

Spotlight Mid-term Assessment Report using ROM review

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

Key information				
Domain (instrument)	Region			
DAC Sector	Human and Social Development : « Gender Equality »			
Zone Benefitting from the Action	Liberia			
Type of Project/Programme	Geographic			
Geographic Implementation	Single-country			
Contracting Party	SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE			
EU contribution	US\$ 15,844,000			
Project Implementation Dates	Start Date	1ST JANUARY 2019	End Date	31ST DECEMBER 2022
ROM expert(s) name(s)	Yssa Oumar Basse, Alice Behrendt			
Field phase	Start Date	15 January 2021	End Date	26 January 2021

Scoring overview:	green (good)	orange (problems)	red (serious deficiencies)			
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Relevance						
	7	8	9	10	11	
Efficiency						
	12	13	14			
Effectiveness						
	15					
Sustainability						

Persons interviewed and surveyed	Interviews/ FGD	Survey
EU Delegation	2	1
Partner country government	15	6
UN agencies	7	7
CSO reference group	3	2
Implementing partners	11	12
Final Beneficiaries	5 FGDs	NA
Other (Spotlight Initiative Coordinator, technical coordinator)	2	5

Key documents	Number
Essential documents	13
Other documents	13

A. PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES, LIMITATIONS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

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

The first phase of the Spotlight Initiative’s implementation has been completed in Liberia and the purpose of the MTA is to assess the programme at country level, to compare the achievements with the initial plans and to assess the new ways of working as “One UN” to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A no cost extension until June 2021 has been granted which is not covered by this evaluation. The MTA uses the “Results-Oriented monitoring” (ROM) principles and aims at enhancing accountability and management capacities with a strong focus on results.

The MTA assesses the four following criteria:

- Relevance (the extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries/agents of change requirements, country needs, global priorities and partners’ and donors’ policies);
- Effectiveness (the extent to which the development intervention’s objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance);
- Efficiency (the measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted into outputs);
- Sustainability (the continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed).

These criteria are used to answer the 15 MTA questions which form the main headings of the present report.

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

Table 1. Grading reference table for criteria and monitoring questions

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

The programme in Liberia is being implemented in five Counties: Nimba, Grand Gedeh, Lofa, Grand Cape Mount and Montserrat. Nimba County was visited during the field data collection.

Limitations and measures taken:

- The field data collection coincided with the spread of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic across West Africa. The expert conducting the data collection travelled from Dakar to Monrovia and he had to remain confined at a hotel for one week and conduct the interviews with national

stakeholders online. The field visit could only cover one County over three days. The Spotlight Initiative Coordinator provided support to collect the data within the planned timeframe, which enabled the consultant to carry out all planned interviews.

- Certified data measuring progress against the indicators and milestones for 2020 were not available during data collection. Qualitative information on activities conducted in 2020 was obtained from document review, key informant interviews and focus group discussion. The absence of comprehensive and quality assured monitoring data in time for the Mid-term assessment review constitutes a limitation for the assessment, which the Spotlight Secretariat should consider in future exercises.
- Official financial reports are available for up to Quarter 3 2020 [30 September 2020]. Certified financial reports for the whole year 2020 will be made available in late May 2021, these reports follow the established inter-agency process for reporting on pooled funds in a Multi-donor Trust Fund and according to the timeline set in the EU agreement special conditions.
- The triangulation of data sources was particularly challenging for this report. Key informants, online survey responses and comments provided to the first draft of this evaluation report included various contradictions. There were not only different stakeholder groups disagreeing with each other, but also contradictory statements from the same stakeholder. The timeframe of the evaluation did not allow to conduct additional interviews to resolve these contradictions. As a result, it was difficult to draw conclusions on some of the topics investigated.

B. RELEVANCE

<p>1. Does the action align to the principles of the Spotlight Initiative as listed in the Spotlight Initiative Fund TORs?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Very Good – Good <input type="checkbox"/> Problems <input type="checkbox"/> Serious deficiencies
<p>The Spotlight Initiative (Spotlight Initiative) implementation design as described in the Country Programme Document (CPD) for Liberia is aligned to the Spotlight principles of human rights including “leaving no one behind” (LNOB). It supports the Liberian Government’s focus on improving the realization of women’s and girls’ rights which is outlined in its recently launched five-year development plan, the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD). The PAPD is aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The CPD also contains a detailed analysis which demonstrates the alignment of the Spotlight Initiative’s six pillars to the SDG.</p> <p>To align the interventions to the Spotlight Initiative guiding principles, several steps were undertaken during the design of the Liberia Spotlight Initiative programme, including a literature review of secondary data (e.g. Demographic and Health Survey data) research and participatory consultations with Recipient UN Organizations (RUNOs), CSOs and different government ministries. To identify the Counties for the programme implementation, several criteria were analysed: The Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) prevalence data, lessons learned from previous programmes, budget availability, the ambition to reach as many beneficiaries as possible and the need to implement the action in the most effective manner. The key informant interviews (KII) with different RUNOs, the representatives of the government ministries, the representatives of the CSOs and traditional leaders contributed further evidence that the design of the Spotlight Initiative in Liberia was based on a consultative approach. In their view, this resulted in a holistic strategy with appropriate interventions to address the main drivers of VAWG in the country. They also perceived that the design allowed to consolidate results from the existing joint UN programme on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) funded by the Swedish government. The evaluation report of the programme recommended, for instance, to ensure that gender-responsive programme budgeting (GRPB) is incorporated within key line ministries for sustainability. This has been considered under the Spotlight Initiative as part of the work under Pillar 2.</p> <p>The results of the online survey confirm that the programme in Liberia is aligned with the Spotlight Initiative principles. There is large agreement among the respondents that the principles are well incorporated in the programme design. A detailed overview of these results for each principle is provided in Annex 3. The only principle for which agreement was lower (at 65%) is the one on strengthening, supporting, protecting, and engaging the women’s movement and encouraging them to adopt to access and develop long term financing strategies. The Spotlight Initiative in Liberia has deployed substantial efforts in mapping the CSOs in the five intervention Counties and in strengthening their capacity and networks, but the development of long-term financing strategies has not been focussed on and there was also the perception that the selection of IPs did not include particular efforts to promote women’s organisations.</p> <p><i>“Also, there seems to be lack of transparency which limits women rights organisations in particular to access funds. In some instances, male led organisations have been selected over women led/rights organisations.”</i> (online survey respondent)</p>	

Key findings

- The programme is well aligned to the Spotlight Initiative principles as listed in the Spotlight Initiative Fund ToRs.
- The Spotlight Initiative implementation in Liberia builds on and consolidates the achievements of the joint UN programme on GBV and harmful traditional practices in Liberia. Its design used a consultative approach and involved all relevant segments of the government, CSOs, traditional leaders and RUNOs which have experience and are in a position to effect lasting changes in the country on issues related to EVAWG. It is well aligned to the government’s PAPD and relevant SDGs.

<p>2A. Are the Initiative’s deliverables aligned with the UN agencies’ mandate and priorities? Are the right UN agencies involved?</p> <p>2B. Are programmes implemented in line with the UN System reform?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Very Good – Good <input type="checkbox"/> Problems <input type="checkbox"/> Serious deficiencies
<p>Are the Initiative’s deliverables aligned with the UN agencies’ mandate and priorities? Are the right UN agencies involved?</p> <p>The following agencies are the RUNOs in Liberia: UN Women, UNFPA, UNDP, UNICEF, OHCHR.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OHCHR leads on Pillar 1¹ and contributes to Pillar 2. It has experience in strengthening institutional capacities of duty bearers and its comparative advantage is the technical expertise to align and mainstream programmes with human rights standards, such as leaving no one behind. • UNDP leads on Pillar 2 and contributes to Pillar 5 and 6. It has been contributing to programmes and projects in the area of justice, security, gender equality and women’s rights. Its comparative advantage is based on its experience in building national capacity among national stakeholders. • UN Women leads on Pillar 3 and 6 and contributes to Pillar 2. It has experience in working on gender responsive planning and budgeting (GRPB), women’s participation in building peace and security and women’s economic empowerment. Its comparative advantage lays in its experience in civil society strengthening and engagement (including community-based organisations) and its technical expertise on preventing and responding to GBV². Due to the latter, UN Women has the role of ensuring technical coherence across all six programme pillars. • UNFPA leads on Pillars 4 and 5 and contributes to Pillars 1, 2 and 3. It has experience in implementing complex programmes in development, humanitarian, and post-conflict settings. Its comparative advantage is its expertise in integrated SRH services, adolescents and youth, gender equality (decrease of harmful traditional practices [HTP] and national protection systems) and data analysis on population dynamics.³ • UNICEF contributes to Pillars 3, 4 and 5. It contributes its experience on child protection, harmful social norms and practices and engagement with communities and traditional leaders. It brings experience of social monitoring tools, communication, and knowledge management. 	

¹ The pillars are: Pillar 1 – Legislative and policy outcomes; Pillar 2 – institutional strengthening; Pillar 3- Norm and behavior change; Pillar 4 – quality service provision; Pillar 5 – data availability on VBG; Pillar 6 Strengthening of women’s CSOs and the women’s movement.

² <https://www.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/africa/regional-and-country-offices>

³ <https://www.unfpa.org/data/transparency-portal/unfpa-liberia>

A joint UN programme on the prevention and response to HTP and GBV existed prior to the Spotlight Initiative in Liberia. It was supported by the Swedish Government and its third phase ended in 2020. It was also UN led, had a similar mandate, and largely involved the same UN agencies and government ministries⁴. The Spotlight Initiative has built on the achievements, lessons learned and recommendations of this programme such as to incorporate GRPB at the level of relevant ministries⁵. The mappings of the activities, partners, gaps, and thematic issues from this programme have also served in the assignment of tasks to the RUNOs and the CSOs assisting in the implementation. There are components in the Spotlight Initiative, however, that were not part of the previous programme. The Spotlight Initiative takes a more holistic approach to address the different factors that create favourable environment for ending VAWG such as the assistance to survivors of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV), the availability and quality of data pertaining to the issue and the capacity of CSOs to contribute to the elimination of VAWG. The Spotlight Initiative is also better funded and places a stronger emphasis on building synergies and coherence across the RUNOs, including collaboration and technical support to Government line ministries and CSOs. During the design of the Spotlight Initiative, the mandates of the different RUNOs were streamlined to the objectives and outcomes of the programme. Both key informants and respondents of the online survey reported that the Spotlight Initiative is well aligned to the mandates, expertise, and capacity of each of the five UN agencies.

Are programmes implemented in line with the UN System reform?

One UN Office: The accountability for the Spotlight Initiative in Liberia lies with the UN Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO). The role of the RC is to (co-)chair the steering committee meetings of the programme and to ensure that all RUNOs coordinate their work and demonstrate commitment to the implementation of the programme. This strategic choice is well aligned with the "One UN" principle as all UN agencies are under the overall supervision of the RC. The leading role of the RC has been perceived as a positive game changer compared to previous joint programmes to ensure synergy, coherence and trouble shooting.

"The RC being the lead has been really, really beneficial. Also, that he has the authority to look at the allocation of resources, to sit down with them [the head of agencies]. It's not easy, but it does make a change from other joint programs, which are quite different in the way the guidelines are set out for the program." (key informant, PMC)

The location of the main coordinating body of the Spotlight Initiative, the Programme Management and Coordination (PMC), in the UN-house, is another strategic choice aligned with working as One UN.

To work as one entity and to optimise the efficiency of resources, each RUNOs has been assigned the responsibility to undertake parts of the action plans with each being responsible for (a) specific pillar(s). The agencies contributing to each pillar in addition to the lead agency have also been identified.

According to key informants (RUNOs, PMC), there has been positive progress among RUNO staff to identify the Spotlight Initiative as a programme delivered under the UN reform. Adherence is, however, not yet universal and profiling of individual RUNOs persists.

"I have colleagues in the team who will talk about Spotlight as UN. But I have also colleagues in the office who will talk about Spotlight with respect to their UN agency, so when there's an event, it is very, very clear to see which agency only talks about that agency and will not talk about the overall UN aspect to Spotlight. (key informant, PMC)

⁴ OHCHR was not part of the joint programme but the human rights component of UNMIL contributed.

⁵ Available at <http://gate.unwomen.org>

Joint implementation and monitoring: The coordination structures of the programme (described in detail under question 10) have ensured that the planning of activities is aligned and coherent across the different RUNOs. The interviewed CSOs which work with more than one RUNO perceived that activities are well planned and coordinated. Examples of joint implementation and monitoring of activities are also provided in the annual reports, for example, joint field trips conducted by the RUNOs and the government. According to key informants and online survey respondents (EUD, RUNOs, PMC), these are, however, still far from being systematic⁶. They reported that there are still challenges that need to be overcome to enable joint procurement processes and joint implementation of activities such as trainings. It was also reported that resources were rarely shared.

“And the EU insists that as a UN reform, all operational things should be done joint. If there are ten laptops under UNDP and five laptops under UNICEF, one under UN women, they should all be procured under one UN procurement approach. [...]. Now, that is a challenge, but we are still trying. And if UNICEF has the strength to do all communication, visibility and associated procurement, we will let them do it. But this is something that is very new, and the window has been very small. It has just been one and a half years. So, everybody is still working around. However, I have to say there has been a huge difference when the team started with a lot of opposition, with a lot of hesitation and a lot of fear to what it does now. But we still have to convince many of them to come together, sit together, discuss and even share costs. If there is one training around the same thematic, UN Women UNFPA, UNICEF can come together when it addresses the same stakeholders, but we have not yet got there so far. We would like that to be happening.” (key informant, PMC)

Key findings

- The Spotlight Initiative is aligned with the UN agencies’ mandates, experience, and expertise. UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women and UNICEF have already participated in the implementation of the Joint VAWG Programme prior to the Spotlight Initiative. This has ensured continuity. Good practices and lessons learnt have been incorporated in the design of the Spotlight Initiative.
- An important foundation for ‘Delivering as one’ has been put in place through the accountability of the RC for the programme and the set-up of the PMC in the UN house. The leadership of the RC has been important to ensure coherence and facilitate problem solving across RUNOs. Joint procurement and implementation are not yet systematic.

Recommendations

- To further bring to scale the work as one UN during phase 2, it is recommended to develop processes for joint procurement and implementation. This should include an analysis of the work plan to identify all actions which should be procured for and/or delivered jointly (Liberia Spotlight Initiative/ RUNOs).

⁶ There were contradictory statements in this regard which are discussed in more detail under question 11.

<p>3. Does the action presently respond to the needs of the target groups / end beneficiaries? Are the necessary consultations taking place with key stakeholders?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Very Good – Good
	<input type="checkbox"/> Problems
	<input type="checkbox"/> Serious deficiencies

Geographic coverage

With a population of about five million people, the project is expected to reach directly and indirectly combined more than half of the total population in Liberia (see Table below). The Spotlight Initiative responds to the needs of the target groups and beneficiaries as the identification of Counties was based on a set of selected indicators, including the incidence and acceptance of GBV, FGM and general exposure to violence. The identification process identified five Counties which are also the most populated in the country (Lofa, Grand Cape Mount, Montserrado, Nimba and Grand Gedeh).

Table 2. Estimated No. of Beneficiaries TBD

Indicative numbers	Direct	Indirect
Women	333,449	396,783
Girls	353,926	478,268
Men	58,748	674,462
Boys	73,289	683,859
Total	613,578	1,987,701

Reaching marginalized women and girls

To align with the principle of ‘Leaving no one behind’, marginalised groups such as the Lesbian Gay, Transgender, Bisexual, Queer and Intersex Persons (LGTBQI) and persons with disabilities were involved from the design to the implementation of the Spotlight Initiative as members of the Steering Committee. According to a representative of the LGTBQI, the priorities of marginalized groups including the LGTBQI and those with disabilities were clearly identified and addressed during the design of the Liberia CPD. Under Pillar 3 (change of norms and behaviours), a holistic approach to changing norms and behaviours is being implemented to ensure that girls and women, including the most marginalized, are aware of their rights and that duty bearers have increased knowledge on their responsibilities and the harmful consequences of VAWG. The decentralization of services to survivors of GBV and the implementation of in-school and out-of-school interventions have been designed to ensure that vulnerable adolescent girls and women benefit from the programme, including those living in remote areas. The capacity-building of service providers emphasizes on confidentiality and client-centred care in line with a rights-based approach to ensure that survivors of GBV are not exposed to discriminative treatment and negative judgement. While the programme design has included holistic approaches to respond to the needs of marginalized women and girls, this is currently only partially captured by the monitoring system. The data collected under Pillar 3 and 4 lack disaggregation for marginalized groups (such as persons with disabilities) to gauge to what extent specific groups have been effectively reached. According to the coordination team, disaggregated data for marginalized groups was not initially requested for in the SMART platform, the monitoring data base for the programme. The difficulty that some groups, such as LGTBQI, find it difficult to identify themselves on record in the Liberian context was also mentioned.

Strengthening CSOs

Three international and seven national CSOs act as IPs. They benefit from capacity strengthening, (mentoring and technical support). To build capacity beyond the IPs and to strengthen civil society capacity

for advocating against VAWG at a larger scale, a participatory mapping of CSOs and networks was conducted. As a result, 779 CSOs and community-based organizations covering the five Countries covered by the Spotlight Initiative were identified. Among the CSOs and community-based organizations were 11 groups of people with disability, seven groups of people affected by HIV/AIDS, one albino group and 13 LGBTIQ groups. All identified organisations were sorted into thematic groups for networking, coordination, and tailored capacity strengthening, as part of activities planned under Pillar 6.

Reaching the target group of traditional leaders, boys and men

While vulnerable girls and women are at the centre of the programme, the Spotlight Initiative also works with men and boys during community awareness raising activities. To have ownership and participation by traditional leaders, town hall meetings were organised with the participation of men and boys and traditional leaders under the supervision of the UNFPA and the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health. Men and boys also participate in the identification of effective SGBV prevention approaches and to develop better response strategies, which can be embedded in the educational system. UN Women also works in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender and the Ministry of Internal Affairs with traditional leaders, religious leaders, men and boys in addressing negative masculinity and social norms attitudes and behaviour that negatively impact women and girls. Together they have established seven male networks engaged in peer-to-peer outreach activities. At the Ministry of Education, the Spotlight Initiative has designated focal points working on the improvement of the Education curriculum in order to dismantle violent masculinity stereotypes and construct new approaches to masculinity as well family and community relations.

Are the necessary consultations taking place with key stakeholders?

Overall, 81 percent of the online survey respondents agreed that all relevant groups and key stakeholders were included in the Spotlight Initiative. Four online survey respondents fed back that further investments were required to ensure that the most marginalized groups (people with disabilities, LGBTIQ, sex workers and drug users) are effectively included in interventions. The online survey results also confirmed that all key stakeholders were to some or to a large extent involved in the design, monitoring and implementation of the programme. A detailed overview of the results per stakeholder group is provided in Annex 4. Particular efforts have been put in place to ensure the involvement of marginalized groups during the different stages. CSOs representing marginalized groups are part of the County Secretariats and participate actively in decision making and in the implementation of action plans. The Co-chair of the CSO reference group participates in the national steering committee. The Liberian Child Parliament has also been involved in the implementation. According to their representatives, they are satisfied to have their voices heard and to be able to provide feedback to actions.

Key findings

- The Spotlight Initiative, by design, is deliberately reaching the most vulnerable women and girls in the five Counties. It is, however, challenging, to analyse to what extent specific marginalized groups benefit from the interventions.
- An inclusive approach to strengthening the capacity, coordination, and networking of CSOs working on VAWG in the intervention areas of the Spotlight Initiative is being implemented.
- The target group of traditional leaders, boys and men has been effectively engaged in the design and implementation of the programme interventions.

- All key stakeholders were to some or to a large extent involved in the design, implementation, and monitoring of the programme.

Recommendations

- To strengthen the accountability towards marginalized groups, we recommend adding qualitative indicators under Outcome 3 (norm and behaviour change) and 4 (quality essential services) to analyse to what extent specific marginalized groups such as persons with disabilities, sex workers and LGBTQI participate in and benefit from the programme (Liberia Spotlight Initiative).

4. Do all key stakeholders still demonstrate effective commitment (ownership)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Good – Good
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Problems
	<input type="checkbox"/> Serious deficiencies

Government

The government, through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSP), hosts the Programme and the Minister of the MGCSP co-chairs the National Steering Committee (the Spotlight Initiative highest governance body) with the UN Resident Coordinator (RC). That notwithstanding, the representatives of the different Ministries at central level voiced unanimously frustration about the implementation approach and processes of the Spotlight Initiative. They are not satisfied with the implementation approach of RUNOs awarding grants to CSOs. In their perception, the government ministries have the ability to implement the programme themselves or they could themselves hire CSOs to do so if needed. They also perceive that their participation is tokenistic and that decisions are taken by the RUNOs in advance of the meetings.

“The responsible UN agencies made the decisions and only briefed the government actors at some point.”
(online survey respondent, government representative)

“It seems like there were two layers. The closed session by the UN where information only circulated with that circle and then the wider circle involving the government institutions. The government had to wait for the UN to approve implementation and I think the UN should have served as counterpart to the pillars and not lead the initiative.” (online survey respondent, government representative)

This perception has also been observed by implementing partners (IPs). One stated, for example, that *“in some meetings, the government partners have complained about not being actively involved in key decisions and in one instance, the Ministry of Gender representative said she felt being used as a rubberstamp”*. (online survey respondent, IP)

The perception of being side-lined and insufficiently informed about the interventions implemented by the CSOs was strong. Some government officials reported that their feedback has not been considered and that they did not receive timely support about upcoming interventions.

“The coordination needs to be improved because there are things that happen and we do not get informed on time or we are informed by the wrong people. I am not satisfied with the ways the voice of the Health Ministry is taken into account because, when we go to the meetings, when we voice our concern, we do not get feedback, or actions are not taken or they are delayed. We were even informed that safe homes

were being built, the only time we are informed is when we are invited to go and cut the ribbon. This has occurred repeatedly we are not involved enough in the actions taken.” (a Ministry representative)

Key informants from the MoGCSP, the MoH and the Ministry of Internal Affairs also deplored that the Ministries were not involved in the recruitment of the CSOs, which implement the programme in the Counties. Involvement in recruitment of CSO or management of CSOs by the government is, however, not in line with the Spotlight Initiative Principles, which consider CSOs and government stakeholders to be equal partners in the programme.

The perceptions of being inadequately involved and informed could not be corroborated by other information sources. Key informants from RUNO’s, the PMC, the EUD and the document review indicated that mechanisms are put in place to ensure that the involved government ministries participate in decision-making processes of the governance structures. These are described in detail under evaluation question 8 and 10 where further analysis on the conflicting reports of different stakeholder groups is provided.

“Given the design of the initiative and the fact that the government Ministries are represented at every level of decision making, implementation and reporting, it is impossible for them to not be at the same level of information as the representatives of the RUNOs. The problem is more related to the fact that with the coming of new people from the new government, it is likely that some of them do not know how the UN operates” (key informant, RUNO).

“The Ministry of Gender children and Social Protection (MGCSP) is a co-chair to the steering committee, while the Ministry of health among other Ministries is a member. [...] All reports, workplans among other key documents are passed through the Steering committee for approval before finalisation. Technical teams of these line Ministries are part of the monthly technical committee and pillar working groups coordinated by the Ministry of Gender.” (written statement, PMC)

There is consensus across stakeholders, however, that the level of dissatisfaction at the level of the involved government ministries has been an obstacle to their effective ownership of and commitment to the programme. It is also noteworthy that similar findings were highlighted in the evaluation report of the previous joint UN-programme on GBV and HTP, indicating that this is not a new issue.

For the interviewed RUNOs and the PMC, the root cause of the government’s dissatisfaction is not lack of information, but their limited access to funding: they would like to be a direct fund recipient as the CSO IPs.

“[...] the government is not happy because the funds do not flow through their accounts. And the reason the government does not get the resources, as I said, is because the government needs to come back with constructive recommendations on how we can do it with them. But as of now, we do not have it. So, the governments do not get most of the funds flowing through their budgets, which creates a lot of their dissatisfaction.” (key informant, PMC)

RUNOs

According to key informants (RUNOs, government) and the online survey, the RUNOs have shown consistent ownership of the programme. Challenges were not linked to lack of commitment or ownership, but rather to inter-agency collaboration and delivering as One UN (see evaluation questions 2 and 11).

CSOs

Both the representatives of the CSOs within the CS Reference Group (CSRG) and at the County Secretariat have demonstrated commitment to participate in the elaboration of the action plans and in their implementation. The online survey showed that 70 percent of the respondents stated that CSOs

contribute effectively to steering the implementation of the Spotlight Initiative. The interviewed key informants from CSOs confirmed strong commitment to the programme albeit some critical voices about the limited reactivity to their recommendations in the coordinating bodies and inflexible, lengthy implementation procedures. These are further discussed under evaluation question 8 and 13.

European Union Delegation (EUD)

As a funding partner to the Spotlight Initiative, the EUD actively participates in the meetings of the Steering Committee and the Technical committee. It also participates in major events and provides technical and monitoring support through review of operational and monitoring outputs. While showing strong commitment to the Spotlight Initiative, the EUD has voiced strong reservations about the timeliness and effectiveness of the communication and reporting processes of the Spotlight Initiative in Liberia. The EUD was given the authority by the EU Headquarters to manage the Spotlight Initiative as per the procedures for bilateral programmes. In line with this decision, they find it unacceptable and inefficient that reports are sent first to the global Spotlight Initiative Secretariat, then to the EU in Brussels before arriving at their level. This process had been originally agreed upon by the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat and the EU in Brussels but was changed in 2019 in response to this feedback. This agreement has, however, still not been recognized due to the desire of the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat to harmonize reporting processes across countries and to avoid cumbersome reporting processes. According to the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat, an agreement has been found that reports are now first sent to the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat for quality assurance, then shared with the EU and national stakeholders for feedback before the final versions are sent to the EU in Brussels.

The EUD is also concerned about the slow response implementation to the COVID-19 pandemic. The insufficient involvement of the EUD in decisions have also caused frustrations. The UN and the EUD have an agreement to identify joint solutions in response to bottlenecks in the programme implementation. According to the EUD, this agreement has not materialized, and it has not been consulted by the RUNOs on issues, for instance, related to the set-up of functional DNA machines in collaboration with the government.

The EUD also deplores limited visibility on important documents. In the national COVID response plan, for example, the EUD reported that the “UN had wrongly indicated that the activities under the ‘Women, Girls and Children Response Pillar’, as part of the government COVID response plan, was funded by the separate UN Agencies while it in fact was funded by the EU under the Spotlight Initiative.” The attribution of funding to separate UN agencies while the large majority of activities were part of Spotlight Initiative was perceived in a negative way. According to the PMC, the Spotlight Initiative was designed as a global programme in which the involvement as requested by the EUD was difficult to accommodate. This is further elaborated on under EQ 8.

Key Findings

- Government stakeholders are not satisfied with their role in the implementation which impacts negatively on their commitment and ownership. Their perception of being side-lined and insufficiently involved could not be corroborated by other data sources but similar issues were reported in the evaluation report of the previous joint-UN programme on GBV and HTP.
- The CSOs and RUNOs have shown strong commitment to fulfil their role as part of the Spotlight Initiative.
- The EUD remains committed to the Spotlight Initiative implementation in Liberia but finds it unacceptable that the agreement to share reports before sending them to the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat and the EU headquarters has not materialized. Dissatisfaction with an insufficient

involvement in problem solving of the EU has also been a concern for them. The PMC, on the other hand, finds it challenging to accommodate the close involvement of the EUD in the monitoring and implementation.

Recommendations

- To further understand the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the involved ministries, it is recommended to hire an external facilitator to (a) conduct a review of the institutional capacities and attitudes regarding the Spotlight Initiative of the involved ministries and (b) support the government to put in place an accountability framework, a harmonized data collection approach to VAWG and a communication flow that will allow a more effective steering of the programme during phase 2 of the programme (Liberia Spotlight Initiative and government).
- To ensure an effective and efficient contribution of the EUD to the programme, the current way of working and its challenges need to be discussed between the EUD, the PMC, the global Spotlight Initiative Secretariat, and the EU headquarters in Brussels. It should be carefully considered whether it is feasible for all actors involved to manage the Spotlight Initiative like a bilateral DEVCO programme. (EUD, EU headquarters, Liberia Spotlight Initiative and Spotlight Initiative Secretariat)

<p>5A. Have all relevant circumstances and risks been taken into account to update the intervention logic? 5B. Also in the context of Covid-19?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Very Good – Good
	<input type="checkbox"/> Problems
	<input type="checkbox"/> Serious deficiencies

Have all relevant circumstances and risks been taken into account to update the intervention logic?

The risk register for the Spotlight Initiative uses three types of risk categories: contextual, programmatic, and institutional risks. For each risk, mitigatory measures have been put in place. The contextual risks did not hamper the implementation with exception of the COVID-19 pandemic which is treated under section 5B. In the category of programmatic risks, four risks were identified: (a) limited absorption capacity of national stakeholders, (b) challenges in resource mobilisation to cover gaps, (c) challenges in implementation and delivery of results and (d) effectiveness of proposed model approaches; alternative sources of income for FGM practitioners. The first risk (a) was classified as low, and two mitigation measures were proposed (capacity building, monitoring and technical support). The risk likelihood classification as “unlikely” merits revision as both the absorption capacity of the government and IPs have resulted in hold ups of the programme (see question 13). For the second and third risk, the mitigation measures have been effective, and no challenges were reported. For the fourth risk, mitigation measures have been implemented, but it is too early to gauge the effectiveness of the approach of alternative sources of income for FGM practitioners. In light of study results from other countries on this approach and recommendations given by the WHO, the risk should be classified as medium and not as low (see also evaluation question 12).

In the category of institutional risks, five risks have been identified. The highest risk anticipated is “Weak, fragmented and low institutional systems, knowledge and capacity”. The mitigation measures that were proposed to address that risk consisted of building institutional capacities for the government and CSOs and continued policy dialogue and advocacy with key government institutions. While these measures are being implemented, the consequences of this risk continue to impact negatively on the programme implementation. Interviews with representatives of the MGCSP at local level, for instance, showed that the weak capacity of the latter has led to delays in information transmission from the Ministry’s County

Coordinators to the Minister's office due to lack of means such as computers and internet connection. The Ministry offices stated that they are not getting enough and accurate feedback from their representatives in the Counties. The government's institutional weaknesses have also resulted in the absence of agreement and coordination between the different ministries regarding the data collected at County level on VAWG (see also question 8). This is related to another institutional risk – the limited availability of data and limited capacities of state institutions to develop and analyse data – for which mitigation measures are also being implemented. They do not directly address, however, the lack of coordination between the different ministries and their disagreement on what data sources should be used.

The context of COVID-19

According to one of the social workers in Nimba, *“some women who were victims of rape and in need of medical assistance were refusing to go to the medical centres for assistance, consequently, the number for people coming for services went down”*. This observation was confirmed in the interim annual report for 2020, which highlighted a decrease of the reported and assisted SGBV cases. That notwithstanding, key informants reported that the actual incidence of SGBV increased due to confinement measures which increased the economic vulnerability of households, and in particular of adolescent girls and women.

To mitigate the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, a joint response plan in partnership and coordination with CSO implementing partners, government partners, and the European Union, was developed and approved by the national steering committee. Intervention and outputs were modified to include information that integrates COVID-19 into the existing GBV/SGBV/SRHR messages, as well as the procurement and provision of Personal Protective Equipment. Over 20 activities were initiated to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19. This included the set-up of a call centre for SGBV referral which was planned, but not yet operational at the time for the evaluation. Essential services to respond and activities to prevent SGBV were maintained at a reduced scale during the lockdown period. Different media channels were used to raise awareness on COVID-19 and GBV. Community awareness raising activities on GBV were only carried out in small groups and were used as a platform to share information on COVID-19. Interventions requiring larger gatherings were either put on hold or conducted virtually. Some training sessions, for example the training of the media, were delivered online. For those where internet connection was not strong, trainings were held in person after the lockdown. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court also suspended jury trials during the lockdown period which were only resumed after its end. At central level, meetings were held virtually, and monitoring field visits were replaced by virtual weekly meetings.

Key Findings

- The programme in Liberia has identified relevant contextual, programmatic, and institutional risks. Some of the risks – notably the risk related to weak, fragmented, and low institutional systems, knowledge and capacity and the risk of limited government capacity to develop and analyse data - require further mitigation measures that need to be integrated in the intervention logic. This conclusion is closely related to those of question 8 and 10.
- In response to COVID-19, the work plan was revised, and relevant mitigation measures were initiated.

Recommendations

- In line with the recommendations formulated under question 8 and 10, it is recommended for Phase 2 to revise the interventions under Pillar 2 and 5 to expand capacity strengthening of government partners. Institutional strengthening at sub-national level to capacitate the MGCSP's County Coordinators should be prioritised to improve the communication and data entry capacity on how to

communicate these data to the central level government (Liberia Spotlight Initiative and government).

- Support the ministries to develop a harmonized approach to data collection, analysis and use on VAWG, which is agreed upon by all Ministries, to ensure that the current efforts on data collection under Pillar 5 are not going to waste (Liberia Spotlight Initiative and government).
- The evaluation indicates a shadow pandemic of increased VAWG as a collateral impact of COVID-19. We were informed by the Spotlight Coordination that this is already being investigated through research supported by Spotlight Initiative. It is critical to carefully assess to what extent the interventions in place are sufficient and adequate to tackle the consequences of this shadow pandemic (Liberia Spotlight Initiative).

<p>6. Are the indicators to measure results well defined and relevant to measure the achievement of the objectives?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Very Good – Good
	<input type="checkbox"/> Problems <input type="checkbox"/> Serious deficiencies
<p>The Theory of Change contained in the CPD was designed in a participatory manner with all relevant stakeholders who set out the specific objectives along with the indicators to measure progress. The action plans were defined in the same way with different stakeholders responsible for the implementation of activities and for the monitoring of corresponding indicators. This resulted in 48 output and 13 outcome indicators, which is an adequate number for a programme of this scope⁷. The indicators were selected from the Spotlight Initiative Results Framework developed by the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat to allow for global aggregation and reporting. Country programmes have the flexibility to identify programme specific indicators to report on at national level, which did not happen in Liberia.</p> <p>Interviews with those responsible for monitoring the programme progress highlight that the chosen indicators are relevant and well defined. The document review confirmed that the indicators are gender responsive. Sex disaggregation is used for all relevant indicators. Specific indicators to measure the engagement of boys and men and the empowerment of girls and women are used.</p> <p>Where relevant, indicators are inclusive of marginalized groups, but there is no specific indicator to track progress on realising the LNOB commitment, in particular on what has been done to reach the furthest behind first. The LNOB commitment is captured by disaggregating indicators by sex, age, sector or other disaggregation types such as girls who are in and out of schools. Country teams are also encouraged to further disaggregate the data in a specific reporting box, when reporting on the SMART Platform, but there was no evidence that this is being done in Liberia at the time of the evaluation.</p> <p>Data gaps and issues related to their quality have also been reported by key informants. Although studies are available on the context of VAWG in the country, the available data lack accuracy on the number of VAWG survivors, the number which received medical and psychosocial assistance and court cases linked to them to inform the Spotlight Initiative about its starting point. As a result, several indicators in the performance monitoring framework lack baselines.</p>	

⁷ See <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/technical-briefs-aligned-results-based-management-handbook> for more information.

Key findings:

- The indicators are relevant and gender responsive. Their number is adequate for the scope of the programme.
- While the indicators are disaggregated to capture data by age, sex, sector, LNOB type, etc., the programme lacks specific indicators on reaching the furthest behind first. This could be measured through a qualitative indicator.

Recommendations:

- Under Pillar 3 and 4, it is recommended to include qualitative indicators to measure how furthest behind groups are being reached (Liberia Spotlight Initiative).

C. EFFICIENCY

<p>7. Are the chosen implementation mechanisms (incl. choice of implementation modalities, entities and contractual arrangements) adequate for achieving the expected results?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Good – Good <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Problems <input type="checkbox"/> Serious deficiencies
<p>The governance structure includes a National Steering Committee for oversight and a technical committee to ensure timely, coherent, and quality execution of the programme (more information on the governance structures is provided under Question 10). The Spotlight Initiative budget is implemented almost equally by the RUNOs (40%) and CSOs (41%). Consultancy services are limited to 4 percent of the overall budget, while 15 percent is designated to the government.</p> <p>The RUNOs operate according to their own internal procedures. Disbursement to implementing partners is done once they complete the activities and send a narrative report to the RUNOs. These reports feed into the Spotlight Initiative reports. The National Steering Committee is updated regularly on the achievement and delivery progress. New disbursements are initiated once the IP’s reports are approved. Representatives of the government have to sign on the agreed disbursement before the funds are made available to the partners. This approach ensures that all relevant actors are informed about the progress and new disbursements made. According to the interviewed IPs, the disbursement rules create inefficiencies and have led to delays. Instead of funding disbursements on a quarterly basis, they would prefer bi-annual disbursements which would give them more time to execute the budget in line with their own internal procedures.</p> <p>According to the 2019 annual report, the IPs recruited to assist in the implementation are three international and seven national CSOs. Four of them were categorized as women-led and one as a women-led and a women’s rights/ feminist organisation. For the remaining five, no information was available on whether they were women-led or women’s rights organisation. The reasons for this omission were not explained. The total amount awarded to CSOs was 1,870,432 US\$ of which 25% were management costs. Over 70 percent of the budget was awarded to international CSOs. One of them, Plan International, received 64% of the total amount awarded to CSOs in 2019. This strong concentration of funding to one international CSO is of concern and a potential risk for the programme. In light of the fact that the limited absorption capacity of national stakeholders to deliver results was identified as a low risk for the programme, this unequal budget distribution across CSOs does not seem justified. The PMC explained that national CSOs did not have the required capacity to implement certain interventions. Plan International’s experience on facilitating Village Saving and Loans Associations and other economic empowerment activities and their community work with traditional leaders gave them a competitive advantage.</p> <p>Execution of the Budget</p> <p>By the end of September 2020, the RUNOs had spent and committed 52 percent of the total budget. This is higher than the average spending (46%) of other Spotlight Initiatives in Africa although the commitment to spend 70 per cent by the end of Phase I (31 December 2020) has not been fulfilled⁸. The analysis of the Liberia budget and expenditure data for RUNOs UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNWOMEN and OHCHR at 30 September 2020 shows the following:</p> <p>Of the US\$15,844,000, US\$4,599,222 (29%) had been spent as of 30 September 2020 and US\$ 3,582,752 (21%) had been committed. Because of the low delivery rate, Phase I has been extended by a further 6</p>	

⁸ The figures are drawn from the financial data shared by the Spotlight Secretariat in January 2021.

months hoping the programme will accelerate implementation and deliver the full Phase I budget by 30 June 2021. The delivery rate (including expenditure and commitments) by RUNO is listed in Table 2. UN Women with 63% budget expenditure was closest to reaching the commitment of 70% (see also Figure 1 on the next page). Over 40% of the respondents said that there are moderate to great issues to execute the allocated budget as planned. Delays in filling positions and challenges in streamlining processes in the effort to operate as one UN have been reported as obstacles to execute the budget as planned. Key informants (PMC, government) also expressed that the implementation timeframe planned for the Spotlight Initiative was too short for rolling out such a complex programme in the context of Liberia.

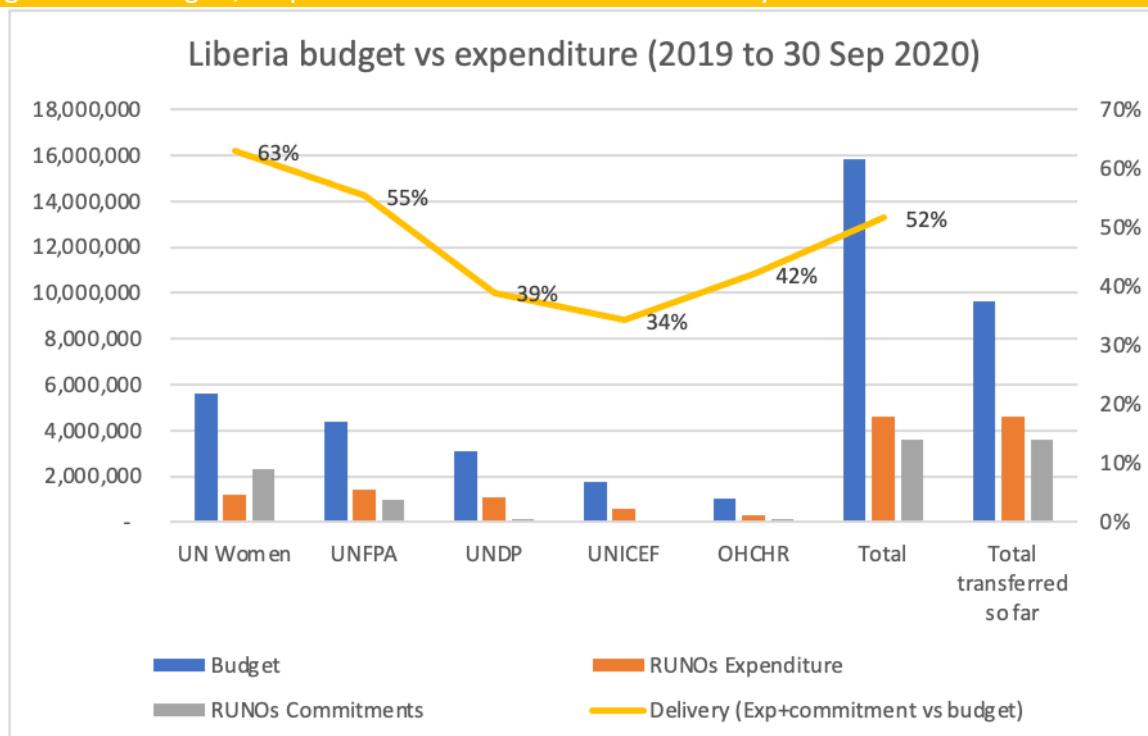
Table 3. General overview of delivery against budget by RUNOs

Liberia	Budget	RUNOs Expenditure	RUNOs Commitments	Delivery (Exp+commitment vs budget)
UN Women	5,610,859	1,203,122	2,327,454	63%
UNFPA	4,363,521	1,436,433	976,315	55%
UNDP	3,097,358	1,068,250	138,468	39%
UNICEF	1,745,875	599,645	- ⁹	34%
OHCHR	1,026,387	291,772	140,515	42%
Total	15,844,000	4,599,222	3,582,752	52%

Source: Financial data received from the Spotlight Secretariat in January 2021.

⁹ The RUNOs use different methods for recording commitments. For example, UNICEF's commitments do not include fund reservations and payroll commitments while other agencies do.

Figure 1. Budget, expenditure and commitments by RUNO



Graph produced by hera based on data shared by the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat in January 2021.

Although the original budget was designed based on the activities by output and outcome, the expenditure is reported by the headquarter of each RUNO through the MPTF gateway using the UNGD budget lines. Expenditure data by outcome and output area should be available at the country office of the respective RUNOs but is currently not collected or compiled by the Spotlight Initiative. This makes it difficult to assess whether issues of expenditure are affecting the achievement of programme results by outcome.

Expenditure averaged 29 percent across all budget lines, with staff and personnel reaching 44 percent of expenditure against the planned budget and contractual services standing at 16 percent (see Table below).

Table 4. Breakdown of budget and expenditure by budget line

UNDG BUDGET CATEGORIES	LIBERIA		
	Spotlight Budget	RUNOs' Expenditure	% expenditure vs budget
1. Staff and other personnel	2,082,620	920,954	44%
2. Supplies, Commodities, Materials	1,252,000	365,180	29%
3. Equipment, Vehicles, and Furniture (including Depreciation)	351,594	152,159	43%
4. Contractual services	3,034,804	489,204	16%
5. Travel	914,149	227,288	25%
6. Transfers and Grants to Counterparts	6,217,411	1,885,030	30%
7. General Operating and other Direct Costs	954,900	259,405	27%
Total Direct Costs	14,807,476	4,299,221	29%
8. Indirect Support Costs (7%)	1,036,523	300,000	29%
TOTAL CP Budget / Expenditure	15,844,000	4,599,222	29%
RUNOs' Commitments		3,582,753	23%
TOTAL CP Budget / Delivery		8,181,975	52%

Staffing levels for Spotlight and Management Cost

The ceiling for programme management cost is set at 18% of the overall budget. In Liberia, out of these 18% (US\$ 2,8 million), 74% are allocated to staff and personnel. According to the programme budget, the Spotlight Initiative funds the position of the programme coordinator (P4), the position of a technical advisor (P3) for the technical lead at UN women, 2 UNV and 5 national programme officer positions (NPO) and 1 national communication position. The remaining staffing costs (admin, finance, operations manager, M&E etc.) are funded through contributions from the RUNOs. At UNDP, for example, the Spotlight Initiative funds the position of 1 NPO while 6 other staff contribute to the Spotlight Initiative implementation. Their working time allocated to the Spotlight Initiative is paid through funding contributions of the agency. This implies that the majority are existing staff members for whom the Spotlight Initiative was added to their existing work portfolio. It is particularly noteworthy that none of the Operational/Administrative and Finance Staff for procurement and financial monitoring are funded by the Spotlight Initiative.

There are conflicting viewpoints as to whether the staffing is adequate. The PMC estimates that staffing levels are appropriate. In their perception, the positions fully funded by the Spotlight Initiative have been an improvement compared to the previous joint UN programme and have been substantial to the programme implementation. It was also acknowledged, however, that UN agency staff not funded by the programme have limited capacities to support the programme delivery due to multiple responsibilities.

"[...] the UN agencies, I don't know in other countries, but in Liberia, they are stretched thin. They have a lot of different tasks. So, giving them additional tasks on Spotlight if they are not funded under the 18 per cent that we have allocated, they are really stretched thin, and we would have major difficulties. But because we now have full time dedicated staff, I can also bring that on table to say, look, the programme has a full-time dedicated staff who needs to be on top of supporting capacity of the government or reporting. And this is something that really helps the programme. [...] the staffing levels that we have at the moment is adequate. It is sufficient." (key informant, PMC)

The interviewed key informants and online survey respondents from the RUNOs, on the other hand, perceive that both technical and operational support positions to the programme are insufficient. According to them, the inadequate staffing resulted in difficulties to ensuring timely and quality implementation.

"The in-kind contribution of staff has been challenging to mobilise given that the OHCHR Country Office is fully project-funded. More resources for staff beyond the NPO currently funded would have allowed for more focus of staff enhancing quality and speed of implementation." (online survey respondent, RUNO)

Key findings:

- The governance structure and implementation processes involve key stakeholders and are transparent. Each RUNO works with its own procedures. According to IPs, modifications to the implementation processes are necessary to improve the disbursement frequency.
- The Spotlight Initiative in Liberia did not meet the target of spending 70% by end of Phase 1 but had higher expenditure rates than other Spotlight Initiative programmes in Africa.
- There are contradictive viewpoints on the adequacy of staffing. From the perspective of the PMC, staffing is satisfactory while RUNOs perceive it to be insufficient. Further analysis is needed to explore whether the staffing capacity for the Spotlight Initiative is adequate.

- The allocation of 64% of the budget awarded to CSOs to one international non-governmental organisation is questionable. If the capacity of local CSOs is too weak to allow timely and quality implementation of interventions under the Spotlight Initiative, this should be reflected in the risk assessment.
- The absorptive capacity of the government needs further strengthening. High rotation among human resources at national level and a lack of institutional resources at County level are key bottlenecks to be addressed.

Recommendations:

- Liberia Spotlight Initiative to review with the IPs the timelines and modalities of disbursement processes to increase the efficiency of the operating model.
- Liberia Spotlight Initiative to conduct a workforce planning exercise to investigate the adequacy of current staffing and potential bottlenecks, in particular at the level of operational management prior to the start of Phase 2.
- For phase 2, we recommend planning for extensive capacity strengthening of local CSOs with the ambition to award grants to CSOs in a way that a more equal award distribution between national and international CSOs is achieved. This could also entail that international NGOs such as Plan International partner with local CSOs as they already do for the implementation of other grants (Liberia Spotlight Initiative).

8. Do partner government and other partners in the country effectively steer the action? (Please consider Government, CSO and EU Delegation)	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Good – Good
	<input type="checkbox"/> Problems
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Serious deficiencies

Government

The Spotlight Initiative initiative has put mechanisms in place to ensure government participation in all coordination structures. The different government Ministries are represented in the pillar working groups, the technical committee, and the Steering Committee. Albeit mechanisms being in place, the government partners do not effectively steer the action. First, the government has not been able to deliver their responsibilities of the Spotlight Initiative work plan. This was confirmed by RUNOs, the PMC and IPs. Execution was either delayed, of low quality or did not materialize. An example provided by the PMC was the set-up of a referral call centre for GBV survivors as part of the response to the COVID-19 crisis. The government has the implementation responsibility for this activity but has not been able to execute the activity. At the time of the evaluation, the call centre was still not operational.

“Since the last 18 months, however, the government has not been able to implement the work plan albeit the support provided such as standardizing templates, having more training, buying of more equipment to make them much more adaptable and usable to the context.” (key informant, PMC)

Second, there is lack of coordination and communication across ministries and between central level and County level government representatives. One example to illustrate the lack of coordination and agreement is the VAWG data collection processes. The MGCSP is the coordinating body for the Gender Information Management System (IMS), which is being implemented under Pillar 5. Albeit efforts are being made to collect quality data from the participating counties, it has recurrently happened at meetings that the other involved Ministries reject the data presented by the MGCSP. At the same time, each Ministry

collects data on VAWG for their own purposes. The motives for rejecting the data by the different ministries could not be explored by the current evaluation, but merit further investigation.

“One of the most difficult part in assessing progress has been the fact that when we sent data to the different representatives of the government, the data are rejected by just about all of them. Each Ministry would show their own records, which are unique to them. It is clear that there is a need to harmonise the ways in which the data are collected and presented.” (key informant, steering committee)

“The Ministry of Gender is responsible for the data collection about the GBV cases that occur in the five Counties where the Spotlight Initiative is implemented, and the Ministry is supposed to share data on a quarterly basis, however, over the past 18 months, there has not been any report that the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Gender endorsed as an official report, therefore, we do not have official documents to work on”. (key informant, steering committee)

The coordination and agreements for consensus among government structures at central and County level are not yet effective and have affected the harmonization of data collection approach on VAWG. This has been illustrated by key informants (RUNOs, IPs) through the following example: disbursements of IPs are signed off at County level in the presence of the Gender County Coordinator (the County representative of the MGSCP). The information related to this process, however, does not reach the representative of the MGSCP at central level who stated that the Ministry is not informed about the activities undertaken by the CSOs. This is difficult to corroborate with the fact that the MGSCP is represented in the different coordination structures (pillar working groups, technical committee, and steering committee) in which both the planning as well as the validation of completed activities take place (see also question 4).

Key informants (RUNOs, EUD and PMC) pointed out potential causes for the ineffective steering of the government. Some key informants stated that the government was insufficiently prepared in terms of absorptive and technical capacities to undertake a programme of this magnitude. This is associated with the government transition which took place in 2018. As part of the transition, most of the staff at ministry level changed. The new government representatives were not familiar with the operating procedures of the UN and had not been involved in the previous joint UN programme on GBV. It was also strongly highlighted that the involved ministries were insufficiently staffed, had often low technical capacity and lacked the equipment and resources to carry out the interventions.

While limited institutional capacity to deliver was recognized as a cause, key informants (RUNO, IPs) also highlighted issues linked to the institutional attitude of the involved ministries. The latter are dissatisfied with the implementation mechanism through CSOs and would like to have funds transferred through their own accounts. The fact that this does not happen is likely to impact negatively on their commitment to deliver (see also evaluation question 4).

“I think the challenge, major challenge at this stage with the government is the understanding of the role of civil society. And they also find challenging that the funds go more than 50 percent to the CSOs for implementation. They do not see that as positive to the program. This is a global guidance from New York that civil societies need to be an implementing partner in order to bridge the capacity gap.” (key informant, PMC)

“The CSOs are not completely accepted as partners by the government so the UN does the heavy lifting to include them in consultations.” (online survey respondent, RUNO)

Key informants (PMC, RUNOs) also expressed uncertainty on how issues are connected and how this could be solved. While discussions with the government have taken place to find solutions, they have not yet shown results.

“[On the failed execution of the government of their responsibilities of the work plan]: “Now, why they [the government] are not able to do that, why they are not doing it, I am not able to answer. [...] I do not know whether it is stuck at the decision-making management levels in the ministry or is it just stuck at the technical level because of the workload. Very often, the government says, leave it to us, we would like that to be led by us and handled by us. But the last 12 months of leaving it to the government has not been very effective because we’ve not been able to move very far.” (key informant, PMC)

CSOs

The CSOs at County level are organized in a County Secretariat to jointly assess needs, implement the activities, conduct monitoring, write the reports and provide feedback about adjustments required for the next steps of the implementation. At this level, CSOs have shown appreciation about the quality of collaboration amongst each other and with other partners. They reported that their voices are heard and that suggestions are taken on board.

At national level, the CSO reference group is represented in all coordination structures. The majority of the online survey respondents (70%) perceived that CSOs contribute to steering the Spotlight Initiative to a considerable or a great degree. Some CSO reference group members stated that their concerns and proposals are taken into account by the other members. There were also stakeholders (including three other CSOs), however, who perceived there are issues related to their contributions to steering the programme.

“We were part of reference team but due to some reasons, we removed ourselves from the group. We felt that the CSORG was not allowed to play its role as crucial as it appeared to be from the onset.” (Online survey respondent, CSO)

“Feedback given by CSOs/ women organisations to the RCO office are not acted upon.” (Online survey respondent, CSO)

One key informant (RUNO) felt that CSOs still struggle to understand the structure of the programme and its procedures. Another key informant (PMC) perceived that CSOs were difficult to coordinate due to their competition for resources.

EU Delegation (EUD)

The EUD participates in the meetings of the technical committee and the National Steering committee. There are conflicting viewpoints regarding the extent and the way the EUD should contribute to steering the Spotlight Initiative in Liberia. This had led to tensions in the institutional relationship and dissatisfaction on the sides of the PMC and the EUD.

According to the EUD, *“the EUD was given the authority from EU HQ to manage Spotlight Initiative as a ‘normal’ bilateral programme, however, it has not yet been fully recognised by the Secretariat in New York.”* The process of *“reports still firstly are being sent to the Secretariat, thereafter to EU HQ –and lastly to the EUD in Liberia”* is perceived as inefficient and as an *“unnecessary burden of work both on the UN in Liberia and EUD”*. To effectively contribute to steering the problem, the EUD would like to receive monthly updates and would like to be involved in problem solving processes (such as the current challenges in working with the government).

At the level of the PMC and the RUNOs, it was highlighted that the Spotlight Initiative was designed as a Global Programme between the EU in Brussels and the UN Secretary General’s Office. As such it follows different protocols than bilaterally managed programmes. The close involvement of the EUD in the

implementation and monitoring is perceived as inefficient and challenging by the PMC. RUNO key informants described it as micromanagement.

“They [the EUD] want to be consulted on everything. They want to know what is happening at every place. They want to be engaged. If there needs to be troubleshooting, they want to know each and everything, and sometimes they would like to know it before we send it to New York and we send it to Brussels.” (key informant, PMC)

The amount of their time investing in responding to requests and queries from the EUD exceeds what was anticipated at the level of the PMC. They also perceive that the EUD’s way of dealing with perceived errors in the programme management was not appropriate. At their level, it has also been difficult to deal with conflicting demands of the EUD and the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat/ or the requirement of internal UN procedures.

“I receive guidance very often from New York on what I need to document, and that document has to be internally reviewed by the UN and it does not need the level of consultation that is on other documents. This is an internal UN process, [...] However, very often somehow the EU delegation feels that it should not be a process that is only decided by the Secretariat and they would not like to have the document after the review is done at New York. They want to be much more on board at the beginning.” (key informant, PMC)

“It tends to get – the information, the clearances, the discussions – very, very complicated because I have a set of instructions and [...] the delegation wants to have complete control over the program here at the country level. This makes it very, very difficult and we are very often just answering questions and clarifying where we are and what we do. At the end of the day, it means that a lot of effort needs to go into discussions. [...] So, at the moment, it’s still very, very challenging.” (key informant, PMC)

At the level of the EU member states, there is a desire to be more informed about the Spotlight Initiative. The two interviewed member states expressed that they would like to participate as observers in the coordination meetings of the steering committee and the technical committee.

“I often talk to UN heads of programmes and government ministers and that is where I get informal information about the progress made by the Spotlight Initiative implementation”. (One of the ambassadors from an EU member state)

“As representatives of member states, we have not received any invitation to attend the meeting of the Steering Committee for a while and we are not being invited to participate to the technical meeting either although we are observers of the implementation.” (Another representative of a member state)

The EUD stated that the member states have delegated the management responsibility of the Spotlight Initiative to the EUD and “should therefore not be involved in the technical meetings”, but rather be regularly briefed by the EUD.

Key findings:

- The government is represented in the different coordination mechanisms but has neither been able to implement the actions under their responsibility in the workplan nor to ensure coordination and communication across the involved ministries and between the central and County level representative. The insufficient coordination and agreement is particularly visible in their inability to reach a consensus for harmonizing their data collection approach on VAWG. Different causes such as insufficient capacity and equipment and disagreement with the implementation mechanism through CSOs were described. Further analysis is required to explore these factors, to understand how they are connected and how they can be effectively addressed.

- There are mechanisms to ensure CSO contributions to steering the programme both at County (through Secretariats) and at national level (through the CSO reference group). Most respondents perceived these mechanisms to be working well, but there were also voices who felt that CSO participation could be more effective.
- The EUD and the PMC have conflicting viewpoints on the extent and on how the EUD should contribute to steering the Spotlight Initiative. The EUD manages the programme as a bilateral DEVCO programme and demands to be closely involved in the implementation and monitoring of the programme. The PMC experiences this way of working as time-intensive and inefficient and not aligned with the global programme approach.

Recommendations:

- To further understand the limitations and gaps in efficiency and effectiveness of the involved ministries, it is recommended to hire an external facilitator to (a) conduct a review of the institutional capacities and attitudes regarding the Spotlight Initiative of the involved ministries and (b) support the government to put in place an accountability framework, a harmonized data collection approach to VAWG and a communication flow that will allow a more effective steering of the programme during phase 2 of the programme (Liberia Spotlight Initiative and government).
- To ensure an effective and efficient contribution of the EUD to the programme, the current way of working and its challenges need to be discussed between the EUD, the PMC, the global Spotlight Initiative Secretariat, and the EU headquarters in Brussels. It should be carefully considered whether it is feasible for all actors involved to manage the Spotlight Initiative like a bilateral DEVCO programme (Liberia Spotlight Initiative, global Secretariat, EUD, EU headquarters).

<p>9A. If there are delays, how important are they and what are the consequences? What are the reasons for these delays and to what extent have appropriate corrective measures been implemented? To what extent has the planning been revised accordingly? BEFORE COVID</p> <p>9B. What are the consequences of COVID 19? To what extent have appropriate corrective measures been implemented? To what extent has the planning been revised accordingly? AFTER COVID</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Very Good – Good
	<input type="checkbox"/> Problems
	<input type="checkbox"/> Serious deficiencies

Delays before the COVID-19

The Spotlight Initiative implementation started six months later than initially planned. Further delays occurred, but important results were achieved for all outcomes. Many of the milestone targets for 2019 were, however, not achieved (see question 12 and 14 for a detailed analysis). In absence of the performance and financial data for 2020, however, it is not possible to say how important the delays were at the moment of the evaluation.

The reasons for the delays were multi-fold. The initial planning phase took longer than expected due to delays in approval from the president’s office. The hiring of the technical team both within the RUNOs and the coordination took longer as planned. The reasons reported for this were the difficulties for the UN to work as one, including disagreements between the RUNOs during the starting phase of the programme. The selection of the implementing CSOs partners took also longer than anticipated which was, for instance, because the process involved calls for proposals where each RUNO followed its own process for vetting the CSOs candidates.

Another reason was related to the new government which took office in 2018. Several staff members at the ministries were replaced by new ones who were often not familiar with UN operating procedures and had to be extensively briefed which resulted in additional delays.

The disbursement of funds also contributed to holdups. Each UN Agency works with its own guidelines and procedures when it comes to fund allocation. It was also reported that processes were lengthy because banks were not available in all areas where the CSOs were supposed to implement activities. IPs also mentioned other inefficiencies in the UN procedures and processes, such as the quarterly funding disbursement rhythm which was perceived as inadequate for their way of operating. These were, however, not corroborated by the RUNOs and could not be further explored by the current evaluation. In addition, most of the CSOs had to be trained to become familiar with the project and to have the necessary capacity to conduct the activities and fulfil the reporting and accountability requirements. Insufficient capacity and coordination at the government level also led to delays (see also question 8).

Corrective measures through capacity strengthening and technical support to IPs were implemented to mitigate the impact of and to avoid further delays. IPs also pre-financed activities before they received disbursement from the RUNOs to avoid delays. At the time of the evaluation, it was not certain, however, to what extent the workplan could be fully implemented by June 2021.

Delays during the COVID-19

In the online survey, 77% of the respondents estimated that the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated the existing delays. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, people were reminded of the Ebola outbreak and took extreme measures to protect themselves and some implementing partners closed their activities and sent their staff home. The pandemic also diverted limited Government capacity to response which also contributed to delays in implementation.

Key informants (RUNOs, IPs, government) unanimously state that the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic caused holdups and postponement in the implementation of the Spotlight Initiative. To mitigate the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, a joint response plan in partnership and coordination with CSO implementing partners, government partners, and the European Union (EU), was developed and implemented. The work plan was revised accordingly. The full range of adapted and additional actions are described under question 5. According to key informants (IPs, PMC, RUNOs), activities were accelerated after the four months lockdown which allowed to further reduce the implementation delays.

Key findings:

- The project started with a six-months delay. Further delays were accumulated due to inefficiencies in the UN processes and procedures (described also under question 2, 7 and 8) as well as the set-up of a new government in 2018 with little experience on the UN operating model. Corrective actions, such as briefings of new government staff and capacity building of partners, were implemented.
- The COVID-19 pandemic led to further delays, but the Spotlight Initiative rolled out a joint response plan which was effective for adapting the programme to the pandemic. The current extent of the delays cannot be assessed as the 2020 annual report, the 2020 performance data and expenditure data were still being compiled at the time of the evaluation.

Recommendation:

- In preparation of phase 2, it is suggested to assess the bottlenecks in the implementing processes and procedures with CSOs. Participatory solutions should be developed to ensure less delays in the implementation of Phase 2 (Liberia Spotlight Initiative and IPs)

<p>10A. How effectively is the Programme managed? Are the management arrangements for the Initiative at national level adequate and appropriate? 10B. How effectively is the Programme managed? Are the National Steering Committees functioning efficiently and in line with Spotlight principles?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Very Good – Good
	<input type="checkbox"/> Problems
	<input type="checkbox"/> Serious deficiencies

National Steering committee

The National Steering Committee is co-chaired by the RC and the Minister of the MGCSP. Its members are representatives from the EUD, the involved line ministries, the RUNOs and the CSO reference group including a representation from the traditional leaders. Its purpose is to provide overall strategic direction, guide policy-setting and approve changes to the work plan. The Steering Committee also establishes institutional linkages with the government coordination mechanisms on SGBV, HPT and SRHR to ensure coherence, knowledge sharing and sustainability. The planned meeting frequency was bi-annual but it was recommended at the first steering committee meeting to meet once or twice each quarter. To date, four steering committee meetings were held: three in 2019 and one in August 2020. During the first wave of COVID-19, meetings were postponed giving priority to coordination meetings for the response to the pandemic.

The online survey shows that most respondents have a positive appreciation of the work of the steering committee. There are 23 per cent who believe they are doing excellent work and 57 per cent who believe they are doing well. The respondents with a positive appreciation are from the RUNOs, the PMC and the IPs.

“Members constructively engage and provide guidance to the program teams, take initiative to address implementation bottlenecks, request for additional meetings to address urgent and important issues if not done in the regular periodic meetings of the NSC.” (online survey respondent, PMC)

There were also critical voices from the EUD and the government about the effectiveness of the steering committee. They point out lack of preparation and in-depth discussion, focus on the wrong details, lack of its members to understand its purpose and a lack of participation of relevant ministries other than the MGCSP.

CSO reference group

CSOs are represented in the management of the Spotlight Initiative through the 16-member CSO Reference Group (CSRG). Its members join the group in their individual capacity. There are seven members whose organisations are part of the women’s movement. The remaining nine members represent the civil society in different capacities (e.g. youth organisations, advocates and leaders of marginalized groups such as disabilities and LGBTQI and Faith Based Organisations). Their common element is their expertise on VAWG. As described under question 8, there is an overall positive appreciation of the contributions of the CSRG to the Steering committee. Their diversity is an asset to the programme and is well aligned with the Spotlight Initiative principles.

Guidance from Secretariat

There was very limited feedback (only two key informants from the EUD and the PMC) about guidance from the global Secretariat. As mentioned above, it is perceived at the level of the EUD that the bilateral programme management approach is “not fully recognized by the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat in New York” albeit being approved by the EU headquarters. A key informant from the PMC mentioned in this regard that they would appreciate more flexibility to be able to manage the requests from the EUD. They

also reported, however, the extensive support provided by the Secretariat when requested, including the participation in the selection of CSOs.

“The programme comes with the guideline which is from a global level. So that needs to be flexible at the country level. To a certain degree it is, but very often it is difficult when it comes to in the context for Liberia. You have a much more interested EU delegation who would like to know everything then there needs to be a kind of alternative on how you do it.” (key informant, PMC)

“But I think that Spotlight has been extremely well funded and supported also with the team from New York who tends to give us a lot of time whenever it is required.” (key informant, PMC)

The programme management and coordination (PMC)

The programme coordination and management team is led by the Programme Coordinator who reports to the RC. She has the responsibility to ensure programme coherence and to provide advice to the different RUNOs, the Resident Coordinator and different partners to ensure synergies in the activities undertaken and to avoid duplication. She also provides technical leadership, coordination, and oversight in the design of the work plans for all RUNOs. The team members are five focal persons (one for each RUNO), four field officers located in the counties, a communication officer (UNICEF), an M&E officer (the position is currently vacant) and the technical lead which sits under UN women. The collaboration between the PMC and the RUNOs was rated as either good or excellent by the UN representatives who participated in the online survey. The key informant interviews provided a more nuanced picture of the strengths of the PMC and the challenges it faces. The technical capacity of the team and the coordination work of the PMC are recognized positively by RUNOs which indicates an adequate management arrangement. Challenges remain at the level of accountability. While roles were defined and agreed, the reporting modalities were left flexible. This led to limited mutual accountabilities within the PMC team, but also with collaborating RUNO staff. It has also been an obstacle to joint implementation as RUNO staff sometimes tend to prioritize work of their agency and are not available to support the Spotlight Initiative.

“There is still a lot of work that needs to be done and agreed. [...] it does not work because they are not accountable to me or I’m not accountable to them in that particular way. [...] I think the activities and performances were spelled out, but reporting to who and when and how, I think this is something that we left it flexible enough to understand and we thought the heads of agencies would provide the relevant guidance. But it has been an issue that needs to be much more clearly communicated and done.” (key informant, PMC).

The Technical Working Group and Pillar Working Groups

The Technical Working Group is co-chaired by the Technical Coordinator and Gender Ministry and it provides technical and programme oversight to ensure timely implementation and monitoring of the programme. The working group meets monthly and provides reports and updates to the Steering Committee. Key informants from the RUNOs indicated that there have been delays as the Gender Ministry has not been providing reports in a timely manner and that the reports lack accurate data. This has constituted a hindrance for the effectiveness of the Technical Working Group.

The six pillar working groups are co-chaired by the Government and UN Pillar lead and include representatives of national and local CSOs. The working groups review progress against results under the six pillars and provide quality assurance through a focus on collective outcomes and concrete results, and joined up planning, programming, and financing. The members include the key thematic/sector focal

points from each pillar. Interviews with the CSOs and the RUNOs indicated that all six Pillar Working Groups are functional and meet on a regular basis.

Key findings

- Overall, the management arrangements at national level are adequate and inclusive of all relevant stakeholders. The National Steering Committee, the Technical Working Group, the six Pillar Working Groups, the CSO reference group are perceived as functional by most interviewees. The timeliness and quality of the reporting of the Technical Working Group seems to require improvements.
- The technical capacity and coordination work of the PMC is appreciated by the RUNOs. The accountabilities within the PMC team including reporting lines need to be defined.
- The government and EU member states have expressed reservations about the ways the programme is managed and complained about not being sufficiently involved by the coordination. The causes for these reservations have been addressed under previous evaluation questions and addressed through recommendations.

Recommendations

- For Phase 2: define reporting lines and modalities for the PMC team to strengthen mutual accountability (PMC and RUNOs)
- Review the reporting modalities for the Technical Committee to identify reasons for quality issue and implement adjustments to address them (government and PMC).

<p>11. Are the chosen implementation and coordination mechanisms (a “new way of working”, in line with UN Reform) contributing to greater efficiency?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Very Good – Good
	<input type="checkbox"/> Problems
	<input type="checkbox"/> Serious deficiencies
<p>For the sake of a more effective, efficient, coherent, coordinated and better performing approach, the Spotlight Initiative is being implemented in line with the directives of the UN reforms and thus the RUNOs should “Deliver as One”. In the CPD, this is operationalized as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Establishing field presences in selected countries in the form of national staff to ensure a harmonized approach to communities and strengthen joint programming.</i> This has been done: Field officers (National UNV from the PMC) are located in Nimba, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh and Lofa. 2. <i>A joint implementation approach with agencies supporting each other through sharing office spaces, transportation, meeting venues, etc.</i> Significant progress has been made on this point, but the extent was difficult to assess. The information given during interviews was in contradiction to comments provided to the first draft of this evaluation report. It was stated in the interview with the PMC that joint procurement and implementation had not yet materialized apart from certain initiatives such as the UN partnership portal (see quote under evaluation question 2) while the comment provided to the evaluation report was “<i>The Liberia Spotlight Initiative built on lessons learned in 2019, where joint procurement of services was done successfully by multiple RUNOs using a single agency service. In 2020, this was further explored to jointly procure other goods and services for communications, equipment, etc.</i>” 	

Operational teams from the RUNOs agreed to procure jointly, and several joint procurements have now been planned which will also help accelerate implementation. This initiative was endorsed by the heads of agencies to avoid delays in programme implementation caused by the various RUNOs' different procurement processes affecting the programme implementation timeline." (comment to the evaluation report from the PMC).

3. *The Liberia Spotlight Initiative will also benefit from a common KM system to support programming. For example, the PMC being housed in one office under the RC will enable all agencies to access guidance on various issues.*

Information in this point was, again, contradictory. During the interviews, it was reported that co-location was accepted by some RUNOs, but not all.

"It's almost two years into the program. I still do not have full buy-in from the UN agencies in the colocation. It is a partial success on co-location." (key informant PMC)

The feedback to the evaluation reported stated, however, that *"at the One UN House, Spotlight Initiative PMC has one office where all staff are located, and which is an important step towards closer integration of participating RUNOs"* (comment to the evaluation report from the PMC).

There are differences in opinion on whether or not the "Delivering as One" is leading to greater efficiency and effectiveness. The UN representatives from the PMC and RUNOs expressed their satisfaction regarding the implementation of UN reform principles. All but one of the 12 UN representatives¹⁰ from the Spotlight Initiative Team, RUNOs and PMC who participated in the online survey perceive that the closer collaboration is leading to greater efficiency. The EUD, on the other hand, perceived that there was insufficient progress of the RUNOs to "delivering as one" and that there were no significant efficiency gains. The IPs did not report direct insights on the One UN reform implementation.

One promising practice that is worth highlighting is the single partnership platform for calls for proposals from CSOs. The initiative enabled to harmonize the process to apply for calls across the five RUNOs. The PMC reported that an open day training was organized to brief the CSOs on the uniform procedure for application which attracted large interest from the CSO community. Albeit being introduced later than planned, it was reported to be very effective by the PMC.

It was also reported by the County Secretariat in Nimba that the programme has increased collaboration and enhanced the coordination of activities in the Counties through the Pillar working groups and the Secretariat at County level. It was not in the scope of the current evaluation to explore this further.

Key findings:

- The One UN reform was operationalized through the placement of Spotlight Initiative representatives in the Counties. It was also planned to co-locate the PMC and to streamline processes for joint implementation and monitoring. While significant progress has been made on these two aspects, the extent of implementation could not be validated by the current evaluation. The information provided in the interviews was in contradiction to the comments on the first draft evaluation report.
- According to UN representatives, the measures implemented in line with the UN reform led to greater efficiency and effectiveness. This viewpoint was not corroborated by the EUD.

¹⁰ Or former UN representatives

Recommendations:

- Liberia Spotlight Initiative to identify and document good practices on delivering as One UN that can be replicated and also to support the development of harmonized and joined up processes which would serve not only Spotlight Initiative but also other joint programmes.

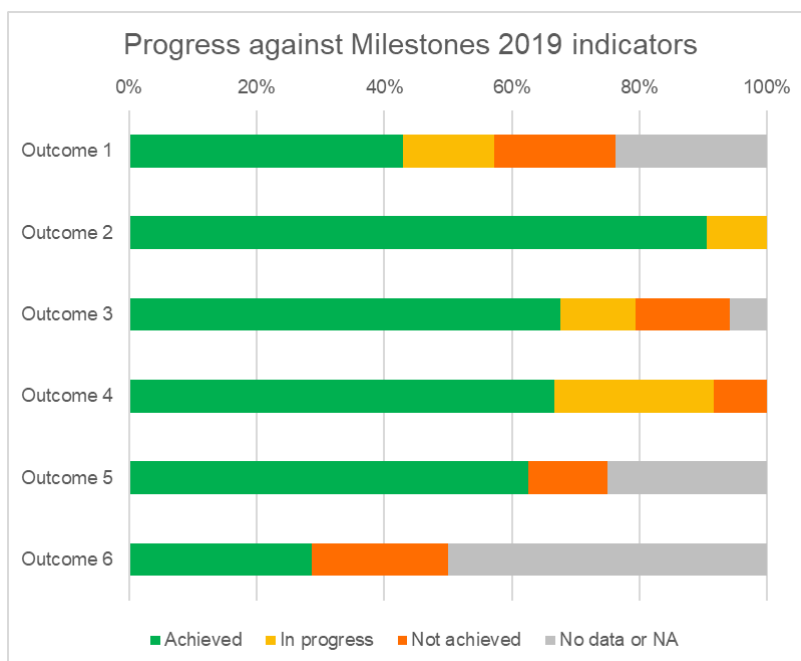
D. EFFECTIVENESS

12. Is the progress of each output conforming to workplan approved by OSC? Is the quality of outputs satisfactory? Are the outputs still likely to lead to the expected outcomes?

- Very Good – Good
- Problems
- Serious deficiencies

We analysed the data from the reporting against the results framework for 2019 (Year 1) – obtained from SMART platform through the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat. As neither the 2020 data nor the 2020 annual report were available at the moment of the evaluation, the current implementation progress could not be assessed by the evaluation team¹¹. The delays encountered at the start of the implementation have resulted in underachievement of the outcome targets in 2019. That notwithstanding, the data show that important progress has been made against the 2019 Milestones for Outcome 2, 3, 4 and 5 (see Figure 2 below). It provides a summary for each outcome by showing the **percentage of outcome and output indicators** which were fully achieved, in progress (over 50% achieved) and not achieved (less than 50% achieved) and those for which no data were available, or which were not applicable (NA) because there was no target for the year of 2019.

Figure 2. Progress against Milestone 2019 Indicators



The progress towards outcome targets in the performance data from 2019 indicate that the programme outputs effectively contribute to reaching the planned outcomes. All but one of the outcome targets had either been achieved or were in progress. The outcome target on attitudes on child marriage was not

¹¹ The latest available document is the 2020 interim report from January to June.

achieved which might be because the programme concentrated much stronger on FGM/C at the detriment of child marriage. It is also noteworthy that disaggregated data for two outcome indicators under Outcome 6 are missing which makes it impossible to analyse to what extent youth and LNOB CSOs have been part of the progress on strengthening coordinated efforts to jointly advocate against VAWG¹².

The key achievements and obstacles of the programme are summarized in Table 4 on the following page. Regarding the quality of outputs delivered, beneficiaries were generally appreciative of the participatory programme approach. Key informants from CSOs highlighted the positive impact of capacity building initiatives. The engagement of traditional leaders on sensitive, cultural issues such as Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) and other forms of GBV is another proxy indicator for the quality of interventions. The holistic assistance provided to survivors of violence was also highlighted as an indicator of quality service delivery.

“The Liberia Spotlight Initiative provided special support to the survivors of VWGA by guiding them through the legal process to report ^{the} crimes and by giving them shelter to protect them from retribution. They are given accommodation in the safe houses where they receive the necessary support while their cases are being legally processed.” (Social Worker, Nimba County).

A quality concern, however, is the considerable investment (US\$ 1,8 million) in the reconversion of traditional practitioners of FGM (zoes) including the construction of Heritage and Vocational Centres in a remote rural site. The amount (US\$ 1,8 million) seems disproportionate in relation to the funds, for example, for promoting community behaviour change. In comparison, the amount budgeted for community awareness raising amongst religious, traditional leaders, community leaders, community members (men, women, boys and girls), youth groups and male networks (HeForShe) for social behaviour change to address VAW, SGBV, HPs SRHRs and acceptance of marginalized is 176,100 US\$. While the available evidence acknowledges that the reconversion of practitioners can be useful as a complementary approach, there are multiple risks to its effectiveness and sustainability, in particular in areas of high FGM prevalence^{13,14,15,16}. The investments for this approach should be carefully considered and their sustainability closely monitored. Another potential quality concern is the reach of marginalized groups. While the programme is based on an inclusive design with the ambition to fully implement the LNOB commitment, the data for relevant indicators are not disaggregated and it is unclear to what extent marginalized groups benefit from the programme. The lack of specific activities targeting the most marginalized was also highlighted as a gap by a key informant from the PMC.

“But when it comes to really targeted support to LGBTI or to disabled, the program has a gap. I think we have not utilized any activities that are specifically working with these groups. And it would be something that I would address going forward, that we have interventions within the spotlight program that we need to really look at, given the gap that we now have.” (key informant, PMC)

¹² It was commented by the PMC that disaggregated data for these two outcome indicators is existent for the 2020 SMART Report (which was not available to the evaluation team).

¹³ R. Elise B. Johansen, Nafissatou J. Diop, Glenn Laverack, Els Leye, "What Works and What Does Not: A Discussion of Popular Approaches for the Abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation", *Obstetrics and Gynecology International*, vol. 2013, Article ID 348248, 10 pages, 2013. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2013/348248> See for example: *Dynamic of a Social Norm: Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting. Manual on Social Norm Change*. UNFPA/ UNICEF. Available at: <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/ALL-HANDOUTS.pdf>

¹⁴ WHO (2011). *Female Genital Mutilation programmes to date: what works and what doesn't*

¹⁵ *Dynamic of a Social Norm: Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting. Manual on Social Norm Change*. UNFPA/ UNICEF. Available at: <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/ALL-HANDOUTS.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://copfgm.org/2020/10/critiques-sur-la-reconversion-en-tant-que-strategie-pour-mettre-fin-aux-mgf>

The slow response capacity in setting up the call centre for the referral of VAWG cases as part of the COVID-19 response also indicate structural inefficiencies impacting negatively on the timeliness and quality of the latter. According to one of the Spotlight Initiative coordinators, *“the slow response capacity also embedded within the delays for the call centre operationalization was delayed. While the Spotlight Initiative released the fund for implementing the call centre, there were delays with the government in setting it up.”*

Table 1. Key achievements of Phase I and obstacles to address

Pillars	Key achievements in Phase I	Issues arising / obstacles to address in Phase II
Outcome 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity strengthening and advocacy contributed to the passage of the Domestic Violence Act in August 2019 Drafting of a bill outlawing FGM through an inclusive process Assessment of private sector compliance with the Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (PSEA) in five counties. As a result of the assessment, it was agreed to develop a PSEA regulatory framework for the private sector. Conduct of a review of customary law to identify gaps in terms of alignment with national and international human rights law (2020). CSOs, the Law Reform Commission and the Legislative Drafting Bureau were supported to simplify the Rape Law and the Domestic Violence Act to be rolled out to remote areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure the implementation and monitoring of the Domestic Violence Act, continued advocacy and capacity strengthening will be necessary to harness the political will and increase support from sub-national decision-makers While the drafting of a bill banning FGM has been a key milestone, it will be critical to mobilize law makers and civil society actors to advocate for its adoption.
Outcome 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity strengthening on Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting (GRPB) and SGBV of 40 CSOs and of the MGCSP, the MoFDP and the MOJ resulted in increased governmental resource allocations. The government agreed to allocated US\$ 70,000 to GBV and improved integration of GBV in the respective action plans of the three ministries mentioned above. In the five counties, the SGVB prevention and response capacity of diverse actors (CSO, legislators, Women and Children Protection Section (WACPS) officers, County Superintendents, traditional and religious council chiefs and elders, men, women and youths were strengthened) as well as the coordination mechanisms for case management were strengthened. Online survey respondents reported increased engagement of traditional leaders in protecting women from SGBV. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High staff turn-over in government institutions will require continued capacity strengthening
Outcome 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of the Spotlight Initiative, the Comprehensive Sexual and Gender Based Violence Prevention Strategy (CPS) was developed in a participatory manner involving relevant ministries, UN agencies, CSOs, the media and the private sector and communities and endorsed in 2019. The document is evidence-based and uses a socioecological framework with the objective to change social norms, structures and practices to prevent SGBV and Harmful Practices (HP) and to facilitate access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). It is operationalized through an implementation plan and a consulting firm was recruited to develop a communication strategy. The accountable Ministry for the implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While the mapping and reconversion of traditional practitioners (zoes) has been reported as an innovative and promising practice in the 2019 annual report, the available evidence indicates that the practice can be useful as a complementary approach, but that there are multiple risks related to its effectiveness and sustainability. Evaluations conducted in countries such

	<p>is the MGCSP. A simplified version with visual aids was developed in 2020.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of the Policy Statement by traditional leaders on the temporary suspension of Sande (traditional women’s bush schools). The policy suspends all Sande practices including FGM for one year. The interviewed Spotlight Initiative beneficiaries and Zoes (practitioners of FGM) confirmed that they had stopped initiating rites (including FGM). Their number was not quantified. A joint monitoring visit on the closure of all Sande bush schools was conducted in 2020 by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, MGCSP, the National Traditional Council of Chiefs and Elders (NACCEL) and the FGM Working Group Representative. • Identification of sites for four Heritage and Vocational Centres that will provide alternative economic and livelihood activities and training for FGM practitioners. The Centres will also be used to promote positive cultural practices. By June 2020, 300 zoes have been identified for a six-month programme for alternative income generation. • Extensive awareness raising on SGBV and HP reached 8,895 children (5,338 boys and 3,557 girls) in 2019 and 1,521 people (714 girls and women and 807 boys and men) in 2020. • In the first six months of 2020, over 3000 people (1,481 girls and women and 1,647 boys and men) were reached on awareness raising on the Sande suspension, the CPS and the Domestic Violence Act. The awareness raising session also included sensitization on COVID-19. According to respondents in the online survey, the reporting of SGBV cases has increased as a result of the awareness raising activities. • Training of 157 media practitioners on gender-sensitive reporting and SGBV issues in Liberia • Perpetrators of VAWG who serve time in the penal system are also given training to learn skills while they are in prison to limit cases of recidivism. 	<p>as Mali, Guinea, Ethiopia, Senegal, Uganda, Kenya, Burkina Faso, etc. reveal that the reconversion programs have not produced the expected results. For example, the experience in Mali shows that, at best, the actions taken under this strategy have helped a small number of practitioners to abandon FGC, simply by “passing the knife” to younger family members or health workers (references are provided in the footnotes on the previous page). As stated above, the investment for this intervention (US\$ 1,8m) is disproportionate and should not take place at the detriment of community behaviour change interventions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reported data for the awareness raising activities do not allow to analyse the reach of marginalized groups such as LGBTIQ or girls and women living with disabilities. There are also no specific interventions targeting these groups which has been recognized as a gap. While it is often difficult to capture them through disaggregated quantitative data, there is need to collect complementary qualitative data on how and to what extent these groups are reached.
<p>Outcome 4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 6200 women and girls accessed essential quality services in 2019. This included 32 fistula repair surgeries. • Six One-Stop-Centres, two Safe Homes, a maternal waiting room and market booths were refurbished to enable holistic assistance to SGBV survivors. Most of the identified SGBV survivors and witnesses (262 in 2019) received justice and psychosocial support. In Nimba Country, 10 two-bedroom shelters were constructed for SGBV survivors and other marginalized women groups. In 2020, 632 child survivors accessed One-Stop-Centres for assistance. • A toll-free call centre for SGBV and child protection was being operationalized as part of the COVID-19 response to refer SGBV cases. According to key informants, the call-centre was still not operational in December 2020. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to online survey respondents, the • The delays in setting up the call centre for the referral and assistance to SGBV survivors require close monitoring. • The reported data do not allow to analyse the reach of marginalized groups such as LGBTIQ, refugees or girls and women living with disabilities.

<p>Outcome 5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of national quarterly report generative by the national Information Management System (IMS) on GBV. • Participatory revision of the confidentiality guidelines for the GBV-IMS tools to align with international human rights standards. • Publication of an SGVB prevalence study conducted by Spotlight Initiative which confirmed that the practice of FGM continues to be widespread. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The data published are patchy, at times outdated and use different information sources from MGCSP, MoJ and MoH. • The capacity of Gender Coordinators at County level – who are responsible for case reporting into the GBV-IMS continues to be insufficient. They also lack digital equipment for data entry. • The capacity of Gender Coordinators at County level – who are responsible for case reporting into the GBV-IMS continues to be insufficient. They also lack digital equipment for data entry.
<p>Outcome 6</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct of a country wide mapping of 770 CSOs and CBOs engaged in EVAWG. • Set up of CSO secretariates in the 5 Counties where Spotlight intervenes for improved communication. • Members of 30 CSOs participated in capacity building on how to advocate and promote actions against VAWG. 	

Key findings:

- Delays in the programme have led to underachievement of the output performance targets in 2019, in particular under Outcomes 1, 5 and 6. Progress under outcome 3 and 4 was satisfactory. Output progress under Outcome 2 was excellent. In the absence of the 2020 data, it is not possible to gauge the current performance status of the programme.
- The progress towards outcome targets in the performance data from 2019 indicate that the programme outputs effectively contribute to reaching the planned outcomes. Lack of disaggregated data on some indicators do not allow monitoring to what extent marginalized groups are included and benefit from the programme in 2019.
- The participatory working approach, increased CSO capacity and the successful engagement of traditional leaders and communities are proxy indicators for the quality of the output delivery. The substantial investments in the reconversion of traditional FGM/C practitioners as well as the delays in the set-up of a call centre for the referral of VAWG cases as part of the COVID-19 response are of concern.

Recommendations:

- Once the programme performance data are available, analyse the progress towards the 2020 milestones and indicator targets to identify interventions with substantial delay in order to identify strategies to accelerate progress in these areas.
- Design specific interventions to ensure the effective reach of marginalized groups by the Spotlight Initiative.
- The budget investments in the reconversion of the traditional practitioners including the construction of training sites on rural sites should not exceed the investments in decreasing the

community demand for FGM. We recommend to carefully analyse the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of these activities to ensure that investments in the reconversion of zoes are not made at the detriment of community behaviour change activities.

<p>13. Is the absorption capacity of the Government, implementing partners or RUNOs an obstacle/bottleneck to ensuring that implementation is going according to plan?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Good – Good <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Problems <input type="checkbox"/> Serious deficiencies
<p>RUNOs</p> <p>Over 80% of the respondents in the online survey estimated the institutional and human capacity of the RUNO’s to be good or excellent. There have, however, been queries about how effectively the implementation processes are implemented by the RUNOs. The interviewed IPs reported that the limited amount of funding that are disbursed to implement the activities and the delays in accessing the funds have had a negative impact on the programme delivery. This was not corroborated by key informants by the RUNOs/ PMC. They stated that delays are due to the late or quality issues with the liquidations of IPs.</p> <p><i>“IPs can only receive a new tranche before the absorption of the previous funds up to at least 80% of the original tranche. This check helps to ensure proper utilization of funds as per agreement.” (comment from PMC)</i></p> <p>Implementing Partners (IPs)</p> <p>The absorptive capacity of IPs was deemed to be satisfactory by key informants. They have prior experience in implementing projects for UN agencies¹⁷ which prepared them to some extent for the implementation of their action plans. This is also confirmed by the online survey results where almost two-thirds of the respondents indicated that the capacity of national CSOs (69%) and women rights organisation (71%) is good or excellent and 25 percent believe it to be fair. Some CSOs reported to have pre-financed activities to avoid holdups. However, according to the annual reports and two key informants from the PMC, most of the CSOs required and were provided with capacity strengthening on reporting, monitoring, communications and visibility to ensure they are able to comply with UN standards. Despite the technical support they received, most CSOs delayed liquidating the previous tranches which also in-turn affected the timeline in which they would receive their next funding. It also happened that reports were submitted on time but had missing information. The consecutive back and forth of communication between the RUNO and the CSO caused then delays in the clearance of their files (especially for financial liquidation).</p> <p>The financial data provided did not provide details on expenditure by IP or other indicators such as overdue advances to partners that could have helped to further deepen the analysis.</p>	

¹⁷ This was, however, not a prerequisite for hiring CSOs for the Spotlight implementation.

Government

While 15% of the budget is allocated to strengthening government leadership and capacity, Spotlight Initiative funds are not managed by the government. Their absorptive capacities, in particular at the County level, have been identified as a key challenge in the programme reports and have also been highlighted by the interviewed key informants (from RUNOs, IPs and the interviewed Ministries). It was reported that staffing levels at the government are not adequate to undertake the activities as designed in the action plan.

“I know that the government is stretched very thin when it comes to people. Very often there are not enough people to do the work that is required in their offices.” (key informant, PMC)

At County level, key informants from the government and the RUNOs/PMC agreed that staff are not equipped for the tasks at hand.

“The County Gender coordinator works closely with us and we report regularly on our activities and she is supposed to forward the reports to the Ministry’s office, however, at that level, they complain about not receiving the reports. This is due to the fact that the County Gender coordinator is not equipped to be able to perform her duties adequately. She does not even have a computer, let alone an office.” (A member of the Nimba County CSO Secretariat).

With the increased reporting of SGBV cases, capacity gaps have also become apparent at the level of public judicial services. The interviews with representatives of the government and Focus group Discussions (FDG) in Nimba with social workers revealed that the courts are overwhelmed with SGBV cases to the extent that they are not able to process all of them due to lack of logistical and financial means. The Spotlight Initiative provides some funding to cover costs, but gaps remain.

“Spotlight provides a minimum support through the SGBV Crimes Unit for accommodation, feeding, transportation and medical cost for survivors/witnesses with cases under trials. However, logistical, and financial support are relevant since the distances to the courts especially at county levels are somewhat remote.” (key informant, PMC)

At national level, absorptive gaps were reported by key informants of the IPs, PMC, and government stakeholders due to staff turn-over, unfilled positions and untimely salary payments to staff impacting negatively on their motivation. The same concerns were also raised during the interview with the EU member states. They reported negative experiences during the implementation of the previous joint programme for which funds were managed by the government. The programme encountered substantial challenges due to the lack of its absorptive capacity. According to the key informants from the EU member states, the government Ministries are not prepared and do not have the capacities to implement the large resources availed by Spotlight Initiative.

Respondents to the online survey also indicated that the institutional and human capacity of the central and regional government to implement the programme required further strengthening. Less than half of the respondents believed it was ‘good’ or ‘excellent’, while 12 percent believed it was poor and 33 percent believed it was fair. They also indicated that lack of logistics, human resources and equipment inhibit the national and local governments to adequately monitor progress.

“At the government level, changes in staffing with limited capacity also contributed to the issue of capacity to execute the allocated budget.” (Online survey respondent)

To address these gaps, a full-time focal point person was assigned to provide training and capacity building of the government on GRPB at the MoFDP. The capacity building is piloted in key ministries to

increase the absorptive capacity of the government and to improve the gender responsiveness in their planning and budgeting processes.

Key findings:

- IPs voiced queries about the absorptive capacity of RUNOs, but these could not be corroborated with information provided by the RUNOs.
- The absorptive capacities of IPs were estimated to be satisfactory. Most IPs received capacity strengthening support. Timely and quality narrative and financial reporting remained nevertheless a problem that led to delays. Due to lack of detail in the financial data provided, the analysis could not be pushed further.
- The absorptive capacity of the government needs further strengthening. The lack and capacity of human resources at County were identified as a key bottleneck

Recommendations:

- To further understand the limitation and gaps in the efficiency and effectiveness of the involved ministries, it is recommended to hire an external facilitator to (a) conduct a review of the institutional capacities regarding the Spotlight Initiative of the involved ministries and (b) identify capacity bottlenecks that needs to be addressed in phase 2 (Liberia Spotlight Initiative and government).

<p>14A. Has the Initiative’s implementation and results achievement gone according to workplan approved by OSC? 14B. Are there any obstacles/bottlenecks/outstanding issues on the partners’ or government side that are limiting the successful implementation and results achievement of the Initiative?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Very Good – Good</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Problems</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Serious deficiencies</p>
<p>We conducted an analysis of progress towards outputs of the 2019 performance data of the Spotlight Initiative. The results are displayed in Table 5 on the next page. Even though there were delays due to a late start of the programme interventions, considerable progress was made towards the milestones in 2019. However, the result achievements of the output performance targets in 2019, in particular under Outcomes 1, 5 and 6, was not sufficient.</p> <p>For Outcome 1 (legislation and policy environment), only half of the 10 output indicators were achieved. The performance data for the outputs of Outcome 6 (women’s movement and CSOs) are also a reason for concern as only three out of six output indicators were not achieved.¹⁸ The outputs under Outcome 5 (data) also require close monitoring. Out of five output indicators, one was not achieved, and data were not available for another.</p> <p>Performance was strongest under Outcome 2 (institutional strengthening) with all output targets achieved (with the exception of one sub-indicator on sub-national multi-stakeholder coordination meetings). For</p>	

¹⁸ According to the PMC, the implementation of interventions under this outcome was accelerated in 2020 including capacity building on key issues and recommendation and capacity strengthening through the provision of grants to 25 CSOs and Women Rights groups and 5 CSO Secretariat;

Outcome 4 (quality essential services), progress was also satisfactory with two outputs out of four outputs achieved and two in progress. **Outcome 3** (norms and behaviour change) has the highest number of outputs (13) of which 9 were achieved and one was in progress. This indicates solid progress although the non-achievement of two outputs requires management attention.

The absence of data for one output indicator under Outcome 3 and one output indicator under Outcome 5 also needs to be addressed.¹⁹

Table 2. Achievement of output targets in 2019

Progress toward outputs	achieved	In progress	Not achieved	No data	Not applicable	Total Nr outputs
Outcome 1	5	2	2	0	1	10
Outcome 2	9	1	0	0	0	10
Outcome 3	9	1	2	1	0	13
Outcome 4	2	2	0	0	0	4
Outcome 5	2	0	1	1	1	5
Outcome 6	1	0	3	0	2	6

It was reported by the PMC that implementation was accelerated in 2020, however, a similar analysis of the 2020 monitoring data could not be conducted as monitoring data for 2020 were still being collected at the time of the evaluation.

In addition to the bottlenecks described under previous evaluation questions, the following outstanding issues were identified as obstacles to a successful implementation of the Spotlight Initiative:

- Three government stakeholders and the key informants from the County Secretariat in Nimba reported that there are significant delays in adjudication of SGBV cases at the Circuit Courts due too many cases to deal within a term of court. There is also limited legal guidance and representation for SGBV survivors, victims, and responders. The victims are not provided counsellors to advise them on the different courses of actions that are available to them in order to prosecute the perpetrators. The limited available guidance hinders many of the survivors from how to prosecute the perpetrators either because they do not know the legal process or because they are intimidated by the perpetrators or they are dissuaded by members of their families or communities. SGBV crimes are crimes against the State, therefore it is the primary role of the Government to prosecute the perpetrators. There are Case Liaison Officers (CLO) and Victim Support Officers (VSO), assigned at county level through the SGBV Crimes Unit/MoJ, who have the responsibility to provide guidance and support to survivors, victims, responders, and witnesses. Although they are being paid by the government, they always expressed challenges of logistical and financial support received. According to the PMC, this issue is “beyond the scope of Spotlight”.

¹⁹ The PMC commented that there is still no report for the indicator 3.1.3 in 2020 and that “this may have to be revised”.

- At the level of health facilities in rural areas, the number of specialized and motivated health professionals in the Counties to examine SGBV survivors or victims is insufficient due to limited incentives for these personnel to remain at remote health facilities. This was reported by two IPs.
- Several key informants (IP, governments) reported that among the Women and Children Protection Section (WACPS) officers in the Counties, there are few trained females. This is likely to impact negatively on the referral and case management of SGBV cases as many survivors are more comfortable in approaching women for assistance. According to the PMC, this is due to the fact that the remuneration and straining working conditions (bad roads etc.) make it difficult to recruit and retain women in the WACPS at county level.
- Some traditional and religious perceptions persist at community level and hinder norm and behaviour change, for example, the interdiction to speak out against forced conscription to bush schools and the taboos and myths related to initiation rites. Strong adherence to beliefs in supernatural powers of the zoes undermine the SGBV prevention and response. This was reported by both IPs and the government.

Key findings:

- The result achievements of the output targets for the Outcomes 1, 5 and 6 was not sufficient in 2019. It was reported by the PMC that implementation was accelerated in 2020, but the extent could not be validated by the evaluation team due to the non-availability of the 2020 data at the time of the evaluation.
- The timeliness and quality of the adjudication of SGBV cases have been a bottleneck, which were further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The availability of skilled health personnel and gender balanced WACPS for the assistance of SGBV survivors has also been an issue. While these issues were not within the remit of the current programme, there is need to address them during phase 2.

Recommendations:

- The concept for Phase 2 of the Spotlight Initiative should incorporate capacity strengthening of justice actors, including the Liberian National Police, Judges and Magistrates to ensure that SGBV cases are speedily adjudicated in a legal time frame in order to avoid prolonged pre-trial detention. It is also recommended to increase the support to (a) the MoH to assign at least two (2) trained, gender-balanced and specialized medical personnel at all government SGBV referral health facilities and to provide them attractive incentives to motivate them to stay at the facilities and to (b) the WACPS to develop and implement a strategy for the recruitment and retainment of female staff (Liberia Spotlight Initiative and government).

E. SUSTAINABILITY

<p>15. Is sufficient capacity being built so that local actors (particularly CSOs, the women’s movement and groups representing women and girls that face intersecting forms of discrimination) will be able to manage the process by the end of the Initiative without continued dependence on international expertise?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Good – Good <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Problems <input type="checkbox"/> Serious deficiencies
<p>The programme or its main stakeholders do not yet have a sustainability plan or an exit strategy. A sustainability plan will be developed under the leadership of the RCO and the Ministry of gender Children and Social Protection as part of Phase 2. We also did not find any evidence that additional resources had been secured for the future of the Spotlight Initiative. In the online survey, most respondents expressed doubts about the capacity of local actors to manage the process without international expertise: only 36 per cent of the respondents estimated that the central government had sufficient capacity; for local government structures, it was even lower (25 percent). For CSOs, 48 per cent of the respondents perceived that they were able to pursue the actions. For small CSOs and Women’s organisations, it was at 52 per cent. The high budget allocation of 70 per of the total CSO budget to three international CSOs also indicates that local actors are currently not prepared to manage the process by the end of Spotlight Initiative without continued support from international institutions.</p> <p>While sustainability planning and the capacity of local actors need to be further strengthened, it is important to recognize that some of the programme’s achievements have already contributed to sustainable changes in tackling VAWG. The capacity building provided to the government ministries on GPPB, the adoption of the domestic violence act, the changes in education curricula to promote gender equality and fight against gender-based violence and traditional harmful practices are likely to have lasting impact well beyond the lifespan of the Spotlight Initiative in Liberia.</p>	
<p>Key findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No sustainability plan or exit strategy has been developed at the end of the first phase; it will be developed as part of Phase 2. • While the Spotlight Initiative has contributed to strengthening the capacity of local actors to reduce VAWG, there are still substantial gaps that make it unlikely that the capacity of the national CSOs and the government will be sufficient to manage the process by the end the initiative. <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the development of the sustainability plan, it is recommended to ensure strong ownership of local actors (national CSOs and the government). The actions of the sustainability plan should be part of the work plan and need to be fully funded by the Spotlight Initiative or other confirmed funding sources (Liberia Spotlight Initiative). • Phase 2 should increase investments in capacity strengthening of national CSOs and women’s organizations to ensure that these organisations have the capacity to manage the activities without international expertise (Liberia Spotlight Initiative). 	

F. KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. PROGRAMME DESIGN:

- MTA Q1: Does the action align to the principles of the Spotlight Initiative as listed in the Spotlight Initiative Fund TORs?
- MTA Q3: Does the action presently respond to the needs of the target groups / end beneficiaries? Are the necessary consultations taking place with key stakeholders?
- MTA Q5: Have all relevant circumstances and risks been taken into account?
- MTA Q6: Are the indicators to measure results well defined and relevant to measure the achievement of the objectives?
- Add Relevance: Is the programme adapted to the present institutional, human and financial capacities of the partner government

Main findings:

1. The programme is well aligned to the Spotlight Initiative principles as listed in the Spotlight Initiative Fund ToRs.
2. The Spotlight Initiative implementation in Liberia builds on and consolidates the achievements of the joint UN programme on GBV and harmful traditional practices in Liberia. Its design used a consultative approach and involved all relevant segments of the government, CSOs, traditional leaders and RUNOs which have experience and are in a position to effect lasting changes in the country on issues related to EVAWG. It is well aligned to the government's PAPD and relevant SDGs.
3. The Spotlight Initiative, by design, is deliberately reaching the most vulnerable women and girls in the five Counties. It is, however, challenging, to analyse to what extent specific marginalized groups benefit from the interventions.
4. An inclusive approach to strengthening the capacity, coordination and networking of CSOs working on VAWG in the intervention areas of the Spotlight Initiative is being implemented.
5. All key stakeholders were to some or to a large extent involved in the design, implementation, and monitoring of the programme.
6. The programme in Liberia has identified relevant contextual, programmatic and institutional risks. Some of the risks – notably the risk related to weak, fragmented and low institutional systems, knowledge and capacity and the risk of limited government capacity to develop and analyse data - require further mitigation measures that need to be integrated in the intervention logic.
7. In response to COVID-19, the work plan was revised and relevant mitigation measures were initiated.
8. The indicators are relevant and gender responsive. Their number is adequate for the scope of the programme. While the indicators are disaggregated to capture data by age, sex, sector, LNOB type, etc., the programme lacks specific indicators on reaching the furthest behind first. This could be measured through a qualitative indicator.

Recommendations:

- a) To strengthen the accountability towards marginalized groups, we recommend adding qualitative indicators under Outcome 3 (norm and behaviour change) and 4 (quality essential services) to analyse to what extent specific marginalized groups such as persons with disabilities, sex workers and LGBTQI participate in and benefit from the programme (Spotlight Initiative PMC).
- b) It is also recommended for Phase 2 to revise the interventions under Pillar 2 and 5 to expand capacity strengthening of government partners. Institutional strengthening at sub-national level to capacitate the MGCSP's County Coordinators should be prioritised to improve the communication and data entry capacity on how to communicate this data to the central level government (Liberia Spotlight Initiative and government).
- c) Support the ministries to develop a harmonized approach to data collection, analysis and use on VAWG, which is agreed upon by all Ministries, to ensure that the current efforts on data collection under Pillar 5 are not going to waste (Liberia Spotlight Initiative and government).
- d) The evaluation indicates a shadow pandemic of increased VAWG as a collateral impact of COVID-19, We were informed by the Spotlight Coordination that this is already being investigated through research supported by Spotlight Initiative. It is critical to carefully assess to what extent the interventions in place are sufficient and adequate to tackle the consequences of this shadow pandemic (Liberia Spotlight Initiative).
- e) Under Pillar 3 and 4, it is recommended to include qualitative indicators to measure how furthest behind groups are being reached (Liberia Spotlight Initiative).

2. GOVERNANCE:

- MTA Q4: Do all key stakeholders still demonstrate effective commitment (ownership)?
- MTA Q8: Do partner government and other partners (CSO and EUD) in the country effectively steer the action?
- MTA Q10: Are the National Steering Committees functioning efficiently and in line with Spotlight principles?

1. Overall, the management arrangements at national level are adequate and inclusive of all relevant stakeholders. The National Steering Committee, the Technical Working Group, the six Pillar Working Groups, the CSO reference group are perceived as functional by the majority of interviewees. The timeliness and quality of the reporting of the Technical Working Group seems to require improvements.
2. The government is represented in the different coordination mechanisms but so far they have encountered difficulties in implementing the actions under their responsibility in the workplan and have had difficulties to ensure coordination and communication across the involved ministries and between the central and County level representative. The limited coordination and agreement is particularly visible in their inability to reach a consensus for harmonizing their data collection approach on VAWG. Different causes such as insufficient technical and institutional capacity and equipment were described. Further analysis is required to explore these factors, to understand how they are connected and how they can be effectively addressed.
3. Government stakeholders are not satisfied with their role in the implementation which impacts negatively on their commitment and ownership. Their perception of being side-lined and

insufficiently involved could not be corroborated by other data sources but similar issues were reported in the evaluation report of the previous joint-UN programme on GBV and HTP.

4. The CSOs and RUNOs have shown strong commitment to fulfil their role as part of the Spotlight Initiative.
5. There are mechanisms to ensure CSO contributions to steering the programme both at County (through Secretariats) and at national level (through the CSO reference group). Most respondents perceived these mechanisms to be working well, but there were also voices who felt that CSO participation could be more effective.
6. The EUD and the PMC have conflicting viewpoints on the extent and on how the EUD should contribute to steering the Spotlight Initiative. The EUD manages the programme as a bilateral DEVCO programme and demands to be closely involved in the implementation and monitoring of the programme. The PMC experiences this way of working as time-intensive and inefficient and not aligned with the global programme approach.
7. The EUD remains committed to the Spotlight Initiative implementation in Liberia but finds it unacceptable that the agreement to share reports before sending them to the global Secretariat and the EU headquarters has not materialized. Dissatisfaction with an insufficient involvement in problem solving of the EU has also been a concern for them. The PMC, on the other hand, finds it challenging to accommodate the close involvement of the EUD in the monitoring and implementation.

Recommendations:

- To further understand the limitations and gaps in efficiency and effectiveness of the involved ministries, it is recommended to hire an external facilitator to (a) conduct a review of the institutional capacities and attitudes regarding the Spotlight Initiative of the involved ministries and (b) support the government to put in place an accountability framework, a harmonized data collection approach to VAWG and a communication flow that will allow a more effective steering of the programme during phase 2 of the programme (Liberia Spotlight Initiative in collaboration with government).
- To ensure an effective and efficient contribution of the EUD to the programme, the current way of working and its challenges need to be discussed between the EUD, the PMC, the global Spotlight Initiative Secretariat and the EU headquarters in Brussels. It should be carefully considered whether or not it is feasible for all actors involved to manage the Spotlight Initiative like a bilateral DEVCO programme (EUD, EU headquarters, Spotlight Initiative headquarters, RCO Liberia).

3. PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT:

- MTA Q2: Are the Initiative's deliverables aligned with the UN agencies' mandate and priorities? Are the right UN agencies involved? Are programmes implemented in line with the UN System reform?
- MTA Q7: Are the chosen implementation mechanisms (incl. choice of implementation modalities, entities and contractual arrangements) adequate for achieving the expected results?
- MTA Q10: How effectively is the Initiative managed? How effectively is the Programme managed? Are the management arrangements for the Initiative at national level adequate and appropriate? [*are staffing levels appropriate?*]
- MTA Q11: Are the chosen implementation and coordination mechanisms (a "new way of working", in line with UN Reform) contributing to greater efficiency?

- **Add Efficiency:** Are the resources budgeted for (as well as the resources made available) sufficient for the planned actions (no over or underfunding?) [are the 18% allocated for programme management sufficient]? Is the programme generating additional resources? If so, how much (in % of total budget)

Main findings:

1. The Spotlight Initiative is aligned with the UN agencies' mandates, experience and expertise. UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women and UNICEF have already participated in the implementation of the Joint UN VAWG Programme prior to the Spotlight Initiative. This has ensured continuity. Good practices and lessons learnt have been incorporated in the design of the Spotlight Initiative.
2. An important foundation for 'Delivering as one' has been put in place through the accountability of the RC for the programme and the set-up of the PMC in the UN house. The leadership of the RC has been important to ensure coherence and facilitate problem solving across RUNOs. Joint procurement and implementation are not yet systematic. According to UN representatives, the measures implemented in line with the UN reform led to greater efficiency and effectiveness. This viewpoint was not corroborated by the EUD.
3. The governance structure and implementation processes involve key stakeholders and are transparent. Each RUNO works with its own procedures. According to IPs, modifications to the implementation processes are necessary to improve the disbursement frequency.
4. The Spotlight Initiative in Liberia did not meet the target of spending 70% by end of Phase 1 but had higher expenditure rates than other Spotlight Initiative programmes in Africa.
5. There are contradictive viewpoints on the adequacy of staffing for the programme at UN level. From the perspective of the PMC, staffing is satisfactory while RUNOs perceive it to be insufficient. Further analysis is needed to explore whether or not the staffing capacity for the Spotlight Initiative is adequate.
6. The allocation of 64% of the budget awarded to CSOs to one international non-governmental organisation is questionable. If the capacity of local CSOs is too weak to allow timely and quality implementation of interventions under the Spotlight Initiative, this should be reflected in the risk assessment.
7. The absorptive capacity of the government needs further strengthening. High rotation among human resources at national level and a lack of institutional resources at County level are key bottlenecks to be addressed.
8. The technical capacity and coordination work of the PMC is appreciated by the RUNOs. The accountabilities within the PMC team including reporting lines still need to be defined.
9. The government and EU member states have expressed reservations about the ways the programme is managed and complained about not being sufficiently involved by the UN, albeit their assigned roles and responsibilities in the Steering Committee, Technical Meetings and Pillar Meetings

Recommendations:

- a) To further bring to scale the work as one UN during phase 2, it is recommended to develop processes for joint procurement and implementation. This should include an analysis of the work plan to identify all actions which should be procured for and/ or delivered jointly (Liberia Spotlight Initiative).
- b) Liberia Spotlight Initiative to identify and document good practices on delivering as One UN that can be replicated and also to support the development of harmonized and joined up processes which would serve not only Spotlight but other joint programmes.
- c) Liberia Spotlight Initiative and IPs to review the timelines and modalities of disbursement processes to increase the efficiency of the operating model.
- d) Liberia Spotlight Initiative to conduct a workforce planning exercise to investigate the adequacy of current staffing and potential bottlenecks, in particular at the level of operational management prior to the start of Phase 2.
- e) Liberia Spotlight Initiative to plan for extensive capacity strengthening of local CSOs with the ambition to award grants to CSOs in a way that a more equal award distribution between national and international CSOs is achieved. This could also entail that international NGOs such as Plan International partner with local CSOs as they already do for the implementation of other grants.
- f) Liberia Spotlight Initiative for Phase 2: define reporting lines and modalities for the PMC team to strengthen mutual accountability.

4. PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND RESULTS:

- MTA Q12: Is the progress of each output conforming to workplan approved by OSC? Is the quality of outputs satisfactory? Are the outputs still likely to lead to the expected outcomes?
- MTA Q5/9: If there are delays, how important are they and what are the consequences? What are the reasons for these delays and to what extent have appropriate corrective measures been implemented? To what extent has the planning been revised accordingly?
- MTA Q5/9: What are the consequences of COVID 19? To what extent have appropriate corrective measures been implemented? To what extent has the planning been revised accordingly?
- MTA Q13: Is the absorption capacity of the Government, CSO and RUNOs an obstacle/bottleneck to ensuring that implementation is going according to plan?
- MTA Q14: Has the Initiative's implementation and results achievement gone according to workplan approved by OSC? Are there any obstacles/bottlenecks/outstanding issues on the partners' or government side that are limiting the implementation and results achievement of the Initiative?
- MTA Q15: Is sufficient capacity being built so that local actors will be able to manage the process by the end of the Initiative without continued dependence on international expertise?

Main findings:

1. Delays in the programme have led to underachievement of the output performance targets in 2019, in particular under Outcomes 1, 5 and 6. Progress under outcome 3 and 4 was satisfactory. Output progress under Outcome 2 was excellent. In the absence of the 2020 data it is not possible to gauge the current performance status of the programme.
2. The progress towards outcome targets in the performance data from 2019 indicate that the programme outputs effectively contribute to reaching the planned outcomes. Lack of

disaggregated data on some indicators do not allow monitoring to what extent marginalized groups are included and benefit from the programme in 2019.

3. The participatory working approach, increased CSO capacity and the successful engagement of traditional leaders and communities are proxy indicators for the quality of the output delivery. The substantial investment in the reconversion of traditional FGM/C practitioners as well as the delays in the set-up of a call centre for the referral of VAWG cases as part of the COVID-19 response are of concern.
4. The timeliness and quality of the adjudication of SGBV cases have been a bottleneck, which were further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The availability of skilled health personnel and gender balanced WACPS for the assistance of SGBV survivors has also been an issue. While these issues were not within the remit of the current programme, there is need to address them during phase 2.
5. The project started with a six-months delay. Further delays were accumulated due to inefficiencies in the UN processes and procedures as well as the set-up of a new government in 2018 with little experience on the UN operating model. Corrective actions, such as briefings of new government staff and capacity building of partners, were implemented.
6. The COVID-19 pandemic led to further delays, but the Spotlight Initiative rolled out a joint response plan which was effective for adapting the programme to the pandemic. The current extent of the delays cannot be assessed as the 2020 annual report, the 2020 performance data and expenditure data were still being compiled at the time of the evaluation.
7. IPs voiced queries about the absorptive capacity of RUNOs, but these could not be corroborated with information provided by the RUNOs.
8. The absorptive capacities of IPs were estimated to be satisfactory. Most IPs received capacity strengthening support. Timely and quality narrative and financial reporting remained nevertheless a problem that led to delays. Due to lack of detail in the financial data provided, the analysis could not be pushed further.
9. The absorptive capacity of the government needs further strengthening. The lack and capacity of a human resources at County were identified as a key bottleneck
10. No sustainability plan or exit strategy has been developed at the end of the first phase; it will be developed as part of Phase 2.
11. While the Spotlight Initiative has contributed to strengthening the capacity of local actors to reduce VAWG, there are still substantial gaps that make it unlikely that the capacity of the national CSOs and the government will be sufficient to manage the process by the end the initiative.

Recommendations:

- a) Once the programme performance data are available, Liberia Spotlight Initiative to analyse the progress towards the 2020 milestones and indicator targets to identify interventions with substantial delay in order to identify strategies to accelerate progress in these areas.
- b) Liberia Spotlight Initiative to design specific interventions to ensure the effective reach of marginalized groups by the Spotlight Initiative.

- c) The budget investments in the reconversion of the traditional practitioners including the construction of training sites on rural sites should not exceed the investments in decreasing the community demand for FGM. We recommend to carefully analyse the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of these activities to ensure that investments in the reconversion of zoes are not made at the detriment of community behaviour change activities (Liberia Spotlight Initiative, IPs and global Secretariat).
- d) In preparation of phase 2, it is suggested to conduct an assessment of the bottlenecks in the implementing processes and procedures with CSOs. Participatory solutions should be developed to ensure less delays in the implementation of Phase 2 (Liberia Spotlight Initiative and IPs).
- e) To further understand the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the involved ministries, it is recommended to hire an external facilitator to (a) conduct a review of the institutional capacities regarding the Spotlight Initiative of the involved ministries and (b) identify capacity bottlenecks that needs to be addressed in phase 2 (Liberia Spotlight Initiative in collaboration with government).
- f) The concept for Phase 2 of the Spotlight Initiative should incorporate capacity strengthening of justice actors, including the Liberian National Police, Judges and Magistrates to ensure that SGBV cases are speedily adjudicated in a legal time frame in order to avoid prolonged pre-trial detention. It is also recommended to increase the support to (a) the MoH to assign at least two (2) trained, gender-balanced and specialized medical personnel at all government SGBV referral health facilities and to provide them attractive incentives to motivate them to stay at the facilities and to (b) the WACPS to develop and implement a strategy for the recruitment and retainment of female staff (Liberia Spotlight Initiative and government).
- g) During the development of the sustainability plan, it is recommended to ensure strong ownership of local actors (national CSOs and the government). The actions of the sustainability plan should be part of the work plan and need to be fully funded by the Spotlight Initiative or other confirmed funding sources (Liberia Spotlight Initiative).
- h) Phase 2 should increase investments in capacity strengthening of national CSOs and women's organizations to ensure that these organisations have the capacity to manage the activities without international expertise (Liberia Spotlight Initiative).

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1. DOCUMENTS ANALYSED

Sources of Information: List all documents analysed	
Spotlight programme documents	Availability
Country Programming document as approved by OSC	Yes
Country Budget as approved by the OSC (may also include revised budget)	Yes
Spotlight Country Programme Snapshot	Yes
Inception report	Yes
Annual report/s	2018, 2019 Report
Interim narrative progress report Jan – Jun 2020	Yes
Annex A Country Report (included in the Annual Report)	Yes
Ad hoc (2 nd Tranche) report (may also include provisional narrative report – 2 pager)	Yes
Spotlight Initiative financial information on the MPTF Gateway	2019
Knowledge management workplan	Yes
National CSO Reference Group workplan	Yes
CSO Reference Group Bios	No
Communication workplan	Yes
Other documents	
Comprehensive Sexual and Gender Based Prevention Strategy for Liberia – November 2019	
Policy Statement by traditional leader on temporary suspension of Sande	
Steering committee meeting minutes April 2019	
Steering committee meeting minutes June 2019	
Steering committee meeting minutes October 2019	
Steering committee meeting minutes August 2020	
New Civil society national reference group focal team leads	
Five Stories directly from the Calendar	

ANNEX 2. LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED

Sources of Information: List of persons interviewed

Stakeholder group	Institution / organisation	Name	Position
PMC Spotlight Initiative	PMC Spotlight Initiative	Chencho Gyalmo Dorjee	Liberia Spotlight Initiative Coordinator
RUNO	UNICEF	Leila Omar Gad	Country Representative
RUNO	UNDP	Mr. Stephen Rodriques	Country Representative
RUNO	UNW	Marie Goreth Nzigama	Country Representative
RUNO/ PMC Spotlight Initiative	UNW/ PMC Spotlight Initiative	Pearl Atuhaire	Programme Technical Specialist
RUNO	UNFPA	Dr. Bannet Ndyanabangi	Country Representative
EU Delegation	EU	Michelle Grundberg	
EU member states	Ambassadors	EU Member States	Ambassadors
Government	Ministry of Gender and Children and Social Protection	Lovette Siedi	Director
Government	Ministry of Gender and Children and Social Protection	Alice Johnson Howard	Vice minister
RUNO	Commissioner OHCHR	Madam Fatima Mohammed	Country Representative
Government	Law Reform Commission	Bokai Kanneh	Director
Government	Ministry of Health	Bentoe Tehoungue	Director
Government	Liberia National Police	Vannah Boakai	Police officer
Community	Tribal Leaders	Ma Sitta	Chiefs
Government	MGCSP	Benedict D. Nyae (Montserrado) James Mazolaville (Grand Cape Mount) Yaah Belleh Suah (Nimba) Esther G. Koryon (Lofa) Wallace Barway (Grand Gedeh)	Coordinator
Government	Ministry of Internal Affairs	Solomon Miller – Montserrado Mark Gblinwon – Nimba Paul T. Neeor – Grand Gedeh Samuel Mulbah – Lofa Tumbay Dondo – Grand Cape Mount	Inspector

Government	Ministry of Internal Affairs	Ministry of Internal Affairs	Charleen Davis
CSO	Plan International	Marie Togbana-Gbah	Coordinator
CSO	West African Network in Peace Building (WANEP)	Victoria Wollie	President
CSO	Medica Liberia	Caroline Bowa	Country Director
CSO	Rural Women Association	Caroline Bowah	President
CSO	Liberia Feminist Forum	Facia B. Harris	Executive Coordinator
CSO	Liberian Women Empowerment Network (LIWEN)	Edith Mulbah	President
CSO	Women Empowerment for Self-Employment (WE4SELF)	Grace Nagbe	President
CSO	United Fund for the Development of Underaged Mothers (UFDUM)	Abdul Bangura	President
CSO	Female Journalist Association of Liberia (FEJAL)	Siatta Scott Johnson	President
CSO	He for She	Tamba Forkpah Jedidiah Johnson	National Coordinator
Community	Focus Group 1 Nimba: Health Rehabilitation	Meeting with health and rehabilitation actors with visit to one stop centre + safe homes + coping centre focal points	
Community	Focus Group 2 -Nimba :Justice	Meeting with justice and security stakeholders and visit to WACPS office	
community	Focus Group 3 : Nimba Child Parliament	meeting with adolescent and children and visit to field sites	
CSOs	Focus Group 4- Ghanta, Nimba : meeting with CSOs and CSO secretariats and visit to field sites	Jzohn Alexander Nyahn Jr	Executive Director, CHES- Liberia
CSOs	Development Education Network- Liberia (DEN-L)	Peter Dolo	President
Government	Focal Point person, Ministry of Finance	Sarah M. Johnson	Gender Sensitive Budgeting Focal Point Person
Government	Ministry of Education	M Joseph Kenneth Henny Madia Harring	Director for School Health, Ministry of Education

			Executive Director for Curriculum Development at the Ministry of Education
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ANNEX 3. ONLINE SURVEY RESPONSES REGARDING THE ALIGNMENT OF THE PROGRAMME TO THE PRINCIPLES OF THE INITIATIVE



ANNEX 4. PARTICIPATION IN DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

Response to the question: “On a scale from 1 to 3, to what extent were the following stakeholders involved in the design, monitoring and implementation of the programme”

