongoing, day-to-day technical support to programme teams on topics of programme interest, including monitoring and evaluation, knowledge management, civil society engagement, and operations and management to ensure effective, high-quality implementation of Spotlight Initiative programmes. This support (and its impact) is extensively discussed throughout this report.

Spotlight Initiative also relaunched its “coordinator calls” in support of programme implementation. This collaborative space offers a platform for knowledge exchange, troubleshooting, and peer support among Spotlight Initiative programme coordinators, providing them – and, by extension, the Spotlight Initiative programme team and broader United Nations Country Team – with technical guidance, management advice, and learning.



PHOTO: Spotlight Initiative Sierra Leone.

Embedding sustainability in programme design and transitions

In 2025, the HIVE Joint Programme focused on data collection, analysis, reporting and dissemination of its sustainability report – “A Sustainable Legacy”, presented in the Result 2 section above. As a corollary to this process, the Initiative updated its programme [sustainability guidance](#), also mentioned above, and integrated key messages on sustainability into technical learning spaces, including concept note and inception webinars, to ensure that sustainability is embedded at the onset of programme design. Spotlight Initiative, for example, provided direct technical support to programmes in Ecuador and Uganda, with a focus on integrating effective transition plans. This included a field mission to Uganda and specific working sessions with Recipient UN Organizations to brainstorm and identify areas to prioritize around sustainability.

In Uganda, discussions confirmed that many Spotlight Initiative activities were already well integrated and aligned with government priorities – a key sustainability imperative, with efforts to end gender-based violence reflected and integrated into district local government annual workplans, with increased local financial commitments. Areas

highlighted for continued focus included: establishing a unified, long-term approach to shelters; and planning for post-election political transitions to secure sustained leadership, government buy-in and momentum on ending violence against women and girls. Both Uganda and Ecuador programmes are exploring next steps, including provisionally seeking new funding to leverage what works and to scale up impact.

5. Challenges, Mitigation Measures, and Lessons Learned

An increasingly challenging political environment despite growing need and emergent forms of violence

As Spotlight Initiative, together with many other entities, continues efforts to end violence against women and girls, advance gender equality and sustainable development, it does so amid strong headwinds: progress is often uneven, and backlash to human rights has intensified across contexts.

As noted, funding is tightening, and civic space is shrinking, yet the need for sustained, coordinated action to end violence against women and girls remains urgent and universal. Globally, nearly [one in three women](#) – around 840 million women - have experienced intimate partner or sexual violence in their lifetime, a figure that has remained largely unchanged since 2000. In the past year alone, 316 million women were subjected to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner.

Progress in preventing violence has been extremely slow, with prevalence declining by just 0.2 per cent per year over the past two decades. Psychological abuse and coercive control, including stalking, harassment, and degradation, are also widespread, significantly affecting women's mental health and autonomy.

Sexual violence continues to be used as a [tactic of war](#) and as a form of political repression in fragile and conflict-affected countries. Displaced, refugee, and migrant women and girls face widespread patterns of conflict-related sexual violence, and trafficking, abduction, and sexual violence in detention were reported in various fragile countries.

Furthermore, online violence is increasingly blocking women in public and political spheres. A [2025 UN Women](#) report found that seven out of ten women human rights defenders, activists, and journalists experienced online violence (or technology-facilitated gender-based violence) in the course of their work, and 41 per cent reported offline harm linked to digital abuse. For women journalists, the proportion who experienced offline attacks connected to online abuse more than doubled from about 20 per cent in 2020 to 42 per cent in 2025. These threats are not limited to online spaces – violence and harassment against women politicians, including psychological violence, threats, and sexist attacks – remain barriers to meaningful political participation.

There is insufficient political will and, in some contexts, growing political resistance, to gender equality and women’s rights. Some governments are placing greater emphasis on national security priorities, limiting engagement in efforts to advance peace, equality, human rights, and sustainable development through multilateralism. This shift away from multilateralism, international law, and human rights-based approaches is undermining collective progress to end violence against women and girls globally.

Strikingly, in 2024 alone, the world spent [USD 2.7 trillion on militarization](#), while official development assistance was just [USD 214.5 billion that year](#) (a 6.0 per cent decrease in real terms from 2023). Investment to end violence against women and girls totalled only USD 563 million on average per year in 2021 and 2022. This represents a profound imbalance in global priorities: in 2024, military spending was nearly 5,000 times greater than investment to end violence against women and girls.

Spotlight Initiative received ongoing global interest for programming, including from fragile contexts. In this context, the HIVE Joint Programme worked with UN partners, civil society, governments, donors, and others to sustain political will, strengthen the evidence base, and support UN Country Teams to develop and deliver high-quality EAWG programming. The Initiative finalized its [high-level framework](#) to deliver Spotlight Initiative programmes in fragile contexts. Building on this, the HIVE Joint Programme held a critical discussion in August 2025 to provide an overview of the humanitarian reset and exchange lessons from the first phase of Spotlight Initiative. This meeting brought together 25 participants, including UN agency focal points, colleagues with experience implementing Spotlight Initiative programmes in fragile and complex settings, OCHA, and the “gender-based violence area of responsibility”. Insights from this session, as well as from Spotlight Initiative’s participation at the “Justice Denied” conference, informed the subsequent guidance and support to UN Country Teams in Ethiopia, Palestine, Sudan, and Syria.

Collaborating with 13 UN agency partners, the Initiative promoted its evidence-based model to drive system-wide collaboration and to mobilize additional resources. The Initiative also maintained visibility and momentum in this challenging context through high-level global and regional forums, advocating for sustained investment in comprehensive, rights-based approaches. For example, in November 2025, Spotlight Initiative, in collaboration with UNFPA, hosted a public webinar focused on sharing best practices to support programmes in preventing and responding to technology-facilitated gender-based violence in Africa, as outlined in the Results section above. This was in direct response to political dynamics in the region and interest from partners on the ground to design activities that seek to mitigate these risks.

Establishing and sustaining Spotlight Initiative programmes

The success of the first phase of Spotlight Initiative has generated strong global demand. However, reductions in official development assistance, coupled with a shift toward decentralized and earmarked funding, have placed greater responsibility on UN Country

Teams to mobilize resources locally. Limited funding opportunities – particularly in middle- and high-income countries – have constrained the roll-out of new Spotlight Initiative programmes despite high demands and needs. While the Initiative continues to promote a “One UN” model – with strong and collaborative UN Country Teams under the leadership of Resident Coordinators – ongoing, systemwide (and exogenous) challenges continue to constrain efforts.

Moreover, as funding becomes more decentralized, earmarked, and constrained, maintaining comprehensive, evidence-based EAWG programming has grown increasingly difficult. Stretched UN Country Teams face fewer opportunities, risking fragmented programming and potential dilution of the Initiative’s model. At the same time, Spotlight Initiative programmes must remain adaptable to diverse country contexts and responsive to evolving geopolitical and funding trends.

In response, the HIVE Joint Programme has pursued a multi-pronged approach to safeguard programme integrity, support adaptability, and mobilize resources:

- **Resource mobilization support:** Spotlight Initiative continues to advocate for increased investment with both traditional and emerging donors. It supports UN Country Teams with donor mapping, outreach, and partner engagement, guiding teams on innovative financing tools that ensure a strong return on investment for funding partners.
- **Programme guidance and technical support:** Spotlight Initiative promotes integrated programme design grounded in evidence, consultations, strong coordination, and collaborative partnerships. Guidance has been developed to strengthen situational analyses at the design stage, ensuring interventions align with national priorities and respond to country-specific needs, while filling critical gaps. The [“Technical Guidance Note on the Four Pillars of Spotlight Initiative’s Theory of Change”](#) was updated to include new research, emphasize cross-cutting issues and promote coherence.
- **Capacity-building and coherence:** Through webinars, targeted technical briefings, and concept note reviews, the HIVE Joint Programme helped UN Country Teams to try and maintain a comprehensive, “whole-of-society” approach. The Initiative also supported UN Country Teams and Resident Coordinators to select UN agencies based on complementary advantage and ensure coherence through integrated programme documents. These measures – particularly when combined with strong Resident Coordinator leadership – provide practical guardrails to prevent siloed approaches or backsliding, even in constrained funding environments.

Collectively, these actions enable Spotlight Initiative to expand programming in new contexts while maintaining fidelity to its evidence-based model, ensuring adaptability, coherence, and impact despite challenging funding and political environments.

High-quality stories to raise awareness

Core to Spotlight Initiative’s communications and visibility efforts is developing and

curating impactful stories of transformation in the communities the Initiative serves. Sourcing high-quality human-interest stories has been a key challenge since the closure of the Initiative's first phase of programmes in 2023.

To mitigate this, the HIVE Joint Programme undertook a story-gathering mission to Samoa to learn about the legacy of Spotlight Initiative and promote its impact on both Spotlight Initiative-owned and partner channels. Civil society, United Nations, government, and implementing partners were interviewed to learn from their experiences and knowledge about the legacy of Spotlight Initiative two years after the programme's closure. Several stories were published on UN websites and social media channels and were covered by the media. Content from the mission also contributed to "[A Sustainable Legacy](#)", Spotlight Initiative's global report on the sustainability of its first phase, as discussed throughout this report.

Expanding and measuring the impact of learning

Ensuring the uptake and use of Spotlight Initiative's knowledge products remains a priority, although challenges persist in reaching diverse audiences, sustaining engagement, and translating learning into practice or policy change. In 2025, efforts focused on disseminating key knowledge products, including "[Colliding Crises: How the climate crisis fuels violence against women and girls](#)", the "[Domestic Resource Mobilization Study](#)", and "[A Sustainable Legacy](#)", as well as resources such as the "[Compendium of Innovative and Good Practices and Lessons Learned](#)". To improve accessibility of these often technical and lengthy resources, the HIVE Joint Programme piloted bite-sized case studies on LinkedIn, enabling practitioners to engage with content in formats and platforms they already use. This approach will continue into 2026, alongside further targeted, micro-learning dissemination, particularly for technical products such as the "[Domestic Resource Mobilization Report](#)". To broaden accessibility, multilingual versions of the "[A Sustainable Legacy](#)" summary brief will also be released.

Uptake and engagement will continue to be monitored across Spotlight Initiative platforms, including LinkedIn and the Initiative's website (and Learning Centre), with lessons used to strengthen cross-platform traffic and targeted outreach. This coordinated approach aims to further position Spotlight Initiative as a trusted and accessible global knowledge resource.

Balancing global coherence with contextual flexibility in the Initiative's model and attendant results framework

Lessons from the first phase of the Spotlight Initiative highlighted a key challenge: while the Initiative successfully adapted to emerging crises (such as COVID-19) and its comprehensive model supported robust global aggregation and coherent results reporting, it was not always readily adaptable to diverse country and regional contexts.

In 2025, the HIVE Joint Programme addressed this through targeted revisions to the

Spotlight Initiative Results Framework and its accompanying methodological notes. The updated Initiative-wide results framework establishes a concise set of core indicators required for all new Spotlight Initiative programmes (from the first quarter of 2026 onward) to maintain alignment and enable global aggregation, while providing a flexible menu of country- and regional-specific indicators for contextually tailored tracking. This approach allows programmes to capture change across diverse settings, while preserving the Initiative’s comprehensive model and ensuring sound global reporting.

To further mitigate risks to data quality and results reporting across the model, the HIVE Joint Programme developed [revised methodological notes](#) to accompany the new Initiative-wide results framework. These provide standardized guidance on definitions, data sources, measurement approaches, and reporting practices, strengthening comparability across programmes while improving data reliability and usability.

As the current five Spotlight Initiative programmes were developed during a transition period, a related challenge is that, during the first and second phases of the Initiative, not all programmes selected indicators for their programme results frameworks directly from the global indicator set. While developing unique indicators allowed programmes to respond to diverse country contexts, it also resulted in bespoke results frameworks, limiting the ability to aggregate results across the Initiative.

To mitigate this, programmes were encouraged to draw from the interim Spotlight Initiative 2.0 framework, which they did to varying degrees. In parallel, the HIVE Joint Programme supported the mapping of programme-level indicators to the newly revised Initiative-wide results framework, enabling a degree of global aggregation across programmes to demonstrate Initiative-wide results.

In addition, the HIVE Joint Programme clarified a set of minimum standards for applying the comprehensive model in complex and fragile contexts, while maintaining its integrity. While programmes are designed to respond to community needs and opportunities on the ground, this framework sets out guiding questions to support decision-making, prompting teams to assess multi-year funding availability, operationalize the Initiative’s key features and ensure adherence to survivor-centred, conflict-sensitive, and intersectional principles. This high-level framework supports context-appropriate flexibility without diluting the Initiative’s minimum standards or intended impact.

6. Communications and Visibility for the European Union Partnership



PHOTO: Leaders from the United Nations, Member and Observer States, and civil society attend the Group of Friends Event on the sidelines of CSW69. Photo: Ryan Brown/UN Women

Ensuring visibility for the Initiative’s donors and partners – including the European Union – is one of Spotlight Initiative’s four communications objectives. In 2025, this was achieved through consistent and coherent partner branding, and top-tier media placements during publicity events and campaigns.

Across media and press outlets, the European Union was mentioned in relation to the United Nations Spotlight Initiative 395 times, from 258 sources in 55 countries, with a total potential reach of 470 million people.

At the highest levels of the United Nations, UN Secretary-General António Guterres highlighted the partnership during his [International Women’s Day speech](#) (March), while Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed recognized the European Union’s leadership in public statements at the “[Commission on the Status of Women](#)” (March) and the “[World Social Development Summit](#)” (November).

7. Looking Ahead: Sustaining and Scaling Up the Impact of Spotlight Initiative

The year ahead presents a critical moment for the HIVE Joint Programme to deepen its role as a driver of evidence-informed, high-impact EAWG programming. Amid ongoing institutional change, including shifts linked to “UN80”, Spotlight Initiative will scale up targeted support to country and regional programmes, serving as a trusted source of knowledge and technical expertise. Expanding and further deepening its partnerships at all levels, the HIVE Joint Programme will continue to drive results, advocate for sustained investment, and call for urgent, responsive action.

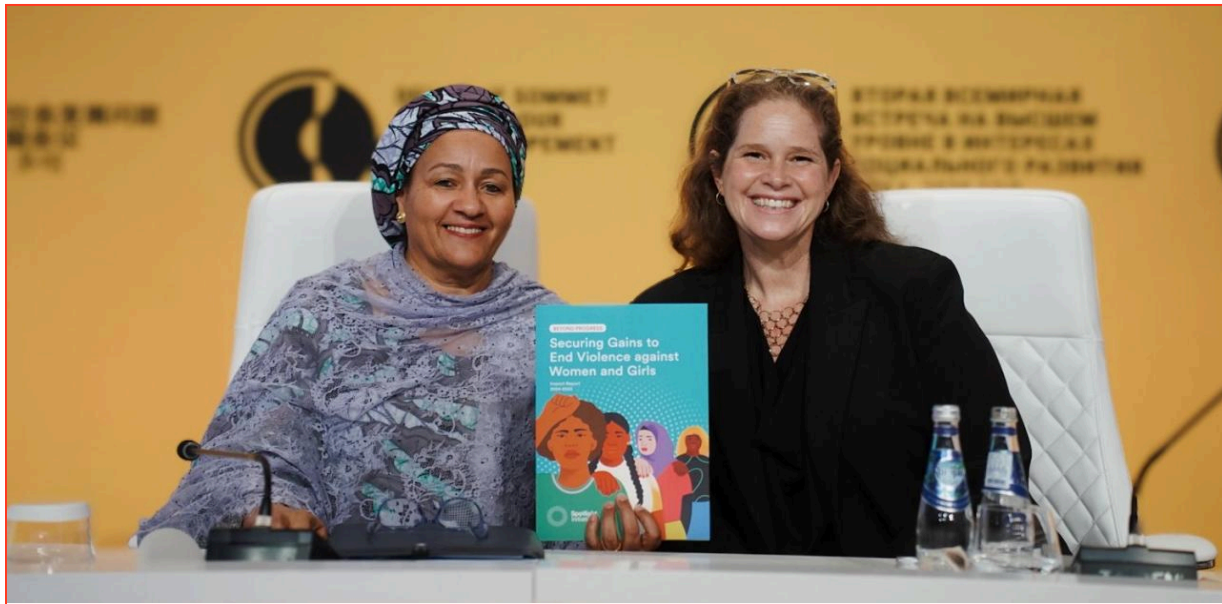


PHOTO: UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed and Spotlight Initiative Global Coordinator Erin Kenny at the launch of Spotlight Initiative's latest impact report. Photo: Spotlight Initiative/Nivedha Meyyappan

Expanding Spotlight Initiative 2.0: Country-level support and programme development

UN Country and Regional Teams will continue to receive tailored support to generate interest, build momentum, and fund and implement high-quality, evidence-based Spotlight Initiative 2.0 programmes. In particular, the HIVE Joint Programme will:

- Strengthen UN Country Team capacity and knowledge to conceptualize comprehensive EAWG programmes through high-quality technical support during programme design
- Explore alternative funding modalities for Spotlight Initiative programming, while reinforcing country-level partnerships to advance coordinated and strategic resource mobilization
- Enhance the quality and effectiveness of implementation in ongoing Spotlight Initiative 2.0 programmes in Ecuador, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Zambia, and the

forthcoming Africa Regional Programme

- Support the anchoring of comprehensive EVAWG programming within UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and other national and regional strategic frameworks.

Strengthening civil society engagement and human rights integration

Building on the foundations established in 2025, the civil society engagement portfolio will continue, in 2026, to advance the co-implementation of the co-designed principles, ensuring that feminist organizations and grassroots movements remain central to EVAWG programming.

Sustaining and scaling up ongoing priorities will include:

- Disseminating and contextualizing guidance tools, with continued support to UN Country and Regional Teams to strengthen civil society reference groups and implement the Grassroots Action Plan
- Integrating human rights mechanisms, including embedding protections for women human rights defenders and civil society organizations, particularly in contexts with shrinking civic space
- Advancing work towards a UN-wide funding framework for women’s rights organizations, to support more sustainable and coordinated financing across the UN System
- Strengthening linkages and collaboration across civil society reference groups at national, regional, and global levels, with a focus on peer learning, mutual support and the exchange of good practices
- Systematically collecting, documenting, and disseminating good practices emerging from the civil society reference group mechanism, to strengthen institutional learning, inform future programming, and support sustainability and replication across contexts.

Enhancing communications and global advocacy

In 2026, the HIVE Joint Programme will continue to leverage strategic storytelling, digital campaigns, and global advocacy to amplify public awareness on the importance of ending violence against women and girls. Its key communications priorities will be to deliver “Mind Your Moves” – the new global activation of Spotlight Initiative's flagship digital engagement campaign, and to promote Spotlight Initiative’s impact and learnings to key audiences at high-visibility forums and opportunities.

Leveraging SHINE’s role as a knowledge exchange hub, the HIVE Joint Programme is planning to pilot new technology capacities and promote new uses of the platform. Looking ahead, it is expected that this investment will test the integration of artificial intelligence on SHINE. Furthermore, the HIVE Joint Programme will continue working closely with the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women to explore new

engagement modalities in order to ensure that the platform evolves alongside its community's needs.

By integrating communications with knowledge management, research, and advocacy, Spotlight Initiative will broaden global engagement, influence programmes and policy, and strengthen collective action to end violence against women and girls.

Advancing evidence-based research and learning

In 2026, the HIVE Joint Programme will focus research and learning on strategic dissemination, practical application, and measurable uptake of evidence. New knowledge that continues to be of interest to broader audiences will be generated, while existing evidence and learning will continue to strengthen comprehensive EAWG programming where it can have the greatest impact. Efforts will focus on the following priorities:

- **Targeted dissemination and uptake:** Prioritizing dissemination of evidence and tools produced by Spotlight Initiative programmes to practitioners, donors, activists, and policymakers. Promoting uptake of findings from flagship knowledge products – including "A Sustainable Legacy"– through targeted, bespoke learning exchanges
- **Applied research:** Delivering the Leaving No One Behind applied research study and associated capacity-building series among practitioners in meaningful application of the principle of leaving no one behind across EAWG programming. Strategic convenings, including the Sexual Violence Research Initiative Forum, will be used to share learning widely among large practitioner audiences
- **Securing an evidence legacy:** Integrating learning across programmes and systems to help ensure that evidence-based, comprehensive EAWG approaches become the norm. This includes finalizing updates to the "[Global Knowledge Product Tracker](#)" – housing over 1,000 EAWG resources – to enhance usability and embed it more clearly within the Learning Centre as a core resource for the sector
- **A more focused learning strategy in 2026:** Adopt a selective approach to knowledge-sharing, prioritizing opportunities with clear strategic value and pathways to sustained collaboration. The "Sexual Violence Research Initiative Forum" will be an ideal space to share learnings that reach multiple practitioners simultaneously. Learning efforts will increasingly focus on providing deeper technical support to Spotlight Initiative programmes as well, including learning from the upcoming "Leaving No One Behind" applied research study.

Enhancing gender-based violence data systems and participatory monitoring

A critical priority in 2026 will be the continued roll-out of the newly revised Spotlight Initiative Results Framework and its accompanying methodological notes. Concurrently, database improvements for enhanced usability among Spotlight Initiative programmes will be prioritized. This will streamline reporting, improve data quality and facilitate global data

aggregation.

Efforts will focus on:

- Rolling out a sustainable platform capable of collecting complex, disaggregated monitoring, evaluation and reporting data with minimal administrative burden
- Mapping and aggregating context-specific indicators to demonstrate global progress and impact
- Supporting participatory monitoring, evaluation, and reporting approaches at all levels of the Initiative, including by providing targeted, capacity-building webinars, tools, and resources to strengthen UN Country Teams' ability to track progress and report results effectively, ensuring no one is left behind
- Developing new evidence and learning and amplifying the uptake of existing studies to improve programme impact, as noted above.

Expanding resource mobilization and strategic partnerships

As Spotlight Initiative looks to 2026, the resource mobilization and partnerships portfolio will focus on scaling up and strengthening funding to support UN Country Teams and national partners in designing and delivering effective EVAWG programmes, despite the constrained funding environment. Priorities include:

- Diversifying funding sources beyond traditional donors, engaging bilateral donors, international financial institutions, private sector actors, and philanthropic organizations
- Supporting “UN80” reform objectives by strengthening coordination, reducing fragmentation, and advancing efficient approaches to partnership development and resource mobilization across the UN System
- Leveraging UN System-wide partnerships and the Deputy Secretary-General’s leadership to drive advocacy and financing efforts
- Engaging in high-profile events such as the seventieth session of the “Commission on the Status of Women”, the twelfth session of the “Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development”, the “Eighty-First Session of the UN General Assembly”, and the 2026 “Sexual Violence Research Initiative Forum”
- Expanding regional reach, particularly into the Middle East and North Africa.

8. Conclusion: A year of scaling up, innovation, and sustained commitment

Throughout 2025, the HIVE Joint Programme has strengthened Spotlight Initiative’s role as a catalyst for knowledge, advocacy, and policy influence on ending violence against women and girls, while supporting the design and roll-out of high-quality EVAWG programming across diverse contexts. Through capacity strengthening, technical support, strategic

partnerships, and resource mobilization, Spotlight Initiative reinforced national and regional stakeholder ownership, sustained progress at the country level, and contributed to global evidence on what works to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls.

Spotlight Initiative will continue to do so with urgency and commitment in 2026, however, as the Initiative looks ahead, this work faces an extremely challenging landscape: continued attacks on multilateralism and international law, shrinking funding, assaults on women’s rights and human rights defenders, heightened conflicts, constrained civic space, and institutional and operational challenges associated with the “UN80” reform. Sustaining and scaling progress will require renewed commitment and bold collective action. Deep investment, strengthened partnerships and networks, and strategic advocacy to protect and advance the gains made will continue to be vital.

Spotlight Initiative calls on its UN partners, governments, civil society, communities worldwide, and donors to ensure that the fight to end violence against women and girls remains a top global priority. For decades, advocates, activists, and practitioners have demanded action to end violence in all its forms. Ending violence against women and girls is not only a fundamental human rights imperative, but a prerequisite for achieving sustainable and inclusive development. With rising authoritarianism and compounding humanitarian crises, urgent, coordinated, and sustained action is more critical than ever. Spotlight Initiative offers an evidence-based model to do just that. The time to act decisively is now.

Annexes

[Annex A: HIVE Results Framework 2025](#)

[Annex B: HIVE Joint Programme Risk Matrix](#)

[Annex C: Spotlight Initiative HIVE Multi-year annual work plan and budget 2024-2026](#)

[Annex D: Tools, Reports, Resources](#)



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Spotlight Initiative
To eliminate violence against women and girls

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