

# Remaining challenges to ending violence against women and girls

Despite many areas of progress, successes and lessons learned over the past five years, significant and pervasive challenges remain as the work to end violence against women and girls continues. Rising rates of gender-based violence have occurred globally as a fallout from COVID-19 and lockdowns, resulting in a shadow pandemic.<sup>526</sup> This increase in violence is further exacerbated by wars, conflicts, food insecurity, extremist governments rolling back progressive programmes and a global economic downturn. The backlash against women's rights and policy progress continues to be a worldwide phenomenon. There is a lack of adequate and long-term funding to address the severity of this issue, which remains one of the most pervasive human rights and health violations. Furthermore, there is an absence of high level political will and committed leadership to end violence against women and girls. All of these issues impact various legal frameworks, the quality of service delivery, funding, partnerships, institutional culture, and data-driven actions. Additionally, gender stereotypes, bias, discrimination, and the social acceptability of violence are significant barriers to overcoming these challenges.



<sup>526</sup> [The Shadow Pandemic: Violence against women during COVID-19](#) (UN Women).

# Recommendations

The EU investment of 500 million EUR into Spotlight Initiative represented a historic commitment and effort to move the needle on ending violence against women and girls globally. Significant achievements were made as detailed throughout this compendium. For more information on the incredible progress made overall, see the final Global Annual Reports for Spotlight Initiative. The following recommendations are offered to positively influence the funding ecosystem that is centred around gender-based violence programming, with the aim of sustaining and amplifying its efforts.

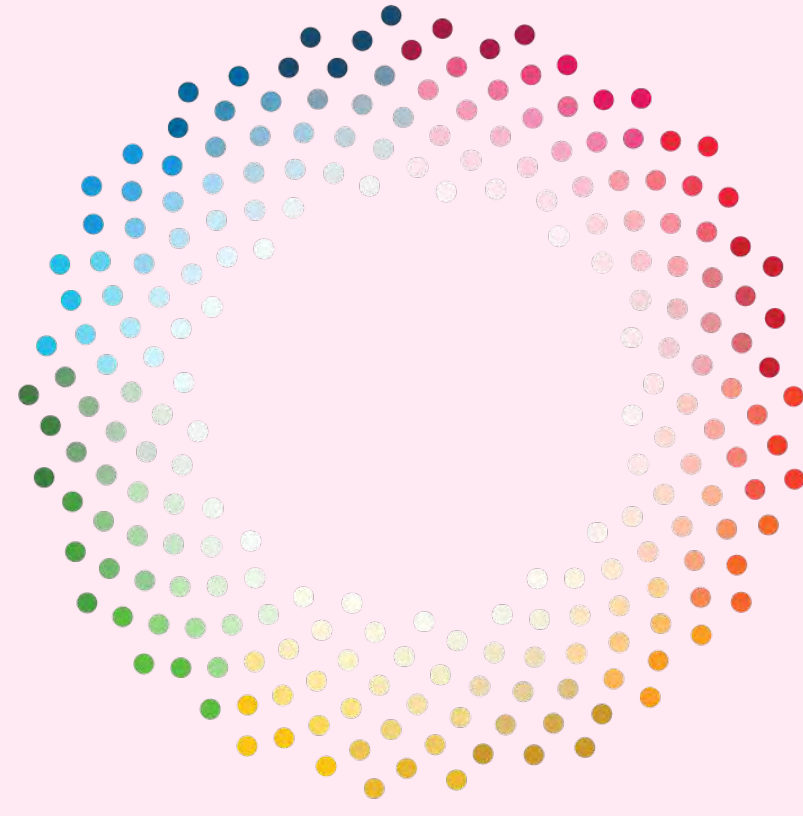
- **Fund boldly and for the long run.** It is estimated that at least 42 billion USD is required to end violence against women and girls.<sup>527</sup> Put in context, gender-based violence costs women 1.5 trillion in earnings annually, so the investment of 42 billion represents only 2.8 percent of that 1.5 trillion USD. The economic and social benefits are clear. More significant funding programmes, such as Spotlight Initiative, which intends to scale to be a 1 billion fund, are required. Funding should be longer-term, moving from 5-year funding cycles to at least 10 years, as this work requires the difficult work of unravelling deeply entrenched gender norms and bias, which is deepening in many contexts. Other areas that require significant investment at the country and local levels include the inclusion of adequate gender budgets and national action plans, funding for diverse and quality services that meet the demand and leave no one behind, data infrastructures to track cases and access to justice, and support to civil society and activists mobilising solutions to end violence against women and girls. Funding in this area boldly has ripple effects, touching multiple aspects of society and the economy.
- **Fund comprehensive models, like Spotlight Initiative, that work across multiple pillars,** such as law reform, institutional strengthening, norms, service provision, data management and movement building and that aim to coordinate agencies within a country through a whole-of-government, whole-of-society and one UN reform approach. The Dalberg “Imperative to Invest” report, which showcased the wide potential of investing in eliminating violence against women and girls, found that working across multiple pillars from policy, prevention, services and movement building yields 70-90 percent more effective results than working on only one pillar alone.<sup>528</sup> Ending violence against women and girls would result in 43 million more productive days of working, significantly contributing to global and local economies.
- **Support the expansion of civic space and build strong feminist movements and leadership in countries and regions in order to hold government and duty-bearers to account.** Research has shown the centrality of feminist movements in keeping political issues related to violence against women and girls on the agenda, despite other political factors in a country.<sup>529</sup> It is one of the best investment strategies.



<sup>527</sup> Dollars and Sense: The Economics of Violence Against Women (UNFPA, 2022).

<sup>528</sup> “Imperative to Invest: How addressing violence against women and girls today reduces violence over time, fosters peace and stability, and enables people to reach their full potential - all of which advances us towards the SDGs” (Dalberg, 2022).

<sup>529</sup> Weldon, S. L., and Htun, M., (2013). Feminist mobilisation and progressive policy change: why governments take action to combat violence against women. Gender and Development 21:2, 231-247.



# Spotlight Initiative

*To eliminate violence against women and girls*

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