



## Pillar 4: Quality essential services

Ensuring access to and provision of high-quality, timely and comprehensive services is essential for addressing the impact of violence and reducing recurring cycles of harm experienced by women and girls. Pillar 4 focuses on the use and availability of quality essential services in inclusive ways, reaching marginalised communities and ensuring no one is left behind. Work in this pillar ensures greater access to and quality of services, expands the one-stop comprehensive care centre model, improves referral pathways to ensure delivery of coordinated essential services, enhances the capabilities of service providers and duty-bearers like government and police, and strengthens the infrastructure that governs and guides the delivery of essential services. Moreover, it emphasises the importance of holding perpetrators accountable in line with international human rights standards and guidelines.

The good and innovative practices below include a wide range of examples from different regions. The first set of case studies highlight the importance of mobile and flexible services offered and delivered in Mexico, Belize, Kyrgyzstan, Niger, Samoa, and Tajikistan. Case studies from Zimbabwe, Mali, and Jamaica explore the results achieved and practices scaled through one-stop centres. The next set of case studies focus on how economic justice initiatives have strengthened service delivery in Malawi and Liberia. Finally, the last set of case studies in this section focus on the various service delivery guidelines developed in Indonesia and Trinidad and Tobago.

### Mobile and flexible services to leave no one behind

#### 4.1 Hotels offer temporary refuge and protection for women, girls, and adolescent survivors of violence and their families in Mexico

##### Overview

On average in Mexico, 10 women are murdered every day, and 7 out of 10 have experienced at least one situation of violence during their lifetime.<sup>230</sup> Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated cases of violence against women and girls across the country, resulting in a 70 percent increase in cases of violence against women over two months of quarantine compared to the same period the year before.<sup>231</sup> Furthermore, from 2019 to 2020, calls to emergency responders related to incidences of domestic violence increased by more than 30 percent, and official reports of rape increased 56 percent.<sup>232</sup> Given the increase in violence against women and girls, shelters lacked the capacity to cope with the increased demand for services.

In order to address the shortage of protection centres and services, Spotlight Initiative in Mexico engaged with different stakeholders to ensure services remained available during the pandemic, despite the challenges posed by COVID-19 and the increase in need. Through the creation of a multi-sectoral mechanism, Spotlight Initiative successfully responded to the increased need for shelter for gender-based violence survivors through flexible programming and developing new partnerships.

##### Results

In line with the principle of leave no one behind, Spotlight Initiative, in collaboration with UNICEF and UNFPA and in alliance with the government and the hospitality sector, launched the Temporary and Free Accommodation in Hotels for Women, Girls, Boys and Adolescents Survivors of Violence (hereafter referred to as the “EAT initiative”) in 2020. This multi-sectoral effort offered temporary refuge for women and their families for seven days. This unique protection model focused on a population rarely considered in other forms of refuge. It included the family members who are dependent on women survivors, such as their adolescent children, mother, father or other older adult relatives.

<sup>230</sup> *La prevención de la violencia contra las mujeres y las niñas es la clave hacia un mundo más igualitario, seguro y próspero* (ONU Mujeres Mexico, 2023). (in Spanish)

<sup>231</sup> *Violencia Doméstica Durante la Covid-19: Herramienta de orientación para empleadores, empleadoras y empresas* (ONU Mujeres, 2020). (in Spanish)

<sup>232</sup> *Wilson Memo: Security and Violence Against Women in Mexico* (Wilson Center, 2021).

In addition to temporary refuge, the EAT initiative provided access to psychological support, as well as critical supplies, such as food, clothing and hygiene products. After the seven day stay, the government ensured the survivors' subsequent relocation to public shelters and/or non-governmental organisations, so that they could begin the process of recovery and rebuild their lives. The EAT initiative also trained around 10,000 stakeholders from partner hotels and referral authorities on the EAT implementation manual, offering technical guidelines and a protocol on each stakeholder's role. In addition, the manual included clear instructions for actors in other contexts or countries to replicate this strategy. Since implementation, the EAT initiative has benefited 409 women, 557 girls, children and adolescents, and 67 accompanying people.<sup>233</sup>

The programme was initially implemented through one hotel chain, Grupo Posadas.<sup>234</sup> The EAT initiative's successful approach led to the involvement of another hotel chain, City Express.<sup>235</sup> After one year of implementation, the number of cities covered by the initiative increased from six to nineteen cities, and more hotel chains showed interest in joining, including one chain that offered to extend the initiative to more than 10 countries in Latin America. The EAT initiative will receive continued support by the implementing UN agencies with the aim of expanding to other Mexican cities and countries in the region under this private-public model, where hotels act as pro bono partners together with referral authorities to ensure that women and their families are protected from violence.

### Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Forge strategic private-public partnerships to maximise resources and offer temporary, safe and free accommodation to women experiencing violence and their dependents.** The strategy is sustainable due to private funding and/or pro bono support and is particularly relevant in contexts with limited public services. In the context of COVID-19 and other crises, the partnerships were an agile and flexible response, which could be adapted in other countries and regions.
- **Develop an implementation manual with guidelines and protocols to outline the actions and roles of different stakeholders.** This good practice not only contributed to the success of EAT in Mexico, but has helped enable the expansion of the initiative in the Latin American region.
- **Allow families of survivors to stay together in order to preserve family unity during times of crisis and hardship.** Providing a safe and secure environment for all family members reduces the risk of harm or exploitation that individuals, especially children, might face if separated from their relatives.
- **Provide holistic services, such as access to psychological services and supplies of food, clothing and hygiene products, to help families transition to more stable living situations.** Access to food and hygiene products addresses immediate and essential needs. Psychological services help survivors cope with their experiences and develop strategies to manage emotional challenges.

<sup>233</sup> The 2022 Ecuador Annual Programme Report, page 22.

<sup>234</sup> Grupo Posadas, a national leading hotel operator in Mexico with more than 180 hotels in the country.

<sup>235</sup> City Express, owned by Marriott International, consists of 152 hotels across 75 cities in Mexico and three additional countries in Latin America.

## 4.2 Mobile women's centres in rural Belize bridge the gap in access to basic services

### Overview

Access to healthcare services remains a prominent concern in rural communities in Belize.<sup>236</sup> Lack of adequate healthcare facilities, personnel, medicine shortages and financial constraints are among some of the barriers to accessing healthcare.<sup>237</sup> Women, girls and children are especially vulnerable as they lack critical healthcare support for sexual and reproductive health, maternity needs and proper nutrition.<sup>238</sup> The mobile women's centres, led by UNFPA through Spotlight Initiative in Belize, aim to address these issues and more.

The teams providing support for the women centre travelled to remote areas of Corozal, Orange Walk and Toledo Districts<sup>239</sup> and set up their free services in schools and community spaces for a minimum of 2 days per location.<sup>240</sup> The mobile women centres were established in partnership with civil society organisations, namely, the Human Rights Commission of Belize, the Belize Family Life Association, the Productive Organization for Women in Action and the Child Development Foundation. It was designed under a mobile brigade approach, whereby civil society led the delivery of services in the centres.<sup>241</sup> The mobile centres offered legal support service provided by the Human Rights Commission of Belize, sexual reproductive health services through the Belize Family Life Association, and psychosocial support and counselling by the Child Development Foundation. The logistics, as well as information dissemination in communities about the mobile centres, were provided by Productive Organization for Women in Action. The mobile centres were also instrumental in providing critical services during the pandemic.<sup>242</sup>

A notable aspect of the mobile women's centre is its "children's safe space," which functions as a daycare facility for the children (aged 5-14 years old) of mothers or caregivers while they access services at the centre. Most of the time, mothers or caregivers are discouraged from going to mobile centres due to their caregiving responsibilities, and the daycare facility eliminates this barrier. It also offered an opportunity for mothers and caregivers to concentrate fully on their own needs in the centre without being encumbered by caregiving responsibilities.<sup>243</sup> Aside from childcare responsibilities, the transportation expense was another barrier for women to access the centre. As a response, the initiative also provided transportation assistance to women to enable them to visit the centres.

Additionally, the mobile women centres adopted a community-based approach. Civil society organisations provided the services to the women and girls, while key members of the community like principals and teachers, community health workers, leaders of women groups, social workers, youth leaders and village council members played an integral role in promoting the centres to their communities.<sup>244</sup>

### Results

Since 2020, the mobile women centres have helped over 1,500 women and girls to access sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence services, as well as legal and psychosocial support and counselling, across 33 communities. Aside from reaching women in remote areas, the mobile women centres also supported migrant and indigenous communities.<sup>245</sup> People who went to the centres<sup>246</sup> were educated on topics such as sexual and reproductive health, gender-based violence and COVID-19.

*"The centre is a great help to women like me. We can get services by visiting the nurse or advice on legal matters, which we often don't get because it comes with a cost."*

**A 45-year-old woman living in a small village in the Orange Walk district**

*"My community has many single mothers who are out of work [because of the pandemic]. Many of them face or are at risk of violence... Not having access to information or services makes them even more vulnerable."*

**Patty Witzil, Village Chairwoman of Trial Farm**

<sup>236</sup> Overcoming obstacles to health care (UNICEF Belize, September 2019).

<sup>237</sup> Stakeholders' Perspectives on the Barriers to Accessing Health Care Services in Rural Settings: A Human Capabilities Approach (The Open Public Health Journal, 2021).

<sup>238</sup> Mobile centres are helping women in rural Belize to access healthcare and other essential services (Spotlight Initiative, March 2021).

<sup>239</sup> The 2020 Belize Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 38.

<sup>240</sup> The 2021 Belize Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 46-47.

<sup>241</sup> Mobile Women Centers (UN Belize, video posted to YouTube on February 10, 2022).

<sup>242</sup> The 2021 Belize Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 3.

<sup>243</sup> The 2020 Belize Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 98.

<sup>244</sup> The 2021 Belize Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 40.

<sup>245</sup> Bella Vista, Aguacate, Santa Cruz, August Pine Ridge and San Antonio Rio Hondo, by indigenous Maya (Yucatec, Que'chi, Mopan Maya), indigenous Garifuna and migrant women.

<sup>246</sup> Mobile centres are helping women in rural Belize to access healthcare and other essential services (Spotlight Initiative, March 2021).

An important milestone was achieved in 2022 when the government, through the Belize Ministry of Human Development, took a lead role in promoting the mobile centres and sustaining these efforts. With this institutional funding commitment for the mobile centres and the ongoing contribution from civil society organisations in both the running and promotion of the women’s centres, the transition was smooth and ensured the continuity of the programme.<sup>247</sup>

### Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Reduce barriers to access for remote communities, in line with the leave no one behind principle.** Providing a child-friendly space or transportation assistance not only encouraged rural women to go to mobile centres, it also provided quality services that were tailored to the needs of women, girls and children.
- **Adopt a community-based approach when setting up and running mobile centres.** Involving local stakeholders significantly enhances the project's effectiveness, reach and sustainability. Notably, the mobile women’s centres in Belize are both civil society and community-led.
- **Secure government buy-in to foster a project’s long-term sustainability.** The Ministry of Human Development in Belize adopted the mobile women’s centres to support the continuation of the programme, even beyond Spotlight Initiative’s involvement.

## 4.3 The Bus of Solidarity in Kyrgyzstan delivers gender-sensitive and survivor-centric legal services to hard-to-reach communities

### Overview

Women, girls and persons with disabilities, especially in the rural regions of Kyrgyzstan, often have limited awareness of their legal rights and struggle to access legal protections.<sup>248</sup> Spotlight Initiative in Kyrgyzstan aimed to address this by providing opportunities for women to access justice through the “Bus of Solidarity” project. The Bus of Solidarity is a mobile legal service programme that transports lawyers to hard-to-reach rural communities across the country.<sup>249</sup> Supported by UNDP and implemented by the Ministry of Justice, the project has been operating since 2016. Under the auspices of Spotlight Initiative, which was launched in Kyrgyzstan in 2020, the Bus of Solidarity was reconceptualized to adopt a gender-sensitive and survivor-centric approach to providing legal services.<sup>250</sup>

### Results

The Spotlight Initiative programme held consultative sessions with the Ministry of Justice to understand issues and challenges around the provision of survivor-centric services within the Bus of Solidarity framework. An analysis of 30,000 rural women and men who accessed legal services from the Bus of Solidarity since 2016 revealed that cases related to sexual and gender-based violence were not reported as it did not have protocols for maintaining the confidentiality and safety of women and accessing related legal services.<sup>251</sup> As a result, a participatory reflection session was conducted to integrate a survivor-centric approach to the Bus of Solidarity programme, and additional multi-stakeholder sessions with 178 representatives from state agencies, local authorities and community members were held, a first in the initiative.

Guidelines were co-developed that contained standards for delivery of sexual and gender-based violence legal services with the Ministry of Justice, women’s rights organisations and crisis centres. Using the guideline, a one-day training was conducted around the topic for 120 lawyers and experts who were part of the Bus of Solidarity.<sup>252</sup> The programme also trained government representatives from the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Labor, Social Security and Migration, as well lawyers and legal experts that were part of the Bus of Solidarity, to be gender champions in 12 target communities of Chui, Osh, Naryn and Batken.<sup>253</sup> Incorporating the Gender Action Learning System methodology<sup>254</sup> into the trainings included experiential learning sessions to better understand uneven power dynamics between men and women<sup>255</sup> and practical exercises, such as co-designing gender-based violence screening interviews.

An assessment conducted after the training revealed that 94 percent of the trained lawyers noted a change in their approach to handling sexual and gender-based violence cases. A significant milestone was achieved in 2021 when, for the first time, 10 cases of domestic violence were assisted and referred to proper authorities through the Bus of Solidarity.<sup>256</sup> Twenty tablets were also dedicated to the Bus of Solidarity missions and used to gather real-time data and data visualisation during legal consultations. As of 2023, 5,562 individuals (59 percent women) have accessed free legal aid through the Bus of Solidarity.

<sup>247</sup> The 2022 Belize Interim Annual Report, page 42. The 2023 Belize Final Report Draft, page 64.

<sup>248</sup> *Access to Justice for Vulnerable Groups in the Kyrgyz Republic* (UNDP Kyrgyzstan, 2014).

<sup>249</sup> The 2020 Kyrgyz Republic Annual Report, page 23 and 34.

<sup>250</sup> *EU-UN Spotlight Initiative shows promising results on ending violence against women and girls and calls for sustained action building on achievements* (UN Kyrgyz Republic, September 2023).

<sup>251</sup> The 2020 Kyrgyz Republic Annual Report, page 34.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid*, page 26.

<sup>253</sup> The 2021 Kyrgyz Republic Annual Report, page 46.

<sup>254</sup> *Manual Gender Action Learning System (GALS) Implementation Toolkit* (International Fund for Agricultural Development and Community Development Alliance, September 2020).

<sup>255</sup> The 2020 Kyrgyzstan Annex D.

<sup>256</sup> The 2020 Kyrgyz Republic Annual Report, page 32.

### Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Train duty-bearers, lawyers and other service providers and raise their awareness on key gender concepts and issues related to violence against women and girls.** This ensures delivery of gender-responsive services vital to the needs of women who seek legal advice and justice. This is also an essential method to incorporate gender mainstreaming into legal services.
- **Reconceptualize past initiatives and refine the elements that did work to enhance the effectiveness of a project.** As in the case of the Bus of Solidarity, stakeholders assessed the gaps in their operations and subsequently formulated strategies to be more gender-responsive and survivor-centric in the delivery of legal services.
- **Involve local stakeholders in the development of the project and its implementation.** The training of lawyers and government representatives enhanced their capacity as local gender champions. This contributed to the overall sustainability of the Bus of Solidarity.



## 4.4 Taxi drivers in Niger promote safe public spaces for women and girls

### Overview

In Niger, women and girls experience high rates of gender-based violence, which is exacerbated by the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the country. With more than 76 percent of girls married before the age of 18, Niger has one of the highest rates of child marriage.<sup>257</sup> Low school enrollment rates for girls, a high prevalence of polygamy and a 10 percent contraceptive use rate also contribute to the various forms of abuse experienced by women and children, especially girls.<sup>258</sup>

As part of the “16 days of activism campaign” that launched across multiple Spotlight Initiative regions in 2021,<sup>259</sup> the Spotlight Initiative programme in Niger launched an awareness raising campaign in collaboration with taxi drivers in Niamey.<sup>260</sup> Taxis are a primary mode of transport in the country, and women often use them to escape abusive situations.<sup>261</sup> To engage men in gender-based violence prevention and reduction efforts, awareness raising sessions were organised to increase the drivers’ understanding and capacity to better respond to instances of gender-based violence that they may witness.<sup>262</sup> The campaign also heavily focused on the positive role these men can play in supporting survivors of violence.<sup>263</sup>

### Results

The campaign trained 50 taxi drivers to be “ambassadors against violence.” To visibly demonstrate their commitment to the cause and express solidarity with women and girls, the drivers wore orange scarves during the campaign activities. In addition to this, the drivers actively participated in the advocacy campaign by prominently displaying stickers on their cars. The stickers served as a public statement of their stance against gender-based violence. A noteworthy result of the awareness raising sessions was the positive change observed in the attitudes of the trained taxi drivers, particularly in their commitment to promoting gender equality.<sup>264</sup>

*“The other day, a group of young students asked me for more information about the orange scarf I was wearing. I explained that it was the symbol of my engagement to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls.”*

**A taxi driver that participated in the campaign**

The awareness raising efforts provided valuable insights to the drivers on how to support women and girls who have faced violence. It equipped them with a better understanding of the diverse needs of survivors, enabling them to offer support in ways that were more sensitive and tailored to individual circumstances. Drivers demonstrated greater willingness to support and help fight gender-based violence and collaborated to make public spaces safer for women and girls.<sup>265</sup> They understood the key role they could play in informing others about why it is necessary to prevent violence against women and girls.

*“As a man and as a taxi driver, I would like to draw attention to the issue of violence against women and girls. Everyone, especially men and boys, must [take action to] stop the perpetuation of violence against women and girls... Women are the mothers of humanity. We have to respect them.”*

**A taxi driver that participated in the campaign**

<sup>257</sup> Niger Spotlight Initiative Programme: Spotlight Initiative Fund (MPTF).

<sup>258</sup> Gender Based Violence Secondary Data Review (Social Development Direct, 2023), page 1.

<sup>259</sup> Spotlight Initiative celebrates 16 Days of Activism around the world (Spotlight Initiative, December 2022).

<sup>260</sup> In Niger, taxi drivers become activists against gender-based violence (Spotlight Initiative, February 2021).

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Spotlight Initiative celebrates 16 Days of Activism around the world (Spotlight Initiative, December 2022).

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

<sup>265</sup> In Niger, taxi drivers become activists against gender-based violence (Spotlight Initiative, February 2021).

Beyond feeling an enhanced sense of empathy towards survivors, the drivers also felt more confident in taking concrete actions to provide support for those who have faced violence, such as establishing connections or identifying suitable referral channels.<sup>266</sup>

*“As taxi drivers, we hear many personal stories, especially during our night shifts. Now, if I hear somebody in need, I know that I can refer her to the NGO SOS-Femmes et Enfants Victimes de Violence Familiale, or if it is a case of rape, to the police.”*

**A taxi driver that participated in the campaign**

### Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Proactively search for partners that frequently interact with women, girls and youth as an innovative way to expand reach and impact beyond the usual groups.** The awareness raising campaign in Niger with taxi drivers as agents of change contributed to safeguarding of women and girls. Furthermore, it demonstrated that masculinity goes beyond conventional norms and can be positively expressed through actions that support and protect others.
- **Use visible symbols, such as stickers and scarves, to help build solidarity and a shared understanding of a particular cause.** These serve as a powerful visual representation of the collective commitment to a cause. For women who may have experienced violence and are trying to escape their situation, seeing these symbols can signal a safe space. It also helps identify allies who are aware and empathetic toward their safety. Visual cues and symbols used in the campaign are strong unifying elements that are suitable for replication across many communities, even where diverse languages and cultural norms exist.
- **Scale and replicate across different geographies.** The ubiquity of the taxi profession across different regions provides a consistent and accessible opportunity for implementing the initiative.

## 4.5 Gender-based violence helplines in Samoa provide services during the COVID-19 pandemic

### Overview

The COVID-19 pandemic in Samoa heightened the vulnerability of women to violence and abuse. Data suggests that 20 percent of the female population has experienced rape, and 86 percent of women in relationships have experienced some form of intimate partner violence.<sup>267</sup> The repercussions of this situation were exacerbated as victims and survivors found themselves confined at home with their abusers during periods of lockdown.

To support government efforts, UNDP, UN Women, UNICEF and UNFPA under Spotlight Initiative in Samoa worked rapidly to engage with key civil society organisations to leverage existing digital platforms to their full capacity.<sup>268</sup> Specifically, UNDP partnered with the Samoa Victim Support Group and Fa’ataua le Ola to ensure that real-time 24/7 response and help would be available. Funding was reallocated and set aside to scale up advocacy and response efforts.<sup>269</sup>

### Results

By the end of March 2020, two helplines operated by Samoa Victim Support Group and Fa’ataua le Ola had responded to 438 calls.<sup>270</sup> More than 85 percent of the calls were made by women who were experiencing multiple forms of violence. By June 2020, these helplines had supported over 3,000 family members, including women, men, children, people with disabilities and people of diverse genders in Upolu and Savaii, and connected them to one or more services.<sup>271</sup> The request for services ranged from counselling, suicide prevention, safe shelter for survivors and dependents, case management and referral, health and legal services and community support.

The two community-based organisations worked tirelessly to manage the calls received. This included engaging in a series of conversations with the survivor, offering information on referral services, such as police and legal action, and providing financial counselling. They also helped the callers to develop contingency plans to ensure the safety and well-being of the caller and their dependents.<sup>272</sup> Positive testimonials from survivors indicated that the process of reaching out and using the helpline services ensured the availability of physical, social and emotional support for survivors.<sup>273</sup> Counselling services helped improve family dynamics and shift mindsets.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

<sup>267</sup> Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls (Pacific Partnership): Samoa Country Summary (UN Women), page 1.

<sup>268</sup> Spotlight Initiative steps in to help with COVID-19 response (UNDP Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and Tokelau, May 2020).

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> Spotlight Initiative Samoa Highlights Q1 2020 (UNDP, 2020).

<sup>271</sup> The 2020 Samoa Inception Narrative Progress Report, page 23.

<sup>272</sup> In Samoa, phone counselling provides support to at-risk women from a distance (Spotlight Initiative, July 2020).

<sup>273</sup> Spotlight Initiative Samoa Highlights Q1 2020 (UNDP, 2020).

For example, Samoa Victim Support Group assisted a 26-year-old single mother and her 10-month-old baby after she had left home to escape her mother's abuse. When she reached out to the helpline, Samoa Victim Support Group took swift action and took both her and her baby to the Campus of Hope, the group's shelter home, where they received counselling and care services.<sup>274</sup> In another instance, Rita (name changed) sought refuge at the same shelter after she escaped an abusive marriage. Reflecting on her experience, Rita emphasised, *"Don't be afraid to take that step to seek help. You will take courage when you look into the eyes of your children."* With Samoa Victim Support Group's assistance, she obtained a protection order, and her husband underwent counselling, resulting in positive changes.<sup>275</sup>

The data collected by both helplines also shed light on COVID-19's impact on interpersonal and community relationships.<sup>276</sup> This information was helpful for the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development to prioritise awareness raising on gender-based violence.<sup>277</sup>

### Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Promote gender-based violence response and prevention approaches, such as helplines, that provide accessible, quick and quality services to survivors and their dependents.** Helplines are an effective medium for individuals to access information and services and are crucial in reaching those in crisis, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Maintaining round-the-clock availability with trained and empathetic professionals provided immediate and consistent support. Collaborations and coordination with other support services, such as shelters, the police and legal aid, provided comprehensive response and assistance that was tailored to specific needs.
- **Develop contingency-based and flexible funding strategies to repurpose funds in emergency and unprecedented situations.** Reallocating funds, particularly during unexpected crisis events, reflected Spotlight Initiative's commitment to adapting and mobilising resources effectively. Reacting swiftly to the pandemic and the changing situation on the ground ensured that frontline organisations could receive the necessary financial backing to provide vital care and response services.
- **Develop a database of credible and reliable partners and stakeholders to leverage their expertise and geographical reach in times of crisis and emergency.** Redirecting funds to credible and already well-established organisations enables a holistic response to the gender-based violence crisis. In thinking about how to effectively address emerging needs, the strategy of looking where results and networks have already been implemented and directing more resources to support strengthening and scale up is often more effective and efficient than starting from scratch.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> Spotlight Initiative Compendium Survey. Impact Mapper. (Survey Results)

<sup>276</sup> The 2020 Samoa Inception Narrative Progress Report, page 23.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

## 4.6 Integration of violence against women and girls in emergency response plans promotes access to services and referral in Tajikistan

### Overview

Community quarantines that went into effect during the COVID-19 pandemic prohibited people from going to work and generating income. This financial insecurity created stress among households, perpetuating violence within the family. Exacerbated by stay-at-home protocols, women and girls were highly vulnerable to violence at home. As such, Tajikistan saw an increased incidence of domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>278</sup>

As part of Spotlight Initiative in Tajikistan's COVID-19 Response Plan, UN Women and the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan<sup>279</sup> collaborated to provide emergency support to address the increase in incidences of violence against women and girls in the country. The Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan has an extensive community reach in the country, encompassing 69 branches. This partnership allowed for the integration of a violence against women and girls component to emergency response frameworks, raised awareness of the issue in the country and provided access to services and referral networks, with a special focus on women and adolescent girls and those living with disabilities.

### Results

The programme was implemented through volunteers and six crisis centre staff that were trained on ending violence against women and girls and COVID-19 safety across six areas in Tajikistan: Rudaki, Gissar, Yawan, Vose, Bobojon Gafurov and Isfara. The crisis centres were also supported through one-on-one coaching with specialists (e.g. psychologists and medical specialists) from the Ministry of Health. The crisis centres provided psychological, medical and legal assistance and offered 12-hour direct online and/or telephone support to women and girls. The programme aimed to identify households with unhealthy and violent in-house environments, raise awareness of and prevent violence against women and girls, and refer survivors to a range of support services, including psychological, medical and legal aid.<sup>280</sup>

At the height of the pandemic, many staff and volunteers had contracted the virus and were forced to stay at home. It became clear that volunteer participation in the programme would be affected, which could result in low outreach to households. Additionally, some staff and volunteers located in rural areas did not have the proper equipment (i.e. internet, laptops) for the training. To facilitate remote training of staff and volunteers, the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan recorded video tutorials that could be accessed via phones and computers to share information on how to identify essential services, mobilise resources and support victims.

The key messaging of the campaign revolved around increasing awareness about women's rights and violence against women, girls, children and people with disabilities and what to do if violence was experienced first-hand or witnessed. Awareness campaigns were conducted both in the community and in the crisis centres through brochures and handouts, as well as house-to-house counselling and participation in informal community (*mahalla*) meetings.<sup>281</sup> Mobile apps (e.g. WhatsApp, Viber, etc.) were also used to disseminate information. To raise awareness around COVID-19, key information was shared on prevention and proper personal hygiene. In total, 120 volunteers were trained on how to identify violence (such as spotting unhealthy habits and aggressive behaviours within the family) and how to facilitate referrals to proper sexual and gender-based violence services (e.g. psychological, medical and legal assistance). Outreach activities were conducted extensively in the six target districts, with over 596,000 people receiving information on COVID-19 prevention and available gender-based violence services, as well as on how to address violence.<sup>282</sup> 3,400 gender-based violence survivors were provided with psychological, legal and medical assistance. Further, 200 boxes of medical and hygiene products were distributed to the six crisis centres and four other shelters.

Having had a long history and knowledge of Tajik communities, the volunteers selected by the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan were individuals usually trusted by the community, such as nurses, teachers, elders or religious leaders. This encouraged women survivors to disclose their situation. This has been especially helpful in reaching out to women who suffer from domestic abuse, as most would not speak up due to taboo, shame or fear. The selection of volunteers who are trusted and respected by the community enabled more women and girls to report cases.

<sup>278</sup> Standard operating procedures adopted in Tajikistan are being used to better address GBV during the Covid-19 pandemic (UNFPA Tajikistan, May 2020).

<sup>279</sup> During the COVID-19 outbreak, Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan was one of the most active organisations providing pandemic response.

<sup>280</sup> The 2020 Tajikistan Annual Report, page 32.

<sup>281</sup> In Tajikistan, there were no strict quarantine measures though the population was encouraged by the government to follow global pandemic protocols.

<sup>282</sup> The 2020 Tajikistan Annual Report, page 8.

A woman supported by the project underscored the critical importance of knowing where to access support after experiencing violence.<sup>283</sup>

*“Through a Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan volunteer, I learned about the Ishtirok crisis center. I did not dare and was afraid to approach anyone, because my husband always threatened to take my life if I approached anyone. One day I called the NGO Ishtirok and asked them to help me get my children back and protect me from my husband. They provided me with psychological support over the phone and referred me to the appropriate law enforcement agencies for legal assistance and further support. NGO staff and government agencies helped return my children and take the case to court. I am proud to have broken my silence and taken immediate action to end my husband's abuse.”*

**A woman from Yavan area**

Ultimately, the collaboration between Spotlight Initiative and the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan demonstrated that a violence against women and girls component can be effectively embedded into emergency response frameworks. Moreover, with the right partners, violence response work can be facilitated quickly and effectively, while making a significant impact on women's and girls' lives and safety.

### Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **In times of crises, partner with a strongly established organisation that has local connections, deep community ties and the trust of the community.** The Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan's operating history enabled Spotlight Initiative to leverage a strong network of existing connections and volunteers that had been cultivated over the years. This enabled them to work smoothly with the government, expediting processes during emergency response situations, and since volunteer members were trusted by the community, women and girls were encouraged to confide in them and report cases during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Position gender-based violence alongside other public health issues that countries must address.** Integrating information on violence against women and girls into pandemic responses helped to raise its visibility as a health issue at a national level.

### One-stop centres



#### **4.7 A mobile one-stop centre model in Zimbabwe improves access to essential services in hard-to-reach areas**

### Overview

Gender-based violence remains prevalent in Zimbabwe, where an estimated 1 in 3 women aged 15-49 have experienced physical or sexual violence, but only 37 percent of them report seeking help.<sup>284</sup> Gender-based violence support services are mainly established at provincial and district levels, while services for survivors living in remote areas remain scarce, due to limited transportation and its high cost.<sup>285</sup>

UNFPA through Spotlight Initiative supported mobile one-stop centres in Zimbabwe to enhance service uptake among gender-based violence survivors in remote and hard-to-reach areas, in line with the principle of leave no one behind.<sup>286</sup> These moveable container clinics were adapted from the traditional one-stop centre model and provide health, legal, police and psychosocial services in one place. Launched in December 2019, the programme saw its relevance increase significantly with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, which brought additional mobility challenges due to lockdowns and reduced means of transport, at a time where gender-based violence cases were on the rise. Cases reported through hotlines increased more than 60 percent during the period of confinement.<sup>287</sup>

### Results

In the first year of operations alone, 5,862 survivors accessed gender-based violence services and sexual and reproductive health supplies through mobile one-stop centres in the 12 Spotlight Initiative target districts. Community volunteers from the “Community-based GBV Surveillance System”<sup>288</sup> reported that the availability of mobile services closer to communities increased the reach and number of referrals. The close collaboration between mobile one-stop centre teams and community-based GBV surveillance teams was further enhanced through funding to improve continuous communication between volunteers, survivors and gender-based violence hotlines.

<sup>283</sup> Red Crescent Society Tajikistan, Project on raising awareness about COVID-19 and VAWG, July-December 2020, Powerpoint Presentation, Slide 10.

<sup>284</sup> Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey-ZDHS (2015).

<sup>285</sup> Mobile One Stop Centres: Taking GBV services to communities (UNFPA Zimbabwe, October 2020).

<sup>286</sup> The 2020 Zimbabwe Annual Programme Report, page 95.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

<sup>288</sup> The 2022 Zimbabwe Annual Narrative Programme Report and Fact Sheet Community-Based Gender Based Violence Surveillance System Report (UNFPA Zimbabwe, 2018). The Community-Based GBV Surveillance programme was launched in 2017 to fill gaps in national gender-based violence data. It involves a community cadre trained in integrated gender-based violence, sexual reproductive health and rights awareness, and referrals to provide critical gender-based violence surveillance at the community level.

Call centres and hotlines, including both voice and text options, were also implemented under Spotlight Initiative and provided means through which survivors could access expert psychosocial support and other forms of gender-based violence services. Since 2020, the Gender-Based Violence Call Center has received 20,695 calls. Coordination with private transportation services and fuel support also contributed to uptake of the service. To further reinforce the principle of leave no one behind, specialised gender-based violence support for people with disabilities were included, as well.<sup>289</sup>

*“In addition to the services that we are providing, we have reached out to like-minded organisations like Leonard Cheshire whose focus is on persons with disabilities who assist in ensuring that this group of people also access GBV services.”*

**Gabriel Jaji, District Development Officer in Chipinge**

### Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Implement mobile centres to bring a range of services to people living in remote communities.** Mobile centres can ensure the continuation of service provision, especially during crises or lockdown periods, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, when survivors may be unable to travel to access services due to movement restrictions or lack of available transport.
- **Replicate the one-stop centre model and integrate different types of services.** Mobile clinics can be adapted to respond to changing contextual needs quickly by modifying service delivery modalities, locations, and frequency, as well as integration with other existing mobile services in both development and humanitarian contexts (e.g. mobile health clinics, food distribution and WASH sensitization points). Replicating the mobile one-stop centres in other countries or regions can help bring services to remote communities.
- **Ensure sustainability through ongoing commitment from government agencies.** The operation of the one-stop centres beyond the Spotlight Initiative programme requires a commitment from the government to ensure ongoing management and financial support.

## 4.8 Decentralised one-stop centres in Mali provide integrated essential services to women and girls

### Overview

Mali has one of the highest rates of gender-based violence in West Africa. Nearly 40 percent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime.<sup>290</sup> Additionally, the prevalence of female genital mutilation (FGM) remains high, with 88.6 percent of women in Mali having undergone the practice.<sup>291</sup> FGM continues to be a common practice amongst several ethnic groups and is predominantly performed by traditional practitioners, with one in ten girls experiencing the most severe form of female genital mutilation.<sup>292</sup> This situation is further exacerbated by limited access to essential and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights services that can support both women and girls.

Given this context and the need for holistic care and response strategies, UNICEF through Spotlight Initiative in Mali supported the establishment of one-stop centres across five regions of the country. By the end of 2021, ten one-stop centres were set up to provide care services to gender-based violence survivors. These services included counselling, medical care and referrals to other appropriate support services. Furthermore, they provided a safe space to encourage women and girls to seek and receive the care they needed. The centres were also set up in communities where access and availability of necessary care was limited. Additionally, the initiative complemented these efforts with outreach programmes and awareness raising activities, effectively managed by partnering non-governmental organisations.

### Results

In 2021, as a part of the one-stop centre programme, efforts were undertaken to enhance the skills of service providers. A comprehensive training was carried out to bolster the capacity of 171 service providers to improve their knowledge and skills for delivering high-quality services to gender-based violence survivors. Moreover, 185 volunteers from the Red Cross underwent specialised training to support community outreach efforts.<sup>293</sup> The programme provided services to a total of 5,814 survivors, offering them the necessary integrated support and care.<sup>294</sup> The decentralisation efforts were essential to securing higher quality care in local communities.

The Spotlight Initiative programme updated and improved the standard operating procedures to better guide and run these

<sup>289</sup> Mobile One Stop Centres: Taking GBV services to communities (UNFPA Zimbabwe, October 2020).

<sup>290</sup> Global database on Violence against Women (UN Women).

<sup>291</sup> Female Genital Mutilation in Mali: Insights from a statistical analysis (UNICEF, 2022).

<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

<sup>293</sup> The 2021 Mali Annual Narrative Progress Report, page 11. (in French)

<sup>294</sup> The 2023 Mali Annual Narrative Progress Report Draft, page 29. (in French)

one-stop centres. Proactive steps were taken to also develop a referral map and actively facilitate the seamless transition of survivors to support units or one-stop centres.<sup>295</sup>

The outreach efforts led by NGO partners made a direct impact on 217,959 individuals, reaching nearly 360 diverse communities within the targeted regions. Furthermore, 925 community leaders were trained to report on cases of violence, get involved in community activities that prioritise women's equitable rights and condemn violence of all forms.<sup>296</sup> Community members were strongly encouraged to refer all gender-based violence cases to the one-stop centres. One of the strategies included developing key messages<sup>297</sup> that conveyed solidarity and support for survivors of gender-based violence (e.g. *'Your voice matters, your story matters'*). These messages emphasised the importance of seeking help and affirmed their rights (e.g. *'You have the right to live without violence and rebuild your life'*).

This comprehensive approach led to the establishment of community-level mechanisms and response plans geared towards preventing and combatting gender-based violence, while strengthening citizen accountability. This involved necessary sanctions at the local level to hold perpetrators of violence accountable for their actions.<sup>298</sup>

#### Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Adopt a comprehensive strategy and holistic support system for the survivors of gender-based violence.** Implementation activities associated with one-stop centres involve professional service providers, volunteers and community members, all working in concordance to meet the multifaceted nature of survivors' needs. This holistic approach ensures that survivors receive expert care and assistance.
- **Build strong partnership and stakeholder engagement approaches to ensure the sustainability of the one-stop centres.** This collaborative effort in Mali extended to district capitals, the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children and Families, the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Health and Social Development and their decentralised support structures.
- **Proactively work with federal, state and local governments to ensure project longevity and uptake.** The active engagement of Spotlight Initiative with the Government of Mali has been integral to the success and sustainability of the one-stop centres. One key milestone achieved has been the organisation of events to officially hand over the one-stop centres to the Government of Mali.<sup>299</sup> This strategic handover process ensures that centres are incorporated into the broader national framework for social and health services and receive the required support, resource allocation and policy alignment with the relevant government structures.



### 4.9 Specialised domestic violence intervention centres at police stations in Jamaica improve access to justice for women and girls

#### Overview

One in every four women in Jamaica has experienced some form of intimate partner violence, and nearly 63 percent of women who have faced violence have not sought any form of help.<sup>300</sup> Low levels of education, early cohabitation and societal expectations associated with performing traditional gender roles have been key factors contributing to high levels of gender-based violence in the country.<sup>301</sup>

Through the support of UNDP and UNFPA under Spotlight Initiative, the Jamaica Constabulary Force, a sub-agency of the Ministry of National Security, established domestic violence intervention centres within police stations across the island.<sup>302</sup> Alongside the Ministry and Jamaica Constabulary Force, the Community Safety and Security Branch played a crucial role as a key stakeholder in the consultation and collaboration process during the design phase of these centres.<sup>303</sup> With support and inputs from Woman Inc., Eve for Life, Jamaica Network of Seropositives, We Change and the Southeast Regional Health Authority, the centres were designed to act as a confidential space where survivors of violence could feel safe to share their experiences without any fear of judgement or ridicule.<sup>304</sup> They filled the gaps within the Jamaica Constabulary Force by providing tailored response and support services to survivors of family and domestic abuse. Starting in 2020, ten domestic violence intervention centres were established across various police stations<sup>305</sup> with six more centres added between 2021 and 2022,<sup>306</sup> offering counselling and immediate care and referral services to survivors.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> The 2021 Mali Annual Narrative Progress Report, page 29. (in French)

<sup>297</sup> The 2023 Mali Annual Narrative Progress Report Draft, page 44. (in French)

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

<sup>299</sup> The 2021 Mali Annual Narrative Progress Report, page 17. (in French)

<sup>300</sup> Brief Country Profile: Gender-based Violence in Jamaica (World Bank, July 2023).

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

<sup>302</sup> The 2022 Jamaica Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 110.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>304</sup> *The Changing Face of Domestic Violence Intervention in Jamaica* by UNDP Multi Country Office in Jamaica (UNDP Jamaica, December 2022).

<sup>305</sup> A locations list of the domestic violence intervention centres established in Jamaica.

<sup>306</sup> *EU-UN Spotlight Initiative supports expansion of Domestic Violence Intervention Centres (DVICs) to domestic violence hotspots* (UNDP Jamaica, October 2021).

*“The handover of six additional DVICs to the JCF [Jamaica Constabulary Force] sends a strong signal of the repositioning of the police in our society and restores hope to victims of domestic violence. This is a new picture of the new direction of the JCF, a Force for Good.”*

**Hon. Dr. Horace Chang, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Security**

## Results

To set up these centres for domestic violence survivors, a set of comprehensive policy documents were developed, improved, and officially validated and institutionalised. This included the “Handbook for the Policy Domestic Violence Intervention Centres for the Policy Sector.”<sup>307</sup> These guidelines, which ranged from interagency referral protocols to legal literacy guides, were instrumental in furthering the impact achieved by these centres. They defined key roles and responsibilities and articulated ways to strengthen a coordinated approach across sectors.<sup>308</sup>

A clear process mechanism to access services was created as a part of this initiative. Accessible channels were outlined, allowing individuals to seek support by visiting a police station and requesting a referral to the nearest centre and/or by navigating governmental resources online on the Jamaica Constabulary Force’s website. This systematic approach was designed to facilitate seamless referrals for individuals experiencing domestic violence to readily access the resources offered by the domestic violence intervention centres.<sup>309</sup> This process was bolstered by the dissemination of encouraging social media messages to prompt individuals to visit these centres. Anecdotal feedback from centre officers suggested that the social media campaigns and the communication campaigns run by the Jamaican police force successfully directed traffic to these centres.<sup>310</sup>

To strengthen the capacities of the officials delivering services at the intervention centres, 21 constables underwent training to equip them with the necessary skills to effectively address cases of domestic violence. Additionally, domestic violence intervention centre managers and peer counsellors received training core funds from implementing UN agencies.<sup>311</sup> Supplementary training in sign language for support personnel at intervention centres further ensured an inclusive approach to ensure no victim was turned away.<sup>312</sup> 19 centre managers underwent training to enhance their abilities in providing initial responses, assessing risks, ensuring the safety of survivors, making appropriate referrals for counselling, conducting thorough investigations and following up on cases. The training sessions were essential for centre managers, as they delivered domestic violence-related services to victims and survivors to administrative divisions (also known as parishes) in Jamaica.<sup>313</sup>

Domestic violence intervention centres in Jamaica have positively impacted women, especially those in rural areas, by providing access to high-quality recovery services. In 2022, the centres across the island documented a total of 1,720 instances of intimate partner violence and 924 cases of family violence. Interestingly, over 650 reports were filed by children. 2,201 women and 740 men demonstrated the courage to report instances of violence to the domestic violence intervention centres.<sup>314</sup>

## Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Operationalise and embed domestic violence intervention centres within local institutions and government to guarantee long-term sustainability and credibility.** In Jamaica, the institutionalisation process of these centres implies a formal integration with the systemic processes of the Jamaica Constabulary Force, ensuring standardised practices, protocols and resource allocations that contribute to their sustained functionality.
- **Replicate the initiative across the entire island or country for continued success and impact.** Within the framework of Spotlight Initiative, it is intended that each parish has access to at least one domestic violence intervention centre, demonstrating an extensive and comprehensive implementation plan.<sup>315</sup> The sustainability and effectiveness of these centres, however, relies on and requires ongoing assessment and continuous capacity building for centre managers.<sup>316</sup>

<sup>307</sup> The 2022 Jamaica Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 45.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid.

<sup>312</sup> EU-UN Spotlight Initiative supports expansion of Domestic Violence Intervention Centres (DVICs) to domestic violence hotspots (UNDP Jamaica, October 2021).

<sup>313</sup> The 2022 Jamaica Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 45.

<sup>314</sup> The Changing Face of Domestic Violence Intervention in Jamaica by UNDP Multi Country Office in Jamaica (UNDP Jamaica, December 2022).

<sup>315</sup> EU-UN Spotlight Initiative supports expansion of Domestic Violence Intervention Centres (DVICs) to domestic violence hotspots (UNDP Jamaica, October 2021).

<sup>316</sup> The 2022 Jamaica Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 110.

## Supporting economic justice

### 4.10 Community and Survivor Funds in Malawi ensure support services and economic justice for survivors

#### Overview

Most gender-based violence survivors cannot pursue justice and access services because of financial barriers and lack of economic power. The financial vulnerability of women, girls and their families also limit their options in escaping violent relationships or fully recovering from their traumatic experiences. To address these challenges, the Malawi Community Fund and the Malawi Survivor Fund (hereafter referred as “the Funds”) were implemented under Spotlight Initiative. These Funds are specifically managed by the community to ensure local ownership and agency to support the long-term recovery of gender-based violence survivors.

Through Spotlight Initiative, UNFPA, the Ministry of Gender, Social Welfare and Community Development and District Councils rolled out the Funds via existing community structures called Community Victim Support Units.<sup>317</sup> In each Traditional Authority within the six priority districts, a Community Committee was formed to manage the Funds, which included members of the Community Victim Support Units, police, health and education services. Accountability mechanisms and regular reporting was also implemented under the supervision of the Area Development Committee.<sup>318</sup> After training all members, the programme provided each Community Committee with financial resources.

#### Results

The Community Fund was created to support gender-based violence survivors’ accessibility to essential services in hard-to-reach areas, including police, legal, health, counselling and other social services. The support was then extended to witnesses of gender-based violence cases in courts to facilitate access to justice, which made it possible to contribute significantly to the prosecution of many cases. The Survivor Fund complements the Community Fund support by offering opportunities for gender-based violence survivors to engage in economic activities towards their long-term recovery and social reintegration in the community. It works as an interest-free loan model, whereby beneficiaries have nine months to return the funds according to a payment plan collectively developed. It also supports obstetric fistula patients to access health services.

The Community Fund has supported 9,156 gender-based violence survivors to access essential services between 2021 and 2022.<sup>319</sup> One survivors’ story illustrates how this support has been critical for survivors to recover and find justice.<sup>320</sup> After being physically attacked and having her life threatened by her former husband, a woman sought help from the nearest Community Victim Support Unit. Seeing that she was seriously injured and without the means to access essential services, they referred her to the Community Fund. With the right financial support, she was able to access a hospital and later attended the court sessions where her case was being heard, far away from her village. Her husband was convicted and is currently serving 6 years in prison.

*“I am thankful for the support. Without it, I couldn’t have made it to the court sessions. As the complainant in the case and the principal witness of the prosecution’s case, I was supposed to attend the court sessions not only as the witness but also as a key stakeholder in the case.”*

**A 24 year old survivor**

Since its implementation in 2021, the Survivor Fund has supported 11,531 gender-based violence survivors to earn additional income to support their economic power. A story shared by one of the Community Committee members showcases how the Survivor Fund is making a difference in survivors’ lives. The family of a young survivor of sexual gender-based violence who received support from the Fund was able to open a small food stand, which provided them with a steady income and allowed their daughter to attend school, taking her out of a vulnerable situation and contributing to her recovery and a brighter future. After nine months, the family was able to pay back the Fund and their business is currently thriving. In addition, the Fund has supported women’s health, with 179 women receiving support for reconstructive surgery for fistulas or other health related services.<sup>321</sup>

<sup>317</sup> Community Victim Support Units are one-stop centres that offer assistance to adult and child survivors of crimes, especially gender-based violence and child abuse, exploitation and neglect.

<sup>318</sup> The Area Development Committees are responsible for identifying development challenges in the community, suggesting solutions and working with the District Council and other stakeholders to implement them.

<sup>319</sup> The 2022 Malawi Annual Programme Report.

<sup>320</sup> [Bringing hope to gender based violence survivors](#) (UNFPA, November 2022).

<sup>321</sup> The 2023 Malawi Final Programme Report Draft.

Another important result was the high level of commitment of the Community Committees to sustaining and growing the Funds to support more survivors. The Community Committee in the Traditional Authority Kawinga had 224 thousand Malawian Kwacha (approximately 133 USD)<sup>322</sup> provided by Spotlight Initiative to their Community Fund. However, the Committee members quickly realised that this amount would not last long. Following other Committee's revenue generating approach, they adopted a revolving fund model through village savings and loans with an annual interest of 20 percent.<sup>323</sup> They also invested in their economic activity, the corn trade, to ensure the Fund's sustainability. After almost three years they managed to reach over four times the initial amount received (1,16 million Malawian Kwacha, approximately 700 USD) and have found a way to self-sustain the initiative.

Other significant results include increased knowledge and capacity among members to better support gender-based violence survivors. In addition, Community Committees served as incredible resources, fully understanding the referral pathway and responsibilities of the different support services and demanding follow-up and accountability after services or cases were filed. One of the key factors that deepened the impact of the Community Committees was their cross-sector background, whereby members had expertise and were representatives of different services, such as the Community Victim Support Unit, police, health and education services, which meant they had insider knowledge to provide more effective support to survivors. Mentors and mentees from the Safe Space Mentorship Programme also contributed to these initiatives by referring gender-based violence survivors and, in some cases, oversaw their management for increased community accountability.

The successful approach and community ownership of the Community Fund and Survivor Fund has led to their replication in other communities across the country through additional revenue from revolving funds and by civil society organisations, contributing to their sustainability and scalability beyond Spotlight Initiative.

#### **Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication**

- **Train and support community structures and members to manage initiatives to ensure local ownership, agency, continuity and, ultimately, the long-term success of interventions.** Being managed by the community and utilising existing structures that handle gender-based violence cases in Malawi ensured the continuity and growth of the Funds. Moreover, by leveraging and deepening members' knowledge on gender-based violence issues, knowledge and experience became consolidated across the Funds.
- **Implement an intersectoral approach involving representatives from different service providers to foster knowledge sharing and increased effectiveness of service delivery.** By involving the Community Victim Support Units, the police, health and education services as part of the Community Committee, insider knowledge sharing was activated. This also reinforced referral pathways and increased the effectiveness of services delivered.
- **Allow for flexibility so that local actors can adapt and innovate to strengthen and grow initiatives.** The flexibility of the Committees to implement revolving funds and their own solutions to expand the Funds' resources contributed to the Funds' sustainability and scalability. Additional revenue from the revolving funds have supported the replication of the programme in other communities. Civil society organisations are also contributing to its replication across the country.

<sup>322</sup> The exchange rate for this case study is from Google Finance, accessed on November 28, 2023.

<sup>323</sup> 15 percent is retained with the fund and 5 percent is allocated to Community Victim Support Units to cover administrative costs. It is important to assess and define an appropriate level of interest rate on revolving funds that does not harm survivors but is conducive to supporting them.

## 4.11 Alternative livelihoods for traditional zoes in Liberia reduces the practice of female genital mutilation

### Overview

The occurrence of female genital mutilation (FGM) in Liberia is 38.2 percent among women and girls aged 15-49 years old.<sup>324</sup> It is a deeply entrenched cultural tradition that is practised in 11 out of 15 counties in Liberia<sup>325</sup> and is seen as a rite of passage for a girl into womanhood, preparing them for their roles as wives and mothers in the future. Female genital mutilation is a harmful practice that violates the rights of women and girls. It can lead to serious health complications, such as severe bleeding, urinating problems, cyst infections, childbirth problems and, in severe cases, death.<sup>326</sup>

Female genital mutilation is usually performed by traditional birth attendants, midwives or “zoes” who are elderly women believed to have mystical powers and members of the “Sande” secret society.<sup>327</sup> The Sande secret society has been present in Liberia for centuries and its members are considered influential, powerful and trusted custodians of culture.<sup>328</sup>

Women and girls undergoing the female genital mutilation initiation process are also trained in “bush schools”<sup>329</sup> to prepare them for their married life. Women and girls are sworn to secrecy by the zoes, preventing them from discussing what they underwent during the initiation process. Because of this, discussions about female genital mutilation are taboo.<sup>330</sup>

Beyond female genital mutilation’s cultural significance, the continuous and widespread practice of female genital mutilation is also driven by economic reasons.<sup>331,332</sup> Zoes are paid by parents who send their daughters to the bush schools.<sup>333</sup> There has been an increase in abductions, forced female genital mutilation initiations and extortion of parents in recent years<sup>334</sup> as the members of Sande society struggle to preserve their group and practice amid a sharp decline in membership and refusal of parents to send their daughters to the bush schools.<sup>335</sup>

*“Many people have asked me to leave bush business, but my question has always been, “What will I do next to help my family?”*

*A traditional practitioner*

Through Spotlight Initiative in Liberia, UN Women in collaboration with the National Traditional Council of Chiefs and Elders and key government ministries supported alternative livelihood initiatives for the reduction of FGM.

### Results

Through consultation sessions mobilised by the Spotlight Initiative programme with the National Traditional Council of Chiefs and Elders, the Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, a consensus emerged that offering alternative sources of income to traditional zoes would encourage them to abandon the practice of female genital mutilation.<sup>336</sup>

A variety of programming was implemented to support zoes in alternative income production. For example, zoes were trained in climate-smart agriculture, which supported their farming/agricultural activities. Twelve village savings and loans associations were also established for the zoes, which allowed them to generate savings and use loans for their personal and/or business needs. A six-month training on entrepreneurship, financial literacy, business development, livestock management, cassava farming and aquafarming was also conducted to strengthen the livelihood skills of the zoes.<sup>337</sup> Additionally, a vocational and heritage centre in Sonkay Town, Montserrado County was completed to serve as a hub to house the training of zoes on livelihood and promote alternative rites of passage for adulthood.<sup>338</sup> The vocational and heritage centres in Sonkay Town were handed over to the Government of Liberia and the National Council of Chiefs and Elders, securing national ownership. The heritage centre in Sonkay town is just one of four centres due to be constructed as the programme expands to other counties.<sup>339</sup>

<sup>324</sup> FGM in Liberia (Equality Now).

<sup>325</sup> Sande Society’s Zoes Surrender (Women Voices, January 2023).

<sup>326</sup> Female genital mutilation (FGM) frequently asked questions (UNFPA, February 2024).

<sup>327</sup> The Practice of Female Genital Mutilation in the Paynesville Community, Liberia (Science Journal Publication, 2016).

<sup>328</sup> Liberia: The Sande secret society, its activities, organization, leaders and consequences of refusing the role of leader; Sande’s power, its treatment of those who speak out against or oppose its practices; state protection for individuals threatened by Sande (2012-November 2016) (Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, February 2017).

<sup>329</sup> Bush schools are a place where girls undergo their right of passage to womanhood, which includes the harmful practice female genital mutilation.

<sup>330</sup> The Practice of Female Genital Mutilation in the Paynesville Community, Liberia (Science Journal Publication, 2016).

<sup>331</sup> Liberia: Gbarpolu Zoe Denounces Female Genital Cutting; Says It’s Causing Health Issues for Girls (FrontPageAfrica, August 2023).

<sup>332</sup> Practitioners of female genital mutilation become part of the solution in Liberia (Spotlight Initiative, March 2020).

<sup>333</sup> FGM Bush Schools Still Operational Despite Three-Year Moratorium (New Narrative).

<sup>334</sup> Following a moratorium on FGM in Liberia, victims are still seeking justice (OHCHR, June 2022).

<sup>335</sup> Membership to Sande secret societies witnessed a drop in recent years due to the increasing campaigns and media coverage against the harmful practices of the members of the society. Many parents stopped enrolling their daughters in the Bush schools prompting the members to abduct women and perform forced female genital mutilation initiation.

<sup>336</sup> The 2019 Liberia Annual Narrative Progress Report, page 22.

<sup>337</sup> The 2020 Liberia Annex D.

<sup>338</sup> The 2022 Liberia Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 38.

<sup>339</sup> The 2022 Liberia Interim Annual Report, page 25 and 68. The planned centres will be constructed in Montserrado, Grand Cape Mount, Nimba and Lofa counties.

*“The training on agriculture and financial management has helped me to change my life. I can now afford to take my children to school. We realized that FGM is not good for our girl children, and we have stopped it. But we also realised that not all traditional activities are bad. Some are good and the good ones should be upheld.”*

**One of the zoes who benefited from the alternative livelihood intervention**

As a result, 800 traditional zoes were able to access alternative sources of income,<sup>340</sup> incentivising them to stop performing female genital mutilation.<sup>341</sup> These livelihood efforts, along with the closure of bush schools, ultimately made the case for the “Act Prohibiting Female Genital Mutilation 2022” bill, which is currently being reviewed in Liberia’s Congress. (See more in [case study 7.3](#), which details this work across multiple pillars.)

### Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Provide economic alternatives to stop female genital mutilation.** When economic livelihoods are determined to be part of the reason the harmful practice continues, this strategy can be replicated to effectively combat female genital mutilation in other contexts.
- **Offer a comprehensive livelihoods programme.** Interventions that strengthen entrepreneurship skills and also include culturally appropriate learning opportunities to impart alternative rites of passage support changes in communities.
- **Set up hubs for learning and exchange of zoes to support culture change.** Creating centres for gathering and dedicated spaces for learning and exchange creates momentum for change.
- **Consult key community elders to better understand the roots of the problem before developing potential solutions.** Ensuring elders’ active engagement, leveraging their first-hand insights and influential role in shaping community perspectives can be important to understand more deeply and address long established traditional practices.

### Service delivery guidelines



#### **4.12 Model protocols in Indonesia for handling cases of gender-based violence and trafficking of women migrant workers**

### Overview

In Indonesia, nearly 65 percent of migrant workers are women.<sup>342</sup> Women migrant workers play a pivotal role in providing economic stability for their own households and simultaneously impact the economies of countries where they actively work and contribute. 67 percent of the remittances sent into Indonesia come from female migrant workers and are often directed towards essential areas like health, education, family and community development.<sup>343</sup> However, challenges persist in their treatment and recognition as formal workers. Since the majority of migrant workers come from poor rural households, many exit the labour force upon returning home.<sup>344</sup> They also face discrimination, exploitation, gender-based violence, and abuse. Though some progress has been made to protect migrant workers with the passage of “Law of Indonesia No. 18 of 2017 on Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers,” more work is required to safeguard their rights and improve coordination and service delivery.<sup>345</sup> Moreover, with the lockdowns and travel restrictions in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, women migrant workers became more vulnerable to violence from employers, partners, law enforcement officials or frontline service providers.<sup>346</sup>

To address the challenges experienced by migrant workers in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Spotlight Initiative implemented the Safe and Fair Programme to improve the status of migrant women.<sup>347</sup> Together with the International Labour Organisation and UN Women, the programme aimed to strengthen governance efforts to address the inherent risks within migration systems, including violence and trafficking.

### Results

Recognising the increase in gender-based violence as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Indonesian Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection collaborated with Spotlight Initiative to launch the “Guideline on the Protection of Women Migrant Workers during COVID-19” and the “Protocol for Handling Gender-Based Violence and Trafficking during COVID-19.” Utilising a “victim-centric approach,” these guidelines served as a key reference document for the government, service providers, community-based organisations, and consular services for greater coordination and better support for women migrant workers, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>348</sup>

<sup>340</sup> The 2021 Liberia Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 98.

<sup>341</sup> The 2023 Liberia Annual Report Draft, page 37.

<sup>342</sup> The 2020 ASEAN Region Annual Narrative Programme Report.

<sup>343</sup> Safe and Fair: Realizing women migrant workers’ rights and opportunities in the ASEAN region - Programme Narrative Indonesia (ILO and UN Women).

<sup>344</sup> Ibid.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid.

<sup>346</sup> [New Guidelines Launched to Protect Women Migrant Workers’ Rights from Violence during COVID-19](#) (Delegation of the European Union to Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam, December 2020).

<sup>347</sup> Safe and Fair: Realizing women migrant workers’ rights and opportunities in the ASEAN region - Programme Narrative Indonesia (ILO and UN Women).

<sup>348</sup> The 2020 ASEAN Region Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 12.

In line with the guidelines and as a first response measure to COVID-19, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection through the Safe and Fair Programme disseminated personal protective equipment kits to returning women migrant workers. The kits also included an information package with details and key contacts of service providers supporting gender-based violence response efforts.<sup>349</sup> At a decentralised level, the programme supported the setting up of a referral mechanism in West Java with the articulation of key processes and protocols complementing the efforts. This effort was undertaken in partnership with the Integrated Service Centre for the Empowerment of Women and Children<sup>350</sup> and other important stakeholder organisations.<sup>351</sup>

Since the development of the initial set of guidelines and protocols, the programme continued its engagement with the government of Indonesia to improve the guidelines. It built strong governmental relationships so that gender-responsive labour policies would be prioritised and improved. In 2021, the programme collaborated with the Ministry of Manpower and developed a complementary guideline that focused on service providers, which was integrated into the Minister of Manpower "Decree No. 294/2020."<sup>352</sup> The Decree sought to ensure that the placement and protection of Indonesian migrant workers was compliant with health protocols and to strengthen coordination between government and private service providers in the implementation and monitoring of the placement of workers, in accordance with these guidelines.

In 2022, the programme, in partnership with Migrant Workers Network, continued its work and launched three additional campaigns as a part of Indonesia's commitment to better protect migrant workers. Spearheaded by the Ministry of Manpower, a set of documents released include the "Technical Guideline on Gender-Responsive Service and Protection for Indonesian Migrant Workers", "the Standard Operational Procedure for Private Placement Agency" and "the Standard Operational Procedure for Technical Education and Vocational Training Centre for Overseas on Services and Protection for Indonesian migrant workers in the New Adaptive."<sup>353</sup> One of the main achievements following the development of the technical guidelines was their successful and formal adoption within the Director-General's Decree on Workforce Placement and Job Opportunity Expansion.

*"The Guideline and SOPs can provide protection, need fulfilment and case-handling that are responsive to different needs from various existing gender groups. Women migrant workers have positively contributed to social and economic development, yet they are also very vulnerable to exploitation and harassment as well as labour rights violence."*

**Ida Fauziyah, Minister of Manpower, Indonesia**

The Indonesian protocols were presented at international and regional forums. The programme played a crucial role in supporting the creation of a dedicated protocol website for disseminating information nationally and at decentralised levels among partners. One of the main achievements of the programme was the official request raised by the Government of Vietnam, seeking the Safe and Fair Programme's assistance in adapting the protocol to align with the Vietnamese context.<sup>354</sup> Technical inputs were provided on the law governing Vietnamese workers employed abroad under contracts and the "Standard Operating Procedures for Supporting Overseas Vietnamese Women Victims of Violence, Abuse, Sexual Harassment and Trafficking in Persons".<sup>355</sup>

### Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Develop and implement frameworks with gender-sensitive measures to safeguard women migrant workers by engaging in regional dialogue and cooperation within the ASEAN and beyond.** The protocols were the first of their kind in the region and motivated other ASEAN countries to systematically think about their labour migration frameworks to improve the conditions of women migrant workers, especially in the context of COVID-19. The launch of the standard operating procedure and guidelines facilitated broader regional dialogue and prioritisation of gender-based violence as an important agenda.
- **Collaborate closely with regional governments and civil society stakeholders to enhance protective measures for migrant workers.** Following the development of the initial protocols, the programme has collaborated with various Indonesian government and civil society stakeholders to improve these measures in the country. By maintaining active participation with key governmental bodies like the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection and the Ministry of Manpower, the Safe and Fair Programme was able to scale and expand its impact. Continuous improvements to build effective response measures help to better serve and protect women migrant workers in Indonesia.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid, page 13.

<sup>350</sup> Pusat Pelayanan Terpadu Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Anak is the Bahasa Indonesia name for the Integrated Service Centre for the Empowerment of Women and Children.

<sup>351</sup> The 2020 ASEAN Region Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 13.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid, page 12.

<sup>353</sup> [Indonesia supports gender-responsive protection for its migrant workers](#) (ILO, April 2022).

<sup>354</sup> The 2020 ASEAN Region Annual Narrative Programme Report, page 56.

<sup>355</sup> The 2020 ASEAN Region Annual Narrative Programme Report, page xxii.

## 4.13 Gender Responsive Policing Training in Trinidad and Tobago strengthens support service for gender-based violence survivors

### Overview

In 2022, Trinidad and Tobago had the highest number of lethal femicides across the Caribbean region,<sup>356</sup> and nearly 30 percent of ever-partnered women reported having been physically or sexually abused in their life.<sup>357</sup> In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a 140 percent increase in cases of abuse of women and girls reported to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, compared with the same period the previous year.<sup>358</sup> The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, as the principal law enforcement agency, plays a critical role in maintaining law and order and preventing and investing in gender-based violence-related crimes.<sup>359</sup>

To address the high rates of violence and support first responders, Spotlight Initiative supported a capacity development programme to build a gender responsive police force in the country. In 2021, the Gender Responsive Policing Training was launched in Trinidad and Tobago to improve and strengthen the capacity of law enforcement officers to better support survivors of gender-based violence. Led and implemented by UNDP, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, the Police Academy and civil society organisations under Spotlight Initiative, the programme was originally designed to train new police officials. Based on input and interest expressed by the Police Service, the scope was expanded to train all current and new police officials.<sup>360</sup> Its purpose was to build on the success of existing gender mainstreaming mechanisms to build the capacities of police officers and sensitise them to address gender-based violence. Furthermore, the programme strategically integrated the training of senior police officials based on the feedback provided by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service officials acting as trainers, as their buy-in was considered critical in making the programme more relevant and sustainable.

### Results

As of 2023, 400 police officials were trained through two cohorts involving 12 trainers from the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. Trainers' insights on the existing processes, day-to-day challenges and local systems proved to be valuable in developing modules and courses that were contextually applicable and relevant.<sup>361</sup> The programme built the capacities of the police officials to become trainers through a training of trainers approach. This ensured that the police force was not only receptive to the training but also more likely to internalise and apply the knowledge gained.

*"We have a team where we have some civilians and [the rest] of them are police officers. So when you're [introducing] a new concept...it's good to have [people] who actually have policing experience [and can deliver the training using] examples [of how it would] impact them. Officers have been receptive to the training, especially [because they] can share their experiences."*

**Melissa Moore, Administrator for Advanced Programmes and Services at Trinidad and Tobago Police Service's Police Academy**

Some results from the programme included an increase in knowledge and awareness amongst police officials on gender issues, particularly around women's experiences of violence. Furthermore, the programme was successful in integrating the experiences of Trinidad and Tobago's police force into its design and delivery.

Another achievement of the programme has been the strong commitment from the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service to continue and sustain the initiative. Face-to-face trainings contributed to the success of the programme after the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions were relaxed. The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service is now interested in scaling the initiative and training 7,000 of its existing officials, and has included the programme as a part of their onboarding process for new officials. In addition to this, Spotlight Initiative donated equipment, such as laptops, to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service to support their work.

<sup>356</sup> At least 4,050 women were victims of femicide in Latin America and the Caribbean In 2022: ECLAC (UN Caribbean, November 2023).

<sup>357</sup> National Clinical and Policy Guidelines on Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence: Trinidad and Tobago (Ministry of Health of Trinidad and Tobago and Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization, August 2022).

<sup>358</sup> PAHO Trinidad and Tobago builds capacity to respond to gender-based violence under the Spotlight Initiative (Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization, 2021).

<sup>359</sup> Gender Responsive Policing Report 2021 (UNDP Trinidad and Tobago, July 2021), page 10.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid.

*"We felt that we could [embed] the curriculum into the police academy...so we sought permission to do so, and we got an agreement from the government that the curriculum now is going to be a part of the [official] training [programme]. We [have also] provided some equipment to the police academy...and they can now continue to do the training long after the Spotlight Initiative has ended."*

**Isele Robinson Cooper, UNDP Programme Officer**

### Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Ensure support and commitment from partners to create a gender-responsive environment that responds to the needs of women and girls.** The programme benefited from the involvement of the Police Academy and key Trinidad and Tobago Police Service officials in the curriculum development phase. Senior officials also helped spread the intended message and training content, which ensured that the organisation's leadership was on board with the initiative and signalled to the entire police force that these changes were a priority. This led to national ownership of the programme and the inclusion of a gender training programme within the Police Academy curriculum.
- **Adopt a training of trainers strategy as a cost-effective, consistent and scalable approach to strengthen knowledge and capacity.** Training conducted by fellow police officers proved highly successful as officers were more responsive to training delivered by their peers. Police officers are a tight-knit community based on trust, hence leveraging that trust through peer training offers a strategy that can be adapted to other contexts as well.
- **To the extent possible, conduct face-to-face training with officials to maximise impact and responsiveness of the programme.** The in-person delivery of the Gender Responsive Police Training enhanced the effectiveness of the sessions. It also provided a valuable platform to confront and mitigate the rise of gender-based violence and intimate partner violence, which were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

