Spotlight Initiative Technical Guidance Note: Implementing across the outcomes

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Overview of Spotlight Initiative

Spotlight Initiative is the United Nations high-impact initiative to end violence against women and girls (VAWG). It represents an unprecedented global effort to address the most pervasive human rights violation by investing in gender equality and women's empowerment as a precondition and driver for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Since its launch in 2017, with a seed funding commitment of €500 million from the European Union, the implementation of Spotlight Initiative in 32 programmes across five regions has yielded transformative change in the lives of women and girls. It's estimated that the Initiative will have conservatively prevented 21 million women. Spotlight Initiative's holistic model to eliminating VAWG - adopting a comprehensive theory of change and new way of working with a range of stakeholders - is more effective than project-based or siloed approaches.

In 2024, Spotlight Initiative launched a new generation of programmes. Today, Spotlight Initiative is building on the evidence and gains of the previous phase. Spotlight Initiative programmes work across a theory of change consisting of **mutually reinforcing outcomes**. Country and regional programmes work in a manner that deeply engages survivors, local partners, governments, women's rights organisations (WROs), and progressive movements. Programmes are developed through a collaborative process, adapted to the context. Ultimately, all interventions seek to contribute to Spotlight Initiative's overall impact vision: **All women and girls, particularly those most vulnerable, live a life free of violence.**

This technical guidance aims to support the development of comprehensive, survivor-centred Spotlight Initiative programmes or EVAWG programmes in general. This note is intended to be used alongside broader Spotlight Initiative knowledge products and learning materials, including the Learning Centre and SHINE hub. It is developed for a range of stakeholders, including civil society, WROs, UN agencies, governments, donors, funds and others.

The technical guidance contains the following sections:

Part One – Key features and technical principles.

Part Two – Support and guidance across each outcome:

- What? Explains the outcome, its purpose and how it fits within broader EVAWG action.
- Why? Examines how the outcome contributes to EVAWG through evidence and data.
- How? Provinces a menu of evidence-based interventions which can be adapted for different contexts.
- Cross cutting areas: Highlights synergies from other outcomes, helping the programme be greater than the sum of its parts.
- Reflective questions: Questions for teams to ask themselves as they develop the programme.

Part Three - Links to tools and resources which can support implementation across outcomes.

Colleagues are encouraged to provide feedback to Spotlight Initiative's Secretariat (aissa.boodhoo@un.org) so guidance can be continuously improved. Guidance is available in other languages here.

Part One - Key features and technical principles

All interventions must be designed and implemented on the basis of Spotlight Initiative's key features and technical principles.

Key features:

Whole of society, whole of government approach, including at highest levels	Spotlight Initiative recognises that ending violence against women and girls cannot be addressed by a single actor. Programmes bring together leadership at the highest political level, work across governments, civil society, communities, the private sector and survivors, at all levels around a shared agenda — generating the political and public will that isolated interventions cannot.
Central, meaningful role of civil society	Spotlight Initiative places civil society - particularly women's rights organisations -at the centre of programme governance and delivery. Nearly half of programme funding is implemented through civil society, and a dedicated pillar of the Initiative strengthens the institutional foundations, voice, and capacity of these organisations and feminist and women's rights movements to promote EVAWG and gender equality for the long term.
Comprehensive theory of change & evidence based programming	Programmes address the interconnected drivers of violence through coordinated action across four pillars. Grounded in a robust and intersectional situational analysis, each programme is designed to generate synergies across these pillars, produce measurable results and contribute evidence to the broader EVAWG sector.
Alignment to UN Reform, pooled funding mechanism, under leadership of RC	Spotlight Initiative brings the UN system together under a single programme focus with pooled funding, and the strategic leadership of the Resident Coordinator. Inter-agency collaboration is coordinated through joint work plans, and a common results framework, and integrated programme delivery and backend operations (wherever possible) with EVAWG elevated as a priority across the UN country/regional team.
Sustainability	Spotlight Initiative programmes are designed from inception to support national ownership and long-term change. Sustainability strategies — developed in partnership with governments, civil society, and communities from Year One — identify the institutional, financial, and civic foundations needed to sustain progress after programme closure.

Technical principles:

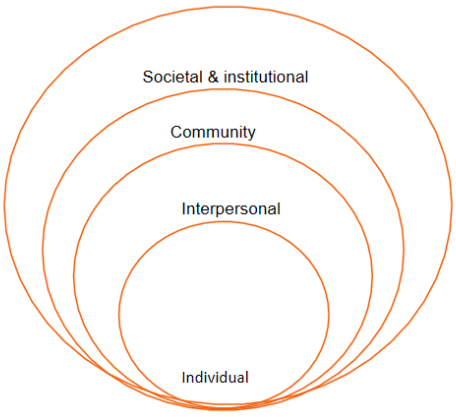
Survivor-centred approach	Places rights, needs, and desires of survivors at the centre of every action. Programmes prioritise survivors' safety, preferences, agency and wellbeing. This requires taking steps to guarantee confidentiality, dignity, respect, non-discrimination and inclusion of survivors across all processes. This is an essential component of the broader human rights based approach.
Doing no harm	Roots action in a strong understanding of the context, and avoiding causing tension, exacerbating inequalities, or increasing risks against individuals or groups. Doing no harm (sometimes referred to conflict sensitivity) requires identifying potential and actual unintended negative impacts or risks and developing gender-sensitive strategies to mitigate.
Intersectionality and leaving no one behind	Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality is a framework that highlights the complex ways in which social categories overlap and intersect to create distinct spheres and experiences of discrimination, marginalization, and / or violence (or

	conversely privilege). Intersectionality can help us understand how individuals and groups that face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination do so through the combined and unique effects of (intersecting) social categories, including but not limited to race, sex, socioeconomic status, gender identity or sexual orientation, migrant status, ethnicity or nationality, and disability. Programmes seek to combat discrimination, inequalities, and reach those who are most excluded, marginalised or discriminated against, even if this takes additional resources.

Part Two – Outcomes

Comprehensive theories of change and targeting:

Robust theories of change, rooted in local knowledge and context are essential for effective EVAWG programming. Spotlight Initiative programmes must deliver activities across all outcome areas in order to be a fully, comprehensive approach. This technical guidance encourages action which cuts across multiple outcome areas simultaneously and systematically, in line with a comprehensive theory of change around prevention and response to violence. It supports delivery in line with Spotlight Initiative's results framework. The guidance encourages change at multiple socio-ecological levels – individual, interpersonal, community and societal. In order to be a comprehensive approach, it is also important to consider all forms of VAWG in programming.



Intersectional, situational analysis, stakeholder mapping and baseline studies are essential for comprehensive, effective and well targeted EVAWG interventions. Programme documents must clearly set out who will be targeted as key stakeholders and why. This should be supported by indicative figures around target numbers and supporting evidence. Targeting of groups should prioritise the most vulnerable and consider the multiple, intersecting and compounding risk factors faced by different individuals.

Programme stakeholders:

Across all programme outcomes, **survivors**, women and girls are the primary stakeholders. Efforts must be made to centre their needs, ensure their participation and guarantee lines of accountability to them. Broader programme stakeholders may include:

- Government ministries (e.g. Finance, Justice, Women, Education, Health, Transport, Social Protection, Statistics Office);
- Local WROs and civil society (including faith based organisations, non-governmental organisations, community based organisations);
- Community, traditional, religious leaders (including leaders of parallel or alternative government systems);
- Private sector, workplaces and employers;
- Think tanks, academia and research institutes;
- Media, ranging from local news outlets, citizen journalists to larger media or tech firms;
- UN agencies.

Wider Spotlight Initiative guidance provides more detail around the programme's specific governance arrangements which can enable effective partnerships, accountability and strategic decision-making.

Outcome A – Laws, policies, institutions, data

What do we mean by laws, policies and institutions?

This outcome is focused on action in relation to governance, laws, policies, institutions and data which can support communities to prevent and respond to VAWG in the long term. Legal reform is an important element of ending VAWG, but laws alone are not enough to prevent VAWG. Laws are most effective when combined with other outcomes, including community-based interventions which shift norms.

Spotlight Initiative programmes have contributed to the development or strengthening of over 500 laws and policies at sub-national and national levels. Comprehensive, inclusive and survivor-centred frameworks are essential to ensure an effective, coordinated legislative response to VAWG. Programming here may include supporting, enforcing or resourcing VAWG laws or policies, as well as implementing, adjusting or repealing broader laws related to gender equality and inclusion (e.g. divorce, property, discrimination, consent, citizenship, inheritance, customary land laws, worker or migrant rights).

Strengthening institutions means working within and across (sub/national) systems, with the aim of fostering lasting change. Working across different governance sectors is key and recognises that they have a role to play in EVAWG (e.g., health, social services, education, justice, security, culture). Working with institutions requires interventions that go beyond one-off activities and instead seek to work in the long term across different levels of the institution. This outcome also recognises that institutions may not only include state governance bodies, and can include more informal sectors, workplaces, businesses, schools and civil society.

Effective work in this space requires reliable, high quality data. Data informs decision making, political prioritisation and targeted investment. It can also support downstream accountability to communities and affected populations. While there has been progress in increasing the availability of national data on VAWG prevalence globally, there is still a lack of high quality, reliable data widely available. Moreover, it is not systematically drawn upon to design programmes or policies.

Why should we work on this and what does the evidence say?

Laws and policies

Women and girls, particularly survivors and those facing intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination, are often left behind in the development, implementation and review of legislation. This can generate multiple consequences, including their specific needs being disregarded when it comes to EVAWG, or their discrimination through legislation (which risks becoming a form of state or structural violence against women).

Gender transformative and responsive policies, EVAWG laws and the formalisation (and funding) of government mechanisms and systems, can support the continuity of a base level of rights protections within a country. Laws that criminalise VAWG play an important symbolic role by indicating that such behaviour is socially unacceptable. Though the creation of legislation may prohibit various forms of gender-based violence, it is not typically sufficient to eradicate the practice. Comprehensive approaches under this outcome do not take a siloed approach to only thinking about legal protections in relation to violence, but consider the broader picture around rights, accountability and legislation. One example is working on systems and policies around comprehensive sexuality education. Experience from Spotlight Initiative programmes suggests that leveraging formal and informal education systems to mainstream sexual and reproductive

health and rights information, particularly with youth, can mitigate violence against women and girls and provide important information to safeguard health in the long term.

Working across stakeholders to establish, adapt, reform and pass laws can help ensure the enforcement of legislation. In some cases, this requires the engagement of religious, traditional and faith-based leaders, or government actors and civil servants at different levels. Across Spotlight Initiative programming, it is clear that engaging religious, traditional and faith-based leaders in the law and policy field can heighten the effectiveness of legal steps, as well as help to shift social norms for the long term.

In many countries, cases of VAWG are dealt with through customary and/or religious law procedures. In some countries, these include the use of compensation to the family or community, ceremonies of forgiveness etc. The processing of a case under customary and/or religious law does not preclude it from being brought before the formal justice system. In some contexts, traditional practices may be preferred, but in others the application of such laws and traditions can be problematic as they may not focus on the healing of, or provision of redress to, the survivor. Instead, they may be more focused on maintaining community stability or upholding patriarchal norms. In countries where multiple informal or formal legal systems exist or overlap (e.g. customary, religious, indigenous and state) there are risks of survivors losing out from protective mechanisms and support and falling between the cracks.

Laws and policies – what works?

Strong national laws to address VAWG share similar characteristics. They make VAWG illegal:

- in *all* spaces, both private and public (home, workplace, public transport, online, etc.);
- in *all* forms (physical, sexual, harmful practices, emotional, economic, etc);
- by *all* perpetrators (including intimate partners, marital rape, armed or state actors).

In addition, they:

- contain the broadest possible definition of acts of domestic violence;
- protect *all* persons, without discrimination of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity etc;
- include adequate sanctions and penalties (e.g. reparations or imprisonment), commensurate with the gravity of crimes;
- allow for protection orders (i.e. restraining orders, apprehended violence orders or non-molestation orders) to be issued against perpetrators;
- ensure that sexual assault/rape offenders are not protected by immunity (even if they subsequently marry the victim);
- incorporate specific provisions on the prevention of VAWG and on the establishment of comprehensive survivor services;
- address both criminal and civil proceedings;
- include complaints mechanisms and duties of stakeholders, including for example that policy must respond to every request for assistance and protection.

Efforts must be made to monitor the implementation of these laws and measure government action. Legislation must be accompanied by training and support for relevant service stakeholders including police and judicial officials.

Institutions:

Like individuals, institutional change on the outside begins with change from within. In order to effectively address VAWG within society, institutions must first confront power imbalances, gender inequalities, and violence within their own institutions. Institutions are made up of people. Lawmakers and officials hold their own attitudes, beliefs and biases. In order for

institutions to create and sustain changes to address VAWG, they must be willing to create change within their own institution, examine their own organisational cultures, and transform institutional power dynamics, personal beliefs and behaviours to create a genuinely enabling environment for transformative EVAWG policies, procedures and actions.

While individual policymakers may move in and out of roles, systems and institutions can help guarantee human rights in the long term. Embedding and integrating laws into formalized systems is fundamental. Working with institutions requires coordination across different levels and sectors. Action should also seek to maximise synergies and coherence between legal issues (e.g. violence against women, violence against children, workplace policies) by working across institutions. Subnational authorities are often at the frontline of service delivery when it comes to protecting and supporting survivors. Subnational ownership and community buy-in are critical. Processes such as gender-responsive budgeting and domestic resource mobilization can play an important role ensuring that activities, laws and policies are funded in the long term at national and subnational levels.

Institutions – what is most important?

Effective institutional action to prevent and respond to VAWG benefits from the following:

1) Championing the values of gender equality within the institution;
2) Proactive and engaged leadership on equality and EVAWG from seniors;
3) Allocation of appropriate resources (financial and human);
4) Coordination and coherence on equality and EVAWG at vertical and horizontal levels;
5) EVAWG and gender equality data to track progress;
6) Meaningful engagement of WROs, human rights advocates and movements to promote accountability and transparency of institutions.

Data:

A range of data can support progress in this outcome. Many institutions struggle to build VAWG data systems to enable effective policy making, implementation and programming. Most VAWG prevalence data is limited to ages 15 and above, or disaggregated differently which blocks comparisons, tracking, life-cycle policies and effective programmes. Other data challenges include: variations in case definitions and recall periods; lack of data on intimate partner violence by same sex partners; low understanding and disaggregation around different forms of violence, including economic/financial abuse, emotional abuse, controlling behaviours and coercive control); low quality data on non-partner sexual violence; as well as generally lower levels of data in humanitarian and conflict settings [1].

Data across countries (and sometimes within countries at subnational level) cannot always be compared, since different methodologies are used. This compromises effective action on EVAWG and leads to misplaced resources. Gathering VAWG data is sensitive and complex, and while reliable, ethical methodologies exist, these are not consistently drawn upon due to lower technical knowledge or insufficient resourcing. Furthermore, the long-term role that women's rights organisations have played in sensitively gathering VAWG evidence and data from communities has been consistently overlooked by power holders and decision makers.

[1] WHO (2021). Violence against women prevalence estimates 2018

What is VAWG data?

VAWG data is the first step in recognizing the scale of the problem and designing initiatives to reduce prevalence. Prevalence and incidence data are two primary forms of VAWG data which can support policy making and programming.

Prevalence data	Proportion of people exposed to violence during a specific period. Surveys can often inform this.
Incidence data	Number of violent incidents or events during a specific period. Service provider administrative data can inform this.

But data can take broader forms, including:

- **Qualitative data:** Narrative based research, consultations, focus group discussions and key informant interviews can highlight experiences and perspectives of different groups. Qualitative data can highlight and help to explain non-linear social change.
- **Attitude data:** Percentage of people who agree that a partner is justified in beating their partner under certain circumstances;
- **Legal data:** The extent to which legal frameworks offer protection from domestic violence. Data and information in relation to police and court records.
- Data sources can also include: action/participatory research, comparative case studies, content analysis, ethnographies, focus group discussions, geographic information systems (gis), meta-analysis, needs assessments, oral history/life history, participant observation, surveys, service-based data, human rights or protection monitoring.

All VAWG data should be stored, collected, managed and analysed safely and ethically. Data processes must do no harm and always protect the confidentiality of the survivor.

VAWG is a sensitive issue, data collection is a complex task. **All data likely underestimates the real prevalence of GBV**, because survivors may choose not to disclose their experiences. Poorly designed data processes, can lead to greater underestimations and, at worst, cause harm[2]. In fragile and conflict-affected settings, data can be even more difficult to collect and analyse, especially if state-aligned actors are reportedly perpetrating violence. In these cases, large scale data collection is rarely appropriate or safe. Instead, research should focus on analysing risks, gaps in service provision and needs. In all settings, data collection, analysis and reporting should ultimately be initiated to serve survivors and those at risk of violence.

Data processes should seek to utilise consistent methodologies to ensure data can be compared over time, across countries/regions, and enable changes to be more accurately analysed. Staff involved in data processes (including interviewers, analysts, supervisors, etc.) must be well trained, not only in the research methods, but in core concepts of equality, EVAWG, ethical considerations, communication skills, responding to disclosures of violence, creating a safe space etc. They must have access to updated referral systems. The UN's Statistics Division Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence Against Women – Statistical Surveys includes some helpful steers on VAWG statistics.

Women's rights organisations have a long track record in producing high quality research and data products, due to their broad networks, cultural insights, and grassroots experience. They

[2] WHO (2021). Violence against women prevalence estimates 2018

should be included as key stakeholders in research and data collection, analysis and dissemination processes, wherever possible.

How?

This outcome **aims** to enhance laws, policies, institutions and data to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of EVAWG efforts. Case studies can be found on the Learning Centre.

1. Strengthen laws, policies and plans:

- Initiate **gender-responsive political analysis and mapping of legislation** (including of formal and informal systems). Evaluations should consider: policy gaps, implementation weaknesses, barriers to protection, budget allocations, monitoring mechanisms, coherence or conflict between customary and state laws, survivors' perspectives and lived experiences, and alignment with regional and global frameworks. Where possible evaluations should be supported through consultations with legislators, police, judges, survivors, community members and WROs.
- Work with policy and lawmakers, at multiple levels of governance, to **implement and resource survivor-centred legislative reforms and policies** on ending VAWG, gender inequality and discrimination in line with international human rights standards. This may include prohibiting school-based violence, domestic violence, scaling up support around sexual and reproductive health, etc;
- **Work with parliamentarians**, ministers and Heads of State as champions to end VAWG. Train parliamentarians on drafting VAWG legislation, gender-responsive budgeting and strengthening parliamentary councils and committees;
- Support government development and piloting of **multisectoral national plans of action** on EVAWG and equality. Explore the potential for subnational EVAWG action plans or sector specific plans focused on the provision of essential services. Ensure participatory design and implementation. Embed strong M&E frameworks which allow for review, tracking of activities and resources, transparency, and adaptation. Ensure there are considerations around internal policies and organisational culture within action plans;
- Introduce **new platforms for engagement, consultations and accountability** so that legislation and policies are developed with the participation of WROs, CSOs and human rights defenders, including those representing survivors and groups facing multiple forms of discrimination;
- **Collaborate with the private sector** and businesses to introduce, roll out or formalise workplace policies in relation to respectful workplaces, organisational culture, and the prevention of harassment, abuse or exploitation;
- Strengthen the capacity of women human rights defenders, WROs and movements to draft legislation, policies, develop EVAWG influencing strategies and advocate for the advancement of **state ratification** of international and regional human rights instruments. Position women's rights organisations as leads to inform reporting and tracking of alignments to conventions and international standards;
- Support local movements and networks advocating to **repeal discriminatory or harmful legislation** (e.g. decriminalise LGBTQIA+ people; promote equal rights regarding divorce; minimum age at marriage; ensuring refugees and migrants have access to services and support);

2. Support institutions in EVAWG action:

- Support institutions (e.g. Ministry of Justice) to **shift organisational cultures, norms and biases** around EVAWG, gender equality and inclusion. Use high level dialogues, role models, capacity development, and accountability mechanisms such as gender audits to drive high level engagement and organisational buy-in;

- Fully integrate EVAWG actions and commitments in broader **multi-sectoral plans** and policies from across government to ensure a comprehensive approach (health, social services, education, justice, security, culture etc);
- Support the **development of tools or systems,** including additional protocols, guidelines, codes of conduct, standards and regulations, which enable the comprehensive and timely implementation of legislation, policies or programming;
- Establish **accountability mechanisms** at different levels to monitor implementation of EVAWG policies, promote transparency, and support adaptations. Involve WROs, academics, and civil society outside of government;
- Strengthen capacities of government officials on **gender responsive budgeting (GRB)** to ensure EVAWG action is adequately financed through the national budget in the long term;
- **Strengthen capacities** of stakeholders at grassroots levels (e.g. paralegals, WROs, community, religious leaders) to meet the needs of survivors through implementation and monitoring of policies and laws on the ground, and social accountability mechanisms. Use a range of long-term capacity building strategies, including mentoring;

Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) – Why does it matter for EVAWG?

GRB can help ensure that EVAWG activities are adequately and sustainably financed. Evidence shows effective GRB is supported by a range of actions, including:

- Ensuring there are strategies to translating gender analysis into policy change;
- Political commitment and leadership, among highest level of government, parliamentary allies, civil servants;
- Participation of WROs and civil society in budget processes;
- Sufficient governmental technical capacity to implement GRB, including at national, regional and district levels
- High quality, reliable, updated disaggregated data and national statistics.

Working with traditional, religious or cultural leaders

The reach and influence of faith-based and traditional actors cannot be ignored. Traditional, local leaders, religious leaders and community elders are often custodians of customary legal systems and can play an important role in perpetuating and eliminating VAWG. When working in contexts with various, overlapping and diverse community leaders, consider the following:

- Analysis and mapping should explore groups, power dynamics and how customary or spiritual belief systems impact VAWG. Understanding values and priorities of leaders and groups can help partners identify and agree shared principles early, as well as help minimise risks of doing harm.
- Equip faith-based and traditional actors to first change their own mindsets and then be part of challenging harmful social norms. Sometimes, harmful faith-based and cultural beliefs are internalized by survivors and victims. It is therefore insufficient to convince only leaders about the need to end certain practices, community members also must be engaged.
- Recognise religion and culture as positive resources. Avoid binary judgements (e.g. good versus bad religion or good religion versus bad culture) and instead identify promising synergies and interconnections within their traditions.

3. Increase coordination at different levels:

- Support the functioning of sub/national **government coordination mechanisms** to improve joined up action on EVAWG. This may be across different levels of government, different sectors or ministries depending on gaps and needs;
- Adapt and improve national **SDG coordination mechanisms**. Ensure states are equipped to track progress, financial contributions and policy linkages around SDG Target 5.2 (Eliminate all forms of VAWG) and other SDGs;
- Establish **coordination mechanisms on EVAWG beyond government**, for example within humanitarian architecture (protection clusters, GBV subclusters) or relevant civil society working groups. Promote localization, inclusion and meaningful participation of diverse groups within these mechanisms;

4. Promote a rights-based and feminist approach to data, evidence and research:

- **Strengthen existing databases, data systems** (e.g. GBV information management systems) **and government statistical staff capacity** on VAWG data. Introduce new systems or data sharing protocols which align with ethical data management standards. Where relevant, engage national statistics offices and service delivery registries to integrate processes and generate globally comparable data on VAWG and harmful practices (HP);
- Build knowledge and **skills of WROs, civil society, media, researchers and journalists** so they have 1) increased abilities to analyse, report and visualise VAWG data; 2) new networks across EVAWG stakeholders; 3) increased potential to hold power holders and government to account using data-driven communications, advocacy and reporting;
- Use flexible grants to promote **local, participatory, feminist research initiatives** which fill VAWG and GBV data and knowledge gaps. Seek to provide opportunities to women or LGBTQIA+ researchers. Support broad dissemination and communication of findings;
- Build on **existing data collection processes to sensitively include new questions** on gender or VAWG dynamics or snapshots on social norms, including rapid care analysis to determine division of household labour to understand baseline of care responsibilities and potential risks of women's economic empowerment interventions;
- **Fill global and national knowledge gaps** including around: how to to implement and scale comprehensive models; on how to be better prepared to address current and emerging threats to the rights and safety of women, girls and gender-diverse people; and how to continue to elevate (and robustly fund) efforts to end VAWG;
- Ensure that appropriate data, learning and research **reach community groups**, including those that have participated in research processes. Use communication and engagement strategies to promote localized understanding and action;
- Introduce, roll out and train stakeholders on **digital security mechanisms** to guarantee the safety and confidentiality of survivors, people at risk, WROs and activists (this is particularly relevant in situations of conflict and high risks of gender-based crimes);

What does feminist research mean?

Feminist research:

- Privileges experiences, perspectives and voices of marginalised persons;
- Challenges the status quo and supports social justice and equality;
- Recognises contributions and expertise of service providers, activists and community;
- Considers and names power imbalances and biases within research, and seeks to overcome them;
- Takes an intersectional approach;
- Moves beyond stereotyped portrayals of women as victims and highlights their strengths and agency.

Reverse Requests for Proposals are one possible example of feminist research. They seek to shift power away from top down models of knowledge, and enable local civil society to set learning agendas. Programmes can initiate reverse requests for proposals as part of their work on data or women's movements. This activity is associated with research grants, enabling grants (supporting research infrastructure, resources, capacity or amplification). It should create new research opportunities for stakeholders, particularly women researchers or those from civil society, who may not traditionally have access to research funding due to strict criteria around education or language requirements. Reverse requests for proposals can also be in support of action under Outcome D.

Cross cutting areas:

Working on laws, policies, institutions and data can have large scale impacts. Achievements in this space are supported by wider outcomes and can have synergistic benefits elsewhere. For example:

- Disaggregated VAWG data plays an essential role in supporting prevention strategies. Strengthened data can improve the quality and accessibility of service provision, and enhance the power of advocacy campaigns by women's movements.
- Women's movements and WROs are well placed to lead consultations and research to inform the development of survivor-centered policies. They have deep knowledge of local dynamics and are well placed to design processes in a sensitive, consultative way.

Reflective questions:

- How can programmes engage more effectively and sensitively with customary law (indigenous, traditional, religious)? How can programmes be sensitive to different power dynamics and avoid imposing state-centric expectations when this might not appropriate or preferred by survivors in all cases?
- What alternative, adapted or innovative models of criminal justice might better support progress on EVAWG?
- How can programming better incorporate survivors' experiences into policy and programming? What assurances can be taken to guarantee that no harm is caused when trying to bring survivors into these processes?

Laws, policies, institutions, data - Key priorities:

- **Analyse political, legal, data and institutional systems** to build a thorough understanding of governance structures, dynamics, stakeholders and landscape (including formal and informal). Incorporate analysis of social norms, attitudes and beliefs related to VAWG and gender norms;
- **Engage a range of stakeholders** throughout the process (survivors, women's rights organisations, community leaders, sectoral ministries, researchers, parliamentarians etc.). Identify allies and champions;
- **Support survivor-centred reform and legal implementation.** Adopt an evidence-based approach to drafting new policies. Build alignment with international and regional frameworks. Monitor and update legislation regularly;
- **Work cross-sectorally** and support coordination as much as possible;
- **Build institutional capacity** to support implementation, data, and survivor-centred service delivery. Explore adaptive ways to ensure sustainability within capacity building processes.
- **Fill data and evidence gaps.** Generate new comparable prevalence data; data on justice outcomes and quality of justice; research on current and emerging VAWG threats; map financing sources; research intersections on climate and VAWG; build

best practice on leaving no one behind; develop evidence-based ways to navigate backlash and risk.
- **Promote data literacy** and ethical data sharing practice across different stakeholders.

Outcome B - Prevention

What do we mean by prevention?

This outcome focuses on addressing the root causes of VAWG, including gender inequality, misogyny and discrimination. Preventing violence against women and girls means stopping violence before it starts. It includes policy and programme initiatives aimed at addressing the underlying causes of violence including gender inequitable systems, structures, norms, attitudes, practices, and power hierarchies. As part of this outcome, programmes may work to address prevention, while also exploring synergies with women's economic empowerment. In the previous phase, the largest percentage of Spotlight Initiative's investment was allocated towards prevention efforts. Work focused primarily around:

- Addressing the root causes and drivers of VAWG;
- Using comprehensive, multi-sectoral approaches at multiple socio-ecological levels;
- Transforming harmful social norms that justify, sustain and tolerate VAWG;
- Mobilising whole communities to prevent VAWG;
- Supporting healthy relationships in couples, families and among peers;
- Applying economic empowerment approaches to help address VAWG;
- Fostering social empowerment to help address VAWG.

Why should we work on this and what does the evidence say?

Prevention, social norms change:

Evidence shows that VAWG is preventable, even within programmatic timeframes. VAWG prevention work can reduce morbidity and mortality, as well as improve the health of girls, women and children. Prevention can help to avert repeated cycles of violence, and lower the social, economic and human rights costs associated with violence by allowing for savings within health care, police and judiciary systems,child and welfare sectors. It also reduces the costs associated with violence such as absenteeism from work, and overall erosion of wellbeing, human capital and development.

Leadership and role modelling matters for prevention programming. Evidence from behavioural science suggests that people are more likely to change behaviours if someone they respect and trust makes recommendations to change. Faith, traditional and opinion leaders can mobilise communities, help facilitate an enabling environment, disseminate programme messages and serve as role models. However it is worth noting that these individuals can also sometimes have negative impacts if they demonstrate harmful behaviours or offer cultural justifications for inequitable norms[3]. Spotlight Initiative programmes have successfully trained leaders on religious interpretations and discourse about women's rights and GBV, and subsequently supported them to facilitate ongoing, inter-community meetings on EVAWG.

Taking a **whole-of-society** approach means working across the lifecycle, and recognising that there are different forms of violence and risk factors in different settings and life stages. For example, working with young people and their parents can be important in light of evidence that shows that childhood experience of violence and exposure to violence in the family is a risk

[3] Le Roux, E. and Palm, S. (2021), Learning from Practice: Engaging Faith-based and Traditional Actors in Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls. United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women

factor for other forms of violence in the future.[4] Evidence suggests a predictive pathway from bullying perpetration in primary school to subsequent perpetration of sexual violence in secondary school.[5] Lessons from past Spotlight Initiative programming shows that partnering with **schools** and educational institutions can be an effective way to reduce, prevent and monitor instances of sexual and gender-based violence and ensure wider policy buy-in with communities and governments. Schools and governments that are tackling this issue have seen reductions in school dropouts and improved educational outcomes[6]. Specific interventions should address violence against children (VAC), particularly adolescent girls who tend to face additional imbalances of power, on top of gender power imbalances, (e.g., with parents and caregivers, at school, with older men). There is limited evidence on prevalence of sexual violence in schools, and limited information globally around the extent to which it is acted upon, or the rate or prosecution and punishment. [7]Violence against children approaches mean programmes are tailored to the needs, barriers and interests of children. Encouraging a combined focus on violence against children and violence against women can support a push towards breaking cycles of all forms of violence and can reduce risks of victimisation.

Spotlight Initiative programming has generated the following lessons for developing effective VAWG prevention strategies[8]:

- The quality of prevention programming is improved by a thorough, **intersectional analysis of the drivers** of specific forms of VAWG. Risk factors and protective factors at multiple levels should be assessed. WROs should support this analysis;
- **Communities** should play a role in conducting analysis on gender norms, as this leads to deeper and meaningful results;
- There is value in **multi-stakeholder prevention work**, engaging diverse groups and institutions to prevent VAWG in the long term;
- Mobilising funding to **feminist organisations and movements** can lead to transformative shifts in the status quo;
- Working **across Spotlight Initiative's outcomes simultaneously** helps prevent VAWG more impactfully;
- Operating across the **socio-ecological model** and delivering activities top down, bottom up and through various modalities helps drive norms change.

Women's economic empowerment (WEE):
WEE is a prerequisite for women to participate meaningfully in public and political life, and represents a potential component for effective prevention of VAWG. WEE approaches, when accompanied with broader social interventions, have proven to both prevent violence and be an integral element in the recovery journey of survivors. Numerous global studies have shown the potential impact of **combined economic empowerment and gender-transformative social interventions** to create more equitable gender attitudes, roles, relationships, and prevent IPV. They can also have positive impacts on women's and men's mental health.

On the one hand, WEE activities can improve women's financial autonomy and bargaining power. They can tackle economic abuse and reduce household conflict due to lower levels of economic stress. On the other hand, they can increase risks of violence. Interventions may leave husbands or partners feeling undermined in their role as providers. Women may move

[4] WHO (2019). RESPECT Women - Preventing violence against women.
[5] UNGEI and SVRI (2024). Prevention of sexual violence in education settings. White paper.
[6] What Works 2 (2024). Policy brief on violence in and around schools and its direct and indirect impacts on educational outcomes of children
[7] UNGEI and SVRI (2024). Prevention of sexual violence in education settings. White paper.
[8] Spotlight Initiative (2023). Lessons Learned from Spotlight Initiative Programming: A Comprehensive and Transformative Approach to EVAWG.

away from “traditional household duties”, and there may be increased disagreements about how to spend finances in the home, which can result in violence.

There are various **risk factors** linking domestic violence and WEE projects which must be considered in programme design.[9] These play out differently and must be tracked carefully throughout the programme. In some cases, women’s level of education has been attributed to mitigating against emotional abuse and some forms of coercive control. However, studies have also found that highly educated women participating in microcredit programmes have faced increased risk of violence from their partners, as this challenges traditional gender roles within the family. Employment status can also have an impact. A male partner’s unemployment or precarious employment has been identified as increasing the likelihood that they will be violent towards their female partners. Women who work outside the home or are seasonal workers report higher sexual violence in domestic partnerships.

When designed sensitively, with strong considerations of risk and backlash as a result of intersectional situational analysis, combined social and economic approaches hold the potential to tackle multiple drivers of VAWG, including poverty and food insecurity, even in fragile, conflict affected states[10]. In order to be transformative WEE initiatives should not just be focused on improving lifestyles or earning power of individual women, but seek to tackle wider injustices and inequalities. This means paying close attention to norms, beliefs and traditions around identity, gender and inclusion. **WEE interventions must be willing to confront inequalities and sexism at the root of VAWG.**

How?

Norms are held collectively - they are social and interpersonal in nature. Attitudes are individual. Changing norms requires the diffusion of ideas to a critical mass of people - enough to shift the reality and perception of what’s “normal” within that community. Sometimes, it can be easier to create new, positive norms, rather than to try to dismantle harmful norms.

Some programmes focus on individual-level change (i.e., they work with specific groups of people over time and measure change amongst those same individuals). While these programmes can be effective in creating lasting change among *participants*, they may not necessarily achieve wider norm change. Social norms change must work at different socio-ecological levels to achieve transformation. Taking a comprehensive approach to prevention means mobilising across levels, to change attitudes and behaviours around the acceptability of VAWG, foster commitment and bring prevention initiatives to scale. Prevention interventions that have been shown to work on a pilot or small-scale basis can be contextualised, modified and scaled up in different ways through consultation and partnership with local communities (adding more community members, replicating and adapting in other geographies, or deepening impacts through the addition of new elements e.g. working in schools).

According to the RESPECT Framework, key elements of strengthening the enabling environment for norms to shift, rely on working across different outcome areas. Elements include:

- Building political commitment from leaders and policymakers to speak out and condemn violence against women and girls;
- Investing, building on the work of, resourcing and supporting women's organisations;

[9] Hughes, C., Bolis, M., Fries, R., & Finigan, S. (2015). Women’s economic inequality and domestic violence: exploring the links and empowering women. *Gender & Development*, *23*(2)
[10] Ahlenback, V. and Fraser, E. (2022). Effectives Social Norms Approaches in FCAS Contexts, Ending Violence Helpdesk Research Report No. 1.

- Putting in place and facilitating enforcement of laws and policies that address VAWG, and that promote gender equality, including access to secondary education;
- Allocating resources to programmes, research;
- Strengthening institutions and their capacities to address VAWG.

When working on the cross section of WEE and EVAWG, it is necessary to combine **WEE and gender-transformative interventions**. Combined approaches are more likely to create more equitable gender attitudes, roles and relationships, and prevent IPV, than silo-ed economic interventions. WEE initiatives should never divert resources away from direct EVAWG programming, nor should they be implemented as stand-alone initiatives. As part of developing these initiatives, efforts should be taken from the early stages to include not only survivors, but also **governments, power holders or men in the community** in processes to drive further impact and sustainability. Building ownership and awareness of the intersections of women's economic empowerment and VAWG, and the value this can have on societies is essential for lasting positive outcomes.

When prevention programmes are implemented, people become more aware of the harmful nature of VAWG and women and girls are often more likely to want to report violence, seek help and services. Case loads may appear to rise. Monitoring is essential. It **is critical for programme teams to map and support response services and ensure that there are referral mechanisms in place, alongside prevention activities.** Service providers and WEE project implementing partners may also consider co-developing individual action plans for women in WEE projects.

Any programme working on VAWG should have strong **risk management and Do No Harm** processes in place. Working on the cross section of WEE/VAWG is no exception. Even throughout the planning process, it is important to integrate methods to monitor and mitigate potential backlash and risks. This means finding ways to track social changes or dynamics in a careful and sensitive way. This will help partners understand any shifts in women's home lives, work burdens, family relationships, risks or experiences of violence. Services and pathways for referrals must be mapped from the start and continuously updated. **One important part of risk management is working out how the intervention is presented to the community,** including participants, their families, male partners and community members including traditional leaders.

This outcome **aims** to transform social norms to prevent VAWG for the long term and build more positive, equitable norms. Past case studies can be found on the Learning Centre.

What is the evidence on social norms programming?

Change starts with us: The most impactful prevention programmes consider their own staff biases, organisational cultures and seek to transform how they use power in their own lives.

Operate in the long term: Social norms change requires long term programming. Changes in behaviours can take 5+ years. Regular and long-term engagement is key.

Use the framing of "power", rather than gender: Ideas around power can feel more relatable to men, women and community members. Framing things in this way can lead to a deeper uptake of ideas and create less gendered backlash. The term "gender" can often be diluted, mistranslated, considered a "Western imposition", and too often wrongly misused as a synonym for "women".

Connecting prevention work with service provision and referrals: Prevention programmes and social norms work should always integrate referral pathways. Good practice includes activities in AISHA and Oxfam in Gaza, where VAWG referral pathways were linked up with couples' conflict management skills building.

Not every programme can or should be a norm change programme! Specifically as some "sticky norms" may take longer to shift. But all programmes should be rooted in a strong consideration and understanding of social norms and local beliefs.

Interventions with strong evidence bases:

Intervention	Overview	Evidence[11]
Community mobilisation	Working with all members of the community (women, men, gender non-conforming individuals, children). Either through a single programme, or coordinating multiple programmes and movements.	**Good evidence of effectiveness**. Impact relies on sustained, high intensity, multi-year activism. There is little evidence that focusing exclusively on men and boys is effective. E.g. SASA!, Tostan.
Individual or couple level interventions	Using different strategies to work with couples, families and communities, to influence household change. Activities may focus on improving relationships, reducing alcohol or substance use.	**Good evidence of effectiveness** when focusing on couples. Well-designed approaches examine gender norms within couples, address alcohol or violence within relationships.
Combined economic and social empowerment	Social protection, economic or livelihoods interventions combined with gender transformative programming, group discussions and other conditionalities.	**Good evidence of effectiveness** in preventing IPV. Longer and more stable economic programmes which significantly reduce financial pressures are more likely to lead to reductions in IPV. E.g. Maisha.
Parent focused interventions	Building parenting and caregiver skills, focus on gender norms, responsive caregiving, parental mental health, positive and age appropriate discipline strategies and challenging underlying power dynamics that drive violence in the home.	**Good evidence of effectiveness**. Creates opportunities to improve relationships between parents, families and enhance parenting skills. Ensure considerations around parental wellbeing and mental health for maximum impacts[12].
School based interventions	Working with children, parents, and teachers to disrupt the cementing of power dynamics, discriminatory attitudes or the acceptability of violence.	**Good evidence of effectiveness** with longer term programmes, focused on transforming gender relationships

[11] What Works programme (2020). A rigorous global evidence review of interventions to prevent violence against women and girls; UN Women, WHO, Social Development Direct (2020). Transformed attitudes, beliefs and norms, RESPECT: Preventing violence against women strategy summary

[12] Prevention Collaborative (2025). Improving the mental health of parents and caregivers as a strategy to prevent family violence: What does the evidence suggest?

Other social norms and prevention activities which show promise, but require additional evaluations to confirm effectiveness include: CBT interventions with pregnant women; empowerment programmes targeting men; promoting positive masculinities.

Tested methodologies, curriculums and toolkits include:

- Indashyikirwa - couple's curriculum which RCT evidence shows is associated with reduction in reporting of both perpetrating and experiencing intimate partner violence.
- Couples Health Co-Op - RCT evidence suggests the combination of men's health co-op and women's health co-op led to reporting of significantly less violence and less harmful alcohol use in South Africa.
- Violence and Alcohol Treatment (VATU) and Combined Elements Transdiagnostic Approach (CETA) - at 12 months, those in the intervention reported significantly less alcohol use and intimate partner violence experience and perpetration in Zambia.

The following strategies have **not** shown significant impacts around shifting norms or preventing VAWG *when implemented as stand-alone interventions*:

- **Awareness-raising campaigns:** Awareness raising is insufficient to permanently shift attitudes or norms. Awareness raising *can* be useful as a platform for activism, but real impact requires high levels of intensity and long durations of exposure.
- **Training professionals (e.g. healthcare workers, police, etc.):** Training is essential for service delivery but norms change requires shifts beyond knowledge and capacity building.
- **Perpetrator programmes:** Programmes aim to reduce repeat cases of IPV (or recidivism), but there tends to be high drop-out rates, particularly among men most likely to reoffend.

1) Understanding root causes, norms to tackle multiple drivers of VAWG:

- Collaborate with WROs, local academics or think tanks to fill **evidence and research** gaps in the following areas, and ensure all prevention work is informed by a thorough assessment of:
    - Norms, stereotypes, and root causes of VAWG;
    - Risks facing particular groups (e.g. LGBTQIA+, human rights defenders, adolescent girls, women in conflict-affected areas, ethnic or religious minorities, persons with disabilities);
    - Factors related to perpetrators, men and boys' use of VAWG;
    - All forms of gender-based violence e.g. emotional, financial and psychological abuse, technology-facilitated GBV (TFGBV), the nexus of climate crisis and VAWG, attacks against women human rights defenders, workplace harassment and risks;
    - Prevalence and quality of survivor centred practices across service delivery and governance systems;
    - Women's participation in the economy and considerations around their disproportionate (unpaid) work loads and how partners perceive their responsibility for unpaid care;
    - **Identify feasibility of different approaches to tackle norms around social norms in your context.** This may include a combination of activities including: community mobilisation; group-based workshops; group education with men and boys; social marketing campaigns or edutainment;

- Identify **implementing partners committed to gender transformative approaches**. The most effective interventions have been implemented by organisations guided by strong values, and committed to reflecting on issues like violence, discrimination, power and relationships, both in their staff and volunteers' personal lives and within the organisational structure.

2) Develop a comprehensive prevention strategy:

- Work with education ministries to take a whole of school approach to review, adapt, reform or introduce **school-based interventions** for preventing violence against children, promoting gender equality, challenging toxic masculinities, promoting respectful relationships, and rolling out appropriate comprehensive sexuality education (CSE);
- Review, adapt, reform or introduce **parenting and early childhood development programmes**. Approaches should focus on gender socialization patterns, encourage parents to spend "positive time" with children and seek to reduce risk factors of violence against children;
- Use digital and **virtual channels** to promote youth-led advocacy and engage youth in problem-solving and change their perceptions, attitudes and behaviours around VAWG;
- Roll out **couples' programmes** to transform power imbalances and promote healthy relationship models. Explore the potential of accompanying media campaigns, television dramas to support couples' curricula and community discussion groups;
- Partner with **humanitarian actors and WROs** to ensure that prevention and social norms change activities reach displaced communities or those affected by conflict. Improve the quality of activities, by supporting partners to go beyond short-term awareness raising activities (which tend to be more common practice in these settings due to short term funding cycles);
- Develop tools to **measure national progress on prevention** and the implementation of the strategy, including through periodic data collection which examine changes in risk and protective factors for VAWG (e.g. gender attitudes, acceptability of VAWG, enforcement of VAWG laws).

School based interventions – what helps to end violence?

- Contextualise child-centered, gender-transformative approaches and Do No Harm principles to create a safe learning environment. Recognise that different school stakeholders can be perpetrators, victims or witnesses of violence.
- Take a whole-of-school approach which considers discipline, peer violence, bullying, harassment, safe journeys to school, and mental health. The approach should involve students, teachers, parents, school council members, staff, communities and build on existing structures such as parent-teacher associations;
- Use age-appropriate topics and curriculum, with buy-in from stakeholders. Adapt curricula to incorporate discussions around gender, power, consent in existing subjects (e.g. maths, history, languages);
- Update school codes of conduct, teacher training. incident response procedures and mentoring to institutionalize activities. Embed violence prevention modules within curricula;
- Consider out-of-school children and find ways to support their participation, recognising their particular vulnerabilities, risks and exclusions.
- Promising interventions include: The Good School Toolkit (GST) in Uganda; The Right to Play programme in Pakistan. Evidence suggests that key components of effective interventions include: building life skills; building knowledge and

awareness; providing psycho-social support; and providing skills training for the school staff;[13]

3) Community campaigns, movement building to drive social change:

- Build **communication, political analysis and advocacy skills** of activists, women human rights defenders and WROs to identify priority advocacy asks, talking points and equip them with the skills to drive norms change across broad sectors (e.g. politics, media, sport);
- Support unions, collective action groups, associations to **engage the private sector** to drive change within workplaces, alignment with global human rights standards, and protect/promote the right to organise;
- Engage **community leaders** as allies and ambassadors to integrate new norms and challenge the acceptability of VAWG. Support them to lead processes within their own communities to drive change;
- Support community-based teams to **'interrupt' instances of VAWG**. Carefully select, train and set up rapid response teams as violence interrupters to work sensitively and safely within their communities;
- **Work with media and journalists** to amplify advocacy efforts of women's movements, or pilot the introduction of evidence-based, high quality edutainment programmes alongside broader community based interventions;
- Enhance understanding of media professionals around core principles of **survivor centred and trauma informed** reporting and communication on VAWG;
- Create safe spaces and **peer opportunities for men and boys to have healthy, respectful and equitable relationships.** Facilitate conversations about how negative conceptions of masculinity have impacted men, and support them in becoming advocates in creating safer communities.
- Use **tech tools** such as chat-bots or 'Model Husbands Club' to support discussion and reflection of community members. See the example of "#KutsvaKwendebvu" – a men's WhatsApp group chat in Zimbabwe focused on discussing masculinities and encouraging dialogue between men to raise the next generation with a better future.

4) Women's economic empowerment (WEE) initiatives alongside gender-transformative action:

- Address violence and harassment in the private sector by promoting **respectful workplaces** and supporting the development of robust gender-responsive complaints processes. Develop company policies around gender equality, workers' rights and non-tolerance of discrimination and violence. Include targeted focus on informal sector, recognising women's high level of participation in these sectors;
- Introduce **livelihood, financial services or cash transfers interventions** for women to promote their position in society. Involve male partners and encourage healthy masculinities within interventions to generate more positive, lasting impacts (and reduced risks of harm);
- Establish **trusted, multi-sectoral partnerships** with local groups, private sector leaders and staff, trade union members, industry regulatory bodies and women's movements to improve coordination and responses to VAWG in workplaces and communities;
- Identify **context-specific gender transformative actions alongside WEE programming** Combine microfinance activities with participatory gender and HIV education; integrate joint couples' financial and household planning courses; facilitate community dialogue around

[13] What Works 2 (2024). Policy brief on violence in and around schools and its direct and indirect impacts on educational outcomes of children

WEE to bring assurances that these initiatives are not about encouraging women to leave their husbands or families but about supporting households and communities;

- Develop **participatory risk management** protocols to minimise likelihood and impact of backlash around women's empowerment programming. Ensure regularly updated referral pathways and accompany all WEE interventions with targeted EVAWG activities and service provision.

Doing no harm and managing risks in WEE activities

WEE interventions are only recommended in circumstances in which they can contribute to a broader, comprehensive EVAWG approach. Evidence is mixed around linkages and impacts on WEE and EVAWG. In different settings, WEE activities can *decrease or increase* risks and reports of VAWG. WEE may lead to increased VAWG incidents associated with disrupted social norms. Increasing reports may not reflect an increase in the number of incidents, but an increase in women's knowledge and access to VAWG reporting pathways.

These complex linkages are highlighted by findings around microfinance. On the one hand, some studies from Bangladesh link microfinance programmes with heightened risk of household conflict and violence (due to men's attempts to control women's funds and anger when new loans were not secured). On the other hand, one meta analysis found correlations between microfinance programming and reductions in emotional and psychological IPV.

As with all social norm change efforts, WEE requires long-term, carefully facilitated engagement. Integrating survivor-centered safeguards, gender-transformative strategies, updated referral pathways, accessible services, engaging community members, and participatory risk management from the outset is essential for reducing risks and enhancing women's bargaining power.

Key insights from the EVAWG and WEEs sector include the importance of:

- Intersectionality: Taking an intersectional approach which considers women's various identities and backgrounds is essential. In some cases, research has shown demographics and identity factors can be correlated with different levels of risks of violence when it comes to WEE programming.
- Evidence based and survivor centred approaches: There are assumptions that WEE programmes can provide a financial "escape plan" or enable full reintegration for survivors. However, these assumptions must be carefully examined. Approaches should be informed by survivors' preferences and lived experiences. Referral systems must always be operational and accessible alongside WEE programming.
- Long timeframes: Backlash from "threatening" or disrupting gender norms can be immediate and acute. With sustained, sensitive engagement—particularly through gender-transformative and do no harm approaches - risks may decrease and indicators of equality may emerge in the longer term.

Cross cutting areas:

Working on prevention requires action at multiple socio-ecological levels and therefore a multipronged approach. Synergies are visible across multiple outcome areas, including:

- Recognising that sometimes social norms and government legislation are not aligned. At times, the *"letter of the law in many places is far more progressive than social norms and*

individual attitudes"[14]*,* in other places the reverse may be true. Situational analysis should explore synergies and differences between public opinions, social norms and legislation.

- Mental health services, and broader social, health and response services play an important role in prevention efforts. Service provider staff are at the frontline and are well placed to identify and shift abusive or risky behaviours. Prevention work must be accompanied with the provision of services.

Reflective questions:

- What specific approaches will be used to include men in processes to shift norms in the long term? How will their perceptions on egalitarian decision-making, sharing domestic work, healthy conflict resolution, respectful communication and toxic/positive masculinities be tracked and/or challenged?
- Tracking changes in social norms can be difficult to capture in results frameworks. What participatory, feminist or adaptive tools will you use to measure change?
- What role can existing trans-national, cross border or regional social campaigns play in shifting social norms and preventing VAWG in your setting? How can media and communication efforts support this?
- How can children's perspectives, views and needs be safely incorporated into programme design? What about other marginalised groups that are typically excluded from processes?

Prevention - Key priorities:

- Use **intersectional situational analyses** to understand power dynamics, drivers of VAWG, with a focus on marginalised and structurally oppressed groups. This will allow prevention programming to target the root causes of VAWG;
- Design comprehensive, multi-component interventions which work across **socio-ecological levels, the whole-of-society and across life cycles** in the long term**;**
- Consider norms within **institutions**, working with public, private sectors, workplaces and schools to drive change;
- Transform harmful social norms and **build new norms** related to positive masculinities, healthy relationships, women's economic empowerment, inclusion and human rights;
- Explore potential to **combine economic empowerment and intersectional, gender transformative initiatives** which address women's barriers to participation and mitigate against backlash;
- Ensure appropriate **intensity of interventions** to drive change (consider duration, dosage, engagement points, ratios of practitioners to population targeted);
- Include **civil society, WROs and movements** who will sustain prevention through continued advocacy and community engagement.

[14] Htun, M., Jensenius, F. (2020). Fighting Violence Against Women: Laws, Norms & Challenges Ahead. *Daedalus* 2020

Outcome C - Response (Essential Services)

What do we mean by response?

Quality and timely access to comprehensive multi-sectoral services is essential to mitigate the consequences of violence and break recurring cycles. This outcome focuses on enhancing service provision, making services more inclusive, as well as increasing the availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality of services. Survivor services play a role in both stable, fragile, conflict-affected and humanitarian settings. They enable both immediate and long-term support to those at risk of violence and survivors. Service providers may be government staff, civil society actors or volunteers.

Key service sectors include:

- **Health services:** Include crisis response, post rape care, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), sexual health and reproductive services.
- **Social services:** Safe shelters, social care, one stop centres, social protection, education, and reintegration programmes.
- **Justice and accountability:** Sensitive police responses, survivor-friendly legal systems, accountability of perpetrators, and enforcement of protective measures.

When it comes to the provision of **justice and accountability** services, it must be noted that all survivors define justice differently. Survivors also have different levels of access to formal, informal or hybrid justice systems. Taking a holistic approach to justice means acknowledging and working with these differing perspectives, experiences and needs, and not simply imposing rigid or formalised models of justice on groups.

Why should we work on this and what does the evidence say?

Essential services for survivors:

Survivors of violence have multiple needs so **multi-sectoral** responses are key. Despite the life-saving role of services, most survivors do not report their experience or seek help from formal systems. Where basic support does exist, services are often underfunded, understaffed, and of lower quality. Services are less accessible for women, girls, LGBTQIA+ persons and persons with disability, as well as others that face multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination, or for those in conflict-affected and humanitarian settings. Evidence from the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) from 51 countries shows that only two percent of survivors go to a social work organisation, two percent to a medical professional, and nine percent to the police for support after a GBV incident.[15] Blocks to services are always contextual, but often include: lack of knowledge or mistrust in services; fear of reporting due to stigmatization; and prohibitive costs to access services. Spotlight Initiative takes a whole of society approach which integrates community modalities and community safety nets, alongside formal services. As communities' trust in these services increases, it is expected that their uptake will also increase.

Justice and accountability:

Ensuring access to justice is an essential component of comprehensive EVAWG action. It can contribute to increased protection and possibly prevent the recurrence of violence. It can hold perpetrators accountable and provide survivors with the possibilities of healing. A lack of access to justice can have negative impacts on the social, emotional and financial outcomes of survivors and their families[16]. Too often, complex, untransparent and expensive legal procedures discourage survivors from pursuing cases and lead to persistent justice gaps.

[15] World Bank (2022). Gender data portal - Escaping gender-based violence. Oct 2022.
[16] OECD (2023). Breaking the cycle of gender-based violence

Barriers to justice include financial (direct costs), structural (lack of awareness and knowledge of rights, services), social (shame, stigma, fears of reprisals). Addressing these barriers requires a multi-pronged approach, rooted in survivors' needs and priorities.

It is important to note that in some cases, pursuing formal justice processes will never be a priority for certain individuals. Different justice systems have varying strengths and weaknesses, though evidence suggests that **traditional models** are more likely to value community stability over survivor wellbeing. Regardless of whether they are customary or state-led, VAWG justice processes must be fair, equitable and responsive to survivor needs[17]. In some cases, there is a need to ensure that interim or transitional justice processes integrate considerations around VAWG as part of post-conflict and peacebuilding measures.

How?

Improving service provision, in the long term, relies on a series of broader enabling factors, including:

- Comprehensive legislation and legal frameworks;
- Intersectional, gender and age responsive policies and procedures;
- Sufficient resources and financing;
- Continuous training and capacity-development to guarantee quality, inclusive services;
- Governance, oversight and accountability;
- Cross-sectoral coordination, referrals and action;
- Monitoring, evaluation processes, as well as accountability and feedback mechanisms.

A multisectoral approach recognises that no single agency or service can adequately respond to the full, multiple and diverse needs of survivors or those at risk. Ultimately this outcome **aims** to strengthen services to better meet the needs of people who experience violence. Case studies can be found on the Learning Centre.

The UN Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence (ESP):
The ESP outlines a framework for delivering critical services. It sets out **core elements and guidelines** to ensure quality, accessible, effective, and survivor-centered services across health, social services, justice and policing, and coordination/governance. The ESP is rooted in core principles of survivor-centred approaches, human-rights based approaches, intersectionality, and emphasises the value of integrated service delivery to address all survivors' needs holistically. The ESP is a tool which can support decisions around the following elements of service delivery:

- Availability;
- Accessibility;
- Adaptability;
- Appropriateness;
- Prioritising safety;
- Informed consent and confidentiality;
- Effective communication and participation by stakeholders;
- Data collection and information management;
- Link with other sectors and agencies.

[17] GBV AoR Helpdesk (2023). Learning Brief: improving justice systems for GBV survivors through survivor-centred processes

1) Increase inclusivity and capacity of service providers:

- Institutionalise **principles of non-discrimination** within services. Sensitise service providers to the different needs of survivors, particularly those facing intersecting forms of discrimination. Support the establishment of specific training, protocols and tools on inclusion within sector specific planning;
- Introduce specific, **targeted approaches for children and adolescents**. Build child-centred and adolescent friendly systems which enable the full evaluation of the individual's situation to best meet their needs. Ensure these are supported by protocols around assent, consent, and age-appropriate communication strategies;
- Scale up **community based mental health psychosocial services** (MHPSS) to provide culturally appropriate, accessible and acceptable care to communities, survivors and those at risk of violence.

2) Enhance access to coordinated, multi-sectoral services:

- **Complete service mapping** which captures accessibility, functionality and quality of survivor services in programme area. Take a multi-sectoral approach which recognises the broad form of services which people may need to access. Use a range of approaches to gather data, including community surveys, site visits;
- Establish standard operating procedures and structures to enable **local and national coordination and case management**. Embed protocols around safe information sharing, M&E, risk management.
- Consider expanding services and support for **survivor-centred reintegration**. This may include building new livelihood or financial support and survivor support groups;
- Build **costed plans for service** provision which identify tasks, time frames, training needs, resources required, coordination structures, roles and responsibilities. Plans should prioritise services on the basis of evidence and community needs;
- Adapt, strengthen, scale up or introduce **women and girls' safe spaces or one-stop centres**, where appropriate. One-stop centres have shown to be a promising practice in certain settings, when run according to survivor-centred principles. They can provide one safe space for survivors to access medical care, psychosocial support, legal assistance, shelter, and recovery services. They can be fixed or mobile services depending on accessibility issues or humanitarian access;
- **Pilot new technologies** to increase access to MHPSS services. Explore possibilities for secure, confidential, appropriate online service provision, chatbots, help lines where appropriate. Regularly review impact and utilisation of technology.

3) Improve access and reduce barriers to justice for survivors

- Improve the accessibility of justice processes, through legal **aid, legal advice, the creation of simplified or special procedures, specialised courts, or dispute resolution bodies for civil claims.** Expand legal aid to relevant VAWG civil matters (e.g. divorce, inheritance, property law, etc);
- Increase **community legal awareness**, educate people about their rights, available legal resources, while promoting a culture of non-violence and accountability;
- Collaborate with stakeholders at different levels of the legal system to **integrate gender-responsive, child-centred and survivor-centred approaches** that work for survivors. This could include the establishment of specific court processes, trauma protocols, protection orders or may including building the capacity of justice actors' understanding of what justice looks like to VAWG survivors, women and girls;

- Facilitate **exchange and dialogue** to share lessons learnt between informal, customary, traditional and formal justice systems within and across countries (where appropriate). Support peer exchanges on gender and victim-responsive courts;
- Increase visibility and **meaningful participation of women within judicial systems** by working with women's rights organisations to identify entry points and build momentum around the positive effects of women's participation;
- Establish **mobile courts, specialized police units and prosecution teams** that are adequately trained, gender-transformative and resourced. In humanitarian settings consider co-locating judicial services alongside health, shelter and psychosocial support services.

Cross cutting areas:

In order to improve access to quality, inclusive survivor services, it is necessary to drive action across multiple outcome areas. Moreover, services should be integrated across all EVAWG programming, whether or not the programme is focused on response as a primary priority. This means ensuring all Spotlight Initiative partners have updated referral pathways and are well placed to support survivors in accessing services.

Synergies across other outcome areas include:

- Women's rights organisations and movements are well placed to build capacity and monitor the quality and impact of service provision. Survivors may also be able to play a role in evaluating the appropriateness of justice initiatives.
- Working on social norms and prevention should include a focus on reducing stigma and discrimination which may block certain groups of survivors from accessing services.
- High quality, sub-national data can support effective targeting and investment in services. Data feedback loops and regular monitoring can lead to higher quality programming.

Reflective questions:

- What does response look like in the online space or in relation to technology-facilitated gender-based violence?
- What steps will the programme take to ensure due consideration for all survivors - who may be left out of traditional programming?
- How will programmes assess the inclusivity of services and approaches?

Response - Key priorities:

- **Map full range of existing services.** Carry out comprehensive needs and gap analysis. Consider how intersecting forms of discrimination lead to exclusion, additional barriers or lower quality treatment. Use a range of sources and work with survivors to build understanding of their experiences;
- **Support inclusive, multi-sectoral service provision** in line with the ESP, backed up by an enabling environment to support sustainability (resource, policy, planning, trained staff);. Explore potential for different kinds of service provision including remote or mobile services; one stop centres; women and girls' safe spaces.
- Integrate **sustainability** planning from an early stage;
- **Prioritise filling gaps within systems**. E.g. MHPSS, targeted support for adolescents, one stop centres, women and girls' safe spaces, or mobile services to increase community access;
- **Develop standard operating procedures** for key service providers and updated directory of services for safe referrals;
- **Establish feedback systems** to monitor quality and inclusivity of service provision. Work with women's rights organisations and civil society to support accountability;

- **Recognise that expectations around justice and accountability look different** for all people. Seek to be led by survivors' desires and context through regular consultation and feedback.

Outcome D - Women's Movements & Civil Society

What do we mean by women's movements & civil society?

The elimination of VAWG in all forms cannot be achieved without strong, empowered civil society and women's movements. Spotlight Initiative has invested a total of USD 23 million in core institutional funding globally.[18] **Localisation** is a priority within the Spotlight Initiative, and, as such, programmes which demonstrate plans to shift the balance of power from international organisations to local and grassroots organisations are encouraged. Transferring resources and power directly to national, local WROs and grassroots organisations, should be integrated wherever possible as part of sustainability efforts, recognising that these groups will likely continue to exist long after programme timeframes.

Women's movements bring together diverse members and groups of WROs, activists, feminists, grassroots organisers and allies. Their structures enable agility, allowing them to work effectively in changing contexts, including fragile and conflict settings. Many movements have members with the experience, legitimacy and capacities to drive lasting change, demand reforms, and hold duty-bearers accountable. However, it should be noted that not all social movements are automatically socially progressive. Moreover, civil society programming is not the same thing as movement-building. Strong organisations don't necessarily mean strong movements (and vice-versa).

Working effectively with civil society to prevent and respond to VAWG requires drawing upon and strengthening the knowledge, expertise and capacities of progressive CSOs; expanding and protecting spaces that are free and conducive to their work; supporting knowledge, information sharing, joint advocacy; and facilitating multi-stakeholder networks at community, national, regional and global levels.

It is necessary to recognise the plurality of the civic space and stakeholders within the VAWG landscape to avoid lumping together disparate groups. **Stakeholder analysis** should explore different individuals and groups across these categories, and recognise all stakeholders as political actors which offer unique contributions to gender equality and ending VAWG. Their plurality and diversity should be supported and maintained. Misunderstanding or overlooking the different roles of different stakeholders can lead to tension, duplication of efforts, or competition for resources. There is, of course, **fluidity** across groups. In some cases, women's movements, informal groups, or individuals may join together, formalise or evolve into NGOs to access funding. This makes regular, updated stakeholder analysis valuable for effective programming.

Example stakeholder	Details
Activists or individuals	Activists or advocates that work independently to advance gender equality. While they can be influential and catalytic alone, their efforts can be amplified when part of a collective. Sometimes, they are already members of one or more organisations, networks or movements.
Women's rights organisations (WROs)	These are groups, often with a defined structure, leadership, and staff. They might focus on specific thematic focuses. They are often at the frontline of service delivery, on the ground with communities. The organisation's mission reflects its commitment to addressing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, advancing gender equality and women's rights.

[18] Spotlight Initiative – Learning Centre

Women-led organisations	A group whose leadership is principally made up of women, demonstrated by 50% or more occupying senior leadership positions at board and/or staff level. These organisations may take different forms, in some cases, this may include youth-led feminist organisations, LGBT+ led organisations etc. Their mandate may not be explicitly feminist and they may work across various sectors or thematics.
Women's networks	Women's networks tend to comprise a membership of interconnected organisations or individuals that share certain interests or backgrounds. Networks offer a continuous, community space for convening and connection. There may be times where networks work together on specific goals, events or projects but this will be fluid.
Women's movements	Women's movements are collective, organized efforts led by women and allies to challenge gender inequality, patriarchy, and intersecting systems of oppression. They can be broad-based, grassroots-oriented, and driven by a shared vision or goal.

Why should we work on this and what does the evidence say?

The UN plays an important role in supporting civil society. Whether this is in its capacity as a direct funder of civil society, in its convening role, or in its role in seeking to create an enabling environment for progressive civic spaces.

Evidence consistently shows linkages between progressive CSOs, women's rights organisations, activists, human rights defenders and women's movements with VAWG prevention and response. Changes in institutions, social attitudes, policies and decision-making, as well as in peoples' everyday lives, especially for women, can be made possible through the sustained demands and organised action of women's movements. Feminist movements, as opposed to movements of women organised for other purposes, play the most important role in progressive policy change and combating VAWG[19].

WROs are key members of these movements. They elevate EVAWG into national and global political agendas, as well as advancing progress within communities on eradicating harmful practices. In contexts with limited state provision of VAWG services, wWROs are often the first to fill gaps. Despite their essential role, WROs are chronically underfunded and face increasing challenges, threats and security risks. They receive only 0.13% of total Official Development Assistance and 0.4% of all gender related aid[20]. Research and surveys continually indicate that WROs are facing increased harassment and threats. [21] In the context of rising authoritarianism, shrinking civic space, technology-facilitated gender-based violence, and coordinated "anti-gender" backlash, this is a growing concern.

Looking at wider civil society, Spotlight Initiative programmes have also demonstrated impact through their work with religious coalitions and networks. It is worth taking a strategic approach to engaging diverse stakeholders. Working with religious networks and coalitions through a regional approach can have a far-reaching impact and provide sustainable solutions that extend beyond a project timeline. Networks and coalitions have long provided a mechanism for members of different communities to learn about one another's beliefs and pursue action on shared social justice objectives.

[19] Weldon, S. Laurel, and Mala Htun. (2013). Feminist Mobilisation and Progressive Policy Change: Why Governments Take Action to Combat Violence against Women. *Gender and Development*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2013

[20] Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID). (2021). Where is the money for feminist organising? Data snapshots and a call to action

[21] Kvinna Foundation (2023). The state of women human rights defenders 2023

How?

This outcome **aims** to empower diverse women's movements to support social change and EVAWG. Spotlight Initiative programmes should not necessarily seek to create new organisations or movements, but instead help create the enabling environment for their expansion and impacts.

WROs can be more effective in addressing VAWG when they collaborate and work together, forging a collective strength that can also help them better withstand backlash. Coalitions can draw on the diverse expertise and networks of different organisations to maximise representation, influence and impact. These synergies can be beneficial. Therefore efforts should be made to promote collaboration and coalitions, including between women's movements and alternative movements outside of conventional EVAWG sectors, including around the climate crisis, labour rights, migrant rights and indigenous rights. Coalitions also benefit from working across different age groups and social backgrounds.

Focus is placed on helping to make an enabling environment which bolsters the civic space, and increases the potential and opportunity for EVAWG coalitions that last. This enabling environment can be supported through:

- Creating frequent opportunity for stakeholders to participate in collective engagement and learning;
- Supporting stakeholder knowledge and advocacy around the legal landscape in relation to the civic space;
- Identifying and creating opportunities for regional coordination with civil society actors, to leverage a multiplier effect.

All action under this outcome will be supported by a thorough **intersectional, situational analysis** which builds on **stakeholder mapping** to consider broader legal landscape, lines of solidarity, exclusion, political alliances, fragmentation, competition, division, conflict and identity dynamics. Efforts should be made to gain an understanding of power dynamics, including the tensions, hierarchies, gatekeeper relationships across the landscape. Analysis should explore how some organisations and individuals may be closer to the government or power holders, while others may be politically targeted or excluded due to their criticism of the state etc.

Case studies can be found on the Learning Centre.

1) High quality, feminist partnerships with diverse stakeholders:

- Provide **high quality funding to civil society, grassroots CSOs and WROs** (rather than simply project activities) to ensure strong movements and sustainable contributions to eliminating VAWG. High quality funding enables CSOs to be flexible and respond to changing circumstances and contexts, in addition to being an investment in organisational strengthening and learning, which enhances impact;
- Invest long term in the **strengthening of capacities** of individual activists, women human rights defenders, survivor groups, progressive national, local and grassroots CSOs and organisations representing marginalised groups - including organisations representing persons with disability, refugee-les groups, LGBT+ organisations, and youth movements. Structure and adapt capacity building curriculums and modalities on the basis of needs and participatory processes. Prioritise stakeholders that have been historically excluded from partnerships, programming or community opportunities. Where possible, support the

involvement of youth, build a pipeline of emerging leaders, and work with individuals who are working at different stages of movement building cycles;

- Promote methods for **self and collective care** for women's rights activists. Recognise that working on politically sensitive and traumatic issues of VAWG can be personally difficult and lead to high rates of burnout, as well as potential security risks. For women's movements operating in sites where gender-based crimes such as conflict related sexual violence takes place, working on VAWG comes with increased security risks linked to retribution, revenge or silencing;
- Pilot and roll out innovative techniques to track, monitor and evaluate progress on coalition activities. Record and seek to understand coalition activities, how these are implemented, and their impact through participatory and feminist **M&E and learning tools.**

How to champion feminist partnerships?

- **Be context specific:** Movements look very different in different settings. CSOs have a variety of relationships with local and national governments, ranging from overt or hidden tensions, co-option to healthy cooperation and collaboration. Map, track and analyse local dynamics.
- **Recognise power dynamics:** Civil society is not a monolith. There are inherent and longstanding power imbalances, notably between international and national CSOs/NGOs and between national and local, grassroots CSOs/NGOs.
- **Interrogate exclusions:** Groups representing the most marginalized are often overlooked, excluded, or discriminated against. Examine partnerships, identify who is left out and develop strategies for reaching, listening to and collaborating with the full spectrum of actors. Go beyond funding traditional, gatekeeper organisations.
- **Encourage solidarity:** Support networks or synergies between groups and mandates. Avoid imposing linkages which may feel artificial, uncomfortable or inappropriate to participants.
- **Acknowledge inconsistencies or contradictions:** Consider impacts formal funding may have on dynamic, organic, grassroots movements, civil society and social change.
- **Demonstrate trust:** Recognise that individuals and groups are experts and leaders EVAWG. They have authentic roots in communities, expertise in navigating complex social dynamics and operating in cloaked, political ways.
- **Agree and continuously reflect on shared principles:** As part of programme design and initial collaborations, agree on ways of working and shared principles which go beyond funding arrangements. Ensure there is space for accountability and honesty in both directions.
- **Provide high quality funding:** Provide multi-year, flexible and core funding. Include indirect administration costs across delivery chains.
- **Support continuous feminist capacity building:** Capacity building efforts should be designed in collaboration with WROs and CSOs, using a participatory approach, to ensure they reflect their own needs and priorities. Capacity strengthening might be focused on meeting a programme's aims, but can also go beyond the programme focus to strengthen the institutional capacity of WROs and CSOs.
- **Consider gendered risks:** Feminist movements are on the frontline of harassment and physical risks. Integrate flexible safety and security budgets and agree on strategies around risk sharing. This is particularly important when

working with survivors or groups targeted through legal discrimination or criminalisation (e.g. LGBTQIA+ groups or sex workers);
- **Be willing to adapt systems:** Review policies, processes, calls for proposals, Terms of Reference, reporting requirements and take steps to simplify them, making them more accessible to civil society groups. Provide guidance and accompaniment to groups to help overcome barriers.

2) Support EVAWG coalition building

- Support the **development of communities of practice.** This might include playing a facilitating or coordinating role which enables WROs to use the space to focus on technical substance, knowledge sharing, reciprocal learning, collaboration and networking;
- Create opportunities for WROs and CSOs to **jointly advocate for policy change.** Create platforms for joint strategising, consultations and planning;
- Connect activists through **South-South, cross-sectoral and intergenerational exchanges.** Facilitate meetings, events or sessions which bring together groups from different backgrounds and set the stage for diverse, intersectional alliances;
- Maintain a focus on **inclusivity and intersectionality,** by ensuring all platforms are accessible**.** This could mean ensuring the availability of sign or ethnic language translators; covering travel costs for women to safely participate in events with their children, and building in strong considerations to reduce risks of re-traumatisation or harm to survivors etc. In high-risk contexts, this might mean developing protection strategies which will increase excluded or marginalised groups from participating in processes;
- Integrate activities to support the establishment and operations of the **Civil Society Reference Group.**

3) Support intersectional exchanges, coordination and networking:

- Support women's movements and survivors' **access to decision-making spaces**. Build or enhance platforms to facilitate government engagement and multi-stakeholder dialogue so a diverse range of progressive CSOs with VAWG expertise can access decision-making spaces, inform policy and hold power holders to account;
- Co-design new opportunities for **experience and knowledge sharing.** Use creative teaching and learning methodologies. Prioritise indigenous knowledge systems and South-South exchanges. Pilot creative measures such as 'un-conferences' to allow free form exchange which can help diverse groups define common goals, strategies or campaigns to end VAWG.

4) Identify opportunities for political action and influence:

- Mobilise women's movements to build and use contextually relevant **feminist accountability mechanisms** for advocacy and holding duty bearers to account. Introduce and expand established methods such as civil society shadow reporting, complaints and feedback mechanisms, or oversight systems;
- Identify dynamic or emerging **political entry points** for women's movements to incorporate gender equality and EVAWG issues. For example, ensure that state decentralization and federalism activities promote the meaningful participation of women and resources for EVAWG at all levels;
- Support women's movements to use **media and creative communications strategies** to increase their visibility, and the impact of their messaging at different levels to drive change.

Cross cutting areas:

All programmes should demonstrate commitment around women's movements, localisation, high quality funding and feminist partnership models. Coalition-building across outcomes can help address GBV comprehensively.

Reflective questions:

- What contextual, historical or legal considerations are important when it comes to progressive social movements in this context?
- How will the programme minimise risks of NGO-isation or depoliticization of autonomous, fluid, organic social movements?
- How will the programme consider benefits and participation for groups with less access to social movements due to their displacement status or lack of connectivity?

Women's movements & civil society- Key priorities:

- **Intersectional analysis and mapping** to build understanding of civil society and women's movement landscape, politics and gaps. This will help move interventions away from a "one-size-fits-all" model of operation which risks alienating or under-resourcing certain groups.
- **Championing principles of leaving no one behind** by finding ways to partner with excluded or marginalised groups, including survivors, women human rights defenders, organisations of persons with disability, sex worker groups, LGBTQIA+ organisations and unregistered organisations etc.
- Guarantee **high quality, feminist partnerships** with all organisations, across delivery chains. Simplify application and reporting processes. Remunerate WROs for their times and costs.
- Supporting women's rights organisations to **initiate social accountability and reporting** on adherence to international human rights standards.
- Adapt and tailor **feminist capacity building,** responsive to needs and demands of partners. Avoid a "one-size-fits-all" mentality, instead seek to co-design processes with women's rights organisations wherever possible;
- Support **women's movements**' convenings, networking, reciprocal learning and access to political spaces. Support organisations in defining their own goals and strategies to end VAWG in their communities. Build consensus around ways of working that are survivor centred. For example, supporting platforming within the principles of "nothing about us, without us" to ensure safe, sensitive participation of survivors and that their voices, views and experiences can shape policies and decision-making.
- Embed strong **gendered risk management processes** which look at the different risks faced by individuals, organisations and movements. Ensure holistic mitigation and management activities are incorporated, which include self and collective care, physical security, digital security, etc.

Part Three – Tools and Resources

The Spotlight Initiative's Learning Centre and SHINE hub provide a series of regularly updated tools, resources and guidance to support impacts across the outcomes. Additional, specific resources are included below.

Outcome A – Laws, policies, institutions

Laws, policies:

- Aequitas. Training Materials on Investigation and Prosecution of Gender-Based Violence.
- Equality Institute, Generation Equality and UN Women. (2023). Together for Prevention: Handbook on Multi Sectoral National Action Plans to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls
- International Development Law Organisation (IDLO) (2019). Practitioner Brief: Customary and Informal Justice Systems.
- International Development Law Organisation (IDLO) (n.d.). Issue brief: navigating complex pathways to justice: Women and customary and informal justice systems
- New Tactics in Human Rights. (2016). Violence Against Women: Advocating for Legal Reform.
- UN Women. (2012). Handbook for Legislation on Violence Against Women.
- UN Women. (2012). Handbook for National Action Plans on Violence Against Women.
- UN Women, UNICEF, and UNDP. (2012). Informal Justice Systems: Charting a Course for Human Rights-Based Engagement.
- UN Women and OHCHR. (2014). Latin American Model Protocol for the Investigation of Gender-Related Killings of Women (Femicide/Feminicide).
- UN Women. (2017). Why and How Constitutions Matter for Advancing Gender Equality.
- UN Women. Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence Against Women and Girls: Legislation Module.
- VAWnet. Online Resource Library on Gender-Based Violence..
- Women Enabled International. (2018). AccountABILITY Toolkit: U.N. Standards on Gender-Based Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities.

Institutions:

- European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). (2014). Effective Gender Equality Training: Synthesis Report.
- EIGE. (2019). Gender Mainstreaming, Institutional Transformation.
- Gender at Work. (n.d.). Pathways to Change: Strategies.
- Global Partnership for Education, United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, UNICEF. (2018). Guidance for Developing Gender-Responsive Education Sector Plans.
- IPU, UNDP, UNIFEM. (2004). Parliament, the Budget, and Gender: A Handbook for Parliamentarians.
- Spotlight Initiative. (2025). Why Domestic Resources Are Key To Ending Violence Against Women.
- SDG Fund. (n.d.). Case Study: Institutional Strengthening Against Gender-Based Political Violence in Bolivia.
- UN Women. (2010). How Can Aid Be Gender Responsive in the Context of the New Aid Modalities? Lessons from Gender-Responsive Budgeting Initiatives.
- UN Women, UNV, AECID, & Basque Government. (2011). Budget and Gender in Latin America and the Caribbean platform.
- UNDP. (2014). Gender Equality in Public Administration: Case Studies.

- UNFPA. (2012). Mobilising Men in Practice: Challenging Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Institutional Settings.
- Women's Budget Group & OXFAM. (2018). A Guide to Gender-Responsive Budgeting.

Data:

- Denbow, C., Watson, J. (2023). Feminist research on violence against women in humanitarian and development settings: a snapshot of best practices and challenges
- The World Bank, Global Women's Institute, Inter-American Development Bank, International Center for Research on Women. (2018). Violence against women and girls - guide
- UNFPA. (2023). A Guide to Better Understanding and Using Violence Against Women Prevalence Data
- UN Women. (2022). Improving the Collection and Use of Administrative Data on Violence against Women.
- UN Women. (2020). ASEAN regional guidelines on violence against women and girls data collection and use
- WHO. (2023). Checklist for Ensuring the Quality of Violence Against Women Surveys.

Additional platforms:

Sexual Violence Research Initiative platform
UN Women. Global database on violence against women
World Health Organization - Global Database on the Prevalence of Violence Against Women

Outcome B - Prevention:

- Ahlenback, V. and Fraser, E. (2022). Effectives Social Norms Approaches in FCAS Contexts, Ending Violence Helpdesk Research Report No. 1.
- Ahlenback, V. (2022) Ending Violence Against LGBTQI+ People: Global evidence and emerging insights into what works, Policy Brief, Ending Violence Helpdesk
- GBV AoR (2023). GBV and disability inclusion fact sheet
- Hillenbrand, E., et al (2015). Measuring gender-transformative change: A review of literature and promising practices. CARE USA. Working Paper
- Sharma V, Scott J, Belen K, Dartnall E, Gevers A. (2022). The IPV ADAPT+ Framework: How to adapt intimate partner violence prevention programs. Equality Insights Lab and Sexual Violence Research Initiative
- Spotlight Initiative, UNDP (2023) Practical Approaches to Women's Economic Empowerment Implementation as a Gender-Based Violence Strategy: A Guide to Developing Women's Economic Empowerment Interventions
- Spotlight Initiative. (2023). Lessons Learned from Spotlight Initiative Programming: A Comprehensive and Transformative Approach to EVAWG.
- Spotlight Initiative. (2022). A comprehensive approach to preventing violence against women and girls: results, lessons learned and promising practices from Spotlight Initiative. June 2022
- Spotlight Initiative (2022). Engaging the Private Sector to End Violence Against Women and Girls: Results, Lessons and Promising Practices from the Spotlight Initiative.
- Spotlight Initiative. (2021). Lessons and promising practices of the Spotlight Initiative. Engaging with men and boys to transform patriarchal masculinities
- The Lancet. (2014). Prevention of VAWG: What Does the Evidence Say?
- UNESCO. (2015). Emerging Evidence, Lessons and Practice in Comprehensive Sexuality Education: A Global Review

- UNESCO, UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women, WHO. (2018). International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education.
- UNFPA. (2017). Adolescent Boys and Young Men: Engaging them as supporters of gender equality and health and understanding their vulnerabilities.
- UN Girls' Education Initiative & SVRI. (2024). Prevention Of Sexual Violence In Education Settings White Paper
- UN Women. (2016). Ten Essentials for Prevention of Violence Against Women.
- UN Women. (2015). A framework to underpin action to prevent violence against women.
- What Works programme. (2017). Effectiveness of Interventions to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls: A Summary of the Evidence.
- What Works programme. (2017). What Works Evidence Review: Social Norms and Violence Against Women and Girls.
- What Works programme. (2019). What works to prevent violence against women and girls in conflict and humanitarian crisis: Synthesis Brief.
- What Works programme. (2020). A rigorous global evidence review of interventions to prevent violence against women and girls
- World Health Organization et al. (2025). RESPECT women: Preventing violence against women.
- World Health Organisation. (2025) WHO guideline on the prevention of female genital mutilation and clinical management of complications

Additional platforms:

UN Women - Financing for Gender Equality portal
What Works to Prevent Violence - platform
Prevention Collaborative - platform

Outcome C – Response

- GBV AoR Helpdesk. (2023). Learning Brief: improving justice systems for GBV survivors through survivor-centred processes
- GBV AoR Helpdesk. (2022) Understanding the core functions and differences between Women and Girls Safe Spaces and One Stop Centres
- GBV AoR and UNFPA. (2019). The Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for GBViE Programming.
- GBV AoR Helpdesk (n.d.). Strengthening Access to Justice for Gender-Based Violence Survivors in Emergencies
- Global Rights for Women (n.d.) Assessment of Pilot Countries' Implementation of the UN Joint Programme on Essential Services Guidance for Women and Girls Subject to Violence 2017-2018.
- IASC. (2015). Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action: Health.
- IDLO, George Washington University. (2022). Survivor-centred justice for gender-based violence in complex situations
- International Center for Research on Women (2020) Toolkit for Designing One-Stop Crisis Centres for Survivors of Gender-Based Violence: Learnings from the Dilassa Model
- International Rescue Committee (IRC) (2020). Caring for Child Survivors of Sexual Abuse: Guidelines for health and psychosocial service providers in humanitarian settings
- UNICEF and IRC. (2023) Caring for Child Survivors of Sexual Abuse Guidelines.
- IRC. (2018). Guidelines for Mobile and Remote Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Service Delivery.

- IRC. (2018). Myths Surrounding Virginity: A Guide for Service Providers.
- IRC's Women Rise (2021). GBV Psychosocial Support Framework and Toolkit
- IRC (n.d.). Guidelines for mobile and remote gender-based violence (GBV) service delivery
- Judicial Service Ghana (2019). Operational Guidelines for Child Friendly GBV Courts in Ghana
- Legal Action Worldwide and Norwegian Church Aid (2020). Five key guidelines for providing remote legal aid to GBV survivors
- Prevention Collaborative. (2021) How can we amplify self and collective care?
- Sordas in Violencia, UNDP. (n.d). Guidelines for access to justice of deaf women victims of gender-based violence
- UN. (2022). Disability-inclusive communications guidelines
- UNICEF. (2019). Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability and Quality Framework: A tool to identify potential barriers to accessing services in humanitarian settings
- UNODC. (2017). Resource Book for Trainers on Effective Prosecution Responses to Violence Against Women and Girls.
- UNODC. (2019). Handbook for the judiciary on effective criminal justice responses to gender-based violence against women and girls
- UN Women, UNFPA, WHO, UNDP, UNODC. (2015). Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence.
- UN Women (n.d.). 10 essentials for service provision to survivors of violence against women
- WHO (2025). Caring for women subjected to violence: online facilitated training for health workers
- WHO. (2020). Clinical Management of Rape and Intimate Partner Violence Survivors: Developing protocols for use in humanitarian settings.
- WHO. (2017). Strengthening health systems to respond to women subjected to intimate partner violence or sexual violence.
- WHO. (2013). Responding to intimate partner violence and sexual violence against women: WHO Clinical and Policy Guidelines.
- WHO, UN Women, UNFPA. (2014). Health care for women subjected to intimate partner violence or sexual violence: A clinical handbook.
- Women's Refugee Commission and International Rescue Committee. (2015). Building capacity for disability inclusion in gender-based violence programming in Humanitarian Settings: A toolkit for GBV practitioners
- Women's Refugee Commission and Child Fund International. (2016). Gender-based violence against children and youth with disabilities: A toolkit for child protection actors
- Women Rise

Additional platforms:
GBV AoR - Helpdesk
Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) - platform

Outcome D - Women's movements & civil society:
- Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID). (2020). How funders can resource feminist movements: concrete practices to move more money to the drivers of change.
- AWID. (2019). Feminist Realities Toolkit.
- AWID. (2013). Watering the Roots, Starving the Leaves.
- AWID. (2017). A Call to Action: Insights into the Status of Funding for Indigenous Women's Groups.

- CREA. (2020). All about movements: why building movements creates deeper change.
- CREA. (2019). All about POWER: Understanding Social Power & Power Structures (Srilatha Batliwala).
- Htun, M. and Weldon, L. (2012). The Civic Origins of Progressive Policy Change: Combating VAW in Global Perspective. American Political Science Review.
- Just Associates (JASS). 2017. Rethinking Protection, Power, and Movements. Lessons from women human rights defenders in Mesoamerica (Marusia Lopez with Alexa Bradley).
- ODI (2013). Localising Aid: Sustaining Change in the Public, Private and Civil Society Sectors.
- Spotlight Initiative (2024). Thematic Assessment: Assessing Spotlight Initiative's contribution to the engagement of civil society, the implementation of 'Leave no one behind' and movement building.
- Spotlight Initiative Civil Society Reference Groups (2024). Principles and Initial Actions to Guide Spotlight 2.0: Outcomes of a Co-Design Process led by Members of the Civil Society Reference Groups to Spotlight Initiative.
- Spotlight Initiative. (2022). Inclusive funding to CSOs: Shifting the power through policies and practices.
- Spotlight Initiative. (2021). A missing brick for sustaining women's movements: flexible institutional funding for local women's organisations.
- Spotlight Initiative. (2020). Session two: supporting the women's movements in advancing EVAWG policy and reaching a feminist funding ecosystem.
- UNFPA. (2025). Girls, youth, women and feminist movements against female genital mutilation. A practical guide for frontliners
- Womankind Worldwide. (2022).Nurturing the beating heart of feminist movements
- Womankind Worldwide. (2019). Stronger together: the power of feminist programmes to strengthen women's movements in Kenya, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

Additional platforms:

AWID - Resourcing Feminist Movements platform
JASS - We Rise: Movement building reimagined toolkit
JASS - Training Tools & How Tos platforms