



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

Malawi

Annual Narrative Programme Report

01 January 2020 – 31 December 2020

Initiated by the European Union and the United Nations:



Programme Title & Programme Number

Programme Title: Spotlight Initiative Country Programme for Malawi

MPTF Office Project Reference Number:¹
00111640

Recipient Organization(s)

UNDP
UNFPA
UNICEF
UN Women

Programme Cost (US\$)

Total Phase I approved budget as per the Spotlight CPD/RPD: 20,990,484 USD

Phase I Spotlight funding:² 20,000,000 USD

Agency Contribution: 990,484 USD

Spotlight Funding and Agency Contribution by Agency:

Name of RUNO	Spotlight Phase I (USD)	UN Agency Contributions (USD)
UNICEF	4,077,502	169,670
UNDP	4,506,897	310,000
UN Women	5,850,290	70,000
UNFPA	5,565,312	440,814
TOTAL:	20,000,000	990,484

Priority Regions/Areas/Localities for the Programme

Nationwide with a particular focus on six proposed districts (Mzimba, Nkhata Bay, Ntchisi, Dowa, Nsanje and Machinga), selected based on performance on key indicators, as well as presence of other programmes and UN organizations. The programme intends to scale up and replicate the approach to at least nine districts by mobilizing partners and additional resources

Key Partners

Gov: Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare; Ministry of Local Government; Ministry of Education; Ministry of Homeland Security, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Justice, Malawi Police Service

Associated Agencies: UNAIDS, UNESCO, UNHCR

CSOs: 18 national NGOs, 8 CBOs, 2 International NGOs

Others: Media, Academia, traditional leaders

Programme Start and End Dates

Start Date:
01.01.2019

End Date:
31.12.2022

Report Submitted By:

Name: Maria Jose Torres
Title: UN Resident Coordinator
E-mail address: torres8@un.org

Name: Teemar Kidane
Title: Spotlight Initiative Joint Programme Coordinator
E-mail address: teemar.kidane@one.un.org

¹ The Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) Office Project Reference Number is the same number as the one on the Notification message. It is also referred to as "Project ID" on the project's factsheet page, the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](#).

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

Table of Contents

List of Acronyms	1
Executive Summary	3
Contextual Shifts and Implementation Status.....	6
Programme Governance and Coordination.....	10
National Steering Committee.....	10
Civil Society National Reference Group	11
Inter-agency coordination, technical committees and other governance mechanisms ..	12
Programme Partnerships.....	14
Government	14
EU	15
Civil Society	15
Cooperation with other UN Agencies	16
Others.....	17
Results	17
Capturing Broader Transformations Across Outcomes	17
Capturing Change at Outcome Level	20
Rights Holders (“Beneficiaries”)	36
Challenges and Mitigating Measures.....	38
Lessons Learned and New Opportunities	40
Lessons Learned	40
New Opportunities	42
Innovative, Promising or Good Practices.....	44
Good Practices.....	44
Promising Practices	46
Innovative Practices.....	46

Communications and Visibility 48

 Overview 48

 Media and visibility events 50

 Campaigns 51

 Human interest stories 52

 Testimonials 54

Next Steps 56

Annexes 58



SI Scholarship beneficiaries interact during a class session.
Photo Credit: UNICEF

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADC	Area Development Committee
AWP	Annual Workplan
CA	Community Activist
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CPW	Child Protection Worker
CSNRG	Civil Society National Reference Group
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CVSU	Community Victim Support Unit
DaO	Delivering as One
DEC	District Executive Committee
DDP	District Development Plan
EoI	Expression of Interest
ESP	Essential Services Package
EVAWG	Ending Violence Against Women and Girls
FSW	Female Sex Workern
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GBVMIS	Gender Based Violence Management Information System
GoM	Government of Malawi
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
GRL	Gender Related Law
GTWG	Gender Technical Working Group
HIV	Human Immo-deficiency Virus
HP	Harmful Practice
IDGC	International Day of the Girl Child
IMS	Information Management System
IP	Implementing Partner
IPGT	Inter Personal Group Therapy
JSSP	Joint Sector Strategic Plan
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer
LNOB	Leaving No One Behind
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
MoEST	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
MoGCDSW	Ministry Of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MoLGRD	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
NCHE	National Council for Higher Education
NSC	National Steering Committee
NSO	National Statistical Office
OPC	Office of The President and Cabinet

PFA	Psychological First Aid
PMT	Programme Management Team
PSEA	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
RC	Resident Coordinator
RCO	Resident Coordinator's Office
RUNO	Recipient United Nations Organisation
SC	Steering Committee
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SI	Spotlight Initiative
SMC	School Monitoring Committee
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SRH	Sexual Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual Reproductive Health Rights
ToC	Theory of Change
TOT	Training of Trainer
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAP	Village Action Plan
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
VDC	Village Development Committee
VSL	Village Savings and Loans
VSU	Victim Support Unit
YFN	Young Feminists Network

Executive Summary

The Spotlight Initiative (SI) Malawi picked up considerable pace in 2020 and continues to illustrate the value of United Nations (UN) Reform and Delivering as One (DaO) in complementarity with operating as a true demonstration fund for UN Reform. This cohesive approach to the Programme's implementation has resulted in catalytic results towards the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls (EVAWG) that reflect the transformational vision of the SI. The strategic partnership between the EU and the UN remains a driving force for the achievement of sustainable results under the Programme.

UN Reform and DaO principles are firmly embedded throughout the SI and are a salient feature of the Initiative. The Initiative supports survivors holistically through a multi-dimensional Programme that leverages on the expertise, experiences and resources of 4 UN Agencies (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women), as well as of the EU, resulting in greater efficiency and deeper impact. This programmatic cohesion is further enhanced through the Resident Coordinator's leadership, which serves to situate the SI within the broader development landscape of Malawi.

The programmatic successes of 2020 are also testament to several strategic partnerships that were established and/or strengthened at all levels. The leadership of the SI's two-line Ministries, the Ministry of Gender Community Development and Social Welfare (MoGCDSW) and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MoLGRD), ensured the alignment of the SI to Malawi's efforts towards the achievement of the SDGs and national development goals, particularly on SDG 5 on Gender Equality. In addition, the MoLGRD has been a crucial partner in ensuring the sustainability of the SI by mandating and empowering district and traditional authorities to steer the Programme at the local level.

The UN and EU alliance attained new heights in 2020 and captured the attention of Malawians through the delivery of powerful messages on EVAWG. The two institutions collaborated closely to advocate for the enhanced protection of women and girls throughout the year, including raising awareness on the heightened risks faced by women and girls in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, the EU contributed to the SI's efforts to transform harmful behaviour that affect women and girls, and continues to play a critical role that extends beyond the traditional donor function.

By the end of 2020, a total of **28 CSOs were engaged as Implementing Partners (IPs) to administer approximately 40% of the 2020 Programme budget. Of these 28 CSOs, 40% are grassroots organisations.** The prioritization of national partners reflects the Programme's sustainable approach to EVAWG by building the capacity of local organisations already actively addressing VAWG and SRHR in SI communities.

In line with the principle of Leaving No One Behind (LNOB), the Malawi SI partnered with a broad spectrum of civil society actors that focus on mitigating the intersectional discriminations faced by women and girls. **This enabled the SI to meaningfully engage female sex workers, female refugees, women, and girls living with HIV-AIDS and women and girls with disabilities both as beneficiaries of the SI and to empower partners driving change in their own homes and communities.**

The SI's partnership with Civil Society was further reinforced through the Civil Society National Reference Group (CSNRG). Its 14 experts on Sexual and Gender Based Violence and Harmful Practices (SGBV/HP) and Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) represent a cross-section of society, including the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ) community, female sex workers, traditional leaders, and others. This diverse membership informs and reinforces the LNOB approach employed by the SI and positions the CSNRG to strengthen the SI's governance by contributing its broad expertise and inclusive lens. A number of measures were adopted to bolster the CSNRG's role, including their permanent inclusion in the SI core team, and the facilitation of a CSNRG shadow monitoring mission to all SI districts.

As the degree of cohesion within the SI UN team intensified, the positive collaborative spirit had a spillover effect into other processes, to the benefit of women and girls. Under the leadership of the RC, the SI coordination team convened 3 other UN Joint Programmes (JPs) to brainstorm and agree on a cohesive response to the surge in teenage pregnancies and child marriages that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic, for maximized impact.

Thus, the SI and its partners achieved significant results across all 6 outcome areas of the SI while also contributing to SDG 5 on Gender Equality in particular, but also to SDGs 3 on Health, 4 on Education, 10 on Reduced Inequalities, 16 on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, and 17 on Partnerships.

Strategic litigation under Pillar 1 (Laws and Policies) elevated the position of VAWG on the political agenda of the country by helping to set a ground-breaking historic legal precedent that protects women and girls from violence. The High Court ruling on the emblematic Msundwe case³ holds State actors accountable for perpetrating VAWG in a situation of political and electoral unrest and led to the creation of institutional mechanisms to prevent VAWG by the Police.

Institutional strengthening through Pillar 2 went beyond conventional state entities to include traditional leaders, who now have a framework, and established network to harmonize and guide their role in EVAWG. Consultations with 3,421 community stakeholders ensured that the innovative Chiefs Forums are embraced by all and that the Chiefs are accountable to their communities, particularly women and girls.

³ The State v The Inspector General of Police and Others Ex parte M.M. and Others Judicial Review Cause No 7 of 2020 –commonly referred to as the Msundwe and Mbwatalika case. The case entails the rape of 14 women and 4 girls by the Malawi Police during the post electoral violence that erupted in October 2019.

Under Pillar 3, interventions to transform harmful behaviour, attitudes, and norms mitigated the risks of SGBV/HPs faced by women and girls and empowered them to speak out. For instance, the **Safe Schools intervention taught 212,262 adolescent learners how to detect and report SGBV/HPs and led to the identification of 941 cases of child marriage and their immediate referral to relevant authorities and actors for action.** Additionally, the Safe Space Mentorship Programme created a **cadre of 11,440 young women who can ably challenge harmful behaviour that fuel GBV. Their work resulted in the identification of 1,893 cases of child marriage,** including 71 cases that subsequently secured convictions in court. In promoting new and positive masculinities, the SI Malawi mobilised over 3,670 men and boys as champions of change and EVAWG.

To ensure access to quality and essential SGBV and SRHR services (Pillar 4), the **SI enhanced the capacities of 1,286 service providers in all sectors, including health, mental health, justice, and livelihoods; the improved services and livelihood opportunities benefitted a total of 19,733 vulnerable women and girls.** In line with the principle of LNOB, the SI improved the mobility of service providers and community workers to assist women and girls living in hard-to-reach areas through the provision of 60 motorbikes and 940 bicycles.

For the first time in Malawi, a harmonised data collection tool was created to facilitate cohesive SGBV/HP-related data collection by the judiciary, health and social welfare sectors. Similarly under Pillar 5, substantial improvements to Police and Judiciary information systems have led to greater availability of data on SGBV/HPs, and facilitated evidence-based responses to such violence by all actors.

Lastly, under Pillar 6, the SI greatly enhanced women's movement building in Malawi by facilitating the establishment of district Women's Assemblies tasked with coordinating and strengthening women's movement building. **A series of capacity-building interventions on topics like disability mainstreaming, SRHR, and effective campaigning has enabled at least 180 women-led grassroots organisations to effectively establish VAWG as a priority in their communities.**

The above results were achieved despite several challenges that arose during a tumultuous year for the country. In February, the Malawi Constitutional Court nullified the results of the presidential elections held in May 2019 and ordered fresh presidential elections, which brought a change of Government by July. Consequently, the rate of implementation slowed in the pre and post-electoral periods, and the National Steering Committee has yet to be convened as the new Government has not determined who will assume the Chairmanship of the Committee.

On the 30th of March 2020, the former President of Malawi declared the coronavirus pandemic a National Disaster. A series of preventative measures were instigated, including travel and meeting restrictions, the closure of schools, and restrictions of public gatherings. With few cases and deaths reported, the impact of COVID-19 was largely economic and human rights-related. **The closure of schools from April to October 2020 had an especially devastating effect on girls. Between April and September 2020, official figures recorded 13,000 child marriages, 40,000 teenage pregnancies,** and shockingly high reports of rape and sexual abuse of women and girls.

The preventative measures obliged the redesign of numerous interventions, particularly hands-on capacity-building interventions, school-based activities, and community mobilisation activities. As IPs sought to adjust activities and negotiate these with RUNOs, the Programme faced major delays and added costs in implementation.

Nonetheless, the SI team was quick to enact a number of programmatic adjustments. Among these, school-based activities were relocated to community structures, and RUNOs relied on grassroots partners, community structures, and traditional leaders to continue with interventions while still respecting preventative measures.

Throughout the year, the SI Malawi team made concerted efforts to get implementation back on track, which continues to be delayed by some 3-5 months. Regularly updated acceleration plans are in place, with new programmatic priorities reflected, including mainstreaming child marriage and teenage pregnancies.

Contextual Shifts and Implementation Status

Malawi remains one of the poorest countries in the world, ranking 172nd out of 188 on the UNDP Human Development Index. Significant inequalities, governance gaps and the consequences of COVID-19 threaten development gains to date as well as internal stability.

Despite important efforts by the Malawian Government, violence and discrimination against women and girls remain commonplace. SGBV and HPs rooted in widespread gender inequality are exemplified by one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world, high rates of maternal mortality and of physical and sexual violence. Violence and discrimination against other groups including persons with disabilities, albinism or those identifying as LGBTIQ is also commonplace. Access to justice is weak and inconsistent, despite some progress in strengthening national accountability mechanisms. Civic space remains limited, partly due to restrictive laws.

In 2020 the police recorded 103 mob justice incidents compared to 28 in 2019. Many of these attacks were gender-related, in which older women were accused of witchcraft and beaten to death. The causes lie in a loss of public trust in the police and the need to increase professionalization and discipline in the Police Service, weaknesses and lack of understanding in the criminal justice system and inadequate structures at the community level to address concerns.

In late 2020 Malawi underwent its 4th cycle of the Universal Periodic Review, to which the SI contributed. Recommendations supported by the GoM include increased attention to gender equality, ending child marriage and SGBV, the rights of the child, protection of persons living with albinism or with a disability, improving access to adequate health services, improving

sexual and reproductive health/rights, family planning and contraception, and addressing maternal mortality. Conversely, the Government did not support recommendations related to decriminalizing consensual same-sex relationships.

The events of 2020 including significant political shifts and the response to COVID-19 magnified these challenges. In February, the Malawi Constitutional Court nullified the results of the presidential elections held in May 2019, which it said were characterised by “widespread, systematic and grave irregularities”. The Court proceeded to order new elections within 150 days and presidential elections were held once again in late June. The opposition party won, and by July a new Government was installed. The pre and post-electoral periods were further complicated by the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic, with the electoral activities triggering an increase in the number of COVID-19 cases. These periods also saw a deceleration in the pace of SI implementation due to difficulties in accessing communities, the preoccupation of government counterparts, and concerns that SI events could be politicised. Nonetheless, implementation continued, with greater care taken by the RC and UN Senior Management to ensure that the SI was not politicised during the pre-electoral period.



A beneficiary explains how SI has benefited her during a mission in Ntchisi District.
Photo Credit: Bennet Phunyanya

On the 30th of March 2020, the former President of Malawi declared the coronavirus pandemic a National Disaster. A series of preventative measures were instigated, including travel and meeting restrictions for all (including UN staff who work from home), the closure of schools, restrictions of public gatherings, and cancellation of in-person non-essential meetings for Government personnel.

With few cases and deaths reported, COVID-19 had little direct impact on the health of the population. The impact on the economy and human rights, however, was significant. The 17% of the economy that relies on tourism, as well as the associated industries, effectively collapsed and tens of thousands of people lost their jobs. Food insecurity was also exacerbated due to the economic impact of the pandemic: approximately 1.6 million persons needed urgent food aid during the 2019-2020 lean season, compared to 2.8 million persons estimated to be in need for the 2020-2021 lean season.

This situation coupled with the closure of schools likely contributed to the increased reports of child labour. Women and girls were particularly vulnerable to exploitation in agriculture, health, and domestic work, leading to a setback in recent gains made on gender equality and exposing them to greater risks of contracting COVID-19. Older women are also more likely to live in poverty, which could exacerbate the impact of the virus, and limit their access to goods, food, water, information and health services.

In addition to hindering children's education and creating higher malnutrition amongst children due to their missing daily school lunches, the closure of schools from April to October 2020 had a devastating effect on girls in particular. This can be summarised as a multiplier effect on teenage pregnancies, child marriages, and SGBV.

Between March and May alone, a single NGO operating a hotline reported an 18% increase in the number of child marriages reported. Between April and September 2020, official figures⁴ recorded 13,000 child marriages, 40,000 teenage pregnancies and shockingly high reports of rape and sexual abuse of women, girls and boys. In December, Malawi Police announced that recorded cases of rape in the country had more than doubled since 2018, with young girls as the main victims. The National Statistics Office added that the rate of sexual abuse cases was 35% higher in the 4th quarter of the year compared to the same period in 2019.

After a spate of disturbing high-profile cases, including attacks on children, women's rights activists held several protests during the year to demand tougher rape penalties drawing attention to the overall increase in VAWG. President Lazarus Chakwera responded effectively by setting up a task force to address the rise in rape and sexual abuse cases.

The SI team reacted in an agile manner by developing a comprehensive response plan to COVID-19 based on a programme criticality assessment. This assessment was aimed at identifying life-saving and enabling (e.g. provision of ICT equipment to first responders)

⁴ COVID-19 rapid assessment on teenage pregnancies and child marriages, led by MoGCDSW

activities and should continue in case of a strict lockdown and cessation of activities. The response plan focused on ensuring continuity of the 2020 Annual Work Plan (AWP) with emphasis on access to essential services, prevention through communication for development activities (C4D), and strengthening institutional capacities to respond to the needs of women and girls. The plan was later merged with the SI Acceleration plan and updated to include teenage pregnancies and child marriages as a priority issue to be mainstreamed across all pillars.

The UN and the EU also partnered closely to raise awareness through the SI on the pandemic, with an emphasis on heightened risks of SGBV and HPs and encouraging timely reporting. An important result of this collaboration was a joint video clip that was aired nationally and at the airport COVID-19 waiting area, and a televised joint panel discussion with key civil society actors.

To address the pandemic-related increases in teenage pregnancies and child marriages, and following the leadership of the Resident Coordinator, the SI coordination team led a joint exercise with 3 other relevant UN Joint Programmes to develop a concise action plan on teenage pregnancies and child marriages. This collaboration, inspired by UN Reform and DaO principles, was in response to contextual shifts in the country which resulted in new and emerging needs for women and girls. The action plan was aligned with the national plan of action developed earlier by the MoGCDSW on this topic, the point being to ensure continued collaboration with the GoM and other key stakeholders. The proposed action plan was then presented to the UN PMT and UNCT in order to integrate individual responses by UN organisations in Malawi.

With the travel restrictions faced by the UN, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and traditional leaders proved to be vital partners to advance the work of the SI. Both were instrumental in raising awareness of SGBV and COVID-19, and rapidly detecting and referring cases of violence to service providers. CSOs were also crucial for the continued implementation of SI activities at the community level (e.g. service delivery) where feasible and in adherence with preventative measures. To enable their work, the RUNOs adjusted IP agreements to cater for increased costs of communication and new modalities of implementation necessitated by the restrictions.

In the first quarter of 2020, the SI Malawi team made a concerted effort to get implementation back on track following the delays experienced in 2019. As the SI team geared itself to accelerate implementation, the limitations on activities and travel imposed by the extended electoral period as well as the preventative measures introduced to curtail the spread of COVID-19 led to further delays. As a result, a number of activities either could not commence or were not completed during the projected timeframe due to the described circumstances; it is estimated that the programme implementation is delayed by some 3-5 months. Specifically, the closure of schools forced the re-programming of numerous school-based activities, and most capacity-building initiatives were postponed or cancelled.

Activity implementation modalities also had to be adapted, requiring amendments to budgets and IP agreements to cater to the new operational environment. Given the interlinkages between the various interventions as part of the programme design, these changes resulted in many others, creating a domino effect of delays and compounding the impacts of the elections and pandemic response.

To reverse these delays, the team updated the pillar-specific acceleration plans as part of a joint planning process early in the year to address delays spilling over from 2019. In parallel, priority was given to finalizing the recruitment of IPs with a focus on grassroots organisations. By the end of Quarter 1, 17 IPs were recruited and operating in all SI districts. Later in the year, as the impacts of the Pandemic became clearer, and the operating context shifted considerably, causing further delays, hence a more detailed acceleration plan was developed to help track, monitor, and accelerate implementation on a quarterly basis. The plan also reflected the emerging needs of women and girls, such as teenage pregnancies and child marriage, which were mainstreamed across all pillars. Please see annex B for further information on risks and mitigation measures.

Programme Governance and Coordination

UN Reform and DaO principles are firmly embedded throughout the SI and are a salient feature of the Initiative. The Initiative supports survivors holistically through a multi-dimensional Programme that leverages the expertise, experiences and resources of 4 UN Agencies, namely UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, and UN Women, as well as of the EU, resulting in greater efficiency and deeper impact. This programmatic cohesion is further enhanced through the Resident Coordinator's leadership, which serves to situate the SI within the broader development landscape of Malawi.

The SI Malawi benefits from the meaningful contributions of several entities and mechanisms, leading to a well-rounded Programme that addresses VAWG from multiple angles and perspectives.

a) National Steering Committee (NSC)

The SI Malawi is governed by a National Steering Committee (NSC), which is the highest body of governance of the Programme. Its role is to oversee the overall Programme implementation, provide strategic direction, review and decide on the recommendations made by the technical team, and share information on policy and legal decisions affecting the SGBV/HP response in Malawi.

The NSC consists of senior personnel of all RUNOs and institutions to the joint initiative with decision-making authority, as well as 3 representatives of the CSNRG.

The SI National Steering Committee was originally co-chaired by the RC and the Secretary to the President and Cabinet (SPC). Following the change in Government in July 2020 however, the SPC communicated his intention to delegate this role to one of the Ministries. By the end of the year, this delegation was still pending, making it impossible to formally convene the SC during the year. The RC and the EU are jointly pressing for a decision on the NSC's chairmanship, and it is hoped that a meeting will be convened in early 2021. The NSC meetings are expected to be annual, though this may change once the new Co-Chair is onboard.

In the interim, the RC, SI Heads of Agency (HoAs), and the EU continue to engage the Ministers of both line Ministries for all strategic level discussions.

b) Civil Society National Reference Group (CSRG)

The Malawi CSNRG was set up in March 2019 and is comprised of 14 experts (5 males, 9 females) on ending VAWG, HPs and SRHR. To ensure inclusivity in the group, the CSNRG has members representing the LGBTIQ community, female sex workers, traditional leaders and other eminent individuals working on EAWG. This diverse membership supports the LNOB approach employed by the SI and allows the CSNRG to contribute to the SI's governance through a broad and inclusive lens of expertise.

Supported by the SI team, the CSNRG conducted one meeting in each of the three regions of the country. The CSNRG operates autonomously and independently; however, at the invitation of the group, RUNOs participated in some sessions to provide updates to the group and share quarterly activity plans.

Since the CSNRG had yet to be formally introduced to the civil society community, the SI team featured a double spread on the CSNRG in the [July SI Newsletter](#). The expectation is that this will help position the CSNRG better as an expert reference group that other CSOs can approach for guidance on the SI when needed.

The CSNRG developed a costed workplan during the year, which focuses on advocacy, shadow monitoring, and technical advice. Funding for these activities had to be allocated on a somewhat ad hoc basis, however, due to the finalization of the phase I budget prior to the establishment of the CSNRG. The SI team therefore included a budget for the CSNRG as part of the budget revision process and plans to allocate a budget under each pillar for Phase II.

In an effort to enhance information sharing with the CSNRG and their meaningful engagement, the CSNRG was invited to nominate two individuals for membership in the SI core team comprised of UN technical focal points, which meets on a monthly basis.

The two core team nominees are tasked with informing the other CSNRG of key developments and decision-making processes for their inputs and contributions. For instance, the members participated in the internal mid-term review (MTR) and Phase II planning process. Further, each CSNRG member was assigned a specific pillar based on their area of expertise and is invited to partake in the quarterly pillar coordination meetings. These improved arrangements continue to strengthen the contribution of the CSNRG throughout the entire SI Programme cycle.

In order to facilitate the development of the CSNRG's shadow report, which is part of the work plan, the SI supported the group members to conduct an independent monitoring visit to all SI districts, in addition to the planning meetings earlier mentioned. The group is finalizing its shadow report, which will inform any programmatic adjustments in year 3 of the Programme.

c) Inter-agency coordination, technical committees and other governance mechanisms

The SI core team is made of up technical level UN staff from all RUNOs, as well as 2 representatives from the CSNRG. Monthly core team meetings have been key in ensuring the harmonised delivery of results under the SI. In addition, the team held quarterly pillar coordination meetings, focusing on pillar-specific delivery, as well as identifying and strengthening inter-linkages with other pillars.

On behalf of the UN team, the SI programme coordination team⁵ liaises with technical level representatives from the MoGCDSW and the MoLGRD on a regular basis through a technical committee. The EU also participates in these meetings where possible. Although the collaboration slowed somewhat due to COVID-19 and the restrictions in meetings and travel, the Committee regained momentum in the 3rd quarter of the year. The Committee jointly developed the concept note for the MTR and Phase II planning process and led its implementation including a thorough joint data collection exercise in all districts. Data was collected from beneficiaries through 52 Focus Group Discussions with women, men, girls and boys on the successes and challenges of Phase I, as well as through an anonymized survey to all SI district authorities.

At district level, the SI Malawi has benefited enormously from the establishment of SI Communities of Practice (COP) in 2019 as the primary district coordination mechanism (more information on COPs is available under good practices). The COPs are comprised of all IPs operating in the district, as well as key government officials working at district level on SGBV/HPs. These groups meet at least once a month, and often more, to inform one another on upcoming activities and identify areas of programmatic and operational collaboration. As a result, SI actors in districts leverage each other's resources and strengths, and learn from each other's activities, leading to greater efficiency (e.g. by carpooling) and effectiveness through a

⁵ The Core team is comprised of the national coordinator, 6 district coordinators in each SI district, an M&E Officer (seconded from Ministry of Finance), a technical coherence specialist (seconded from UN Women), a communications officer, and a finance and administration officer.

holistic approach to SGBV and HPs that benefits both survivors and their communities. For example, girls withdrawn from child marriages by an IP are usually referred to other SI IPs for economic, educational and psychosocial support; thereby strengthening the continuum of care.

During 2020, two district teams decentralised the COPs from the district capital level to the village level. Having multiple SI interventions, particularly under Pillars 3 and 4, operating in close vicinity to one another has resulted in a truly comprehensive approach that makes the Malawi SI Theory of Change (ToC) apparent to IPs and leading to an increasingly cohesive approach.

At both national and district levels, the SI is strategically positioned under the Gender Technical Working Groups (GTWGs). At national level, the Gender and Human Rights Working Group (GHRWG) has a standing agenda item for the SI, during which key updates are shared with the group. This arrangement reflects the spirit of UN Reform by allowing the SI to be part of broader gender and human rights discussions, which in turn ensures greater complementarity at the inter-agency level, and facilitates holistic and multi-lateral decision making for the SI. At district level, the COPs jointly report to the GTWGs which are also being strengthened through Pillar 2.



Beneficiaries interact during a mentorship session in NkhataBay District.

Photo Credit: Nomsa Taulo

The SI is furthermore a critical feature of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and a key contributor to SDG 5 on Gender Equality. As such, the SI AWP is incorporated into the various sector work plans within the UNSCDF, and features in the UN annual report. The SI also has its own page within UNINFO, alongside the UNSDCF, thus allowing all viewers to better appreciate the SI concerning the development landscape in Malawi.

Programme Partnerships

a) Government

The partnerships established with the Government of Malawi (GoM) continue to flourish, much to the benefit of the SI. The SI is ably steered by two line Ministries: the MoGCDSW and the MoLGRD, who are jointly responsible for overseeing the Programme. The MoGCDSW provides technical support on gender and VAWG, and the MoLGRD ensures that EVAWG is strategically positioned within district development plans and processes for greater sustainability of the SI.

District authorities are supported by SI district coordinators who have been strategically positioned within district council teams. The district authorities' leadership of the SI has led to the prioritisation of GBV and HPs in district development plans and processes. In addition to facilitating the SI's work through district authorities, the MoLGRD has also been an indispensable ally in enabling and strengthening the role of traditional leaders, whose work falls under the Ministry, in eliminating VAWG.

During the year, an MoU was signed with the National Council of Higher Education (NCHE). As the governing body for public and private universities and colleges, NCHE has been a strategic partner in coordinating and influencing these institutions to develop and/or review gender policies.

The SI also partnered with the National Statistical Office (NSO) to drive results under Pillar 5. As a seasoned and trusted government counterpart in data management, the SI worked with NSO to enhance SGBV, HP and SRHR incident data collection by establishing a data observatory hub on SGBV at the national level; thereby ensuring the availability of harmonised SGBV data at the national level for the very first time.

Other key GoM partners include the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology, the Malawi Police Service, the Malawi Judiciary through the National Child Justice Forum (NCJF), and the Malawi Law Commission.

b) EU

The partnership between the UN and the EU was highly effective throughout 2020. Through regular information sharing with the EU (e.g. monthly reports), and their inclusion in all strategic meetings and discussions, the EU made important contributions to the SI's successful steering and implementation.

At the strategic level, the RC and the EU worked closely to have the line Ministries engage with the SI and to ensure greater ownership at the executive levels of the new Malawian Government. Where the SI has faced bottlenecks, for instance in convening the steering committee, the UN and EU have worked together to jointly lobby the GoM to prioritise the SI.

Of noteworthy importance is the alliance between the two institutions on advocacy and communications. Through the SI, the two collaborated closely on all major international day campaigns, including the EU day, Women's International Day, and the 16 days of activism against GBV.

For instance, the EU Head of Development Cooperation and the RC jointly produced a video to raise awareness on the risks of GBV in relation to COVID-19. The video featured a number of Malawian celebrities who spoke on the issue and it was televised nationally in order to reach as many listeners/viewers as possible.

During the 16 days of activism, the RC and Ambassador a.i once more joined hands in a panel discussion featuring CSO representatives working on the SI. The discussion focused on child marriage and teenage pregnancies, which skyrocketed in Malawi due to the closure of schools in March. The panel discussion was also televised and widely viewed.

COVID-19 did prevent the EU-UN partnership from attaining its full potential, however. The initially planned regular joint missions had to be postponed for the most part, which made it difficult to showcase the results attained by the SI. While the team managed to conduct one joint high-level visit featuring the RC, the Head of Development Cooperation, the heads of UN Women and UNFPA, and the UNFPA Regional Director, this was limited to one district only. Nonetheless, all field visit reports and MTR data analysis were shared with the EU for their knowledge and follow-up.

c) Civil Society

Throughout the year, the SI engaged civil society organisations at all levels in a transparent and meaningful manner. As with the previous year, priority was given to engaging grassroots organizations as IPs in line with the SI Grassroots Action Plan. This new way of working is intended to ensure the capacity development of local organisations as a sustainable means of EVAWG.

Following the harmonized call for Expression of Interests (EOIs) for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) the recruitment of CBOs and CSOs was finalised in 2020. RUNOs worked together to advise one another on recruitment processes, and

as per the DaO principle and in the spirit of UN Reform, some RUNOs utilized CSO assessments conducted by other RUNOs to finalize the selection process, saving time and resources in the spirit of DaO.

By the end of 2020, a total of 28 CSOs were engaged as IPs to administer approximately 40% of the 2020 Programme budget. Of these, 13 are national CSOs, 11 are grassroots organisations, and 4 are international CSOs. This reflects the SI Malawi's strategy to ensure a sustainable approach to EVAWG by building the capacity of national and grassroots organisations and prioritising organisations who were already actively addressing gender equality, SGBV/HPs and SRHR in SI districts. In this regard, several capacity building workshops were conducted by RUNOs to strengthen CSOs' ability to EVAWG. The workshops focused on programme management, the effective implementation of SI activities and results-based monitoring and reporting.

In line with the principle of LNOB, the Malawi SI has engaged a broad spectrum of CSO partners that together address the intersectional discriminations faced by women and girls. The empowerment of women and girls with disabilities was supported through the Malawi Council of the Handicapped (MACOHA) and the Federation of Persons with Disabilities, which is the umbrella organisation for Disabled Persons Organisations). Others include the Female Sex Workers Association, the Coalition of Women and Girls living with HIV-AIDS, and faith-based organisations.

In response to the restrictions during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the SI brought onboard the mobile-based organization VIAMO, tasked with supporting training and awareness interventions through mobile platforms.



Girls belong in class, a scholarship beneficiary in Dowa district.
Photo Credit: UNICEF

d) Cooperation with other UN Agencies

Throughout the year, the SI continued to strengthen its collaboration with Associated Agencies, namely UNAIDS, UNESCO, and UNHCR, by agreeing on a number of joint strategic actions that leverage these agencies' strengths and expertise.

UNHCR played a key role in the Dowa district, where the SI actively supports refugee women and girls in the Dzaleka refugee camp, in which SGBV is prevalent. Based on the needs of refugee women and girls, a joint road map of activities was developed to guide SI activities in the camp. The roadmap prioritised interventions under Pillars 3 and 4, which are jointly planned and managed with UNHCR.

During the year, SI collaborated with UNESCO to conduct an Impact Assessment of COVID-19 on PWD in all 6 SI districts. The findings of the assessment will guide SI's focus on how to support women and girls with disabilities better in the context of the pandemic. While the SI had identified a number of joint actions with UNAIDS, most of these had to be postponed due to COVID-19.

The SI continues to participate in protection cluster meetings and the UN Programme Management Team. Under the leadership of the RC, the SI coordination team convened three other UN Joint Programmes (JPs) to brainstorm and agree on a harmonised approach to address the surge in teenage pregnancies and child marriages between March and December. The four have agreed on a number of actions to leverage each other's interventions and to ensure holistic support to vulnerable adolescent girls.

e) Others

Traditional leaders continue to be essential allies of the SI Malawi. As gatekeepers of the Malawian culture, their support in eliminating harmful cultural practices like child marriage in marginalised rural communities has been vital. When COVID-19 brought about major travel restrictions for the UN team, traditional leaders continued to refer cases and even withdraw girls from child marriages. The role of traditional leaders in Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) was confirmed through a [U-Report poll](#) which found that 46% of respondents would report SEA to their traditional leaders.

The SI Media Network has also become an increasingly important partner. As the number of rape cases soared in 2020, the Network worked to sensitise both the public on VAWG and other journalists on survivor-centred reporting.

In 2020 the SI also enhanced its cooperation with the private sector. Malawi's two largest network providers, Airtel and TNM, became important allies in the delivery of community outreach messages and data collection mobile technology under Outcomes 5.

Finally, the SI partnered with the Parliamentary Women's Caucus (PWC) to coordinate capacity-building interventions for women parliamentarians to effectively address VAWG in the National Assembly. This serves to strategically position VAWG on the agenda of the country's lawmakers and policymakers.

Results

a) Capturing Broader Transformations Across Outcomes

Strategic positioning of VAWG on the political agenda

Through public litigation support to the internationally renowned Msundwe case, the SI contributed to the setting of a historic legal precedent. The High Court ruling in favour of the Msundwe survivors holds State actors accountable for perpetrating VAWG and demands the protection of women and girls, particularly in situations of political and electoral unrest. The High Court pronouncement raised public awareness on the criminal nature of SGBV, and enhanced confidence in the legal system to facilitate access to justice for survivors, even when perpetrated by public officials.

The SI's support for survivors of the so-called Msundwe case also included shelter, psycho-social counselling, and ensuring access to education for the girl survivors by lobbying the MoE. Following a number of highly insensitive media reports on this case, the SI also assisted the SI Media Network to issue a [press release](#) calling on all journalists and media outlets to recall the "do no harm" principle when reporting on cases of VAWG. The SI's support to the Msundwe case illustrates the comprehensive nature of the SI, and its ability to holistically support survivors.

Leaving No One Behind.

The Programme specifically targets hard-to-reach areas within SI districts to ensure the inclusion of communities typically left out from development initiatives due to long distances and unreliable roads. Access was facilitated by improving the mobility of service providers, community workers, and IPs through the provision of motorcycles and bicycles, and airtime for remote case management.

The SI's engagement with Female Sex Workers (FSWs) -as an especially vulnerable population group- has yielded positive results across pillars. FSW community activists mitigated the sexual exploitation of young girls, raised awareness on FSW rights, and encouraged their peers to access services, while mobilizing other FSWs into a protective network in communities where FSWs support one another.

The Malawi SI consistently mainstreams disability throughout all pillars of the Programme. Law and policy reforms are based on gender and disability sensitive review, and the Gender and Disability Analysis Tool ensures the systematic inclusion of disability in development plans.

Service Providers are trained on inclusive service delivery, while targeted health and court facilities were revamped to facilitate access for survivors with disabilities. Newly developed data collection tools allow for the disaggregated collection and analysis of data based on disabilities, and all awareness-raising messages are disability-sensitive in their content and delivery. Lastly, the SI engaged DPOs to mobilise communities and build a movement of women and girls with disabilities.

A UN Reform Flagship Programme

As a UN Reform flagship programme, the principle of Delivering as One (DaO) is firmly embedded throughout the SI Programme cycle and is a salient feature of the Initiative, particularly in the context of UN Reform. The consultative programme design, the close-knit implementation process through various inter-agency coordination mechanisms, and the joint M&E efforts have resulted in greater efficiency and deeper impact. The Initiative addresses VAWG multidimensionally and supports survivors holistically by leveraging the expertise, experiences and resources of 4 UN Agencies. The SI is uniquely led by the Resident Coordinator, who promotes cohesion in the Programme's implementation.

In recognition of the importance of the One-UN approach for the success of the SI, the team developed an innovative accountability framework that operationalises the concept and tracks progress and bottlenecks in concrete terms. Inter-agency Fuel SOPs were also developed to allow the collective use of one SI vehicle for the achievement of results across all Pillars. This tool is intended to support the team's efforts to implement the new way of joint delivery in the spirit of the recent UN Reform.

Movement Building

The SI Media network has steadily gained influence and recognition. Members of the network increased their reporting on SGBV/ HPs and encouraged other media actors to report ethically in a way that protects the survivor's safety while depicting survivors in a respectful and dignified manner. This in turn has fostered greater cohesion and collaboration among media actors in support of ending VAWG.

In SI communities, chiefs, community and faith leaders, service providers, activists, district authorities and CSO/CBOs were brought together under the SI banner. SI Communities of Practice (COPs) at district and village levels facilitated dialogue and collaboration among these groups, which lends weight to the messages on SGBV/HPs and SRHR. The strategic decision to implement all 6 pillar interventions comprehensively created a network of actors and activities that are more impactful because of the frequent reiteration of EVAWG messages from a wide range of sources.

Shifts in stakeholders' attitudes, beliefs and ways of working

SI COPs have furthermore affirmed the importance of a multi-sectoral approach to EVAWG. These have facilitated a continuum of care for survivors, while allowing members to benefit

from the exchange and sharing of resources, knowledge and expertise. The value of SGBV coordination is now better appreciated by all stakeholders as a result (more information included under good practices section).

The Impact of COVID-19

Restrictions on in-person meetings created an opportunity to strengthen stakeholder capacities on ICT. This led to increased interaction with actors in other districts and encouraged remote service delivery, which is a useful approach for accessing marginalized communities beyond COVID-19.

The roles of Chiefs, community leaders, and CBOs were also unexpectedly reinforced when travel restrictions required the UN team to rely on these actors for continued reporting and referrals of SGBV/HP cases.



A class session with some of SI scholarship beneficiaries at Mvera Community Day Secondary School.
Photo Credit: UNICEF

b) Capturing Change at Outcome Level

Outcome 1: Legislative and policy frameworks, based on evidence and in line with international human rights standards, on all forms of violence against women and girls, and harmful practices are in place and translated into plans.

The SI's support to the renowned Msundwe case resulted in ground-breaking legal precedents to protect survivors from sexual violence perpetrated by the Malawi Police, and establish mechanisms to prevent such incidents. A series of recommendations to enhance the legal and policy framework in line with international Human Rights standards was developed in consultation with key stakeholders, and endorsed by the highest level of Government, Legislature and the Judiciary. The SI also strengthened the capacity of 574 duty bearers to correctly apply the law and better protect women and girls against violence.

The SI continues to propel the amendment of 5 prioritised laws and 2 policies that adequately protect women and girls from violence, based on the key gaps and bottlenecks identified in the law review conducted under the SI in 2019. A National Task Force was set up to ensure a coordinated process with full national ownership by all key stakeholders. The Task Force is co-chaired by the Ministry of Justice, magistrates and includes other GoM stakeholders, CSOs, and the UN. The group is responsible for providing technical support throughout the legal review process, as well as the formulation of and implementation of the recommendations for the strengthening of these instruments. The Task Force has been acknowledged as a key coordination mechanism for improving all gender-related laws beyond the SI.

Through a Judicial Colloquium targeting 74 senior judicial officers (e.g. Judges of the High Court), the SI supported Judges to harmonise their position and collectively advocate for greater legal protections against VAWG. In this regard, the officers developed a series of recommendations that affirmed Task Force recommendations and gave them greater weight.

With the SI's support, these recommendations were tabled at a high-level event attended by high-level stakeholders from the Executive, Legislature, and the Judiciary. As a result, the SI obtained commitments from important decision makers, such as the Speaker of Parliament, the Attorney General, Chairpersons of key Parliamentary Committees (Legal, Finance, Social, Health), and the Minister of Finance to amend and fund the revision of the prioritised laws and policies.

Important groundwork was done to improve the judiciary's capacity to effectively handle SGBV and HP through the development of a judiciary handbook. The handbook was developed in collaboration with the Tithetse Nkhanza⁶ programme, which allowed the two programmes to leverage each other's expertise and resources. The handbook aims to improve harmful attitudes and behaviours by members of the judiciary, including magistrates, and train them to address

⁶ Tithetse Nkhanza is a large programme on EVAWG funded by DFID.

such cases through a survivor centred approach. The handbook will be the main training tool for court magistrates, judges, and support staff as frontline workers assisting survivors.

The programme further enhanced the capacity of 574 informal and formal legislators⁷ on the legislative and policy framework related to SGBV and HPs. The legislators are now well versed on the correct application of child and gender related laws, including COVID-19 mainstreaming to minimise the escalating number of SGBV during the pandemic, and the formulation and effective implementation of bylaws related to SGBV – towards the abolishment of HPs.

To further improve the understanding of the laws on SGBV/HP among district level duty bearers, gender-related laws were simplified, translated into local languages and used to orient district officials involved in SGBV case management.

In collaboration with OHCHR, and under the guidance of the RC, the SI set important legal precedents by supporting public litigation for the Msundwe case⁸, entailing gross violations of women and girls' rights by State actors. The SI's support to the case was highly impactful and an important contribution to SDG 16. The Malawi High Court ruled in favour of the women and girls, and ordered the arrest of the 17 implicated police officers and compelled the Police to compensate the 18 women and girls. The Court further demanded the establishment of a credible system to monitor the conduct of police officers, and extended the responsibility to the National Assembly for failing to operationalize the Police Complaints Commission. The Commission has since been established, and women and girls now have a body from which to seek recourse for unlawful actions by officers of the Malawi Police Service. The pronouncement was a historic triumph for Malawian women and girls, and serves as an indispensable legal precedent for any future cases of violence perpetrated by State actors. A [policy brief on strategic impact litigation and the Msundwe case](#) was developed and disseminated to raise more awareness on the crucial lessons learned through this case.

SRHR Reporting: Outcome 1

One of the 2 prioritised policies for reform is the National SRHR Policy. The amendment will further strengthen an enabling policy and environment towards equitable information and access to SRH information and services, particularly for vulnerable groups, at risk populations, and young people in hard-to-reach areas. The Judiciary Handbook developed under the SI includes SRHR, and will thus strengthen the capacity of this sector to protect women and girl's SRHR.

⁷ District and Community stakeholders 242 (139 M and 103 W from District Social Welfare Office, Gender, Community Development, Police, Youth, Judiciary, Education, Agriculture, Water, and Health- and 318 community leaders (94 women and 224 men)

⁸ The State v The Inspector General of Police and Others Ex parte M.M. and Others Judicial Review Cause No 7 of 2020 – commonly referred to as the Msundwe and Mbwatalika case. The case entails the rape of 18 women and girls by the Malawi Police during the post electoral violence that erupted in October 2019.

Outcome 2: National and sub-national systems and institutions plan, fund, and deliver evidence-based programmes that prevent and respond to violence against women and girls, and harmful practices, including in other sectors.

The SI ensured greater sustainability of EVAWG efforts through the systematic inclusion of VAWG in regional development plans, along with corresponding budget lines. A framework was developed to harmonise and guide the role of traditional leaders in EVAWG in consultation with 3,421 community leaders and stakeholders. Chiefs' forums were established at all levels to facilitate their work, while ensuring their accountability to communities, and 190 Chiefs are better able to apply Gender Related Laws (GRLs). District coordination and decision-making structures were considerably strengthened in EVAWG, with 364 key stakeholders trained on the prevention of and response to SGBV/HPs and ensuring a more cohesive approach across sectors.

The SI formed a highly strategic alliance with Chiefs in 2020. In close collaboration with the MoLGRD, Senior and Paramount Chiefs⁹, the SI developed a conceptual framework to harmonise the approach to working with traditional leaders in Malawi, with emphasis on the eradication of HPs. The framework is the first of its kind and defines the roadmap for the establishment of Chiefs' Forums at the national, district and community levels. The forums are a crucial mechanism to ensure greater accountability by traditional leaders to their constituents in the promotion of gender equality and the elimination of SGBV/HPs, as well as mitigating COVID-19 related risks.

Based on this framework, a National Chiefs' Forum was established, along with forums in all SI districts, replete with Terms of Reference. To strengthen these platforms, and enable the Chiefs to fulfill their roles effectively, 190 Chiefs were trained on SGBV/HP and SRHR laws. Further, 3,421 community leaders and stakeholders were mobilised for Chief consultations, leading to greater ownership of the newly created structures and improved understanding of the referral pathway for cases of SGBV/HPs. The subsequent identification of 47 SGBV/HP cases through the Forums and referral to the police and social welfare is a testament to the early success of these Forums.

The GoM employs a bottom-up approach in the development of its district and national development strategies, which are based on community plans such as Village Action plans (VAPs). The SI therefore strengthened the capacity of 5 community-based decision-making structures to effectively develop gender and disability-responsive VAPs, in a bid to ensure the sustainable inclusion of gender issues in district and national strategies. Since then, the targeted communities identified SGBV/HP and SRHR related indicators to incorporate in VAPs, which are critical for tracking progress on these issues and ensuring gender and disability-responsive budgetary allocations at village and district levels.

⁹ Paramount Chiefs are the most senior traditional leaders in Malawi. There are 5 Paramount Chiefs in total, each of them covering a geographical region.

To complement these efforts, the SI developed a Gender and Disability Analysis tool. The tool is being used to facilitate the effective integration of gender, disability and SGBV into district and local development plans and programmes, leading to the positioning of EVAWG as a matter of strategic importance for the achievement of Malawi's development goals. The tool succeeded in achieving the inclusion of gender and disability in 3 district development plans (DDP) and corresponding budgets where previously there was little or no mention or budget (Nsanje, Ntchisi and Mzimba), and resulted in considerably improved budgetary allocations (Nsanje: 35%; Ntchisi: 45%, and Mzimba: 40%).

SI improved the capacity of 76 members of district and local coordination structures involved in EVAWG, including GTWGs, Area Development Committees (ADCs), CVSUs, and Village Development Committees (VDCs) on Gender Mainstreaming, SGBV case management and SGBV monitoring. The trainings included disaster preparedness to enable them to mainstream SGBV in their COVID-19 response plans. All participated in a Training of Trainers (TOT) to facilitate training of other community structures. Targeted community leaders have since started developing strategies to lessen the impact of COVID-19 on women, girls, persons with disabilities, and persons living with HIV among other vulnerable populations, in line with the principle of LNOB.

ADCs also received training in gender, SGBV/HPs, and human rights to encourage reporting of cases of violence. Consequently, 288 ADC members are better equipped to effectively respond to SGBV/HPs. ADCs are influential entry points in communities as they are comprised of members from the community. The oriented ADCs have since capacitated 60 group village headmen¹⁰ and reached 120 villages with messages on prevention and response to SGBV/HPs, based on IEC Materials provided by the SI. This approach ensures better absorption of the information since it is being delivered by respected community leaders in positions of authority.

Similarly, the SI has supported and strengthened multi-stakeholder SGBV/HP coordination mechanisms at the district level to establish clear mandates and annual work plans. In 4 districts, the programme revamped GTWGs, which are responsible for ensuring a coordinated response to SGBV/HPs at the district level, including through joint monitoring and reporting patrols in communities. The SI supported GTWGs to introduce a quarterly reporting system to update the District Executive Committees (DECs), the highest level of governance at district level, on their plans and lobby for budgetary allocations. This has led to the systematic inclusion of SGBV/HPs in DEC meetings, leading to an average of 43% budgetary allocations to SGBV/HPs response, compared to 0% or 12% allocations.

The SI facilitated a dialogue among Members of the Parliament on Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) to improve the allocation of the national budgets to the prevention and elimination of all forms of VAWG. To support enhanced gender-responsive budgeting and systematic reporting on SGBV/HP and SRHR, 38 female MPs of the Parliamentary Women's Caucus were oriented on GRB. An analysis of budget allocations towards gender and social services was used to influence

¹⁰ Group village Headmen are community leaders who work under the supervision of traditional leaders.

improved allocations to the Ministry of Gender and social sectors responsible for addressing SGBV/HPs. This was done to ensure consideration of VAWG during the 2020-2021 Budget session.

In parallel, at least 150 community leaders and women's rights organization members have been oriented in gender and disability-sensitive budgeting.

SRHR Reporting: Outcome 2

SI improved the sustainable integration of SRHR into local development plans by enhancing the capacities of decision-making structures at district and village level on this area. Traditional authorities were also trained on SRHR, allowing them to better support women and girls' rights to access services.



Spotlight Initiative Scholarship beneficiaries at Mvera Community Day Secondary School.
Photo Credit: UNICEF

Outcome 3: Gender equitable social norms, attitudes and behavioral change at community and individual levels prevent Violence Against Women and Girls and Harmful Practices and promote women and girls' SRHR.

Interventions to transform harmful behaviour, attitudes, and norms mitigated the risks of SGBV/HPs faced by women and girls, and empowered them to speak out. A total of 212,262 adolescents learned to detect and report SGBV/HPs, leading to the identification of 941 cases of child marriage and their immediate referral to relevant authorities and actors. The Safe Space Mentorship Programme created a cadre of 11,440 young women who are challenging behaviours that fuel GBV, and resulted in the identification of 1,893 cases of child marriage, including 71 that secured convictions in court. In promoting new and positive masculinities, the SI Malawi mobilised over 3,670 men and boys as champions of change and EVAWG.

Towards the achievement of SDG 4 on Education, the SI supported 624 girl survivors of SGBV and child marriage to access their right to education through the provision of scholarships. The Spotlight scholarship complements the Malawi Government's newly updated policy of allowing girls to return to school after birth, which is also supported through UN contributions to the SI. To ensure a high retention rate among scholarship recipients, SI availed psychosocial support and standby mentors in all schools attended by the girls, of which 40 girls have now completed secondary school. For greater sustainability, the Programme partnered with the MoE and capacitated 110 school principals and teachers to provide mentoring and counseling support to the returning girls. The work improved the economic potential of these girls; thereby contributing to an educated and empowered female population that is able to contribute to Malawi's development.

Through the Safe School Programme, 212,262 adolescent learners (105,301 males and 106,961 females) from the six districts are now able to detect SGBV and report it to relevant authorities for action and redress. This led to the identification of 941 cases of child marriage and their immediate referral to the appropriate authorities and other SI partners for additional services.

In parallel, the SI improved knowledge on SGBV and HPs among school-associated groups¹¹ responsible for protecting girls against all forms of abuse in and out of schools. This was achieved through legal literacy sessions on child and gender-related laws, and the production and dissemination of 18,180 child-friendly legal literacy materials (e.g. comic books) to learners and to members of school structures in 180 schools. Moreover, 2,748,708 stakeholders (1,174,234 males and 1,574,474 females) were sensitised on girls' rights and gender-related laws through radio programmes and television jingles.

The SI Girls Empowerment Self Defence training programme empowered 15,708 girls to protect themselves from abuse and exploitation. The girls went on to train their peers in different schools and communities, creating a large network of girls that can speak up against violence.

¹¹Members of Parents-Teachers Associations (PTAs); Mother Groups (MGs); Learners' Councils; and School Management Committees (SMCs).

Similarly, 13,308 boys participated in the Boys Transformation Training Programme that instils positive gender norms and supports boys to oppose violence and exploitation at school and in their communities. The boys also trained their peers, as a result of which 465,943 more learners (229,634 boys; 236,309 girls) from the 6 districts have the skills and knowledge to condemn and report violence and protect themselves from the same.

Through the Safe Space Mentorship Programme, the SI created a cadre of 11,440 young women who can ably negotiate and challenge the harmful behaviours that fuel GBV, while offering a support system within their communities for young girls and women. The Programme recruited and trained 435 mentors across the 6 districts, all of whom ran 6 monthly mentorship sessions targeting 30 girls for each session. A Safe Space Mentorship Manual was developed and printed to guide the mentor's training on a wide array of topics related to SGBV prevention and SRH rights and services.

The mentors and mentees played a critical role in exposing SGBV and child marriage cases and promoting an environment where harmful social norms can be safely challenged. The women and girls identified 1,893 cases of child marriage, and referred 344 cases to service providers, including 71 cases of child marriage that subsequently secured convictions in court. The Safe Space Mentorship sessions also spread awareness on the youth-friendly health services for GBV and SRHR and improved help-seeking behaviour: within 3 months, 1,445 young women and girls accessed essential services ranging from family planning, STI, post-abortion care, obstetric fistula, PEP and HIV, contributing to SDG 3 on Good Health and Wellbeing.

In promoting positive masculinities and the EVAWG, SI mobilized over 3,670 men and boys. The Barbershop Toolbox fostered critical dialogues between men and boys on the prevention of SGBV in communities, while the 40 HeForShe Agents of Change recruited under the SI acted as role models among 480 men, whom they engaged in a conversation on EVAWG. As a result, Chiefs and religious leaders (117 male chiefs, 12 female chiefs¹², 42 male sheiks and 40 male pastors) were inspired to independently address their constituents and congregations on the negative impacts of VAWG and child marriages.

The SI enabled the institutionalization of the operational guidelines for male engagement to EVAWG through the development of a [Male Engagement National Strategy](#), which will harmonise male engagement approaches across the country. This was done in consultation with the men and boy participants in the above male engagement activities.

The SI Journey of life¹³ initiative mobilised 520 community members (286F, 234M) and their leaders, and supported them to establish community-based structures (e.g. safe spaces) to protect girls from SGBV. The 8 communities targeted then went on to develop their own action plans to ensure the structures' success.

¹² While the intervention focused on positive masculinities, more senior female chiefs were included to enable them to understand the concept of positive masculinities, given their role in guiding male junior traditional leaders.

¹³ A community mobilization tool to make communities aware of the needs, capacities and problems of girls especially those who are at risk or in difficult circumstances, and empower communities to act on prevention and response to violence.

A total of 170,467 girls, boys, men, and women were sensitised on gender equality, prevention of SGBV, child rights, COVID-19 prevention and information on how to report GBV both in and out of school settings. This was done through the Ifenso intervention¹⁴, mobile based platforms, 57 radio jingles aired through community radios, 264 sensitization community meetings, theatre and dissemination of 13,000 Information Education and Communication (IEC) materials.

During 2020, 4,495 adolescents participating in Ifenso Platforms reported cases of SGBV in or out of schools, resulting in 24 girls withdrawn from child marriages and connected to peer support and services by other SI partners. Peer to peer information sharing has been intensified, with girls and boys doing door-to-door visits to disseminate gender equality and GBV prevention information. As a result, 2491 people (715 girls, 936 boys, 405 men and 435 women) were sensitized on VAWG through the door-to-door intervention. In this regard, teachers, youth club chairpersons, and mother groups were trained to support school-based awareness activities, while boys and girls were trained on social accountability and advocacy to hold duty bearers accountable. Consequently, interlinkages between school and communities have led to greater cohesion in the EVAWG at the community level, as evidenced by the jointly developed community mobilization and awareness action plans to EVAWG.

SRHR Reporting: Outcome 3

Community advocacy platforms and adolescent empowerment interventions have brought meaningful awareness on SRHR and the relevant services, leading to increased uptake of SRH services amongst adolescents and young women. The Safe Space Mentorship manual focuses considerably on SRHR, and improved knowledge of girls and women of their SRHR and the available services, leading to 1,445 women/girls accessing SRH services.



¹⁴ Ifenso platforms are clustered based on school clusters and act as key task force for school clubs.

Outcome 4: Women and girls who experience violence, including SGBV/HP, use available, accessible, acceptable, and quality essential services including for long-term recovery from violence.

In 2020 the SI enhanced the capacities of 1,286 service providers to deliver quality and essential services to survivors and vulnerable women and girls in all sectors, including health, mental health, justice and livelihoods. In line with LNOB, Service Providers were trained to assist women and girls with disabilities, while refugee women and girls were prioritized for legal assistance. To further ensure marginalised women and girls' access to services, the SI provided 940 bicycles and 60 motorbikes to service providers as well as key community workers tasked with case follow-ups and referrals, thus enabling them to reach remote and marginalized communities. Remote case management was facilitated by enhancing connectivity of service providers.

The improved services and livelihood opportunities benefitted 19,733 vulnerable women and girls, of which 14,318 received mental health services, 1,077 received legal assistance and/or representation, 545 received SRH services, and 3,739 were economically empowered.

The SI facilitated GBV service delivery for hard-to-reach communities by supporting critical frontline workers operating in rural and marginalized communities with airtime for remote case management. These acted as response points and assisted community level protection officers to address reported cases. Service delivery in marginalized communities was also considerably improved through the provision of 6 motor vehicles to each district and 60 motorcycles to Child Protection Workers (CPWs) and IPs across the 6 districts. Case follow-up and referrals were enhanced through the distribution of a further 940 bicycles to mentors, and community structures (e.g. youth networks, mother groups, community policing forums, and CBOs). The SI also improved access to SRHR by fully stocking health facilities across the 6 districts with SRH commodities, such as PEP kits, pregnancy tests, HIV tests and others.

The integration of quality SRHR and SGBV essential services for survivors and vulnerable groups was achieved by creating a directory of GBV services in SI communities. A one-page laminated referral pathway including telephone numbers of service providers was widely disseminated in all communities within easy reach of women and girls.

These efforts under the SI resulted in a total of 4,567 GBV cases reported and followed up, of which 1,893 cases were child marriages and 2,336 teen pregnancies. A further 517 adolescent girls accessed SRH services, 1,549 survivors received counselling, and 102 women received legal assistance, of which 71 cases were concluded with convictions.

Following the training of health professionals on treatment of obstetric fistula in all SI districts in 2019, 69 fistula cases were identified and 28 were successfully treated. The rate of treatment was affected by the closure of the Fistula Centre which was turned into an isolation centre in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the SI negotiated the re-opening of the centre for 5 years and 41 important cases have been prioritised for surgery in 2021.

The SI succeeded in the institutionalization of the Essential Service Package (ESP) for GBV survivors which will ensure the sustainable inclusion of quality SGBV service delivery as a specific module in official learning curriculums of the Police. The Police ESP module was validated and

approved by the High Command of the Police and a training of trainers has been done for police tutors across the country. The SI also successfully institutionalized the ESP in the health sector by supporting the MoH to revise the One Stop Centre guidelines on management of SGBV in line with the ESP international standards and protocols.

In line with the principle of LNOB, 553 young women and adolescent girls with disabilities were identified as part of a mapping exercise in SI districts. A needs assessment identified the barriers faced by women and girls in accessing services, and a complementary assessment of health facilities was carried out. The assessments will inform the refurbishment of health centers to make them disability-friendly, while the women and girls will receive assistive devices.

SI also strengthened the capacity of service providers to provide quality services to Persons with Disabilities (PWD) by training 95 service providers from all sectors in inclusive service delivery. The training included basic sign language which the service providers can use to improve accessibility and inclusion. Video clips in sign language to improve survivors' access to services were developed for use by various service providers across the country.

SI successfully built the capacity of judicial officers in handling SGBV cases, leading to an improvement in case completion rates: for instance, from 19% in the first quarter of 2020 to 34% in the second quarter. The training workshops equipped 80 court personnel, including magistrates, court clerks, probation officers and court with knowledge and skills to improve service delivery in SGBV cases.

SI has further enhanced the capacity of 41 Community CPWs to address SGBV against children, which will benefit approximately 408,000 girls¹⁵ in SI districts. Given the pivotal role in EVAWG played by CPWs as frontline workers, the 7 weeks pre-service training will considerably improve their work at community level and ensure girl's access to quality services.

The protection cluster identified Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) as a key gap in responding to COVID-19, as a result of which, demand for Psychological First Aid (PFA) increased, alongside the surge in cases of SGBV/HPs. Based on the rapid needs and gap assessment of MHPSS Services in all the SI districts, the SI increased the availability and quality of psychosocial care for survivors in SI districts leading to 12,769 vulnerable women and girls receiving PFA services: a substantial achievement towards SDG 3. A total of 23 Social Welfare, Health, CSO and District Council staff were trained on Interpersonal Group Therapy (IPGT) and 40 officials were certified as trainers in Psychological First Aid (PFA)¹⁶; PFA trainers went on to build the capacity of 405 service providers¹⁷ across the country.

Thanks to the SI, survivors in remote areas are able to access services through CVSUs which are now operational in all districts and are staffed with volunteers with the requisite skills. Following a gender-sensitive assessment of CVSUs, the SOPs for all CVSUs were revised and the SI successfully reactivated and reconstituted 50 CVSU committees to better manage SGBV/HP cases. This

¹⁵ One CPW serve 32,462 children under the age of 18 (CPW Task Analysis 2020), thus the CPWs serve a total of 800,000 children in SI districts

¹⁶ This work was funded through UN contributions to and investments in the SI

¹⁷ The service providers were drawn from Police, Health, Education (Advisors and Teachers), Social Welfare, CSO and Faith Based partners.

included the training of 457 CVSU members and 35 CPWs on handling such incidents, including in times of COVID-19. Further, the SI improved referrals of SGBV identified in schools to CVSUs by establishing linkages between these and 197 schools.

Guided by the principle of LNOB, and to ensure access to justice by survivors living in marginalized communities, the SI rolled out 48 mobile courts, including legal aid clinics, and benefitted over 975 SGBV survivors. The mobile courts allow for a considerably fast tracking of court proceedings and resulted in the hearing of 188 cases and the conclusion of 85. The courts are guided by a Mobile Courts Policy developed with the support of the SI.

To complement the SI's efforts to improve access to justice, the SI contributed to a survivor-centred court environment devoid of gender-based biases and prejudice that diminish the quality of services. This was done by training 190 justice responders and stakeholders on how to ensure a gender-responsive court environment and adjudications.

The SI empowered communities to share feedback on the quality of justice related services through community scorecards. The tools were developed in consultation with 90 community members and elevated the voices of 292 individuals on the implementation of the 5 prioritised GRLs which guide service delivery for survivors.

The SI has improved the long-term recovery prospects of 3529 vulnerable women (including 2,493 SGBV survivors and 27 women and girls with disabilities) by facilitating their access to financial resources. Similarly, the SI improved livelihood opportunities and life skills of 210 GBV survivors by supporting them to enroll in adult literacy schools and training 64 adult literacy instructors. These efforts can be added to efforts towards SDG 10, to reduce inequalities by better positioning marginalized women and girls.

Through the Programme, 18 women's Village Savings & Loans Association (VSLA) and marketing groups were linked to Micro Financial Institutions to access business loans and improve their financial independence. The SI further enhanced survivor's financial standing by supporting their small businesses through the purchase and installment of critical commodities such as solar pumps and sewing machines. Women farmers were greatly assisted to access financial support through the creation of 405 marketing groups to link women farmers to financial services from micro financial institutions.

SRHR Reporting: Outcome 4

The SI improved access to SRHR services by ensuring that service points are fully stocked with SRHR commodities. This benefitted 517 women and girls who accessed SRH services during 2020. The integration of quality SRHR and SGBV essential services was achieved by enhancing capacities of service providers, and establishing an integrated referral pathway. Service providers were also trained on SRH service delivery to women and girls with disabilities.

Outcome 5: Data

Important groundwork has been laid to harmonise SGBV/HP incident data collection through national and district Observatory Hubs through a harmonised data collection tool for the judiciary, health and social welfare sectors. The SI also strengthened Information Management Systems (IMS) pertaining to the police and judiciary, leading to enhanced data capacities and availability for evidence-based programming and policy development.

The SI laid important groundwork for a harmonised SGBV/HPs and SRHR IMS in Malawi. The validation of the SI supported assessment of the SGBV information framework in Malawi generated important dialogue among key stakeholders from 55 different institutions, and provided a platform for all to advocate for a harmonised system, as well as agree on key steps towards its achievement. The key recommendation was for the SI to focus on enhancing data collection by community police, health and social workers at the village level where cases typically go unnoticed and unreported. A ground-breaking outcome of the consultations was the agreement of the Malawi police, village health workers, and the courts to collaborate with the NSO in SGBV/HPs information gathering and sharing.

To complement these enhanced data collection efforts, the SI is supporting the establishment of a National Data Observatory Hub as well as District Observatory Hubs to be managed by NSO. The Hubs will be a repository and reference point for all SGBV/HP and SRHR related information shared from a range of sources.

Based on the comprehensive assessment on the SGBV Information Management in Malawi, a data collection tool has been designed that will harmonise SGBV/HPs and SRHR data collection by 3 key sectors: health, social welfare, and justice. The tool was developed in consultation with key stakeholders who validated the need for such an instrument, and has since been pre-tested based on their feedback. The testing of the tool demonstrated the ease with which SGBV incidence data will be collected and shared with the SGBV District Data Observatory Hubs, strengthening multi-sectoral service delivery and coordination.

After building the capacity of the Malawi Police's capacities to collect SGBV/HP data, there have been marked improvements in their data collection and sharing. The upgraded and newly developed mobile data collection system "RapidPro" for social welfare officers, the police and the Judiciary enabled the production and dissemination of 4 quarterly bulletins¹⁸ including an analysis of the data for Malawi collected by the Police and the Judiciary. An additional dashboard for One Stop Centres was also completed to improve data visualisation, and which has improved partners' ability to monitor trends and adjust their response as needed.

RapidPro has significantly improved the availability of SGBV/HPs and SRHR data, as well as facilitated readily analysed information that can then inform policy development and programming.

¹⁸ The police produced 3 bulletins for Quarters 1, 2, and 3, while the Judiciary produced one bulletin covering Quarters 1 and 2.

From Q1 to Q3 in 2020, 1,890 cases of sexual violence were reported to police, representing a 22% increase compared to the same period in 2019.

1 / TYPES OF VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

From April to June 2020, a total of 4,248 (1,009 girls, 180 boys, 2,114 women, 158 men) new cases of violence were reported at police stations across the country. Children contributed 30% (1,279) out of 4,148 cases, a drop from 34% (537) out of 1,571 in Q2 of 2019. The most common types of violence reported were marital and interpersonal conflict (35%), followed by economic violence (17%), physical violence (14%), conduct likely to cause breach of peace (13%), and Sexual violence (12%). In comparison to the Q1 (January-March) 2020, it is notable that the share of cases of marital and interpersonal conflict increased from 25% (1,208) out of 4,822 in Q1 to 34% (1,418) out of 4,248 in Q2 2020. Violence of any form was experienced most commonly among girls and women compared to boys and men (76% females, 27% male), a trend consistent over the years.

The highest number of cases in Q2 of 2020 was recorded as 1,488 in May and the lowest record was in June at 1,357. A comparison of the data for the same period in 2019 shows that the highest number of cases were also recorded in May (1,511) in May 2019 and the lowest record was in June at 789. Police formations are coordinated by four regional offices, and a spike can be observed in May both at Southern region and Eastern region, while the Central region shows a contrary trend with a drop in May. Many less cases were seen during Q2 in the Northern region with a slight upward trend.

2 / PROFILE AND TRENDS

In Q2 of 2020, 77% of all sexual abuse cases involved child victims. Children contributed 17% of all physical abuse victims, and 24% of all economic abuse cases. Females accounted for 83% of all sexual violence cases, 72% of all physical violence cases, and 84% of economic abuse cases. Children were victims in almost 30% of all violence cases. Compared to the Q1 2020, the percentage of female victims against the total cases slightly increased for sexual violence (from 91% in Q1 to 93% in Q2), physical violence (from 69% in Q1 to 72% in Q2), and for economic abuse cases (from 78% in Q1 to 84% in Q2).

Figure 5 shows the comparison between Q2 2020 and Q2 2019 by categories of cases. A notable rise was seen in 2020 for marital and interpersonal conflict, conduct likely to cause breach of peace, human trafficking, and abduction. Similarly, a slight increase can be observed for economic abuse, indecent assault, other sexual violence, and suicide. On the other hand, a slight drop can be seen for child neglect, delinquency, physical abuse, and rape.

Figure 6 indicates the comparison between Q1 2020 and Q2 2020. Notably, a 30% increase of cases of marital and interpersonal conflict is seen in Q2 2020 compared to Q1 2020 and a 30% increase of cases of conduct likely to cause breach. A slight increase can be observed for human trafficking and suicide, however, there were less cases for other categories, including abduction, child neglect, delinquency, economic abuse, indecent assault, other sexual violence, physical violence, and rape.

Figure 1: Number of victims of sexual violence

Category	Q2 2019	Q2 2020
Total victims	434	479
Sexual violence	397	434
Physical violence	137	145
Economic abuse	100	100

Figure 2: Children in conflict with the law

Category	Q1 2020	Q2 2020
Total arrested	515	513
Total diverted	143	143
Total released	372	370

Figure 3: Children in conflict with the law

Category	Q1 2020	Q2 2020
Total arrested	515	513
Total diverted	143	143
Total released	372	370

Figure 4: Total number of victims over time

Month	2019	2020
Jan	1,200	1,300
Feb	1,300	1,400
Mar	1,400	1,500
Apr	1,500	1,600
May	1,511	1,488
Jun	789	1,357

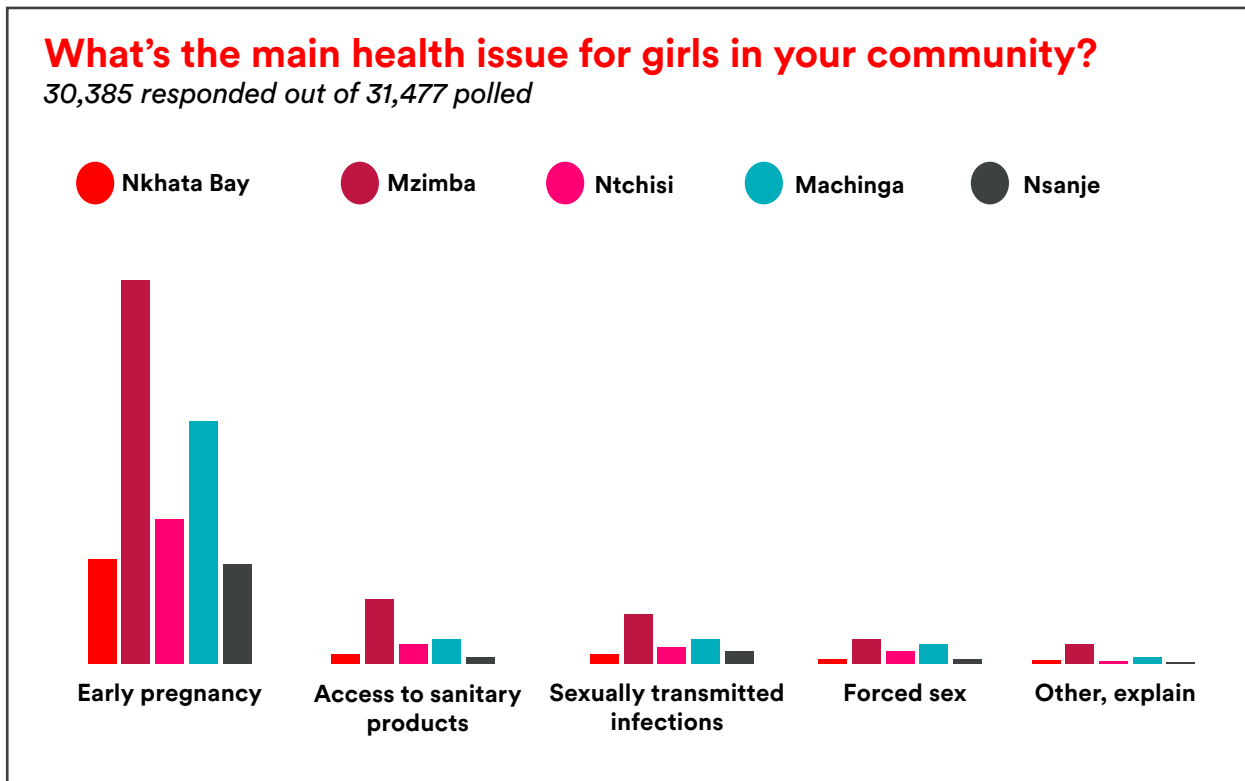
Additionally, the SI has ensured a more survivor-centred approach by upgrading the Gender Based Violence Management Information System (GBVMIS), leading to enhanced confidentiality of cases. The upgrade allows different sectors to share and manage their data through a separate window, which will facilitate multi-sectoral information sharing and management.

The SI team continues to use U-Report to better understand community perceptions and level of comprehension of key topics related to SGBV/HPs and tailor the programme accordingly. The surveys also raise awareness on these issues by kick starting a community conversation. Three polls¹⁹ were conducted in 2020 on access to and quality of SRHR services, gender and SGBV norms, and female empowerment, respectively. The nation-wide SRHR poll found that 72% of all respondents believe early pregnancy to be the main health issue for girls in their community, thus confirming the SI's focus on SRHR for adolescents. The poll on female empowerment targeted females in SI Spotlight districts and found that 52% said women and girls' rights is a current topic of discussion in their communities, though 26% said it is not taken seriously by males.

SRHR Reporting: Outcome 5

Based on the comprehensive assessment on SGBV Information Management in Malawi, a data collection tool has been designed that will harmonise SGBV/HPs and SRHR data collection by 3 key sectors: health, social welfare, and justice. SRHR data is now more readily available through the improvement the Police and the Judiciary IMSs (RapidPro). A nation-wide poll on access to and quality of SRHR services was conducted to better understand community perceptions on these issues and adjust the Programme as needed.

19 For more information and the full polls, visit <https://ureport.mw/opinion/4603/>, <https://ureport.mw/opinion/4300/>, and <https://ureport.mw/opinion/4041/>.



Outcome 6: Women’s Movement

The SI made significant contributions to women’s movement building in Malawi by district-based Women’s Assemblies tasked with coordinating women’s movement building. Social accountability mechanisms were developed and rolled out among grassroots women’s groups, who now have the evidence base to hold duty bearers accountable to quality service delivery and the EVAWG. A series of capacity building interventions on GRB, disability mainstreaming, GRLs, and SRHR and effective campaigning has better positioned at least 180 grassroots women’s organisations to effectively position VAWG as a priority in their communities. Female Sex Workers were supported to establish a protective network that enhances this vulnerable group’s protection, and encourages help-seeking behaviour.

The SI mobilised 1,275 women into action to EAWG by establishing and/or re-activating 51 women’s rights groups at grassroots level. Community-based movement building was further bolstered by the SI through the creation of 6 Women’s Assemblies in each district, which resulted from the cooperation of 180 women representing 180 women’s groups (30 per district). The Assemblies are a sustainable mechanism to coordinate, galvanise, and support women’s movement building at grassroots level.

The SI built the capacity of CBOs to influence and advance progress on VAWG in their communities by conducting 15 awareness campaigns and 16 radio programmes. Their messages on EVAWG sensitised over 31,321 people.

In keeping with the LNOB principle and addressing intersecting forms of discrimination, the SI created and strengthened networks of female sex workers (FSWs), and Women Living with HIV and AIDS. A total of 278 women belonging to these groups received training on SGBV and SRHR, and are consequently able to develop community-based advocacy campaigns, establish alliances with other marginalized groups of women, and enhance COVID-19 pandemic protection.

The empowerment of 45 FSW Community Activists (CAs) to use SASA!²⁰ Principles to design and lead community-based action plans on SGBV among FSWs has further built collective bargaining among FSW and other key populations. The SI supported the Activists to liaise with key community stakeholders and decisionmakers and build consensus on how to EVAWG against FSWs in particular. With the Programme's support, CAs also effectively mitigated sexual exploitation risks for adolescent girls through a proactive bar-to-bar outreach programme initiative resulting in the withdrawal of 20 adolescent girls from bars and their referral to protective services.

Through SI's capacity building interventions, a further 67 representatives from CBO's and DPOs, 25 women support groups and 10 men's support groups are now knowledgeable on EVAWG, disability mainstreaming, and SRHR. Thirty women's organisations are able to apply GRB and hold service providers accountable for the quality of SGBV/SRHR services. Their advocacy has been strengthened through scorecards developed under the SI, and the subsequent scorecard assessments which engaged 1,009 community members.

The SI worked with CBOs to raise awareness on VAWG by supporting them to train 314 people from 51 women rights groups on GBV and harmful practices (251 women, 55 with disabilities; and 50 men, 4 with disabilities). The success of the trainings is demonstrated in 115 SGBV reports to/by the CBOs.

The Initiative has further enhanced networking and the sharing of best practices within Radio Action Groups structures. There has been an improvement in women groups' coordination in case referrals by women's groups 40 (Female 25 and 15 Male) with 8 Radio Action Groups of 120 members (78 females) and Women learning Circles for women movement building (380 women) mobilized including theatre for development (22 F) and 2 drama series developed that have increase grassroots awareness on SGBV/HP.

The SI improved the protection for women rights defenders through the mobilization of 200 women lawyers to lobby high-level GoM representatives, including the Malawi Vice President, and the Attorney General. As a result, the GoM committed to ensuring better protection mechanisms for women lawyers and other Women's Rights Defenders.

²⁰ SASA! is a community mobilisation approach for preventing VAW and HIV. It is designed for catalysing community-led change of norms and behaviours that perpetuate gender inequality, violence and increased HIV vulnerability for women.

The SI also supported over 91 CSO members to jointly advocate for systemic improvements through contributions to key documents. Their important inputs resulted in the collective development of the Beijing+ 25 alternate report and Malawi's 8th alternate report on the CEDAW.

Women's Movement building was further supported by the SI through the launch of the The African Women Leaders Network (AWLN) Malawi Chapter. The SI-supported launch targeted 350 women and girls drawn from various sectors and groups such as CSOs, youth networks, private sector entities, women in business including entrepreneurs, the Parliament, local councils, political parties, academic institutions and students, women living in rural areas, government Ministries, departments and agencies on 2 March 2020 under the theme: 'Intergenerational leadership: Malawian Women Working Together for the Malawi we want'.

SRHR Reporting: Outcome 6

Women's grassroots organisations are more knowledgeable on SRHR and are better able to advocate for their rights and develop/ implement plans to enhance their SRHR. In keeping with the LNOB principle the SI created and strengthened networks of female sex workers (FSWs), and Women Living with HIV and AIDS, and trained them on their SRHR, prompting them to raise awareness and improve uptake of SRH services among members of this especially vulnerable group.



Traditional leaders interact during a chiefs forum in Ntchisi.

Photo Credit: Bennet Phunyanya

Rights Holders (“Beneficiaries”)

Indicative numbers	Direct for 2020	Indirect for 2020	Comments/Justifications
Women (18 yrs. and above)	1,072,301	3,377,006	<p>Direct beneficiaries include women reached through advocacy meetings on harmful practices, women and adolescent girls who accessed GBV and SRH services such as counselling, pregnancy test, PEP, contraception, STI test, protection, women accessed judicial services, communication messages, trainings, U-reporting, women in VSLs, SMEs.</p> <p>How calculation was done: <i>In line with the guidance for counting beneficiaries, the estimated indirect reach calculation assumed that for any women directly reached, they reached 5 more people. Each teacher or head teacher is assumed to have reached 72 more children (based on average school figures), and the formula for calculating indirect reach for service providers was used counting staff from the courts, child protection workers, police. The total population reached covered more than the total population of the area and the assumption is that some people were reached more than once.</i></p>
Girls (5-17 yrs.)	595,499	2,210,225	<p>These include girls reached during the commemoration of the International Day of the Girl Child (IDGC), girls given scholarships, reported girls’ cases of violence reported through police, CVSUs and Ifenso platforms, girls removed from child marriages, girls who underwent legal literacy sessions, martial arts training, and girls who were reached with SI communication services,</p> <p>How calculation was done: <i>In line with the guidance for the beneficiaries counting, the estimated indirect reach calculation assumed that the areas of operation for the girls directly reached is the community and for every one girl reached directly, 5 additional people were reached indirectly through the girl. Therefore, the total direct reach for all the girls was multiplied by 5 to get the estimated indirect reach figure.</i></p>

Indicative numbers	Direct for 2020	Indirect for 2020	Comments/Justifications
Men (18 yrs. and above)	897,482	4,089,576	<p>This group of men is a combination of adolescent boys and men, some are local leaders and others fall under influential group like service providers through communication messages, trainings, U-reporting, men reached through community engagements such as engagement of traditional leaders and gatekeepers on issues emerging from mentorship sessions, men in barbershop toolkit, male champions.</p> <p>How calculation was done: <i>In line with the guidance for the beneficiaries count, the calculation for indirect beneficiaries assumes that for any young and older women directly reached, 5 more people received the information. For each teacher or head teacher, the assumption is that an additional 72 people will be reached (based on average number of students in a school). The formula for calculating indirect beneficiaries for service providers was used counting staff from courts, CPWs, police. The total population reached covered more than the total population of the area and the assumption is that some people were reached more than once.</i></p>
Boys (5-17 yrs.)	591,626	2,190,748	<p>The data comprises cases of violence reported by boys through police, CVSUs and Ifenso platforms, boys who participated in the Transformation Training Programme, boys who underwent legal literacy sessions, boys who underwent martial arts program, boys who were reached with SI communication services, including boys directly reached during the commemoration of the IDGC.</p> <p>How calculation was done: <i>In line with the guidance for the beneficiaries count, the estimated indirect reach calculation assumed that the areas of operation for the boys directly reached is the community and for every boy reached directly, 5 more people were reached indirectly. Therefore the total number of direct boy beneficiaries was multiplied by 5 to get the estimated number of indirect beneficiaries.</i></p>
TOTAL	3,156,908	11,867,555	

Challenges and Mitigating Measures

More information on challenges and mitigating measures is further outlined in Annex B on Risk Mitigation.

Surge in SGBV and HPs (COVID-19): Following the closure of all schools in March, the country witnessed a major surge in cases of defilement, teenage pregnancies²¹ and child marriages. This surge in teenage pregnancies in particular leaned on the SI's strength in mainstreaming SRHR into all services. In response, the SI team positioned teenage pregnancies and child marriages as a new programmatic priority in the updated acceleration plan, to be mainstreamed across all pillars. Interventions to ensure access to SRHR were bolstered at the community level, with traditional and community leaders as well as school authorities enlisted as key allies in awareness raising, case follow-up and ensuring greater accountability. The EU and the UN also joined hands to raise awareness through jingles, video clips and televised panel discussions.

COVID-19 Preventative Measures: The closure of schools, partial closure of GoM offices, and restrictions on non-essential travel for UN staff, and public gatherings all obliged the re-design of numerous interventions. Hands-on capacity building interventions (e.g. data management trainings), school-based activities, and community mobilisation activities were especially affected. As IPs sought to adjust activities and negotiate these with RUNOs, the Programme faced major delays in implementation. Alternative delivery models also typically relied on ICT and required PPEs, implying unanticipated programme costs.

Nonetheless, the SI team was quick to enact a number of programmatic adjustments. School-based activities were relocated to community structures, and RUNOs relied on grassroots partners, community structures and traditional leaders to continue with interventions while respecting prevention measures. RUNOs responded positively to IP requests for programme adjustments, and budgets were boosted to include PPEs and improved ICT equipment and capacities. The mobile based CSO VIAMO was also brought onboard to improve information dissemination to communities and resulting in a more agile way of working on VAWG.

COVID-19 restrictions also prevented in-person meetings as well as the quarterly joint monitoring visits planned with the EU and the GoM. This affected team building, and the degree of ownership of the SI by line ministries. Channels of communication with the central GoM were maintained (e.g. by sharing monthly reports) and at district level, government ownership was sustained through the CoPs.

The Continuum of Care for Survivors of Child Marriage: To combat the rising number of child marriages, the GoM prioritised the urgent annulment of all child marriages when identified. While this response was welcomed, the absence of economic, educational, and psychosocial support

²¹ It should be noted that the surge in teenage pregnancies was not necessarily the direct result of violence, but rather, the lack of access to SRHR services.

for girls withdrawn from child marriages posed a considerable challenge. In many instances, girls and their parents resorted to marriage due to a lack of livelihood opportunities amid high levels of poverty. Where girls were withdrawn from marriages without ensuring a fall-back plan, they often returned to the marriage or refused to leave their spouse in the first place. SI partners worked cohesively to prioritise these girls and refer the girls to each partner's particular programs to benefit from the various interventions; however, the overwhelming demand was difficult to meet. As part of the Malawi acceleration plan, RUNOs therefore scaled up economic empowerment interventions, the mentorship programme and strengthened referrals for SRHR.

Similarly, while the SI scholarship under Pillar 3 offset the costs of school fees, uniforms, learning materials, sanitary pads and accommodation for survivors, it became evident that the girls also needed psychosocial support and mentoring to recover from the violence they experienced. In response, an orientation with 110 head teachers and teachers was conducted to guide them in better supporting learners. Further mentoring from successful women who emerged from similar situations is also planned in the coming year.

Capacity of IPs, Particularly CBOs: in adherence to the SI principles of local ownership and sustainability, the SI Malawi prioritised the recruitment of locally based organisations to implement the Programme. As a result, the same intervention may be implemented by a different partner in different locations. Unfortunately, this approach has highlighted differing levels of capacity across partners, leading to differing impacts of the same intervention across districts. Additionally, low literacy levels, low absorption rates, inadequate financial management, limited understanding of the Programme's ToC and low capacity on results-based management have ultimately led to lower delivery rates by many IPs and an added strain on RUNOs to meet targets.

Despite this challenge, the Malawi team remains firm in the belief that engaging national and grassroots organisations is critical for sustainability, and has instead intensified efforts to build their capacity to deliver results as planned. In addition to RUNO specific support, the coordination team offered a training on gender and disability-sensitive monitoring and reporting, which improved levels of understanding on the SI ToC. In year 3, further capacity building plans are underway, including on financial management.

Do No Harm: It became apparent during the year that not all SI partners apply a survivor-centred approach. As partners strived to show progress, and "prove" the SI's success through enhanced visibility; confidentiality and ethics were at times overlooked. Media reports on GBV and HPs were also observed to be insensitive and potentially harmful to survivors and their families. The team noted these development with immense concern, and reacted by, i) developing and widely disseminating a [guidance note for IPs on how to ensure visibility while respecting ethics and the "do no harm" principle](#), and ii) supporting the SI Media Network to issue a press statement calling for media actors to do no harm when reporting on SGBV/ HPs. Further capacity building on this subject is planned for year 3.

Sequencing of IP Recruitment: The different operational processes of the 4 RUNOs resulted in different stages of IP recruitments, which affected the cohesiveness of the various interconnected and interdependent interventions. Fortunately, the existence of SI CoPs at district level supported the smooth integration of newer IPs, who benefitted from the lessons learned, networks and experiences of the other partners.

Partnership with Executive Levels of GoM: The change in Government, while a positive testament to the democratic disposition of Malawi, required renewed partnership building with the executive levels of Government. The change in cabinet and leadership furthermore brought changes in roles and responsibilities at executive levels, which in turn affected the convening of the Steering Committee during the year. Led by the RC, the UN joined efforts with the EU to elevate the SI as a priority with Line Ministers and to build strong alliances for the successful continuation of the SI Programme.

Delayed Funds Disbursement: The Malawi team experienced considerable delays in the disbursement of funds, which posed a major challenge for RUNOs to ensure continuity in partnerships and interventions. While the fund replenishment was requested in May, RUNOs only received funds in mid December when financial systems had already closed for the year. While many interventions could not be continued during this period, nearly all RUNOs borrowed heavily against core resources to avoid halting critical services and activities.

Expectation of Remuneration by Communities: Anticipation of benefits by community members threatened attendance and sustainability of some SI interventions. For instance, some mentees from the Safe Space project expected remuneration for attending mentorship sessions and dropped out when they discovered that participation was voluntary. Moving forward, expectations will be managed from the very onset.

Disgruntled Men and Boys: During the MTR the FGDs with adult men and traditional leaders, who are typically male, revealed that many feel the SI wrongly favours women and girls. This perception, coupled with stereotypical male attitudes that justify VAWG has led to the dissatisfaction of some men and boys with the SI, which can negatively impact on the SI's female beneficiaries. Moving forward, the team will scale up male engagement activities to secure the allegiance of men, and thus promote gender equality and the EAWG among community-based decision makers.

Lessons Learned and New Opportunities

a) Lessons Learned

Engaging Grassroots organisations as IPs for the SI is vital for the sustainability of the Programme. However, where it is anticipated that the organization may struggle to absorb funds and deliver results, contractual agreements should include a strong capacity-building component.

SI CoPs at the district level are an essential coordination mechanism. The CoPs ensure greater efficiencies, enhanced synergies across pillars, and more cohesive and effective engagement with district officials – leading to greater ownership (more information under good practices). Moving forward, CoPs will continue to be the primary coordination mechanism at district level.

The "Do No Harm" Principle needs to be firmly embedded in IP agreements and all capacity building initiatives. Ensuring visibility of the SI should not come at a cost to survivors and their right to confidentiality. Capacity building on ethics and the "do no harm" principle is needed for all SI actors and has been prioritized for the coming year.

The CS-NRG constitutes an important structure and should be supported by all RUNOs. This novel mechanism was established after budgets had already been allocated, the work was primarily funded by one RUNO. This placed an inequitable burden on one RUNO, while distancing other RUNOs from the CS-NRG. In Phase II financial support to the CS-NRG will be assumed by the entire SI UN team.

A coordination budget for line ministries is imperative to enable them to fully oversee the SI. While the 2 SI line ministries fulfilled their coordination and oversight functions, the availability of a budget would have allowed them to play a more active and autonomous role in driving the SI forward. For Phase II, a budget line has been allocated for both ministries to effectively play this role.

Careful joint planning on geographical coverage is necessary prior to rolling out activities. The late onboarding of the coordination team coupled with the pressure on RUNOs to commence implementation led to variations in geographical coverage within prioritized districts. This meant that without all pillar interventions taking place in one district, the holistic nature of the SI was somewhat lost. Nonetheless the coordination team very quickly identified this discrepancy, and conducted a 3W mapping to recommend areas of convergence and operation. Today, the SI is implemented cohesively in all districts and areas.

Distribution of SI visibility products are an important incentive for communities. During the internal mid-term review conducted, community members noted that such products (e.g. t-shirts, school bags, etc.) are highly valued by them, and allow them to feel a sense of pride and ownership in the work they do with the SI.

Entrenched gender inequalities affect membership of GBV community structures. During the year the SI significantly improved the capacity of CVSUs to support SGBV/HP survivors. However, it was observed that the gender parity in the membership of CVSU committees was largely lacking. This is due to limited participation of women in community decisionmaking processes. Further capacity-building and sensitisation on the need to be gender-inclusive will be addressed in the next year.

b) New Opportunities

COVID-19 became an opportunity to strengthen survivor support services in hard to reach communities. For instance, the Malawi Police Service established a hotline 932 dubbed “Mthetsa Nkhanza”, which enabled police to rapidly respond to issues of SGBV. Grassroots IPs and Government service providers were equipped with bicycles, motorbikes and mobile devices to



Scholarship beneficiaries at Mvera CDSDS.
Photo Credit: UNICEF

better access marginalised communities. The pandemic also highlighted the urgency to improve data management in order to monitor the situation of women and girls.

The District Youth Offices provide an important entry point to working with adolescent and young girls. During the mid-term review exercise, communities were asked which community structures were effectively addressing VAWG, the youth office was repeatedly mentioned. The SI has thus far not engaged this office significantly; however, based on this feedback plans are under way to strengthen the SI's partnership with this office.

The SI Media Network is effective and should be incorporated into the work under various pillars. Until now, the Network has been funded under communications and led by the RCO. However, RUNOs have observed that their work is highly relevant, cross cutting and that the Media Network should be allocated a budget to support the work of all pillars. This will also give the Network greater autonomy and flexibility to raise awareness on VAWG and advocate for change.

The Association of Women in Media (AWOME) has emerged as an important and promising new stakeholder in EVAWG. While this group has not been vocal in the past, the rise in cases of rape in 2020 prompted AWOME to march in the country's main cities and appeal for authorities to toughen laws on sexual violence. Based on the impactful partnership with the SI Media Network, there are plans to support AWOME and strengthen their capacity to advocate for the EVAWG.

The Speaker of Parliament, and the Parliament itself is an important ally for the SI. As the 3rd most senior Government official in the country, the Speaker of Parliament affirmed her commitment to improving laws and policies in favour of survivors in collaboration with the SI. The RC and the Speaker liaised closely on this matter during the year, and there are plans to solidify this partnership in 2021 through a number of joint activities, including at community level, COVID-19 permitting, and with the active participation of the EU.

The Presidential Task Force on Rape and Defilement is a strategic advocacy platform. One of the key challenges in responding to VAWG in Malawi is the insufficient budget allocated to front line service providers, such as police, magistrates, and others. These actors largely rely on the financial support of development partners, which poses a major obstacle to the sustainability of the Government's response to GBV and HPs. A principal priority for the SI moving forward is to lobby the GoM for increased budgetary allocations to institutional service providers, and the Presidential Task Force is the ideal platform due to the number of key decision makers who make up the membership.

Facilitating the exchange of good practice on EVAWG among district officials and traditional leaders will incentivise enhanced action on SGBV/HPs. The SI team observed that certain senior district officials and traditional leaders stand out as excellent examples on how to effectively combat VAWG. Facilitating the exchange of good practices and lessons learned among these respective two groups in 2021 could incentivise under performers to improve their work, while validating and encouraging the good work of their peers.

The National Institute for Civic Education (NICE) is a strategic partner for the SI. During the year the SI team partnered with NICE to produce a soap opera on SGBV and HP related topics. As part of the production, the SI team trained the production team and actors on SGBV and HP (including in relation to COVID-19), and in doing so instilled a sense of responsibility in the team to support the country's development by sensitising the nation on the dangers of SGBV and HPs. The team plans to further leverage this budding partnership in the coming year.

The Inter-Agency SOPs on use of SI vehicle at district level will lead to greater efficiencies.

The vehicle was purchased under Pillar 4 with the intention of supporting the work under this pillar. The vehicle is not always occupied, however, and in these instances could be utilised by other RUNOs and partners who may not have access to transportation. The SOPs will allow for this resource to be utilised by all SI actors, thereby improving access to marginalised rural communities and leaving no one behind, while ensuring greater cost efficiencies.

UN Joint Programme Collaboration is key and sets the tone for UN System wide action.

Under the leadership of the RC, the Spotlight Initiative took the lead in convening all UN Joint Programmes (JPs) to agree on a common approach to addressing teenage pregnancies and child marriages by leveraging on each other's resources, interventions partnerships, networks, and expertise- towards a holistic response. The 4 JPs agreed on a number of joint actions, and recommended a harmonised way forward through the UN Programme Management Team and the UNCT. In 2021 the JPs will continue to work cohesively on this topic for a more multi-sectoral approach and in the spirit of UN Reform.

UNINFO will enable more effective information sharing with key stakeholders.

The travel and meeting restrictions introduced to curb the COVID-19 pandemic have slowed the degree of collaboration between the UN and key stakeholders- including the GoM and the EU. To compensate, increased information sharing is needed. UNINFO will allow for progress data to be organised in a visually impactful manner, and for stakeholders to access the platform directly and track the SI's results on a quarterly basis.

Digital literacy is positively received by communities and worth investing during the Phase II of the Programme. This is especially true for grassroots women's rights organizations as crucial frontline service providers during the pandemic.

Community based multisector collaboration on social behavior change has been enhanced.

National, district and community platforms for social mobilization were revamped, including the establishment of Chief's Forums. The strengthened collaboration enhanced implementation of pillar 3 interventions during the pandemic. These should be further strengthened given their potential to influence collective action and leverage resources at all levels.

Innovative, Promising and Good Practices

a) Good Practices

SI Community of Practice (COP)

The SI COPs established in all districts (and even below district level) during 2019 continue to facilitate comprehensive solutions to EVAWG among SI actors, including district State Actors, to the extent that 2 districts decentralized the structures to operate at the village level. The COPs have been particularly effective for IPs to collectively ensure the continuum of care for girl survivors of child marriage, which has been a major protection concern in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, where a survivor is identified by the group, she is then recommended for inclusion in the various interventions being conducted by the different SI IPs, resulting in the holistic support needed to recover from her trauma.

As a result, collaboration of SI actors through the COPs directly resulted in:

- Ending 136 child marriages;
- Apprehension of 8 perpetrators of child marriage- of which 6 were sentenced;
- School Re-enrolment of 22 adolescent girls;
- Inclusion of 16 GBV survivors in VSL groups who then received loans from welfare funds;
- Inclusion of 28 GBV survivors in Safe Space mentorship Programme.
- Follow up of 8 SGBV/HP cases with the court and police.
- Referral of 31 survivors for medical services.
- Provision of PSS to 141 GBV survivors.

Chief's Forums to EVAWG

In collaboration with the MoLGRD, the SI established a harmonised approach for Traditional Leaders (Chiefs) in Malawi to collectively EVAWG at national, district and community levels. As custodians of culture, customs and traditions, Chiefs play a critical role in the sustenance and evolution of sociocultural norms in communities.

Further, the sustainable elimination of VAWG requires approaches that are community-led and embrace decision makers and leaders as allies. The SI Chief's forum therefore positions Traditional Leaders as catalysts of social change and transformation by championing individual commitment, combined with self and public accountability.

As a result, 34 Paramount and Senior Chiefs and 156 Chiefs are now engaged through National and district Chief's forums. As a result, traditional leaders worked with service providers to withdraw 209 young girls from child marriages and facilitated the school re-admission of 41 girls.

Safe Space Mentorship Programme

The Safe Space Mentorship Programme includes a 6-month mentorship curriculum targeting out of school adolescent girls and young women. The Programme empowers young women and girls to recognize the illegality of violence, and how such violence infringes on their basic human rights as well as to challenge harmful social attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate VAWG. The 11,440 mentees and 435 mentors have become part of a protective girls' network that supports thousands of other young women and girls in SI communities. A platform is then afforded to mentors and mentees to engage with traditional leaders, service providers and other community-based decision makers to jointly speak out on the issues affecting them and demand accountability from duty bearers. The Programme has already led to the identification of 1,893 child marriages and their immediate referral to authorities, which in turn led to 71 convictions in court during the reporting year.

b) Promising Practices

Strengthening Forensic investigations skills in SGBV cases

Insufficient capacities in forensic investigations for cases of sexual violence poses a major obstacle to achieving criminal justice in favour of survivors. The SI therefore established a University-based Forensic Investigations Training Course for justice actors which will facilitate enhanced evidence collection and analysis, thereby strengthening access to justice for survivors.

The Course also presented partnership opportunities for the judiciary and health sectors and the National Registration Bureau (NRB). In launching the course, the Police expressed willingness and interest in linking the police forensic data system with the National Registration Bureau (NRB). This partnership would allow the Police to collaborate with the NRB to identify perpetrators through national identities.

School Re-Enrollment Policy for Girls

The Spotlight scholarship enabled UNICEF in collaboration with MoE to develop a re-admission policy where girls who were expelled for being pregnant are given the opportunity to return to school after giving birth. This has ensured that the survivors of violence are not left behind from their right to access education but have an opportunity to return to school to complete secondary education. The policy is a positive instrument for behavior/cultural change for school level stakeholders who initially had negative attitudes towards the participation of pregnant and/or new parent girls in school.

c) Innovative Practices

Delivering as One (DaO) Accountability Framework

The DaO Accountability Framework is an innovative tool developed by the SI team during 2020, based on the premise that the DaO approach is the most effective manner to achieve the SI's Theory of Change as well as to integrate the new way of working under UN Reform. The rationale behind the framework is that the harmonised application of the DaO approach will ensure a comprehensive response to VAWG, cohesive and therefore more impactful advocacy, increased efficiencies through cost savings and avoidance, and streamlined partnerships.

By clearly defining milestones, targets and key performance indicators for the DaO approach, the UN team will be able to jointly monitor and track progress in its application, and easily identify bottlenecks as they arrive. This framework also serves as an accountability tool, ensuring that RUNOs/RCO are accountable to one another as members of the JP team, and that they have a concrete reference point in holding each other accountable. The framework will furthermore build



Beneficiary narrates how SI has impacted her life in Ntchisi.

Photo Credit: Nomsa Taulo

on and incorporate the strong coordination in districts through COPs. The tool will be piloted in 2021, and seek to achieve the following objectives:

1. To develop a mutual and clear understanding on DaO;
2. To define roles and expectations of a DaO approach within the SI;
3. To develop a simple monitoring and progress tracking tool for DaO in the SI.

Communications and Visibility

a) Overview

Through various communications interventions, the SI reached millions of viewers and 2,495,000 readers with transformative messages on EVAWG, including in relation to COVID-19. In keeping with a human rights and survivor-centred approach, the SI enhanced capacities on safe and ethical reporting through trainings and user-friendly guidance for IPs. The Programme focused on generating behaviour change at the community level by developing impactful messages using entertaining formats such as cartoons and soap operas. The UN collaborated closely with the EU and jointly conducted campaigns to EVAWG and mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls. The SI Media Network continued to be a crucial ally in galvanizing media and public support to combat VAWG.

Objective 1.1: To raise awareness on VAWG

In 2020 the SI focused the work under this objective on ensuring survivor centred and ethical reporting on VAWG. To this end, the SI interacted with the Media Network (comprised of the 53 journalists) throughout the year by consistently flagging stories on SGBV/HPs that did not meet ethical standards and explaining the reasons for concern. This regular interaction was important as it strengthened the Network's comprehension of ethical reporting through real examples.

Thus, after a series of harmful articles on the Msundwe case were published, the SI turned to the Media Network to sensitise other media actors on the need to protect the safety and security of survivors by protecting their confidentiality and reporting in a sensitive manner. The Network issued a press release appealing to media outlets to draw the public's attention to the increasing number of VAWG cases, while ensuring confidentiality and ethical standards.

Objective 1.2: To illustrate and promote the impact and results of Spotlight interventions

The SI's work was widely promoted and shared with the public and relevant stakeholders by identifying and disseminating stories of the women and girls whose lives have been positively transformed by the Initiative. The Initiative's IPs were encouraged to do the same and oriented

on how to effectively engage the media while adhering to visibility guidelines. This resulted in 25 articles featuring the SI, including Malawi's 15 main media houses (2 main dailies with 70,000 reach in total) reaching approximately half a million people across the country.

To ensure that survivors' safety and security is prioritised by IPs when securing visibility for the SI, the team developed "Guidelines Towards Safe, Ethical, and Harmonized Communications and Visibility". The guidelines were a key tool to remind IPs that visibility for the SI should never be at the expense of survivors.

The Malawi team furthermore published the first edition of the SI Newsletter, featuring editorials from the EU and the RC. In addition to highlighting human-interest stories revealing the impact of the Programme on women, girls and their communities, the Newsletter also formally introduced the CS-NRG to the public, and explained the important role they play. The newsletter was widely disseminated to key stakeholders and the public through the Reliefweb website²² which has 15 million users, as well as on the EU's social media pages which reach over 10,423 people.

Objective 1.3: To provide communications for development support to strengthen SI's programme implementation

In support of pillar 3's work to transform harmful social norms, the SI sensitized 9.4 million people on the risks of VAWG. This was particularly important in the context of COVID-19, by developing and disseminating a series of media products that communities found both informative and entertaining, as outlined below. These efforts are an important supplement to those under Pillar 3 as they aim to raise awareness on VAWG and generate social behaviour change towards the elimination of such violence.

- **A cartoon series** on VAWG published in a local newspaper; 120,000 copies of the cartoons were disseminated to SI communities over a period of 6 months, reaching 2,400,000 people.
- **A radio soap opera** on VAWG developed in partnership with the National Initiative for Civic Education-NICE and several well-known Malawian actors who were trained on the SI and SGBV/HPs by the UN team. The episodes are scheduled to air on community radios in 2021.
- **1,080 radio jingles, 10 drama series and 4 special radio programmes** sensitizing the public on the risks of VAWG during the pandemic. These were aired on 9 community radio stations and 2 national stations, reaching 2 million people.
- **Collaborative video on EAWG** during COVID-19, featuring the RC, EU Head of Development Cooperation, and several Malawian celebrities. The Video was aired on a national private TV station reaching 6 million people, shared widely on UN social media pages reaching 25,000 people and aired at the Lilongwe Airport waiting room for COVID-19 patients.

²² <https://reliefweb.int/report/malawi/spotlight-initiative-bulletin-malawi-country-programme-official-newsletter-volume-one>.

Objective 1.4 To ensure visibility for the Spotlight Initiative, its donors, and partners:

To enable the visibility of the SI, a number of products were designed and disseminated in communities and among key stakeholders, including fact sheets, torches, folder, tote bags, footballs, sign posts, pens, backpacks, SI branded cloth, and mugs. Billboards with targeted messaging were also designed for all 6 SI districts, which proudly announce the district as an SI area.

Messages

The SI disseminated several messages on EVAWG through social media, radio, television and newspapers; targeting all sectors of Malawian society. The effectiveness of these messages was enhanced through their frequent reiteration by all SI IPs and stakeholders via the various media platforms. Their success is evidenced by the feedback given by SI communities during the 52 FGDs conducted as part of the MTR.

Message 1: *“Violence against women and girls is not normal. It is wrong and harmful. It affects their physical and mental health and prevents them from fully participating in activities to develop themselves, their families, and their communities”.*

Target audience: traditional leaders, community structures and parents

Message 2: *“You are a key player in ending violence against women and girls. Join efforts with others to end all forms of violence against women and girls; or Let’s work together to end violence against women and girls”.*

Target audience: traditional leaders, community structures and parents

b) Media and visibility events²³

Bicycle donation: The SI donated 60 motorbikes and 940 bicycles to the Government of Malawi to improve women and girl’s access to services. The former Minister of Gender commended the EU and UN for their timely action as Malawi prepared to mitigate gendered impacts of COVID-19. (Pillar 4)

Speaker calls for concerted efforts in eliminating VAWG: The Speaker of the National Assembly presided over the official opening of a high-level event on GRLs, attended by several Ministers, MPs, and Senior GoM officials. The Speaker called for continued joint efforts in the EVAWG. (Pillar 1)

²³ This section focuses on visibility, rather than results. For more information on the impact of these events, please refer to the relevant pillar results section, as indicated.

Official launch of trainings for police officers in forensic investigations of sexual violence cases: The trainings were rolled out as one way of ensuring quality data for evidence to support prosecution of sexual gender-based violence cases. It targeted 60 police officers. (Pillar 5)

Engagement with Traditional leaders on EVAWG: The SI supported consultations with Malawi’s most senior Chiefs towards the establishment of national, district and community forums for traditional leaders in Malawi. The event was graced by the former Minister of Local Government. (Pillar 2)

Women Lawyers Association-WLA networking breakfast: SI supported the WLA networking breakfast attended by the Vice President and UN RC. The event sought to improve the protection of women’s rights movements and women human rights defenders by the GoM. (Pillar 6)

c) Campaigns

As mentioned above (under Partnerships), the EU and UN collaborated closely with the EU on 2 campaigns: i) a digital campaign dubbed ‘16 days 16 stories’²⁴, highlighting the impact of the SI the lives of people in the communities, and ii) the EU #StrongerTogether digital campaign featuring the RC in a short video highlighting the collaboration of the EU and UN to transform the lives of women and girls.

During the 16 days of Activism to EVAWG, the SI initiated a high-level panel discussion aligned to the global theme “orange the world; fund; respond; collect”²⁵, and involving the RC, EU Chargé d’Affaires, a High Court Judge, and member of the CS-NRG. The discussion aired on TV reaching 10,566,000 people, a further 10,206,000 by radio reaching, and 592,565 people via Facebook live streaming.



A community leader explains how SI has empowered them as agents of change in Ntchisi district.

Photo Credit: Nomsa Taulo

²⁴ <https://fb.watch/32EhxyoMAJ/>

²⁵ https://web.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=233100568210225&ref=watch_permalink.

d) Human interest stories²⁶

A number of human-interest stories were developed during 2020:



How Spotlight Initiative is changing lives of vulnerable girls in Malawi: Malaika's Story (Pillars 3 & 4)

Malaika Phiri is a 15-year-old girl from a small village in central Malawi. After her mother remarried, her stepfather stepped in to support the family but demanded sexual favours from Malaika as a condition for his support. As a result, Malaika dropped out of school due to lack of resources, but her acceptance into the scholarship programme enabled her protection from SEA.

<https://www.unicef.org/malawi/stories/how-spotlight-initiative-changing-lives-vulnerable-girls-malawi-malaikas-story>

Chain of care; seeking justice for child survivors of sexual violence in Malawi (Pillars 2 & 4)

Until last year, 8-year-old Fanny spent most of her time playing with friends and going to school. Senior Group Village Headman Yobu (not real name) describes her as a friendly and cheerful girl who, due to her disability, needs additional support from family.

<https://spotlightinitiative.org/news/chain-care-seeking-justice-child-survivors-sexual-violence-malawi>

(no photo because of the sensitivity of the story)



²⁶ All names have been changed for the safety and security of survivors



Activists on the move; how bicycles are changing lives in Malawi (Pillar 4)

Afiya Salanje, 47, has always been passionate about eliminating violence against women and girls. An activist for 10 years, he recently started working with Spotlight Initiative's "Champions of Change" programme. Afiya, is a beneficiary of bicycles that SI distributed to community structures. As a result of this, Afiya now visits 30 families in a month.

<https://spotlightinitiative.org/news/activists-move-how-bicycles-are-changing-lives-malawi>



Early marriage is not a solution; Tilimbike safe community space in Malawi shows that mentoring works (Pillar 3)

"Now I know that I have the right to quality education, the right to freely express my opinion and that early marriage is not a solution—thanks to the safe space, because it has made me aware of my human rights," said Alinat Fackson, 17, who received mentoring through the Safe Space mentorship Programme.

<https://spotlightinitiative.org/news/early-marriage-not-solution-tilimbike-safe-community-space-malawi-shows-mentoring-works>



e) Testimonials

“ Gender based violence is a big problem in Malawi, and it must not only be highlighted during the 16 days, that’s why the EU and UN partnered to **eliminate all forms of violence on women and girls.** ”

IVO HOEFKENS
EU Head of Cooperation in Malawi



“ I commend the EU and the UN for their commitments through the Spotlight Initiative; **this shows that Gender Based Violence is a global problem and that developed partners are working tirelessly to eliminate it.** ”

CATHERINE GOTANI HARA
Speaker of Parliament

I am pleased to note that **the Spotlight Initiative is building on existing programmes and efforts, contributing knowledge and good practices in improving women’s and girls’ lives,** ”

MARY NAVICHA
Former Minister of Gender





“ The Spotlight Initiative has empowered us chiefs. We are able to impart knowledge about effects of violence against women and girls in our communities; we can see change, ”

TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY Chilooko-Ntchisi District

“ I realized that I got paralyzed during my pregnancy because I was too young, and my body was not ready for childbirth. I immediately decided to get out of the marriage and go back to my parents’ house. I am now back in school, thanks to the Spotlight Initiative, ”

ALEFA LAZALA
Nsanje District



“ The Spotlight Media Network realizes that eliminating violence against women and girls requires concerted efforts. By issuing a press statement on sensitive reporting, we feel we are in a way reducing the stigma that comes with issues of rape and defilement. ”

ALEX BANDA
Chairperson, SI Media Network

Next Steps

During year 3, the Malawi Programme will be adjusted and strengthened based on the good practices, lessons learned, and new opportunities identified throughout the year and through the MTR in November.

This process included a thorough data collection exercise which obtained the views and recommendations of communities and district authorities. Data collection was done through 52 FGDs with girls, boys, women, men and traditional leaders, as well as an anonymous survey that gathered the insights of over 60 district officials. Questions asked focused on the effectiveness, relevance, and sustainability of the SI during Phase I and sought recommendations from all on programmatic focus for Phase II. The results were systematised and documented in a report, which was used to fine-tune the year 3 work plan, and design the Phase II work plan.

Thus, as per the recommendation of communities and the GoM, a [scale up strategy](#) was developed to increase the SI's coverage from January onwards. Per the strategy, during the first semester of 2021, the SI's best practices (based on M&E visits and feedback obtained in the MTR) will be expanded to reach 100% coverage of all 6 SI districts.

Additional areas of focus in the coming months are also highlighted below.

Pillar 1

- Drafting of amendments for the prioritised 5 Laws and 2 Policies and presentation of amendments to the Parliament for adoption.

Pillar 2

- Expansion of trainings in SGBV forensic investigations to include doctors and judicial officers.

Pillar 3

- Launch of the Male Engagement Strategy in collaboration with the MoGCDSW.
- Strengthening awareness and understanding of GRLs by traditional leaders.

Pillar 4

- Engaging the Malawi Police Services, Health and Judiciary for a high-level visit on outstanding and controversial cases.
- Rehabilitation of shelters in CVSUs for provision of temporary accommodation to survivors of SGBV.
- Increased focus on training service providers in MHPSS and Psychological First Aid.

Pillar 5

- Completing the MoGCDSW migration to the new mobile reporting system for child protection workers.
- Continuing to monitor violence against women and girls through a mobile reporting system, GBVMIS, and a new system under NSO.

Pillar 6

- Supporting the Young Feminist Network through small grants.

Monitoring, Reporting and Knowledge Management

- Development of SI knowledge products focusing on criminal justice and human rights, media coverage of SGBV, and the effectiveness of the State response to SGBV perpetrated by State actors.
- Documentation of promising practices and lessons learned.
- Facilitation of peer to peer learning among district authorities and traditional leaders.
- Rolling out monitoring and reporting on UNINFO 2.0.
- Development of a sustainability strategy.

Coordination

- Piloting of the Delivery as One Accountability Framework.
- Developing guidelines to harmonise operation of COPs.
- Commencing regular strategic meetings between EU and UN at senior level to strengthen joint steering of the SI, with emphasis on joint strategic advocacy.
- Piloting and finalisation of the inter-agency Fuel SOPs.
- Strengthening coordination with other UN JPs on teenage pregnancies and child marriage.
- Facilitating networking among all SI IPs.
- Developing a capacity building programme for all SI IPs including on PSEA, RBM, financial management, and other key topics.

Civil Society and CS-NRG

- Strengthening inter-pillar linkages and the comprehensive approach envisioned in the TOC by facilitating exchange among IPs.

ANNEXES

Annex A

Spotlight Monitoring and Reporting Tool

Annex B

Risk Mitigation Matrix

Annex C

CSO Engagement Report

Annex D

Innovations, Promising and Good Practices

Annex E

Phase I Carry Over Work Plan (Jan – Jun 2021)



**Spotlight
Initiative**



CONTACT

UN Resident Coordinator's Office
Area 40, Plot 7
P.O. Box 30135
Lilongwe 3
Malawi

Tel: +265 1 773 500
E-mail: rcc-malawi@un.org

