

Synergies across multiple pillars: a systematic approach to EVAWG

Spotlight Initiative's mission to end violence against women and girls requires synergistically working across multiple pillars, wherein impacts in one pillar can affect the effectiveness and results achieved in other pillars. Ensuring that no one is left behind, Spotlight Initiative utilises mutually reinforcing entry points to tackle the root causes of violence at every level.⁴⁴² By taking a "whole-of-government" approach to institutional coordination and a "whole-of-society" approach to meaningful stakeholder engagement, Spotlight Initiative's diverse interagency and partnership model demonstrates the "One UN" model in practice.

The following in-depth case studies in Malawi, Mozambique, and Liberia highlight the impacts that occur when creating and connecting cross-programme synergies. This integrated programming work sits at the heart of the approach and innovations that Spotlight Initiative led.

New national and subnational laws and policies



7.1 A comprehensive approach to end violence against women and girls in Malawi

Overview

The high prevalence of different forms of violence against women and girls is one of Malawi's biggest challenges. Over one third of women (37.5 percent) will experience physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence in their lifetime, and one in five girls have been sexually abused before the age of 18.⁴⁴³ In addition, early marriage (a harmful practice) is rampant, with nearly half of girls in Malawi having been married before the age of 18.⁴⁴⁴

Although important steps have been taken in the country,⁴⁴⁵ there is still a long way to go. One promising indicator is that the government has demonstrated a strong commitment to advancing the gender equality agenda and ending violence against women and girls through its ownership of and participation in Spotlight Initiative. Country ownership, together with strong UN interagency collaboration and coordination and the active participation of the Civil Society National Reference Group in the National Steering Committee,⁴⁴⁶ were all critical elements that ensured the comprehensive approach to ending violence against women and girls was adopted. Examples of key Spotlight Initiative interventions and holistic results are detailed below.

Results

By leveraging existing government and community structures and resources,⁴⁴⁷ Spotlight Initiative was able to implement interconnected interventions and programmes that advanced multiple pillars and fostered changes at the individual, family, community and societal levels. Some of the most strategic and impactful allies were the traditional leaders. Incredible results under Pillar 1 (Laws and Policies) occurred due to their engagement, including the passing and finalizing of 52 by-laws that focused on ending sexual and gender-based violence and child marriage.⁴⁴⁸ Their engagement under Pillar 2 (Institutional Strengthening) through the Chiefs Forum complemented this work by monitoring the implementation of by-laws and policies on sexual and gender-based violence, as outlined by the Chief's Policy Guide.⁴⁴⁹ The work of the Chiefs Forum also influenced efforts under Pillars 3 (Prevention) and 4 (Quality Essential Services), as traditional leaders began to engage in awareness raising activities in their communities to identify and refer child marriage and harmful practices cases more

⁴⁴² Spotlight Initiative named a UN High-Impact Initiative ahead of Sustainable Development Goal Summit (Spotlight Initiative, 2023).

⁴⁴³ EVAWG global database (UN Women).

⁴⁴⁴ Child Marriage Factsheet (UNICEF Malawi, July 2018).

⁴⁴⁵ Malawi is party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and has a set of laws and policies aimed at fighting gender-based violence, including the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (2014), the Gender Equality Act (2014), the National Gender Policy (2013) and the National Action Plan to Combat Gender-Based Violence in Malawi 2014-2020.

⁴⁴⁶ The Civil Society Reference Group had at least 20 percent representation.

⁴⁴⁷ Such as the implementation of the Community Fund and Survivor Fund initiatives under the Community Victim Support Units and the implementation of the Safe Space Mentorship Programme through community leaders and groups (for example, the mother groups).

⁴⁴⁸ The 2023 Malawi Final Programme Report Draft, page 23.

⁴⁴⁹ The Chief's Policy Guide is a national-level ministerial document that formalised the involvement of traditional leaders in handling sexual and gender violence matters. It is pending tabling in parliament.

effectively. This included chiefs making referrals to mobile courts, another Spotlight Initiative intervention implemented under Pillar 4 to bring justice to the most marginalised women and girls, upholding the principle of leave no one behind. Additionally, Spotlight Initiative leveraged the influence of wives of traditional leaders and engaged them to develop action plans and alliances with other wives of the village heads. This work supported women and girls to demand their rights and report gender-based violence incidents, with the support of women police volunteers involved in the Malawi Police Service Women's Network. (See more in [case study 2.3](#) under Pillar 2.)

In line with the comprehensive approach, the Malawi Police Service collaborated with traditional chiefs and other community structures⁴⁵⁰ in order to track child marriage and gender-based violence cases through the Safe Schools Mentorship Programme and the One School One Police Officer Initiative. Both Spotlight Initiative interventions facilitated police investigations and prosecutions and linked the mobile courts to schools. Over 750 police officers, 13,253 members of school-based structures (i.e. PTAs and mother groups), and 601,504 students were trained on how to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls in schools.⁴⁵¹ As a result, 52 child marriage or violence cases were reported through school complaints boxes placed in 135 schools by adolescent girls and boys: of these, 25 were concluded, 17 resulted in convictions, 8 in acquittals and the remaining 12 are still being handled in court.⁴⁵²

The Safe Space Mentorship Programme, conceptualised under Pillar 3 on Prevention, was also interconnected with other interventions and contributed to multiple pillars, driving impressive results as described in the earlier case study. (See more in [case study 3.1](#) under Pillar 3.) The Safe Space Mentorship Programme supported young women and girls' access to services and resources (Pillar 4), built joint actions (Pillar 6) to demand cultures of justice, equality and accountability, and worked side-by-side in gender-based violence patrols with traditional chiefs from the Chiefs Forum to contribute to community reporting of child marriage and gender-based violence cases. Overall, 17 percent of all gender-based violence cases in Malawi were reported by the 37,727 mentor and mentees involved in the programme between 2019 and 2023, which is an incredible result.⁴⁵³ Safe Space Mentorship Programme mentors and mentees were also involved in the Community Fund and Survivor Fund initiatives to ensure greater transparency and accountability of these initiatives to the community. These Funds were critical to support gender-based violence survivors in accessing services and recovering from their experiences. (See more in [case study 4.10](#) under Pillar 4.) Finally, the Safe Space Mentorship Programme also promoted leadership, with 1,455 of young women assuming community leadership roles during the programme implementation, contributing to the sustainability of Spotlight Initiative's work.⁴⁵⁴

Recognising the critical role that men play in ending violence against women and girls, Spotlight Initiative in Malawi also leveraged existing informal men groups by developing, with their participation, a toolkit with a training methodology called the Barbershop Toolkit Programme. This programme, which mobilised over 3,800 men across all six Spotlight Initiative districts,⁴⁵⁵ fostered mindset and behavioural shifts at the individual, family and community levels (Pillar 3). Connected with the gender-based violence patrols, participants started to monitor gender-based violence cases in their villages, backed up by their by-laws and traditional chiefs.

"We sit together to discuss what is happening in our villages and when we find out a violent situation has occurred, we call this man, husband and try to solve the problem by talking to this person and showing what our by-laws state. If the situation continues, we then take the matter to Traditional Chiefs."

A member of the Barbershop Toolkit Programme

This work also started to shift the acceptability of violence in the community, offering a powerful transformation towards ending violence and more gender equitable norms (Pillar 3) and contributed to the development of a Male Engagement National Strategy, which harmonised approaches across the country.

Movement building and civil society engagement (Pillar 6) were cross-cutting strategies to advance several initiatives under other pillars. One example was how traditional leaders, a network of male allies, mentors and mentees, mother groups, Parent Teacher Associations and several other community structures came together to jointly drive change in their communities. These community networks prevented cases of gender-based violence (Pillar 3) and improved women and girls' access to essential services (Pillar 4).

⁴⁵⁰ Community structures, such as Parent Teacher Associations, mother groups, and District Education Managers.

⁴⁵¹ The 2023 Malawi Final Programme Report Draft.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ Ibid. Out of a total of 78,765 gender-based violence cases that have been followed up, 13,564 gender-based violence cases were referred by Safe Space Mentorship Programme mentors and mentees.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

Programme governance and coordination played a crucial role in ensuring the successful implementation of this comprehensive approach, aligning diverse stakeholders' actions and monitoring progress towards achieving the desired outcomes. The creation of the National Steering Committee,⁴⁵⁶ the Inter-Ministerial Taskforce,⁴⁵⁷ and Spotlight Initiative Communities of Practice (at district level),⁴⁵⁸ as well as the revitalization of Gender Technical Working Groups,⁴⁵⁹ strengthened coordination at the national and district levels and ensured the multidimensional nature of Spotlight Initiative, while enhancing national and local ownership in an efficient manner.

Additionally, the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Local Government, as well as UN agencies' staff under Spotlight Initiative, were co-located and sat together at both the capital and district levels, which ensured systematic inclusion of the issue of violence against women and girls in regional development plans, along with corresponding budget lines, as well as engaged district councils to effectively implement interventions. This strengthened collaboration contributed to interagency coherence, stronger working relationships with government officials, national and local buy-in and the adoption of a coordinated, comprehensive approach to ending violence against women and girls.

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Adopt a UN interagency approach aligned with UN reform with clear coordination mechanisms to facilitate connectivity across different interventions and pillars and create greater impact.** For example, the Safe Space Mentorship Programme and the Community Fund and Survival Fund initiatives under UNFPA were linked with the UNDP-led Chiefs' Forum, increasing the impact at the community level across different pillars.
- **Adopt a multi-stakeholder approach to both the design and the implementation phase of initiatives to ensure increased national and local ownership and the adoption of bottom-up approaches.** In Malawi, the involvement of two key ministries, diverse departments and levels of government and other community structures from the beginning of Spotlight Initiative ensured a holistic understanding of how social norms perpetuated gender-based violence and allowed programmes to be built on community needs, insights and existing structures, while also ensuring ownership contributing to its sustainability.
- **Push for the systematic inclusion of violence against women and girls interventions in countries' regional development plans with concrete budget lines.** Ensuring that regional development plans are budgeted and have monitoring and evaluation built in promotes their sustainability and can support more coordinated community-based interventions.
- **Embed sexual and reproductive health and rights within policies and legislative frameworks and train decision-makers on the topic.** These efforts can help move forward lobbying efforts for more inclusive policies and can promote greater sustainability and lasting impact of interventions to end violence against women and girls.

⁴⁵⁶ Co-chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator and the Minister of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare to discuss implementation as well as Spotlight Initiative progress, challenges and the way forward with key stakeholders, also deciding on the recommendations made by the technical team.

⁴⁵⁷ The Inter-Ministerial Taskforce was implemented as a national coordination mechanism. Membership included several ministries, quasi-governmental entities, local authorities, the EU, UN, and representatives of the civil society national reference group.

⁴⁵⁸ Spotlight Initiative Communities of Practice were implemented at district level, chaired by District Directors of Planning and Development to ensure local ownership. Communities of Practice engaged marginalised and rural communities aligned with the principle of leave no one behind.

⁴⁵⁹ Gender Technical Working Groups were existing national and district mechanisms that were revitalised by Spotlight Initiative and were instrumental in generating reports and influencing district and national level decisions related to the ending violence against women and girls.

7.2 The establishment of the Multi-Sectoral Mechanism of Integrated Care for Women Victims of Violence in Mozambique

Overview

In Mozambique, 16 percent of women aged 15–49 report that they have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner, and the country has the tenth highest rate of early marriage in the world, a form of gender-based violence and a harmful practice.⁴⁶⁰ Formal justice structures are inaccessible, especially in remote areas, and informal procedures are often rooted in attitudes and practices that discriminate against women and girls. Survivors of gender-based violence in Mozambique often face challenges in accessing legal justice and support.

Given the range of barriers faced by women in Mozambique, Spotlight Initiative in coordination with UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF implemented a comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach that improved coordination of interventions across government ministries, the police and court system, as well as non-governmental and civil society organisations to address violence against women and girls and sexual and reproductive health and rights.⁴⁶¹

Results

Spotlight Initiative in Mozambique supported the introduction of a strong coordination system under the leadership of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Action, which improved efficiency in both prevention and response and resulted in increased engagement with the education sector, the development of technical innovations, the integration of essential services and new service provisions for remote areas.⁴⁶² This approach has led to results across six pillars and reached a total of 4.63 million beneficiaries. These results were achieved through several interventions described below.

The multi-sectoral and comprehensive approach to domestic violence care in Mozambique resulted in the establishment of Integrated Service Centres, which served as a one-stop centre for gender-based violence survivors, contributing to Pillar 4. In addition, Integrated Service Centres functioned as a space for training and awareness raising on gender-based violence, as well as engagement with communities and civil society organisations, focused on shifting norms (Pillar 3).⁴⁶³ The Spotlight Initiative programme provided ten vehicles and fifty motorbikes to the member institutions of the Multi-Sectoral Mechanism.⁴⁶⁴ Through supporting mobility, the programme ensures that teams can respond to gender-based violence even in the most distant communities, leaving no one behind.⁴⁶⁵

"We can now act by the law for cases classified as crimes in the most distant communities. We act fast and collectively and fulfil the principle of leaving no girl and woman behind."

Judite Nota, Head of the Department of Women Affairs and Social Action in Mossurize district, Manica province

Spotlight Initiative support for a coordinated approach resulted in mobile clinics and brigades for gender-based violence prevention and care. The mobile clinics served communities and ensured that health services were more widely available to the public, including those living in hard-to-reach areas. The clinics provided a multi-sectoral approach to services and brought medical and drug assistance, sexual and reproductive health services and gender-based violence case management to remote communities. In 2022, clinics were operated in eleven districts and more than 99,000 women and girls were reached.

Spotlight Initiative also supported the development of an innovative digital platform called *InfoViolência*, in an effort to make it easier to gather, organise and manage data linked to cases of gender-based violence.⁴⁶⁶ Managed by the Ministry of the Interior, through the Police, the platform improved coordination and speed in managing violence cases across the health, justice and social sectors. (See more in [case study 5.1](#) under Pillar 5.)

⁴⁶⁰ MOÇAMBIQUE Inquérito Demográfico e de Saúde 2011 (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, Ministério da Saúde, 2011) and [Spotlight Initiative launches in Mozambique](#) (Spotlight Initiative, March 2019).

⁴⁶¹ These include: Government Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Action, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Constitutional and Religious Affairs, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Ministry of Education and Human Development, Ministry of State Administration; Secretary of State for Youth and Employment. State Institutions Parliament, Ombudsman, National Human Rights Commission, Attorney General's Office, Professional Council of the Magistracy, Family and Juvenile Courts, Supreme Court and non-governmental organisations. [Innovative data tool strengthens services for gender-based violence survivors in Mozambique](#) (Spotlight Initiative, 2023), [Spotlight Initiative launches in Mozambique](#) (Spotlight Initiative, 2019), and [The Mozambique Cumulative Draft Report Draft 2019-2023](#).

⁴⁶² At the district level, the various essential services sectors came together such as coordination, data harmonisation and validation of GBV cases. At the provincial level, coordination meetings played a significant role in both prevention efforts and community sensitization, which resulted in increased demand generation for GBV response services and response and referral. The 2019–2023 Mozambique Cumulative Report Draft.

⁴⁶³ [A traditional leader's quest to end gender-based violence in Mozambique](#) (Spotlight Initiative, 2021).

⁴⁶⁴ ["We can eliminate violence if we work together" - multi-sectoral teams are eliminating gender-based violence in Mozambique](#) (Spotlight Initiative, 2022).

⁴⁶⁵ [Multi-sectoral teams are eliminating gender-based violence in Mozambique](#) (Spotlight Initiative, 2022).

⁴⁶⁶ [Innovative data tool strengthens services for gender-based violence survivors in Mozambique](#) (Spotlight Initiative, April 2023).

In terms of country coordination, technical focal points from the implementing agencies, as well as representatives from the central and provincial levels, met regularly to exchange information, promote synergies and improve technical coherence.⁴⁶⁷ A communications group, led by a communications specialist, proved instrumental in engaging all agencies in planning, implementing, reviewing and reporting on programme communications. Together with the Government and the European Union delegation, they organised joint events and visibility activities. In addition, a monitoring and evaluation reference group was formed to closely monitor the progress and strengthen documentation of best practices and lessons learned.

“Before, there was no coordination of the multisectoral group. But with Spotlight Initiative, in fact, the coordination has improved, and our work is going on in a good and healthy way.”

Otilia Filipe, Head of the Department of Assistance to Family and Minors Victims of Violence, Manica

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Establish multi-sectoral coordination and response to improve essential services, data harmonisation and validation of gender-based violence cases.** In addition, prevention efforts and community sensitisation resulted in increased demand for gender-based violence response services and referrals. The coordination across different agencies maximises resources and promotes synergies, ensuring a greater number of beneficiaries and impact across pillars is reached.
- **Set up integrated and one-stop service centres to facilitate a better experience for survivors, greater access and more comprehensive information and help.** The provision of services in one space means survivors are not required to report violence to different institutions and/or organisations. In addition, these centres provide an important community space to raise awareness and conduct training sessions. Scaling up access to Integrated Service Centres that link multiple sectors such as the police, health care and judicial sectors, among others, can streamline services and increase access to justice. Mobile clinics bring these services to remote and hard-to-reach areas, leaving no one behind.
- **Provide vehicles and motorbikes to reach distant communities that might otherwise have no access to services.** Supporting organisations with access to mobility allows them to engage with communities they otherwise would not and is critical to including all communities in the effort to end violence against women and girls. Replicating this tactic in other contexts would help extend services to remote communities around the world.
- **Introduce digital platforms to improve coordination and speed in managing violence cases across different sectors and reduce duplication.** Coupled with training, digital platforms, such as *InfoViolência*, that link multiple sectors together can make reporting violence less cumbersome.



⁴⁶⁷ The 2019-2023 Mozambique Cumulative Report Draft.

7.3 The declaration of rape as a national emergency in Liberia results in a National Anti-Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Roadmap

Overview

Sexual violence against women is a prominent challenge in Liberia. The war that ravaged the country from 1989 to 2003 subjected women to sexual brutality, with 61 to 77 percent of women having reported being raped.⁴⁶⁸ While the war has long ended, Liberian women continue to face sexual violence. According to the 2019-2020 Demographic and Health Survey of Liberia, 9 percent of women and girls aged 15-49 had experienced sexual violence, and 5 percent of them had experienced sexual violence before reaching the age of 18.⁴⁶⁹ Sexual and gender-based violence cases were reported to hit a record high of 2,708 in 2019. At the height of the pandemic in 2020, 2,240 rape incidents were registered.⁴⁷⁰

In August 2020, Liberian society reached a boiling point following the news of the rape of a 3-year-old girl.⁴⁷¹ This drove thousands of Liberians to hold a peaceful march across the country to call for an end to sexual and gender-based violence.⁴⁷² The social movement prompted the President of Liberia to declare rape a national emergency and carry out other measures to end sexual and gender-based violence, such as appointing a special prosecutor for rape, setting up a national sex offender registry, establishing a national security task force on sexual and gender-based violence and dedicating an initial amount of 200,000 USD to roll out the National Anti-Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Roadmap (hereafter referred to as the “Anti-SGBV Roadmap”).⁴⁷³

Amid the national awakening to end sexual and gender-based violence, Spotlight Initiative has been working to combat violence against women and children since its launch in Liberia in 2019.

Results

Through Spotlight Initiative, OHCHR collaborated with civil society organisations and engaged with the government and legislature,⁴⁷⁴ which led to the passage of the landmark legislation, “Domestic Violence Law” and the drafting of the “Female Genital Mutilation Bill in 2019,” contributing to Pillar 1.⁴⁷⁵ Various training and awareness raising sessions with government officials were conducted both at the national and local levels on the Domestic Violence Law. The programme also trained key ministries on gender-responsive planning and budgeting. Further, Spotlight Initiative established collaborations with the government, leveraging the key role of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection as its lead partner agency to coordinate work with other ministries. This paved the way for establishing close ties with the Office of the President.

The Anti-SGBV Roadmap was designed and developed by civil society organisations and the government and detailed specific measures to address gender-based violence in Liberia such as sexual violence and other harmful practices (i.e. female genital mutilation and child marriage).⁴⁷⁶ The Spotlight Initiative programme provided technical guidance in the development of the roadmap and also facilitated consultative discussions and validation sessions among civil society, the government and traditional leaders which fed into the roadmap.⁴⁷⁷

Ending female genital mutilation was one of the key aims stipulated in the Anti-SGBV Roadmap.⁴⁷⁸ A remarkable result occurred in February 2023 when the chairperson of the National Council of Chiefs and Elders of Liberia publicly declared a full ban on female genital mutilation. The public statement prompted the introduction of the concept, “Initiation Without Mutilation,” which will allow girls to go through the cultural rite of passage into womanhood without being subjected to the harms of female genital mutilation. The declaration led to the closure of two more bush schools⁴⁷⁹ in two counties, a public renouncement of female genital mutilation in a local area (Monrovia) through their head zoe⁴⁸⁰ and a stronger call to pass the anti-FGM bill.⁴⁸¹ While efforts were already made in the past to combat female genital mutilation (such as banning female genital mutilation for girls under the age of 18 in 2018, suspending female genital mutilation practice in 2019 and 2022 and the closure of bush schools),⁴⁸² the Anti-SGBV Roadmap intensified the call for ending female genital mutilation, consequently leading to the full ban on the harmful practice. (See more in [case study 4.11](#) under Pillar 4.)

⁴⁶⁸ *Sexual Violence in Liberia: End the Silent Epidemic* (UNDP Liberia, June 2023).

⁴⁶⁹ *Liberia Demographic and Health Survey 2019-20* (Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services, Ministry of Health Liberia and ICF (originally, “Inner City Fund”), 2021).

⁴⁷⁰ *Sexual Violence in Liberia: End the Silent Epidemic* (UNDP Liberia, June 2023).

⁴⁷¹ *Liberia police tear-gas anti-rape protesters on third day of Monrovia march* (RFI, August 2020).

⁴⁷² *Liberia declares national emergency as the country records spike in rape cases* (Native, October 2020).

⁴⁷³ *The 2020 Liberia Annual Report*, page 16.

⁴⁷⁴ Among the partners were the Law Reform Commission, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, the Independent Human Rights Commission, Women Solidarity Inc. and local stakeholders in Lofa, Nimba, Montserrado, and Grand Cape Mount Counties.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, page 5.

⁴⁷⁶ *Government of Liberia & Partners' ANTI-SGBV Roadmap (2020-2022)*, page 17.

⁴⁷⁷ *The 2020 Liberia Annual Report*, page 12.

⁴⁷⁸ *Government of Liberia & Partners' ANTI-SGBV Roadmap (2020-2022)*, page 22.

⁴⁷⁹ Bush schools are a place where girls undergo their rite of passage to womanhood, which includes the harmful practice female genital mutilation.

⁴⁸⁰ Zoes are female traditional practitioners in bush schools who perform the rite of passage, which includes female genital mutilation.

⁴⁸¹ *The 2023 Liberia Draft Annual Report*, page 4.

⁴⁸² *Following a moratorium on FGM in Liberia, victims are still seeking justice* (OHCHR, June 2022).

The Anti-SGBV Roadmap also contained provisions to procure materials⁴⁸³ for Liberia’s forensic laboratory that will improve sexual and gender-based violence-related investigations (contributing to Pillar 5), and enabled the government of Liberia to purchase DNA machines.⁴⁸⁴ The roadmap also stipulated strengthening the capacities of law enforcement officers such as the Women and Children Protection Section and the Liberia National Police officers, supporting Pillar 2.⁴⁸⁵ With the support of Spotlight Initiative, 121 law enforcement officers were trained on investigation and handling of sexual and gender-based violence cases.⁴⁸⁶ Additionally, 10 Women and Children Protection Section’s facilities were renovated⁴⁸⁷ to be able to service and accommodate 967 children who were sexual and gender-based violence survivors or missing children. Through the services of these facilities, 424 children were reunited with their parents/caregivers, while 543 were referred to other services, strengthening Pillar 4.⁴⁸⁸

Finally, the Anti-SGBV Roadmap authorised and increased budget allocation on sexual and gender-based violence by key ministries.⁴⁸⁹ The ministries were equipped to carry this out through the gender-responsive planning and budgeting training conducted by Spotlight Initiative, as well as the establishment of Gender-Responsive Planning and Budgeting units in key ministries. National budget allocation for gender issues increased from zero in 2020 to 380,000 USD in 2021 and 500,000 USD in 2022. It is expected that there will be more ministries adopting gender-responsive budgeting and more funding will be allocated to sexual and gender-based violence in the next budget years, strengthening Pillar 2.⁴⁹⁰

To reinforce the Anti-SGBV Roadmap, Spotlight Initiative supported advocacy efforts for the “Act Prohibiting Female Genital Mutilation 2022” bill, which was submitted in July 2022 to Liberia’s Congress. As of 2023, the bill is being reviewed at the joint committee level. The Spotlight Initiative programme played a role in engaging key government officials (i.e. upper and lower chambers of the legislature, executive branch of the government and key government ministries) for the passing of the bill.⁴⁹¹

While the public outcry was a potent force that urged the President to declare a national emergency on rape, the work of Spotlight Initiative on capacity-building, advocacy, dialogues and fostering close relationships with key government decision-makers enabled the programme to reinforce the political positioning of ending violence against women and children in Liberia. The work of Spotlight Initiative, bolstered by the social outrage, was instrumental to the President’s declaration of rape as a national emergency and its subsequent measure, the development of the Anti-SGBV Roadmap.

Key Elements of Success and Practices for Replication

- **Establish strong ties and continually engage key government decision-makers to effectively achieve programme goals.** Spotlight Initiative strategically partnered with Liberia’s President to get high level political buy-in and support for prioritising the ending of sexual and gender-based violence in the country. Securing government commitment and partnership also helped move forward the development and implementation of the Anti-SGBV Roadmap.
- **Create roadmaps that detail strategies for ending gender-based violence with adequate budgets and capacity support for duty-bearers.** Roadmaps not only outline strategies for addressing a particular issue, they also hold the government accountable to deliver on its commitments.
- **Leverage the power of public protest and outcry to push for policies and implementation frameworks that protect women and children.** The peaceful demonstration in the streets by the local community prompted the Liberian President to declare rape as a national emergency. This set a stage for further policy reform and Spotlight Initiative leveraged the moment to promote the Anti-SGBV Roadmap by providing strategic guidance and facilitating consultative sessions.

⁴⁸³ Government of Liberia & Partners’ ANTI-SGBV Roadmap (2020-2022), page 27.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid, page 31.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid, page 22.

⁴⁸⁶ The 2023 Liberia Annual Report Draft, page 30.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid, page 2.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid, page 27.

⁴⁸⁹ Government of Liberia & Partners’ ANTI-SGBV Roadmap (2020-2022), page 18.

⁴⁹⁰ The 2023 Liberia Draft Annual Report, page 18.

⁴⁹¹ The 2023 Liberia Draft Annual Report, page 16.