



**Spotlight  
Initiative**  
*To eliminate violence  
against women and girls*

[AFRICA REGION]

# Annual Narrative Programme Report

July 2020 – 31 December 2020

Initiated by the European Union and the United Nations:



African Union 

<p><b>Programme Title &amp; Programme Number</b></p> <p><b>Programme Title:</b> Africa’s Response to Addressing VAWG, SGBV, HP, SRHR including FGM and Child Marriage</p> <p><b>MPTF Office Project Reference Number:</b><sup>1</sup> 00119124</p>	<p><b>Priority regions/areas/localities for the programme</b> Not relevant for the Regional Programme</p>																		
<p><b>Recipient Organization(s)</b> UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women, UNDP</p>	<p><b>Key Partners</b> <i>The African Union Commission, Regional Civil Society Organizations (including Faith Based Organisations)</i></p>																		
<p><b>Programme Cost (US\$)</b></p> <p><b>Total Phase I approved budget as per the Spotlight CPD/RPD:</b> 26,982,281 USD</p> <p><b>Phase I Spotlight funding:</b><sup>2</sup> 25,620,000 USD</p> <p><b>Agency Contribution:</b> 1,362,281 USD</p> <p><b>Spotlight Funding and Agency Contribution by Agency:</b></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="165 958 826 1272"> <thead> <tr> <th>Name of RUNO</th> <th>Spotlight Phase I (USD)</th> <th>UN Agency Contributions (USD)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><b>UNICEF</b></td> <td>9,404,872</td> <td>387,810</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>UNFPA</b></td> <td>10,625,993</td> <td>525,119</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>UN WOMEN</b></td> <td>3,454,656</td> <td>253,352</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>UNDP</b></td> <td>2,134,478</td> <td>196,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>TOTAL</b></td> <td>25,620,000</td> <td>1,362,281</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Name of RUNO	Spotlight Phase I (USD)	UN Agency Contributions (USD)	<b>UNICEF</b>	9,404,872	387,810	<b>UNFPA</b>	10,625,993	525,119	<b>UN WOMEN</b>	3,454,656	253,352	<b>UNDP</b>	2,134,478	196,000	<b>TOTAL</b>	25,620,000	1,362,281	<p><b>Programme Start and End Dates</b></p> <p><b>Start Date:</b> 13.07.2020</p> <p><b>End Date:</b> 31.12.2022</p>
Name of RUNO	Spotlight Phase I (USD)	UN Agency Contributions (USD)																	
<b>UNICEF</b>	9,404,872	387,810																	
<b>UNFPA</b>	10,625,993	525,119																	
<b>UN WOMEN</b>	3,454,656	253,352																	
<b>UNDP</b>	2,134,478	196,000																	
<b>TOTAL</b>	25,620,000	1,362,281																	
	<p><b>Report Submitted By:</b> Name: Ratidzai Ndhlovu Title: Programme Coordinator Email: <a href="mailto:ndhlovu@unfpa.org">ndhlovu@unfpa.org</a></p>																		

<sup>1</sup> The Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) Office Project Reference Number is the same number as the one on the Notification message. It is also referred to as “Project ID” on the project’s factsheet page the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](#).

<sup>2</sup> The Spotlight Contribution refers to the amount transferred to the Recipient UN Organizations, which is available on the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](#).

# Table of Contents

## Contents

Table of Contents .....	3
Executive Summary .....	5
Contextual Shifts and Implementation Status.....	9
Programme Governance and Coordination .....	11
Programme Partnerships .....	13
Results .....	16
Capturing Broader Transformations Across Outcomes .....	16
Rights Holders (“Beneficiaries”).....	22
Challenges and Mitigating Measures .....	22
Lessons Learned and New Opportunities.....	23
Innovative, Promising and Good Practices.....	23
Communications and Visibility .....	24
Next Steps.....	26

## List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>AfCHPR</b>	African Court on Human and People's Rights
<b>ACERWC</b>	African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of Children
<b>ACHPR</b>	African Commission on Human and People's Rights
<b>ACRL</b>	African Council of Religious Leaders
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>AUC</b>	African Union Commission
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
<b>CSW</b>	Commission on the Status of Women
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus Disease 2019
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>CSRRG</b>	Civil Society Regional Reference Group
<b>DHS</b>	Demographic Health Survey
<b>EN/SOAWR</b>	Equality Now/Solidarity for African Women's Rights
<b>EOI</b>	Expression of Interest
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EVAWG</b>	Ending Violence against Women and Girls
<b>FGM</b>	Female Genital Mutilation
<b>GEWE</b>	Gender Equality and Women Empowerment
<b>GPECM</b>	UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage
<b>HHASD</b>	Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development
<b>HP</b>	Harmful Practices
<b>HR</b>	Human Rights
<b>JPFGM</b>	UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme to Eliminate Female Genital Mutilation
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>MICS</b>	Multi-indicator Cluster Survey
<b>NAPs</b>	National Action Plans
<b>RECs</b>	Regional Economic Commissions
<b>RUNOs</b>	Recipient United Nations Organizations
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SGBV</b>	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
<b>SIARP</b>	Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme
<b>SRHR</b>	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
<b>SYVA</b>	Saleema Youth Victorious Ambassadors
<b>TWG</b>	Thematic Working Group
<b>UNDCO</b>	United Nations Director for the Continent-Africa
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNGA</b>	United Nations General Assembly
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNOAU</b>	United Nations Office to the African Union
<b>VAWG</b>	Violence against women and girls
<b>WGYD</b>	Women, Gender and Youth Development

## Executive Summary

The Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme (SIARP) has a continental scope and enhances a regional approach to Ending Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG), Sexual Gender Based Violence (SGBV), Harmful Practices (HP), as well as strengthening Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). The programme strengthens existing regional strategies and initiatives on eliminating violence against women and girls, such as the Africa Union (AU) Gender Strategy 2017- 2027, Agenda 2030, Agenda 2063, the Maputo Plan of Action on the Operationalization of the Continental Policy Framework for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (2016-2030), the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and other regional human rights instruments. The programme adopts a strategy of harnessing the respective strengths of multi-sectoral, multi-level partnerships which support the acceleration of transformative change.

The SIARP works through two streams of work, Stream I and Stream II, both of which contribute towards the same outcome areas: Outcome 1: Legislation & Policies; Outcome 5: Quality and Reliable Data and Outcome 6: Supporting the Women's Movement. Stream II was built on the programmatic and operational framework including governance structures of the ongoing [UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage](#) (GPECM) and [UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation](#) (JPFGM) and, as such, Stream II is fully aligned to the UN Reform efforts that encourage delivering as one and a significant increase in joint programming on gender equality. The Spotlight Initiative has further deepened implementation of the UN Reform by leveraging the two joint programmes and in this way, the Spotlight programme more deeply reflects the principles of the UN Reform. During the reporting period, Stream I focused on laying the foundational groundwork for the start of a new program including putting the required programme management systems and governance structures in place, which will ensure effective delivery going forward. It also identified synergies and possible areas for joint programming in line with the UN Reform. Consequently, Stream I and II of the SIARP are at different levels of implementation and so relevant parts of this report are structured around the two streams.

The health, social, political and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are disproportionately affecting girls and women by exacerbating existing systemic gender inequalities at all levels, with potential implications for the incidence of harmful practices against girls and women including child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM). With increased travel restrictions and physical distancing requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic, Stream II of the SIARP has strengthened reliance on digital and mobile technology as a way of reaching and engaging with intended audiences of the programme. Guided by the principle of "leaving no one behind", even where access to digital resources remained limited, Stream II launched innovative approaches to intensify efforts to reach the most vulnerable, including out of school girls, girls and women with disabilities, girls and women in remote areas as well as married adolescent girls. These innovative approaches helped to extend preventive and protection services against harmful practices including child marriage and FGM, despite the physical distancing challenge.

The European Union (EU) was an active and strategic partner during the reporting period including its high level participation at the inception meeting during which the EU, together with the African Union Commission (AUC) set the stage for programme implementation. The EU is also playing a key role as an active member of the Selection Committee in the establishment of the Civil Society Regional Reference Group (CSRRG). Stream II advanced collaboration with specific EU countries that included Italy and Netherlands to draft and co-sponsor a resolution on child, early and forced marriage during the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly on November 16, 2020. The resolution builds on the language agreed on in 2018 and adds on impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, addition of references to obstetric fistula, female genital mutilation, sexual and reproductive health-care services, and to menstrual hygiene.

Partnership and engagement with civil society organizations (CSOs) is central to the Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme and hence establishment of the CSRRG would be done in a way that ensures wide representation of CSOs in line with the principle of leaving no one behind. Civil Society Organizations were also engaged as implementing partners. While Stream I went through a rigorous selection process for CSO implementing partners in order to guarantee quality and accountability, Stream II used a non-competitive process which had its own merits, for example they could select CSOs that had the potential to grow with effective capacity building all in the spirit of leaving no one behind.



*Girls from Narok, Kenya, where communities still practice FGM. © UNFPA/Georgina Goodwin*

In its initial months of operations, the [UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage \(GPECM\)](#) and the [UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation \(JPFGM\)](#) were core to the annual work planning process of the Spotlight Programme that happened prior to its inception in July 2020. Building on the programmatic and operational framework of the Joint Programmes, Stream II of the SIARP achieved the following key results for 2020:

## **Stream II Results**

### **Advances at governance and policy level:**

- The preparation of a report on FGM in Africa and an accountability framework to monitor national-level commitments and actions toward the elimination of FGM and CM that would serve to coordinate a peer review mechanism is currently under development by the African Union Commission.

- A 5-year strategy of the African Union Saleema Initiative on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation (2019 - 2023) has been validated by its Member States - facilitating accelerated implementation of the agenda at continental level.
- 23 countries have costed regional, national and subnational action plans on ending child marriage, promoting women's and girls' SRHR. These were developed with M&E frameworks, responding to the rights of vulnerable groups and increased from 18 countries in 2019;
- 12 countries have costed regional, national and subnational action plans on ending FGM;
- 3 countries have drafted new and/or strengthened laws and/or policies on ending child marriage, that are in line with international human rights (HR) standards and respond to the rights of women and girls (including SRHR, women's rights, gender equality and non-discrimination), particularly those facing discrimination;
- 14 countries reported having legislation on ending female genital mutilation.
- A total of 200 youth across the continent participated in the virtual ideation workshop, social media campaign and intergenerational dialogue with duty bearers to amplify the role of youth in prevention and elimination of harmful practices especially child marriage.

### **Supporting evidence-based programming on FGM and Child Marriage:**

- The SIARP is implementing “*The Population data, FGM Data & Research*” fellowship initiative that aims to provide the most recent evidence on the Elimination of FGM and increase technical capacity at Global, Regional- and Country level to conduct innovative research and data analysis; A total of 103 [child marriage](#) and [FGM](#) knowledge management products produced by the Joint Programmes were shared across the Spotlight Initiative countries globally including technical papers/guides, research analysis reports, [newsletters](#) and blog posts communication materials such as joint statements, key advocacy messages and social media packages.
- 27 capacity enhancement webinars were conducted

### **Addressing social and gender norms:**

- 2.6 million people were reached through education, sensitization and social mobilization;
- A unique platform, the Saleema Youth Victorious Ambassadors Programme (SYVA) which includes young women, FGM Survivors and Activists, at the heart of the legal and political process for the elimination of Female Genital Mutilation was established during the reporting period. It is a communication bridge between national, regional and global institutions and the youth, and more specifically youth organizations, women's organizations, and grassroots organizations.

### Synergies between Spotlight Initiative and the Joint Programmes

Though the joint programmes focus on 21 countries in Africa, tools and guidance materials including technical assistance and support is extended to all countries under the African Union, including those that have launched the African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage and, are aligning to the Saleema Initiative on Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation.

Over the last six months, Stream II teams promoted evidence-, rights- and participation-based intervention approaches for improving legal and policy frameworks and access to gender-responsive girl-friendly prevention services. Virtual working meetings, training webinars, and data and research sharing workshops contributed to building up the capacity of Spotlight Initiative focus countries, the AU, other countries within the continent, and civil society organizations. To ensure sustainable capacity building, Stream II teams developed and rolled out a number of technical guidance documents and evidence briefs for policy and programme stakeholders that covered topics ranging from gender transformative programming, civil society engagement, scaling up of harmful interventions, pivoting harmful programmes during COVID-19, value for money, monitoring during COVID-19, systems strengthening and leaving no one behind. These knowledge products and virtual

engagements are enabling Spotlight Initiative focus countries, AU and government officials, and related partners to implement the programme outcomes in a timely and effective manner, despite the pandemic, based on their understanding of the programme requirements and indicators.

Stream II promotes capacity building of adolescent girls at risk of and affected by harmful practices including child marriage and FGM, especially in the critical time of the COVID-19 pandemic, by supporting the wide-scale use of innovative approaches such as peer to peer mentorship among girls in their communities and schools, providing life skills training and information aligned with the standard operating procedures established by governments during the pandemic. The AUC also provided guidelines to Member states through the African Committee on the Rights and Welfare of the Child on protection of children during the COVID 19 pandemic. Stream II teams in partnership with technical experts in communication for development and community engagement conducted a mapping and developed technical briefs on digital engagement that are specific to different country contexts. These have been useful to programme partners in identification and rolling out of easily accessible digital technology for vulnerable adolescent girls, including for purposes of community engagement.

While addressing quality issues within the programme implementation, UNICEF and UNFPA staff at the headquarters and regional offices for the Spotlight regional programme are providing routine remote technical assistance and support to AU countries through regular reviews of the programming and implementation progress.



*Young people wrote and performed theatrical scripts in their communities, shedding light on harmful practices such as FGM and child marriage. © UNFPA Egypt.*

## Contextual Shifts and Implementation Status

Home to more than 1 billion people, half of whom will be under 25 years old by 2050, Africa is a diverse continent offering human and natural resources that have the potential to yield inclusive growth and wipe out poverty in the region, enabling Africans across the continent to live healthier and more prosperous lives. The region is composed of low, lower-middle, upper-middle, and high-income countries, 18 of which are fragile or conflict-affected. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic took a toll on African lives and economies, and economic activity is projected to decline by 3.3%, confirming the region's first recession in 25 years. This situation could also push up to 40 million people into extreme poverty, erasing at least five years of progress in fighting poverty. Similarly, COVID-19 could set back progress in building human capital, as school closures will affect nearly 253 million students, potentially causing losses in learning. Many countries have seized the opportunity within the crisis to move faster on necessary reforms and investments that will be crucial for long-term development. However, concerns of a second wave are fueling further uncertainty.

Some regions within the continent have been particularly hard hit. The surge in armed violence across Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger is having a devastating impact on survival, education, protection and development. The sharp increase in armed attacks on communities, schools, health centers and other public institutions and infrastructure has reached unprecedented levels, with violence disrupting livelihoods and access to social services. The Sahel, a region of immense potential is now one of the most vulnerable regions in Africa, home to some countries with the lowest development indicators globally. The COVID-19 pandemic adds further risks to the plight and safety of millions already affected by the humanitarian crisis

Pending formal assessments of COVID effects, we rely on projections through UNFPA and UNICEF:

### Sources:

- (i) <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/impact-covid-19-pandemic-family-planning-and-ending-gender-based-violence-female-genital>
  - (ii) <https://data.unicef.org/topic/gender/covid-19/>
- 7 million unintended pregnancies are expected to occur with continued lockdown for six months with major disruptions to health services (based on April 2020 projections).
  - 31 million additional cases of gender-based violence can be expected to occur with continued lockdown for at least six months. For every three months the lockdown continues, an additional 15 million extra cases of gender-based violence are expected.
  - COVID-19 will disrupt efforts to end child marriage, potentially resulting in an additional 13 million child marriages taking place between 2020 and 2030 that could otherwise have been averted.
  - Current assessments show that girls face disruption to learning and school attendance due to the 'gender digital divide'.
  - A general reversal of gender equality gains and increased marginalization of adolescent girls
  - Need for ensuring continued reach of girls and sustained services with a vision to deliver through a transformative lens.

## Implementation Status:

Overall, progress reviews show that the Spotlight Regional Programme is still on track to achieve its planned targets despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

The political negotiations between AU, UN and EU in the development of the Africa Regional Programme aimed to ensure consensus of all partners, and ensure co-ownership and co-responsibility **but did** cause some delay in the implementation of activities, especially for Stream I. However, the negotiation process was instrumental for all partners to reach the same level of understanding of the Regional Programme which is crucial for the success of the implementation phase. Whilst the programme contractually started in July 2020, it was officially launched on 6 October 2020 through a High-Level Inception Meeting co-chaired by the AUC and United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU) and attended by senior officials from the UNOAU, UN DCO Africa and the RUNOs. It was only after the inception meeting that the UN and AUC teams could begin to work together on implementation. After the inception meeting, Stream I focused on establishing project management systems, and governance structures as well as recruiting staff - all of which were required for effective programme implementation. However, as Stream II is built on an existing programme, it already had project management systems and governance structures in place, making it possible to move ahead immediately with implementation of activities.

As noted, the program is on track, although certain activities - including all those requiring travel and physical interaction - have been delayed due to the COVID-19 related measures. Most of the engagements with the AUC, a key implementing partner, have been slower than normal for the following reasons:

1. The Department of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development - HHASD (formerly Social Affairs) of the African Union Commission, leading the SIARP, is where the African CDC is located. With the outbreak of the pandemic, significant attention has been given to the pandemic, and even though progress has been made regarding the SIARP, some delay has been noted. In order to address these delays, acceleration plans are being developed in order to fast track implementation in 2021.
2. The African Union administrative processes require physical presence within the African Union Commission compound. The sanitary measures related to COVID-19 have required staff to work from home, thus slowing down the administrative process necessary for the implementation of the SIARP. During a joint technical meeting between the AUC-WGDD and the UN, agreement was reached to have regular technical catch-up meetings every two weeks in an effort to accelerate programme implementation.
3. In addition to COVID19, civil unrest as well as humanitarian and security concerns in several countries including Ethiopia also took the attention of the political bodies such as AUC away from the Spotlight Initiative. To ensure continuity in the future despite the multiple pressures and demands faced by the AUC, the AUC was requested to appoint technical focal persons who would always be available to move the Spotlight programme forward consistently.

Considering the COVID-19 prevention and control measures, almost all engagements with the African Union Commission and other regional governmental and non-governmental partners have been conducted remotely. Activities which include travel such as technical missions of the Special Rapporteur and Goodwill Ambassador for ending child marriage had to be postponed. In November

2020, AUC with support from Stream II teams held the African Youth Month celebrations virtually with about 200 young people across Africa participating in the events as the reference group. Some benefits of holding the meeting virtually were that more diverse youth from different places were able to attend than if it were an in-person meeting.

Partly because people were working from home as a result of the challenging COVID environment, selection of Civil Society implementing partners was a challenge as organizations were not quick to respond to the call for an expression of interest which meant it was necessary to re-advertise. Similarly, recruitment of programme staff by RUNOs was relatively slow.



*“We took action to avoid the marriage of a 16-year-old friend in our village.” Mariama (left), 17, and Zeinabou, (right), 18, are part of a movement of young girls who protest against child marriage in Niger. © UNICEF/UNI324118/Haro*

## Programme Governance and Coordination

A robust governance mechanism consisting of different bodies was built into the Regional Programme design in order to ensure efficiency and coherence between Stream I and Stream II. In addition to the overall governance arrangements, each stream has its own governance mechanism. Draft Terms of Reference for all the governance structures were developed during the reporting period.

### Africa Regional Steering Committee

During the programme negotiation process, the UNOAU provided overall political leadership for the UN and was the UN’s main communication entry point to the African Union. During the programme inception meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October 2020 and in line with UN reform, the UNOAU handed over UN political leadership to UNDCO Africa, which has been overseeing stakeholder relationships and ensuring programme coordination and coherence across Stream I and Stream II of the programme.

All members of the Africa Regional Steering Committee have been nominated by their respective institutions including the Commissioner of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development of AUC, as well as the Director of the Department; Head of Cooperation- EU delegation to the AU; EU Brussels Deputy Head of Unit- Gender Equality, Human Rights and Democracy; Regional Directors for East and Southern Africa for UNFPA, UN Women and UNICEF; and the UNDP Regional Programme Advisor and Team Leader for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. The AUC coordinating Department and UNDCO Africa will co-chair the Africa Regional Steering Committee. Based on the success of the regional programme inception meeting that was co-chaired by the AUC and the UNOAU, it is envisaged that having the AUC co-chairing the Africa Regional Steering Committee will have a positive impact on ensuring regional ownership of the programme and also strengthening partnerships across the continent. Discussion on the specific date and time for the first Africa Steering Committee meetings is on-going.

#### The Civil Society Regional Reference Group (CSRRG)

The Selection Committee, chaired by the Spotlight Secretariat, was established following consensus on the diversity criteria for selection of its members to ensure an accurate representation of the vulnerable groups of beneficiaries. The plan is to finalize the selection process by mid-April 2021 and the Selection Committee will meet again to finalize the selection process.

#### Stream I Steering Committee:

All members of the Stream I Steering Committee have been nominated by their respective organizations and these include the AUC Director for the Women, Gender, Youth and Development Department (WGYD); UN Women Regional Director for East and Southern Africa; UNFPA Deputy Regional Director for East and Southern Africa; UNICEF Representative to the AU and ECA; UNDP Regional Programme Advisor and Team Leader for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and 2 CSO experts who will be selected from the CSRRG once it is fully established and functional.

#### Programme Coordination:

During the reporting period, multi-level coordination arrangements were used to ensure a smooth flow of programme implementation and management.

The Programme Coordination Unit (PCU) provided overall coordination for the regional programme and organized monthly catch-up and planning meetings for UNFPA and UNDCO and served as secretariat. It also organized monthly Stream Leads coordination meetings that ensured synergy between Stream I and Stream II and worked closely with the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat for capacity building of RUNOs. The unit acted as the liaison between the EU, RUNOs, the UNDCO and the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat. In addition to the overall programme coordination by the PCU, there was coordination at Stream, Pillar and individual agency level. During the reporting period, the PCU played a critical role in coordinating engagements with the AUC leading to the successful inception meeting, nomination of AUC representatives in the different governance structures and in organizing the upcoming joint meeting for the AUC-HHASD Department and the AUC-WGYD Directorate. The PCU also played a key role in providing updates to the UNDCO through regular meetings and technical briefs. It also provided technical support by drafting memos and other forms of communication to different stakeholders. On the other hand, the UNDCO played a pivotal role in ensuring that the regional programme was aligned to the Spotlight principles especially since the Africa Regional Steering Committee was not yet fully functional. It engaged with the EU and the UNOAU, providing updates and flagging any issues of concern.

Inter-agency coordination structures, for example the Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Working Group, were established for the SIARP. Members of this inter-agency structure are from both Stream

I and Stream II which further enhanced coherence across the two streams in addition to the Stream I and II regular meetings that are chaired by UNFPA. With this inter-agency and inter-stream M&E technical working group, it will be possible to align and support joint monitoring and reporting on indicators since the programme has only one results framework. There has also been effort to organize a joint technical-level meeting for the AUC-HHASD Department, AUC-WGYD Directorate and the UN as this will help strengthen coherence across the two streams, which should lead to effective programme delivery. The meeting will take place on 7 April 2021 and will also enable the teams to prepare for the first Africa Regional Steering Committee meeting.

Stream II-SIARP continues to use the governance structures of both the GPECM and JPFGM. The steering committees for both joint programmes provide strategic guidance and oversight responsibility for the overall management and functioning of the programmes. The Steering Committees are made up of the UN Agencies that are signatories to the Joint Programmes and Donors that have contributed to the Joint Programmes, including the European Union and other partners. Committee members may, in consultation with all members, invite other relevant parties to take part in the Steering Committee meetings as required. The Steering Committees meet minimum twice a year to approve annual requests for fund allocation and the second meeting is held mid-year to review the annual results reports and to discuss other pending matters. During 2020, the Steering committees met separately following the SIARP inception meeting to review areas of integration for the Spotlight programme

Since the beginning of Stream II-SIARP in June 2020, both UNFPA and UNICEF have convened monthly planning and coordination meetings with staff at Headquarters and Regional Offices of both participating agencies. Of the 36 work plan programme activities in Phase I of the Stream II-SIARP, 11 (31%) programme activities were identified for joint implementation by GPECM and JPFGM all in the spirit of the UN reform.

## Programme Partnerships

Partnerships are at the heart of the global effort to accelerate the momentum to eliminate Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG), harmful practices including child marriage and female genital mutilation, and strengthen SRHR in line with the SDG framework. Innovative partnerships to overcome structural weaknesses can help to improve the quality of large scale regional, national and local programmes, enable partnerships in which civil society organizations provide technical support to government agencies, and can mobilize alliances of civil society organizations, particularly those led by women and youth, to increase coverage and reach. The SIARP was designed with a multiple partnership approach to pull together different strengths in synergy and complementarity across the different partners and the UN agencies.

### The African Union

The AU and its Member States are at the forefront of partnerships as the legitimate authorities that have the mandate and responsibility to dismantle structural discriminatory systems in line with global and regional human rights obligations. The AU, through the Commissioner for HHASD, co-chairs the highest Governance structure, the Africa Regional Steering Committee, co-chaired the High Level Inception Meeting in October 2020, and is a signatory to the tripartite SIARP agreement. At the programmatic level, the AUC plays a critical role as the main partner in implementing SIARP activities with overall engagement and Stream II led by the HHASD and the WGYD playing a key role under Stream I. The role of the AUC in programmatic activities include joint oversight of consultants engaged to work on programmes related to the AUC, for example during the reporting period, the

AUC participated in the recruitment of programme staff and consultants; the AUC demonstrated political leadership in key meetings for example when they co-chaired the High level segment of the inception meeting and monthly joint coordination meetings with UNFPA and UNICEF under Stream II. In addition, the AUC was involved in the implementation of programme activities with technical assistance from the UN technical team as well as providing technical and financial reports in accordance with the UN Accounting and Reporting procedures.

### Governments

Stream II is building on existing partnerships with the National Statistics Offices in the majority of countries on the African continent to strengthen, through training and provision of analytical tools, the capacity of national statistical officers in data collection and analysis of household survey data such as the Demographic Health Survey (DHS) and the Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS). These capacity building activities are aimed at supporting Outcome 5 of the SIARP. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Stream II has adjusted its training approach from face to face, to virtual engagement platforms. Currently, statistical data analysis training modules are being adapted to online platforms. It is expected that upon completion of the training, national statistical officers will have the capacity to develop, review and disseminate statistical data and evidence products on child marriage and FGM. The data products are intended to prompt advocacy and action to reduce child marriage by providing key data in an accessible format to managers in order to facilitate programming for every girl including those most vulnerable and in hard to reach areas

### Civil Society

Stream II, like other global and regional programmes, suffered setbacks in identifying CSO implementing partners through a competitive process partly due to the challenges of the pandemic. Finally, in consultation with the Spotlight Secretariat, a non-competitive process was approved for engagement of CSOs. Stream II is employing the following approaches to engage with CSOs:

- a. Joint venture contracting with UN agencies: The objective is to advance gender transformative programming. This approach has targeted mostly Africa-based women rights CSOs that include, African Women's Development and Communication Network -FEMNET, Equality Now and Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development.
- b. Long-term agreements (LTAs) utilization: The objective of this approach is to target particular technical capacity for example in social and gender norms measurement, social policy and budgeting. This approach has targeted mostly CSOs with expanded capacity to provide technical support on the continent that include youth-led and women rights organizations such as AIDOS.
- c. Leveraged partnership: Through this approach, Stream II is building on existing GPECM and JPFGM partnerships, such as Girls Not Brides and African Council of Religious Leaders, to advance activities aimed at improving research and evidence generation, policies and legislation.
- d. Inclusivity: The selection of CSOs specifically targeted organizations that advanced the principles of inclusiveness and rights based approach to programming and development.

### Equality Now/Solidarity for African Women's Rights (EN/SOAWR)

During the reporting period, SIARP Stream I partnered with a regional CSO, Equality Now/Solidarity for African Women's Rights (EN/SOAWR) an international human rights organization dedicated to ending violence and discrimination against women and girls and promoting the use of the law to advance their human rights. Equality Now's Africa Office convenes the Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR) Coalition, which seeks to advocate for the ratification, domestication, and implementation of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the "Maputo Protocol") as a critical tool to realize the human rights of women

and girls. SOAWR is a pan-African membership-based network of over 50 organizations based in 27 countries working to advance the promotion and protection of women’s rights in Africa. Its campaign works are centered on four program areas: Legal Equality, End Sexual Violence, End Harmful Practices, and End Sex Trafficking, with a cross-cutting focus on the unique needs of adolescent girls.

Following the selection of Equality Now as an implementing partner (IP) to implement selected activities especially under Output 1, which is “National and regional partners have strengthened evidence-based knowledge and capacity to assess gaps, draft new and/or strengthen existing legislation and policies and enforce implementation of existing legislation on ending SGBV, FGM and child marriage, that are in line with international HR” SIARP Stream 1 is in the process of developing a detailed work plan with the IP (inception report) to conduct a regional evidenced-based mapping and assessment of the status of implementation/enforcement of laws and policies, Action Plans, financing and capacity to deliver on EVAWG by Regional Partners and Member States to inform and update current baselines.

Following the issuance of Expression of Interest for regional CSOs working in the area of Ending Violence against Women (EVAW), Sexual and Gender Based Violence/Harmful Practices (HP) and promoting Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), 6 additional CSOs were shortlisted by RUNOs as potential implementing partners (IPs). They are further requested to submit proposals for the different activities in the stream.

To ensure the participation of more qualified partners and francophone organizations the Expression of Interest (EOI) was re-advertised and the RUNOs shortlisted 7 more CSOs to submit their proposals in a second round.

#### European Union:

The EU continued to be an active strategic partner from the negotiation process through to the reporting period during which the EU set the stage for programme implementation at the inception meeting. The European Union is also playing a key role as an active member of the Selection Committee in the establishment of the CSRRG. Stream II advanced collaboration with specific EU countries that included Italy and Netherlands to draft and co-sponsor a resolution on child, early and forced marriage during the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly on November 16, 2020. The resolution builds on the language agreed on in 2018 and adds on impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, addition of references to obstetric fistula, female genital mutilation, sexual and reproductive health-care services, and to menstrual hygiene.



*Mariam Muhindo, 18, is a student at Rwenzori Senior Secondary School in Uganda. She got pregnant during the COVID-19 induced lockdown, but through the Spotlight Initiative, she was able to go back to school after giving birth.* © UNICEF/UN0467985/Kabuye

## Results

### Capturing Broader Transformations Across Outcomes

During the reporting period, progress was made in **positioning the SIARP as a key initiative to transform harmful traditional norms that hold back women and girls and to eliminate violence against women from the continent.** As was reflected during the inception meeting, the programme was welcomed by the AUC as an initiative that will encourage strategic dialogue and more effective coordination towards elimination of VAWG by 2030 in Africa. The EU's emphasis on the need to ensure synergy and coherence across the two streams and across pillars contributed to the achievement of concrete results as it resulted in concerted effort to identify synergies for possible joint programming. For Stream I, the development of a comprehensive diversity criteria in the selection of the Committee members and efforts to achieve a wide dissemination of the call for CSO's expressions of interest all aimed to ensure diversity and inclusivity. Implementation of the Spotlight Initiative within the operational and programmatic frameworks of both UNFPA and UNICEF Joint programmes galvanized support for AU Campaign to End Child Marriage, the AU Saleema Initiative to Eliminate Female Genital Mutilation and other regional initiatives addressing harmful practices, building on and deepening the existing work.

For instance, in 2020, the SIARP Stream II fostered partnerships with the African Union Commission (AUC) and AU Youth Envoy to launch the Saleema Youth Victorious Ambassadors (SYVA) programme and communication campaign in September 2020. SYVA are the young female activists and FGM Survivors aged between 18 and 35 willing to express publicly on the elimination of FGM. The communication campaign offered a platform for SYVA to popularize the Saleema Initiative among African youth, foster intergenerational co-leadership and dialogue, amplify the voice of FGM survivors, and ensure regional representation and outreach of the Saleema Initiative.

In 2020, Stream II of the Spotlight Initiative regional programme established partnership with the African Council of Religious Leaders (ACRL) to engage with religious leader members of the Inter-Faith Councils at national level and address the frequently incorrect interpretation of the sacred scriptures in relation to Child Marriage. In collaboration with Religions for Peace-ACRL and the Joint Learning Initiative for Faith and Local Communities, new guidance was produced on how to engage and communicate with religious leaders on violence against children, Child Marriage and FGM in times of COVID-19. A series of 6 regional webinars were organized with religious leaders from 6 countries (Kenya, Malawi, South Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe) on different topics, including COVID-19 prevention, adaptation of religious gatherings to the COVID-19 situation and on how to prevent, address and respond to violence against children (including child marriage and FGM) cases in times of COVID-19. Some immediate results from these webinars include awareness and uptake of the new guidance as well as the establishment of a community of practice.

On November 20 2020, through the Spotlight Initiative Stream II, the African Union campaign on ending child marriage, in collaboration with the AUC Youth Division and the Department of Social Affairs, organized an ideation workshop, social media campaign and intergenerational dialogue with

duty bearers. These [events and activities](#) aimed to enhance the role of the young in prevention and elimination of harmful practices, particularly child marriage. The events were organized to support the innovative regional youth-led initiatives and amplify youth, particularly young women and girls' engagement in policy dialogue and initiatives ending child marriage and harmful practices. 200 youth participated in these events virtually and these events are expected to advance: enhanced awareness and advocacy on the interconnected driving forces and solutions on child marriage; the role of young people particularly young women and girls' engagement in policy dialogue and initiatives to end child marriage amplified; and the identification of scalable solutions for the prevention, elimination and response to child marriage. ([African Union Youth Program - Reimagine An Africa Without Child Marriage Ideation Workshop | Facebook](#))

On October 28 2020, the Spotlight Initiative Stream II engaged the SADC Parliamentary Forum standing committee on gender equality, women advancement and youth development. A presentation on “*Parliament’s Mandate in Eradicating early and Child Marriage - Regional Framework on Eradicating Child Marriage: Unpacking the SADC Model Law on Eradicating Child Marriage and Protecting Children Already in Marriage*” was made during the virtual meeting. The AU Goodwill Ambassador and Girls Not Brides were among other invited guests and they spoke about the AU commitments to end child marriage and impact of COVID-19 on education and child marriage, respectively.

An important dialogue involving religious and traditional leaders and youth was also held in December 2020. The dialogue addressed the crucial role that these leaders play in their communities and as well as linking their work more closely with youth in communities and schools for advocacy and reaching consensus on solid actions against ending child marriages.



Mentorship on the rights of young women and girls carried out in the community in Malawi. © UNFPA East and Southern Africa / Luis Tato

## Capturing Change at Outcome Level

In 2020 following the SIARP inception meeting, Stream II contributed to the following results:

### Outcome 1: Legal and Policy Framework

At both the regional and country level, Stream II teams have been engaged in providing technical support and assistance towards the strengthening of regional frameworks and translating them into national standards. Through advocacy and sharing of data and evidence on what works to eliminate harmful practices, Stream II teams have partnered with the AU campaign to end child marriage and the AU Saleema initiative on elimination of FGM to engage governments to develop and implement national strategic frameworks and plans of actions on SGBV, child marriage and FGM.

Following the successful launch of the AU Campaign to end child marriage in at least 28 countries, Stream II teams have worked with the AU Campaign focal points in governments and national CSOs to develop and utilize advocacy materials including provision of technical support to governments. In 2020, this partnership resulted in 5 countries (Eritrea, Central African Republic, Kenya, Niger, South Sudan) finalizing the costing and launch of their evidence-based national action plans with M&E frameworks to end child marriage. Currently, 5 additional countries (Angola, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal and South Africa) are being supported to develop national action plans to end child marriage. In addition, Burkina Faso, Mozambique and Zambia were provided with technical support during the year to develop new and strengthen existing laws to end child marriage.

The AU Campaign on ending Child Marriage also finalized a 5-year strategy (2019- 2023) as part of the second phase, whose proposal was validated in 2019 by Member State experts (and other stakeholders) from East and Southern Africa and then in 2020 by Member State experts (and other stakeholders) from West, Central and North Africa. The strategy aims, among others, to improve inclusivity, strengthen partnerships, stronger monitoring and evaluation reporting mechanism and accountability to accelerate an end to child marriage in line with related AU policies and goals.

In addition, AUC and its Member States validated a 5-year strategy for its Saleema Initiative on Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation on October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020, facilitating greater coordination in implementation of the agenda to eliminate the harmful practice. The strategy articulates the AUC's vision and agenda to accelerate elimination of FGM on the continent, capitalizing on the organization's mandate, aims to amplify regional and country level efforts and will be an important link to the 55 Member States of the African Union.

The teams are continuing with the technical support to the AUC process to articulate the Harmful Practices Accountability Framework, and a continental report on female genital mutilation as well as a global monitoring mechanism on child marriage.

In collaboration with the AUC, Stream II teams conducted an assessment to identify the capacity needs of implementing gender transformative programming within the AUC campaigns on ending child marriage. This assessment has facilitated the need to develop terms of reference for the development of gender transformative capacity building guidelines that is currently ongoing.

Under Stream 1, activities implemented during this reporting period aimed at contributing to results under Output 1.1 *“National and regional partners have strengthened evidence-based knowledge and capacity to assess gaps, draft new and/or strengthen existing legislation and policies and enforce*

*implementation of existing legislation on ending SGBV, FGM and child marriage, that are in line with international HR standards and treaty bodies' recommendations''* These included:

- assess the status of domestication and enforcement of global and regional HR instruments including CEDAW and Maputo Protocol;
- assess the progress on development and implementation of NAPs and investments on EVAWG;

A CSO (Equality Now/SOAWR) to undertake the assignment was selected and is currently in the inception stage of launching the assessment. The assessment findings are expected to show the status of domestication and enforcement of HR instruments including CEDAW and Maputo protocol among others and to show the level of development, implementation and financing/investment on NAPs on EVAWG.

## **Outcome 5: Data**

SIARP is committed to the generation and use of data as well as evidence for compelling advocacy, and to inform programming and decision making, in an effort to end VAWG and strengthen SRHR. In pursuit for a safe and healthy work environment following the pandemic, the programme initiated the development of online training courses to build the capacity of regional and country partners including governments and CSOs in statistical data analysis using DHS and MICS surveys.

Under the Spotlight programme, Stream II activities included data analysis work towards the development of statistical country profiles on child marriage. These profiles provide a snapshot of the situation in each of the Spotlight countries with respect to levels and trends in child marriage and include data on a core set of related indicators on reproductive health, access to education and women's empowerment. These profiles are intended to prompt advocacy and action to reduce child marriage by providing key data in an accessible format. The full set of profiles are expected to be finalized in mid-2021.

Under the Spotlight Initiative programme, UNFPA in collaboration with the UN Volunteers Programme launched the "Population data, FGM data and research" fellowship initiative. The fellowship is intended to contribute the most recent evidence on the elimination of FGM and increase technical support capacity to the AUC campaigns as well as other initiatives to end harmful practices at the regional and country levels. Currently, technical support capacity is being deployed to Burkina Faso, Senegal, Egypt, Nigeria, and Kenya, to provide data management, processing and analytic support as part of the fellowship initiative.

To complement evidence generation and learning within the Spotlight Initiative, the Stream II team, in partnership with Girls Not Brides and the World Health Organization, established the Child Marriage Research to Action Network (CRANK). This network will work with the AUC and regional CSOs to strengthen knowledge sharing and capacity of partners including connecting African researchers and practitioners to global dialogue and vice versa. CRANK brings child marriage researchers, practitioners and policy makers together every three months to share and discuss the latest evidence on priority learning topics. It is also a knowledge management mechanism through which tracks ongoing and upcoming research by CRANK members, monitor patterns and identify gaps.

A cost and impact modeling exercise was conducted to determine the level of investment required to eliminate FGM by 2030. Based on the analysis which used programme data, secondary data, and population-level costing methods, it is estimated that it would take \$3.3 billion to reach the high-coverage targets by 2030 and avert about 25 million cases of female genital mutilation. This data has been widely used in communication channels for advocacy for more investment in programmes addressing female genital mutilation. Through the ongoing partnership between SIARP Stream II and Avenir Health, the report on the cost and impact of scaling up programmes addressing female genital mutilation was finalized and accepted for a [peer-reviewed journal article](#).

In a related activity, and as part of a review and gender analysis of macro level data, such as MICS and DHS, the programme will undertake a data review to understand the linkages between child marriage and sexual and reproductive health e.g. links to adolescent pregnancy and menstrual hygiene. It will also leverage on the programming lessons to strengthen capacity of national partners in gender transformative analysis and measurement. These deliverables will improve the development and implementation of gender-transformative policies, legislation and investment at national and sub-national levels.

For Stream I, the process of recruiting a consultant that will support AUC's effort to strengthen regional data and research, gender observatory and Scorecard as well as generation of evidence to inform policy and programmes is underway. The process is expected to be finalized by the end of March 2021.

Under the Spotlight Initiative Programme, [the ACT framework](#), that measures and tracks changes in social norms in relation to female genital mutilation, has been tested in Ethiopia and is currently being utilized together with other measurement tools to establish child marriage and FGM social and behavior change baseline indicators in five regions of Ethiopia.

## **Outcome 6: Women's Movement**

Stream II remains focused on transforming discriminatory social and gender norms through meaningful engagement with both regional and national level CSOs to end harmful practices such as child marriage and FGM. Leveraging on the GPECM efforts, the programme will benefit from an e-course on Gender Transformation that will serve as a global good. This e-course builds on training of select UNICEF and UNFPA GPECM staff on [GenderPro](#) that will also cascade learnings to SIARP's CSO implementing partners.

A capacity building webinar on engaging men and boys to end harmful practices was convened at the end of August 2020 to improve gender transformative programming in the African region, specifically targeting CSOs. This webinar shared global evidence, tools, resources and facilitated interactive discussions on gender transformative approaches to engaging men and boys. This webinar will strengthen male involvement in the fight against harmful practices as it has already created a pool of male champions towards this cause. The webinar had notable expert presentations from Kenya Ministry of Education. Support was also given to regional and international CSOs that are mainly led by African women in their efforts to end FGM. These women-led organizations have all started to plan their activities that will be implemented in 2021, finalized their staffing structures and used this period as their inception phase. Four new regional CSOs were selected (a) African Women's Development and Communication Network -FEMNET, (b) Equality Now and (c) Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development -FORWARD. The organizations will share knowledge on GEWE to end HP (FGM and CM), work on legislative and policy changes to end SGBV and HP, and strengthen the capacity of CSOs, FGM survivors, youth for accountability and advocacy to prevent HP. In addition to four new CSOs, an existing partnership with AIDOS has continued in support of the Spotlight Initiative.

Some of the highlights from these partnerships include: (a) the building bridge initiative between Africa and the Diaspora in order to enhance mutual learning and experience sharing, provide space and facilitate dialogue and communication among communities and advocate for more attention and investment on female genital mutilation prevention and responses programmes in various forums taking place in Europe: (b) mapping out the FGM stakeholders in Africa; (c) development of the Community Mobilization Strategy to engage men and boys' involvement to advocate ending FGM.

SIARP stream 1 is finalizing recruitment of the Regional CSO engagement Coordinator who will support the implementation of activities that aim to engage women's rights groups, autonomous social movements and CSOs, including those representing youth groups.

**Reporting on SRHR:** Within the framework of the SIARP Stream II, UNFPA co-leads the

multigenerational campaign: “Generation Equality: Realizing women’s rights for an equal future”. The Generation Equality campaign demands equal pay, equal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work, an end to sexual harassment and all forms of violence against women and girls, health-care services that respond to their needs, and their equal participation in political life and decision-making in all areas of life. This campaign provides a platform for the regional Spotlight Initiative to educate, advocate and innovate for gender equality. A global conversation was organized in July 2020 on “Bodily autonomy and SRHR”. This global conversation was about the importance of adolescent girls’ bodily autonomy and decision making as a critical pillar to the unfinished agendas of Cairo and Beijing. The event called for adolescents’ rights, voices and choices and all the protective measures including at the institutional, community and family levels, to be in place, so they can exercise those rights and thrive.

Inter-agency Pillar meetings are being organized to identify and discuss areas of synergy across the two streams and across pillars. These discussions will facilitate identification of areas for joint programming in line with the UN Reform. Discussions already done by RUNOs have shown that some activities under Pillar 1 and Pillar 6 can be done jointly by two or more agencies which will result in synergy, coherence and efficiency/cost-effectiveness leading to greater impact.



Adolescent girls are raising awareness about VAW including FGM abandonment through sport in the Guinea © UNFPA Guinea

## Rights Holders (“Beneficiaries”)

Indicative numbers	Direct for 2020	Indirect for 2020	Comments/Justifications
<b>Women</b> (18 yrs. and above)	432,541	6,065,541	Based on 24 countries in Africa supported by both joint programmes and Spotlight
<b>Girls</b> (5-17)	2,481,213	2,453,663	Based on 24 countries in Africa supported by both joint programmes and Spotlight
<b>Men</b> (18 yrs. and above)	338,311	5,741,270	Based on 24 countries in Africa supported by both joint programmes and Spotlight
<b>Boys</b> (5-17 yrs.)	110,615	2,127,537	Based on 24 countries in Africa supported by both joint programmes and Spotlight
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,362,680</b>	<b>16,388,010</b>	

## Challenges and Mitigating Measures

For Stream II, due to the short implementation time after signing and receiving the budget, one of the important setbacks was the selection of CSOs as implementing partners since a competitive process was recommended. However, due to the limited number of regional CSOs to work with, in consultation with the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat, a non-competitive process had to be applied. Efforts to identify and engage IPs, including using existing Long-Term Agreements (LTAs) were not successful for Stream II. Direct selection of IPs was prioritized and this enabled Stream II to initiate new activities and continue with on-going activities. Partnership has so far been established with 4 new regional level CSOs. Stream I developed a joint inter-agency call for expression of interest to identify potential CSOs as implementing partners. However, due to the lack of sufficient technical expertise among the 82 applicant CSOs in the areas of SGBV, gender equality, child protection, women’s empowerment, legal reform and other relevant areas of the program, limited geographic presence and lack of diversity, only 6 were recommended to develop their proposals. Therefore, the EOIs had to be re-advertised with the intention of ensuring wide dissemination to secure a sufficient number of applications towards the expedited selection of CSO IPs.

COVID-19 presented a major challenge especially the lockdown that restricted movement which slowed down programme take off and subsequent implementation. To mitigate COVID-19 protocols like restricted movement and social distancing, communication had to be done virtually. This helped the programme to keep moving forward, albeit at a slower pace than if there was a face to face and personal touch especially where negotiation was involved. The pandemic ushered in new priorities which, if they were not addressed, had immediate life threatening consequences. The AUC had to focus on developing and rolling out the continental response to the health crisis. All these factors caused delays in the implementation of actions required for the full operationalization of SIARP.

# Lessons Learned and New Opportunities

## Lessons Learned

The need to be flexible in times of crisis by moving to virtual platforms was a major lesson learnt during the reporting period. All the engagements with the AUC, RECs and CSOs since the inception of the programme has been virtual due to the pandemic, hence, staff members from these organizations are working remotely from home. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual platforms, that were used at local, regional and global levels, significantly reduced travel costs that were reprogrammed for greater programme coverage. Most of the activities were transferred to virtual platforms and this enabled partners to be more innovative with the virtual world and these innovations may continue to be used beyond the pandemic given their cost effectiveness and efficiencies. However, there is a need to evaluate the quality of engagements and learnings/training provided online vis-à-vis the long-term impact on the programme outcomes. At a programme level, Stream II documented lessons learned for [child marriage](#) and [FGM](#) programming from the adoptions of the Programmes to work within a COVID19 context.

## New Opportunities

COVID-19 created an urgent need for new modalities and opportunities of community service delivery and training using digital platforms including engagement with partners at global, regional and national levels. Programmes can now reach out to a wider global audience through the use of digital platforms as COVID-19 brought about a strong digital transformation which necessitated building the capacity of a wide audience, including beneficiaries in the use of different digital media. Through digital platforms several experts from different parts of the world can be invited to workshops and webinars. There has also been a new realization that more resources can be used for programming than for office space and other office administrative expenses when people work from home. Travel time by staff is now being used for productive work.

The Spotlight Initiative has leveraged on the two largest Joint Programmes on Child Marriage and FGM together to address a common underlying driver, namely discriminatory gender norms. It has created a unique opportunity to leverage and expand the scope of programme interventions, in the spirit of UN Reform. Also, the programme has strategically benefited from a strong knowledge management strategy under the two joint programmes that includes sharing of public good products e.g. technical guidance, webinars and publications such as newsletters and research digests

The tripartite negotiation process during the programme design period created an opportunity for all the involved parties to achieve a common understanding of the programme and the issues that needed to be addressed.

## Innovative, Promising and Good Practices

**Promising:** The Saleema Youth Victorious Ambassadors Programme is a unique platform as it places young women, FGM Survivors and Activists, at the heart of the legal and political process for the elimination of Female Genital Mutilation. This platform is a communication bridge between national, regional and global institutions and the youth, and more specifically youth organizations, women's organizations, and grassroots organizations. This platform has allowed for the Saleema Initiative to gain visibility at grassroots level after just a few months of existence and can be replicated at country level in order to create a women's movement and to facilitate communication between the different layers of the Spotlight Initiative by linking the Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional programme and country level programmes.

**Promising: Establishment of an inter-agency M&E Technical Working Group**

The Africa Regional programme established an inter-agency Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Working (TWG) group that is taking a lead in all M&E related activities including the establishment of baselines and targets. This inter-agency, inter-stream technical working group will also spearhead and provide technical support for joint monitoring and reporting against SIARP indicators. All RUNOs are represented in the TWG.

**Promising: Recruitment of a Civil Society Engagement Coordinator**

A Civil Society Engagement Coordinator was recruited to provide technical leadership and guidance to CSOs given the critical role that civil society plays in the regional programme.

**Promising: Developing a joint Expression of Interest for IP selection**

All RUNOs worked together to develop a joint call for Expression of Interest for CSO implementing partners. Assessment of the submitted EOI and selection of IPs was done jointly in line with the principles of the UN Reform.

**Promising: Youth Reference Group:** Since 2015, UNICEF has been supporting countries to establish an Adolescent and Youth Reference Group that aims to advocate for promoting the voices of adolescent youth, prevent and respond to violence against women and girls, and harmful practices such as child marriage. At the country level, these gender balanced groups usually consist of not more than 200 members. And as part of the AUC and UNICEF “Reimagine an Africa without child marriage” campaign and through the SIARP, the first regional youth reference group with 200 was convened on November 17 2020 from a selection of 400 youth that responded to the call for applications Establishment of the Regional Youth Reference Group will continue throughout and beyond the SIARP as it is a viable, prompt and cost-effective means for youth engagement on different issues at continental, regional and national levels. It is also an opportunity which can facilitate linkages and two-way communication/ engagement particularly between policy/decision makers and local / grass-root level. Such a reference group will have a significant role in creating awareness, mobilizing support, promoting social accountability.

## Communications and Visibility

As part of the AU Saleema Initiative on Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation, a communication strategy was finalized in September 2020. Its implementation has just started. This period is thus too short for a complete analysis. However, the main component of the communication strategy is the SYVA programme, for which we can see a significant increase in visibility and interest. Preparation of the communication plan is in progress.

**Reach on social media during the reporting period:**

**Facebook:** organic reach of 360.000 between September and December 2020

**Twitter:** organic impressions of 140.000 between September and December 2020, with a monthly increase during the same period of 350% for tweet impressions and 250% for profile visits.

**Mailchimp:** audience went from 566 to 1958 subscribers with an increase of the open rate by 2 points, from 34,3 to 36,6.

**a) Messages:**

**"Youth and Women's Empowerment: Main Audience"**. This message was effective as it addressed directly the needs of the beneficiaries, the CSOs, the grassroots and aims at creating dialogue and inclusion.

SYVA celebratory launch: stakeholders through the newsletter. This message was very well received with an opening rate at over 50%. The idea of celebrating the work of the stakeholders, of celebrating the inclusion of new voices and beneficiaries in our process has shown a great impact and success.

**b) Media and visibility events:**

One High Level event was organized during the reporting period: the SYVA launch led by the AU Commissioner for Social Affairs and in partnership with the AU Youth Envoy were participated in the event as well as representation of Burkina Faso as AU Champion on the elimination of FGM, UNFPA: Chief of Gender and Human Rights Branch, UNICEF: Head of the UNICEF LO to the AU and UNECA, African Committee on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

**c) Campaigns:**

Due to the very short implementation period, there is no campaign to share yet, the campaigns that are envisaged will be shared in the 2021 annual report.

**d) Human interest stories:**

In line with the Saleema Communication strategy, human stories will be those of activists interacting with and being empowered by the stakeholders. Thus, we have started with the SYVAs, FGM survivors and activists which will share their human story in 2021 annual report, the ones around them, always in an active and empowering way.

**e) Testimonials:** There were no testimonials collected during the reporting period

**f) Photos:** Photos uploaded - Additional background information is available in the link to the report below

[Africa Youth Month -Reimagine an Africa without Child Marriage- Report \(Fn\).pdf - Google Drive](#)

**g) Videos:**

We had no specific videos but we are sharing a Facebook link to the virtual workshop. In case the video is of interest, then we can request it uploaded though we do not have a specific video maker as it was recorded in pieces during the presentation and has no Spotlight branding.

[African Union Youth Program - Reimagine An Africa Without Child Marriage Ideation Workshop | Facebook](#)

## Next Steps

### Programme Coordination and Governance

- Organize a joint technical-level meeting for the AUC and the UN teams during which progress updates will be presented and consensus reached on next steps to facilitate greater acceleration of programme implementation, as well as content preparation for the first Africa Regional Steering Committee Meeting.
- Operationalize the Africa Regional Steering Committee, the Stream I Steering Committee and the Civil Society Regional Reference Group (CSRRG) in order to strengthen both the overall and stream level governance of the programme.
- Finalize selection of the additional CSOs and Academic and Research Institutions (ARI) and launch the partnership agreements for accelerated implementation of the work plan
- Strengthen the role of Pillar Leads including by having Pillar focal persons in each RUNO who meet regularly to discuss and take action on pillar related issues

### Programme Activities

- On communication and advocacy, the Saleema Website, the Saleema Talks podcast, and the Saleema Interviews will be realized
- Finalize the AU Accountability Framework on Harmful Practices: The framework will build on and benefit from existing AU accountability frameworks - working within ongoing processes to ensure Member States account on policy and p to amplify the work of Saleema Initiative to a broader audience and underline the strong collaboration between AUC HHASD Department and the AU Youth Envoy's Office with the Saleema Youth Victorious Ambassadors. This will help to strengthen visibility of the SI Africa Regional Programme. of girls and women in efforts to eliminate FGM.
- Finalize the AU Africa FGM report on national progress, which also comprises the peer review mechanism. This will provide a recent historic account, scope of the harmful practice, an examination of the impact on lives of young girls and women, a policy analysis and recommendations, particularly on peer review towards accelerated elimination of female genital mutilation in Africa, thus creating further shifts in gendered norms over time.
- Organize high-level international conference focusing on yearly strategic thematic issue on FGM as part of implementation of the plan of action of the Africa Union initiative on the Elimination of FGM to share all the developments regarding legislations, programmes. and good practices.
- Support the work of the African Union Special Rapporteurs on Violence Against Children and, on Child marriage and other Harmful Practices to monitor and support national, regional and continental responses with policy recommendations, data and evidence to accelerate the elimination of FGM
- Organize high level panels with a focus on strategic issues related to FGM during International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation (6 February), Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), and UN General Assembly (UNGA) and European Union (EU) forums
- Establish and implement an innovation hub to promote exemplary and effective initiatives on the elimination of female genital mutilation which will lead to new modalities and opportunities of programme implementation and service delivery while tackling with harmful practices.
- Continue supporting the selected CSOs mentioned under the women's movement title that have already started working in the reporting period. Through the support given to the CSOs and women's groups, several other groups such as women and girls, youth, service providers, community leaders, religious leaders, media professionals, will be influenced broadly for strengthening the Women's movement and progress in combating harmful practices. Finalize and implement Activity Acceleration Plans for 2021 to ensure the timely achievement of expected results.

- Finalize the work on AU’s regional data and research gender observatory and Scorecard to ensure periodic, inclusive and quality reporting of member states and CSO’s on VAWG/SGBV/HP and SRH & RR to generate evidence in order to inform policy and programs
- Develop a communication and knowledge management Strategy for Stream 1 to contribute to visibility of the SIARP and the results of the program.

#### Communication and Visibility

- Identify a Communications and Visibility focal person to ensure visibility of the programme.
- Establish a common Knowledge Management platform accessible to all RUNOs.

## Annexes

Annex B...[Africa RP - Annex B- Risk Management Report\\_Final.xlsx](#)

Annex C...[SIARP Annex C-CSO Engagement Report Final 2.xlsx](#)

Annex D...[Africa RP - Annex D Final.docx](#)





# Spotlight Initiative

