DELIVERING AS ONE: UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM PROGRESS ON ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS 2019–2024

Spotlight Initiative
To eliminate violence against women and girls

UN WOMEN

FOR ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

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Ending Violence against Women and Girls Section
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This report reflects the contributions made by United Nations entities across the UN System to the UN Inventory for Ending Violence Against Women and Girls. They are (in alphabetical order): the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), the Department of Peace Operations (DPO), the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict (UN Action), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), UN Tourism, the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UN Trust Fund), the UN World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organization (WHO), the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), and the World Bank Group. Inter-agency and joint mechanisms contributing to this report include the Essential Services Package Joint Programme, the Global Programme to End Child Marriage, the Global Programme to End Female Genital Mutilation, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR), the Joint Programme on VAW Data, the Spotlight Initiative, and the UN Action Multi-Partner Trust Fund on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence.

ACRONYMS

CEB	Chief Executives Board for Coordination
CEDAW	Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEFMU	Child, Early and Forced Marriage and Unions
CMR-IPV	Clinical Management of Rape and Intimate-Partner Violence
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CRSV	Conflict-Related Sexual Violence
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations (now DPO)
DPO	Department of Peace Operations
DPPA	Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GBV AoR	Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility
GBVIMS	Gender-Based Violence Information Management System
GDP	Gross Domestic Prowduct
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPV	Intimate-Partner Violence

LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex and Queer. The plus sign represents people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics who identify using other terms or none
MESECVI	Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
NAP	National Action Plan
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
TF VAWG	Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls
UN	United Nations
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNICRI	United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UNODA	United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division
UN Trust Fund	United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WRO	Women's Rights Organizations
WTO	World Tourism Organization (now UN Tourism)

INTRODUCTION

"ON THE THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BEIJING DECLARATION, I CALL ON THE WORLD TO UNITE TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN EVERYWHERE. TOGETHER, WE CAN BUILD A WORLD FREE OF FEAR WHERE EVERY WOMAN AND EVERY GIRL CAN THRIVE".

Secretary-General António Guterres, Message on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, 25 November 2025.

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) persists as a global human rights violation of pandemic proportions, impacting women and girls across the world. The United Nations (UN) System plays a unique role in efforts to end VAWG through global leadership and advocacy, advancing global norms and standards, coordination and convening key partners, delivering programmes and partnerships that cut across sectors and regions. Specifically, addressing VAWG in the current context requires multi-sectoral approaches that can keep pace with rapid technological change, withstand political backlash, and respond to emerging threats. Through its system-wide approach, grounded in human rights, the UN plays a key role in driving the scale of change needed to end VAWG everywhere.

The year 2025 marks the 80th anniversary of the UN and the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the most comprehensive global blueprint and set of commitments for advancing gender equality and women's and girls' human rights. These milestones present an important opportunity to reflect on progress and challenges in advancing gender equality, and to assess the contribution of the UN System in addressing VAWG. As Member States and the UN System look ahead, ending VAWG will continue to be an area for coherence and joined-up action which supports women and girls, fulfils national priorities and accelerates global progress towards sustainable development, peace and equality.

1. THE URGENCY OF THE PROBLEM

The urgency of action to end VAWG has never been greater. Across their lifetime, 1 in 3 women, around 840 million, are subjected to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence from a non-partner. Progress in reducing intimate partner violence has been very slow over the last two decades with only a 0.2 per cent annual decline.[1]

Femicide, the most extreme form of VAWG, persists at staggering rates. Nearly 50,000 women and girls were killed at home by people related to them in 2024, accounting for 60 per cent of all female

1. World Health Organization. 2025. Violence against women prevalence estimates, 2023. Global, regional and national prevalence estimates for intimate partner violence against women and non-partner sexual violence against women. Available at https://bit.ly/4r9lBH4

homicides.[2] In other words, an average of 137 women and girls worldwide lost their lives every day at the hands of their partner or a close relative.

The most marginalised women and girls are at greatest risk of violence, with intersectional inequalities exacerbating risks, particularly for those with physical or mental disabilities,[3] older women[4], younger women, and women and girls who experience discrimination based on race, socio-economic disadvantage, migrant status and religion. Among women refugees, up to 70 per cent are estimated to have experienced sexual and other forms of gendered violence.[5] There is limited globally comparable prevalence data of violence against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer (LGBTIQ+) community, however existing studies suggest a prevalence of experiencing sexual and physical violence ranging from 6 to 25 per cent among persons identified as LGBTIQ+.6 As well as the more common impacts of VAWG, indigenous women and girls experience disproportionate rates of violence and often endure effects of structural violence exacerbated by legacies of colonisation with the full scale of harm obscured by a lack of consistent data.[7]

Emerging trends over the last five years have further intensified risks of VAWG:

- **Escalating conflict and crises:** In 2023, 612 million women and girls lived within 50 kilometres of armed conflict, a 41 per cent increase since 2015.8 Verified incidents of conflict-related sexual violence surged by 50 per cent from 2022 to 2023, with women and girls accounting for 95 per cent of reported victims.[9]
- **Climate change is increasingly linked to VAWG:** Displacement, resource scarcity, and food insecurity heighten risks of violence, trafficking, and exploitation. Climate change-induced disasters displace millions, an estimated 80 per cent of whom are women and girls.[10] Women environmental human rights defenders and indigenous women face compounded threats as they defend their land and communities in the face of land grabbing, environmental degradation, and corporate or state interests.
- **Technology-facilitated VAWG (TF VAWG) is intensifying:** Though comparable global data on TF VAWG remains limited, available data show that TF VAWG is intensifying, with studies indicating that the prevalence of TF VAWG ranges from 16 to 58 per cent among women and girls.[11] New technologies such as artificial intelligence

2. UNODC and UN Women. 2025. Femicides in 2024: Global estimates of intimate partner/family member femicides. Available at https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2025/11/femicides-in-2024-global-estimates-of-intimate-partner-family-member-femicides

3. UN Women and WHO. 2024. Measuring violence against women with disability: data availability, methodological issues and recommendations for good practice. Available at https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/measuring-violence-against-women-with-disability-en.pdf

4. UN Women and WHO. 2024. Violence against women 60 years and older: data availability, methodological issues and recommendations for good practice. Available at https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/violence-against-women-60-years-and-older-en.pdf

5. Pertek, S., & Phillimore, J., 2022. "Nobody helped me": Forced migration and sexual and gender-based violence: findings from the SEREDA project. University of Birmingham. Available at https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/iris/2022/sereda-international-report.pdf

6. UN Women and WHO. 2025. Measuring Gender Based Violence: Data collection and evidence on violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics. Available at https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-06/data-collection-and-evidence-on-violence-based-on-sogiesc-en.pdf

7. UN Human Rights Council. 2022. Violence against indigenous women and girls Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Reem Alsalem. UN Docs A/HRC/50/26. Available at https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/50/26

8. UN Women and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. 2024. Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot 2024. Available at https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2024

9. *Ibid.*

10. UN Women. 2022. Tackling violence against women and girls in the context of climate change. Available at https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/03/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls-in-the-context-of-climate-change

11. Hicks, J. 2021. Global evidence on the prevalence and impact of online gender-based violence. Institute of Development Studies.

are enabling new forms of harm, such as the rise of non-consensual deepfake pornography and image-based abuse.[12]

- **COVID-19 exacerbated existing forms of violence:** COVID-19 disrupted service delivery for survivors and those at risk of violence. Data indicates that seven in ten women believe abuse by partners became more common during and since the pandemic, with more than half observing worsening sexual harassment in public spaces.[13]
- **Backlash and anti-rights movements are normalising VAWG:** The growth of anti-rights movements and attacks on women's and girls' rights are increasingly influencing decision makers and resulting in proposals for regressive laws and policies that reinforce inequality, misogyny and norms that excuse or justify VAWG. Nearly a quarter of countries surveyed in the Beijing+30 review identified backlash against gender equality as a significant barrier to achieving progress around gender equality commitments.[14]

Despite the scale and increasing intensity of the problem, there remain stark gaps in action and commitments. A 2025 comprehensive analysis of UN Women's Global Database on Violence against Women found that of 193 countries, 16 per cent of States still have not adopted any specific VAWG legislation and around one third of States, have not adopted a specific VAWG national action plan or strategy.[15] Comprehensive approaches to policies and laws are urgently needed as they make a significant difference in prevention and response - the average prevalence rate of intimate-partner violence (IPV) over the last 12 months is nearly 2.5 times higher in States with low levels of comprehensive VAWG measures, as compared to States with a high level of comprehensiveness in adopting a broad range of types of VAWG measures.[16]

The costs of inaction are significant, primarily for survivors' physical and mental health. VAWG can have lasting impacts on survivors, their children and family members. It can have direct financial impacts on households - due to costs around legal assistance and accessing health services. VAWG also has major implications for States' sustainable development. VAWG is a cost to States' health and justice systems and leads to reductions in productivity. Estimates suggest that VAWG costs governments up to 4 per cent of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP).[17]

While the costs of VAWG are substantial, the level of investment remains inadequate. Official Development Assistance (ODA) towards programmes to end VAWG represents less than 1 per cent of total ODA.[18] While women's rights organisations are recognised as pivotal to ending VAWG, they remain chronically underfunded. ODA to women's rights organisations is strikingly low and amounts to less than 1 per cent of ODA for specific activities related to gender equality.[19] In particular, the lack of core funding threatens the continuity and sustainability of these organisations at the frontline

12. UN Women and WHO. 2023. Technology-facilitated violence against women: Taking stock of evidence and data collection. Available at https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/04/technology-facilitated-violence-against-women-taking-stock-of-evidence-and-data-collection

13. UN Women. 2021. Measuring the shadow pandemic: Violence against women during COVID-19. Available at https://data.unwomen.org/publications/vaw-rga

14. UN Economic and Social Council. 2024. Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly Report of the Secretary-General. UN Doc. Available at https://docs.un.org/en/E/CN.6/2025/3

15. UN Women. 2025. Ending Violence Against Women and Girls: Global Commitments, Local Actions. Available at https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2025/12/ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-global-commitments-local-actions

16. *Ibid.*

17. Ashe, S., Duvvury, N., Raghavendra, S., Scriver, S., and O'Donovan, D. 2016. Costs of Violence Against Women: An Examination of the Evidence

18. OECD. 2024. DAC Network on Gender Equality: Latest data on official development assistance (ODA) for gender equality and women's empowerment.

19. OECD. 2024. Development Finance for Gender Equality 2024. Available at https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/development-finance-for-gender-equality-2024_e340afbf-en/full-report.html

of VAWG prevention and response, with 90 percent of Women's Rights Organisations (WROs) recently reporting severe reductions to essential services and quarter halting prevention programmes[20].

Elimination is critical[21] to the realization of human rights and key to unlocking progress across all Sustainable Development Goals[22], including for poverty eradication, food security, education, decent work, climate change, and peace and security. Ending VAWG requires a joined-up approach, involving entire societies and governments. **As such, it is a cross-cutting priority across all United Nations mandates, and the UN system plays a pivotal role in ending VAWG**.

2. ABOUT THIS REPORT

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was adopted unanimously by 189 governments in 1995 as a landmark agreement that explicitly recognised the critical role of the UN System in advancing gender equality and eliminating VAWG. The Platform called for the UN to work alongside Member States, feminist movements, and civil society to prevent and address violence in all its forms, establishing the UN System as a key actor in developing normative frameworks, programming and coordinated action.

Since 1995, the system-wide approach has been operationalized through various high impact initiatives. Against this background, this report sets out the actions that the UN System has taken between 2019-2024 to address VAWG in the context of the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. **It aims to provide an overview of contributions, identify promising practices, and highlight remaining gaps to inform future UN System priorities and strategies to accelerate progress towards eliminating VAWG by 2030.**

2.1. Methodology

The report is based on entity submissions between 2019-2024 to the UN Inventory on EVAWG,[23] which documents UN System activities to end VAWG. The data informing this report covers action submitted by 37 UN agencies, financial institutions and inter-agency mechanisms for the 2019-2024 period.[24] Noting that the submissions varied in their level of detail and analytical content, the data was analysed thematically to identify key patterns in reported actions. Any quantitative data provided in this report relates to joint programming to avoid double counting of actions and impact. Based on the analysis, the report demonstrates what the UN system has delivered as a whole to prevent and respond to VAWG. The analysis and reporting are structured in line with the expected actions outlined to prevent and respond to VAWG set out in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

The UN Inventory on EVAWG was first established by UN Women in 2007 to track contributions towards the five priority outcomes of the UN Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence against Women Campaign. These outcomes included: 1) the adoption and enforcement of national legislation, 2) the development of multi-sectoral national action plans, 3) the establishment of data systems, 4) the implementation of awareness-raising initiatives, and 5) coordinated efforts to address sexual violence in conflict situations.

20. UN Women. 2025. At risk and underfunded: How funding cuts are threatening efforts to end violence against women and girls. Available at https://knowledge.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2025/10/at-risk-and-underfunded-how-funding-cuts-are-threatening-efforts-to-end-violence-against-women-and-girls

21. Equality Institute. 2025. Sustainable Development Goals and Violence Against Women and Girls. Available at https://www.equalityinstitute.org/app/uploads/2025/09/Sustainable-Development-Goals-and-Violence-Against-Women-and-Girls.pdf

22. United Nations. 2015. Sustainable Development Goals. Available at https://sdgs.un.org/goals

23. UN Women. 2025. UN System Inventory on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls. Available at: https://evaw-un-inventory.unwomen.org/en

24. DPKO; DPPA; ECA; ECE; ECLAC; ESCAP; ESCWA; FAO; IASC; IFAD; ILO; IOM; OCHA; OHCHR; Spotlight Initiative; UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict; UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women; UN Women; UN-Habitat; UNAIDS; UNDP; UNESCO; UNFPA; UNHCR; UNICEF; UNICRI; UNITAR; UNODA; UNODC; UNRISD; UNRWA; UNSD; UNV; WFP; WHO; World Bank

The Inventory on EVAWG is the UN System's central tracking tool for EVAWG efforts, consolidating the work of UN agencies, financial institutions and inter-agency mechanisms. It currently captures actions across 13 categories, including inter-agency coordination, international legal and policy development, legislative and policy support, prevention, protection and services, data collection, capacity building, and measures to address VAWG in the context of COVID-19, technology-facilitated VAWG (TF VAWG), femicide and sexual violence in conflict situations. The Inventory has evolved into a public, searchable online platform that is regularly updated, enabling stakeholders to track progress, share knowledge, and strengthen coordination in real time.

This report is organised by the following sections:

- Setting new global standards: Normative advances related to VAWG
- Leveraging resources and expertise: Coordination and Interagency Mechanisms
- Embedding best practice standards: from individual agencies and joint programming
  - Policy and legislative reform
  - Comprehensive services
  - Prevention
  - Data, research, monitoring and learning
  - Support for civil society and women's rights organizations
- Conclusions and priorities for future action

A note on terminology

The report primarily uses the term "survivors" to refer to those affected by violence, while recognising that some UN entities also use "victims" or "victim-survivors" based on context. "Violence against women and girls" (VAWG) and "gender-based violence" (GBV) are used in line with entity usage, though the report adopts VAWG as the overall framing of the report, in line with the terminology used in the Inventory.

THE REPORT PROVIDES AN OVERVIEW OF CONTRIBUTIONS, IDENTIFIES PROMISING PRACTICES, AND HIGHLIGHTS REMAINING GAPS TO INFORM FUTURE UN SYSTEM PRIORITIES.

University of the West Indies, Mona Campus Jamaica students participating in the clothesline project to break the culture of silence around rape and sexual violence for #16Days 2016. Photo: UN Women/Khristina Godfrey.

1

SETTING NEW STANDARDS: GLOBAL NORMATIVE ADVANCES RELATED TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

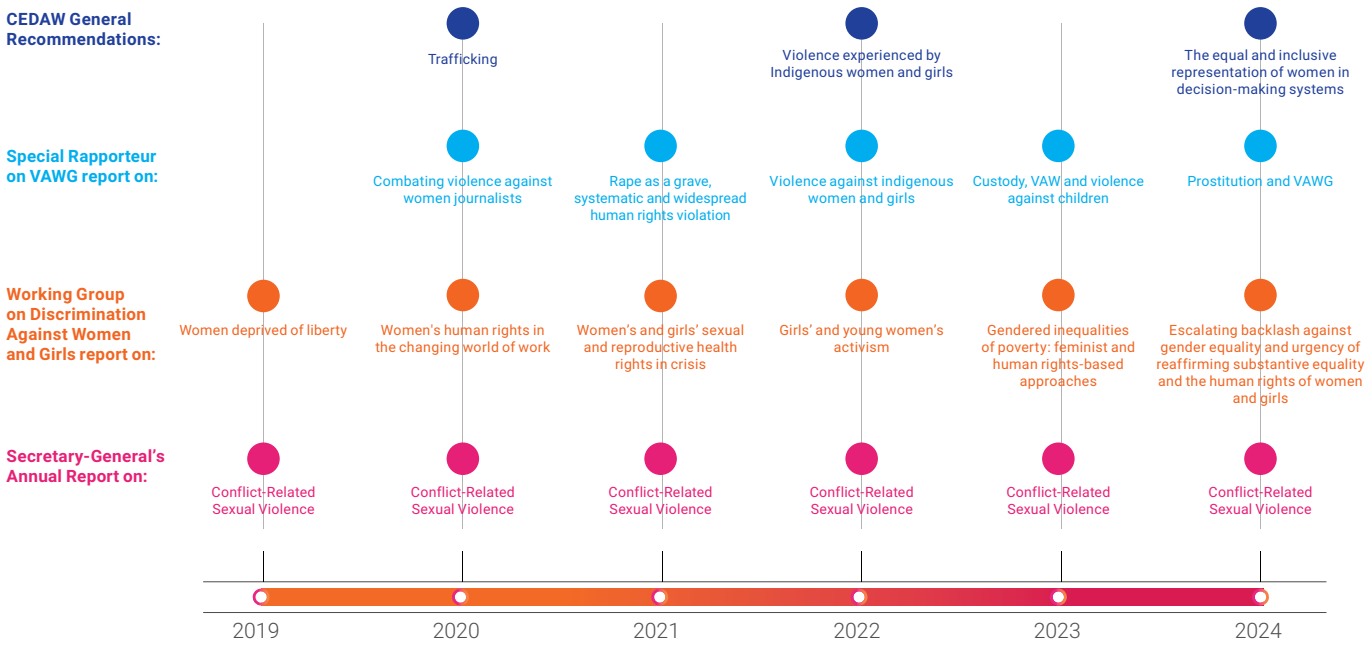
1. LANDMARK NORMATIVE DEVELOPMENTS

In the past five years, important advances have been made to expand the normative commitments made in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action which strengthen global standards and agreements around ending VAWG. These normative advances have spanned numerous intergovernmental bodies such as the Commission and the Status of Women and General Assembly, as well as the human rights system, such as the Human Rights Council, CEDAW Committee, the Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences. These normative standards are important for guiding Member State action on ending VAWG, driving accountability and ensuring adherence to best practice.

Normative advances have been responsive to emerging challenges and trends, particularly rapid technological change, climate change, increasing conflict as well as rising backlash and threats violence and harassment in the world of work and cybercrime. Treaty bodies have issued further guidance on implementing existing conventions, notably on trafficking in persons, the rights of Indigenous women and girls, and equal, inclusive decision-making. Through intergovernmental mechanisms, countries reached agreements on VAWG in the digital environment; links between ending VAWG and climate change, innovation and financing; and survivor-centred approaches to conflict-related sexual violence.

Various UN entities have played a key role in supporting these advances, directly through providing Secretariat support and indirectly through broader advocacy, policy and research activities which set the ground for new normative standards. UN entities also play a role in supporting Member State ratification or implementation of existing conventions. Women's rights organizations, civil society and survivors' advocacy have been integral to securing progress.

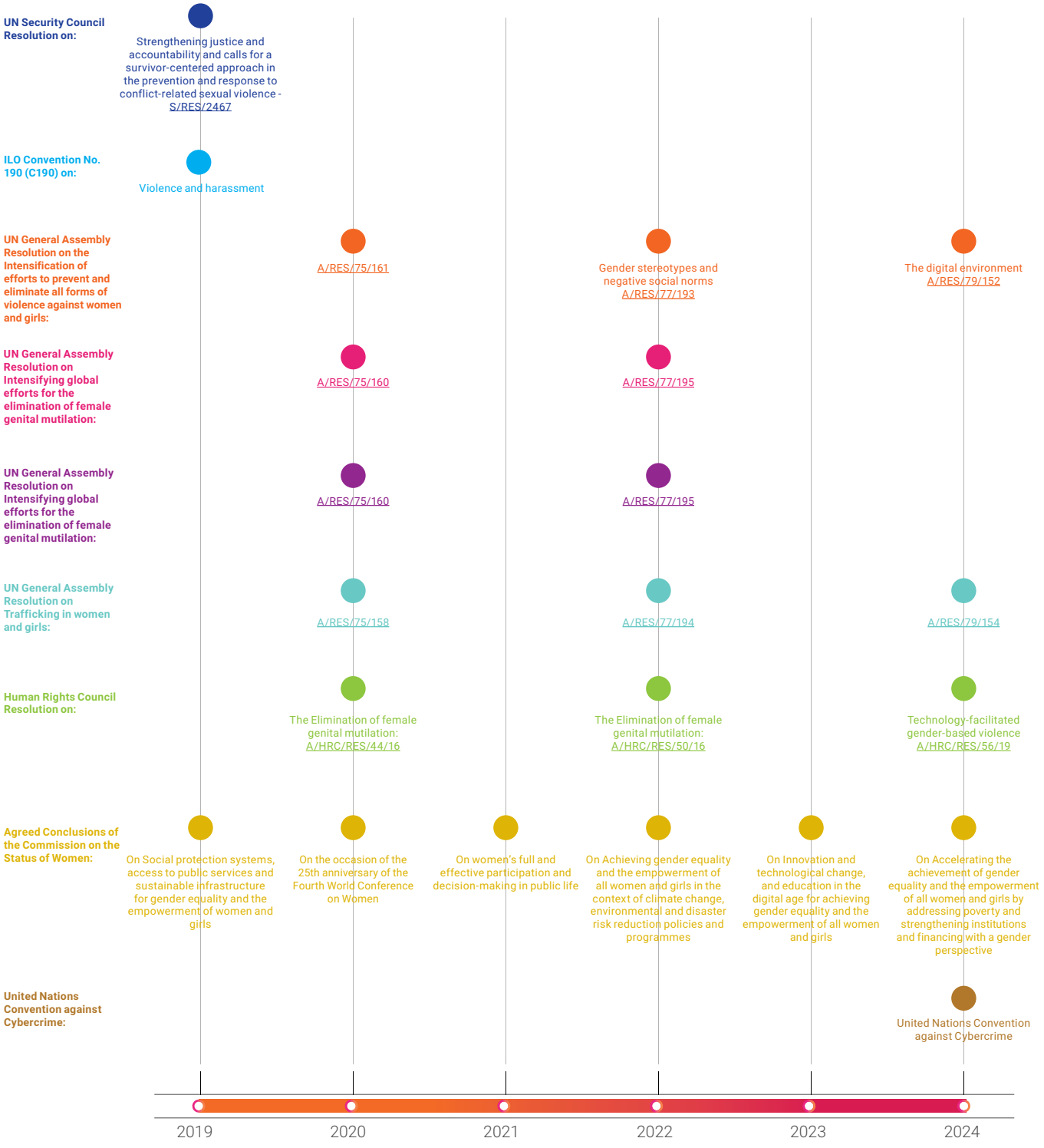
FIGURE 1
Recommendations and reports from global normative bodies 2019-2024



Source: Delivering as One: United Nations System Progress on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (2019–2024).

FIGURE 2

Global normative developments, 2019-2024



Source: Delivering as One: United Nations System Progress on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (2019–2024).

2. IMPLICATIONS

These normative advances suggest an increasing consideration of the impacts of VAWG across different sectors. VAWG is recognised as a critical, systemic issue with relevance across various domains, including poverty, climate change, labour rights, conflict, technology, Indigenous rights and political participation. The breadth of new norms and standards addressing issues such as TF VAWG and VAWG in the context of climate change also reflects growing recognition of the diversity of experiences and evolving forms of violence.

Ensuring considerations of VAWG are embedded in discussions across all aspects of the UN's normative work and across the UN System can support strengthened connections between global norms and the implementation of VAWG policies and programmes at the national level. These normative advances are integral tools for Member State accountability. They empower advocates and provide women's rights organisations and activists with standards and policies that can be leveraged to demand change at a country level. As implementation of global commitments remains uneven at a national or community level, ensuring that global normative frameworks and commitments are translated off paper into grassroots action will require resources and sustained support from the UN System, including through joint advocacy, coordination, technical assistance, programming and monitoring.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IS RECOGNISED AS A CRITICAL, SYSTEMIC ISSUE WITH RELEVANCE ACROSS VARIOUS DOMAINS, INCLUDING POVERTY, CLIMATE CHANGE, LABOUR RIGHTS, CONFLICT, TECHNOLOGY, INDIGENOUS RIGHTS AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION.

From left to right: scenes from the opening of the 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Monday 14 March 2022, United Nations Headquarters, New York; and scenes from the conclusion of informal consultations in which Member States reached agreed conclusions for the 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, 25 March 2022, Conference Room 4, United Nations Headquarters, New York. Photo: UN Women / Ryan Brown.

2

LEVERAGING RESOURCES AND EXPERTISE: COORDINATION AND INTERAGENCY MECHANISMS

The UN System has continued to strengthen efforts to drive system-wide action on VAWG, recognising that effective prevention and response require coordinated, multisectoral, and sustained engagement. Coordination enables the UN system to leverage the specialised expertise of individual entities, and harness synergies across mandates to deliver more comprehensive strategies to amplify impact.

The period 2019–2024 saw a focus on coordination across UN entities, with joint programming, pooled funding, synchronised, global advocacy and shared tools and frameworks supporting efforts for coherent action, public attention and momentum around EVAWG. Global programmes such as Spotlight Initiative, the UN Trust Fund to end Violence against Women and Girls, and inter-agency working groups demonstrate important efforts to align action, reduce fragmentation and minimise risks of duplication. Coordination can lead to comprehensive responses that cover all aspects of EVAWG including laws, prevention, multi-sectoral response services and empowering civil society, drawing on the individual expertise of specialised agencies and maximising resources across the UN System. Coordination has been particularly important for ensuring a strong focus on VAWG prevention and response in humanitarian contexts.

1. UN SYSTEM COORDINATION: AT A GLANCE

Between 2019-2024, **the UN System continued to strengthen interagency coherence** through dedicated mechanisms. This includes the UN Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence Against Women and Girls, chaired by UN Women, which enabled a coordinated UN system response during COVID-19 to sustain essential survivor services and support the implementation of cross-sectoral measures. In conflict and humanitarian contexts, the UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict, a network of 27 UN entities, coordinated joint programming, knowledge generation, and advocacy on conflict-related sexual violence. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and the Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR) actively supporting clusters and humanitarian actors in 32 humanitarian settings.

Over the last five years, UN interagency mechanisms have sought to enable joint problem-solving, collective accountability, and harmonised advocacy, allowing the system to deliver a more unified response to the complex, cross-cutting challenge of VAWG. Strengthened coordination resulted into:

- **Common standards:** United Nations entities have collectively produced guidance to support the implementation of global norms and standards, based on robust evidence. Such guidance, covering the main pillars of work to end VAWG and thematic issues, helps to uphold quality standards and advance survivor-centred policies and programmes across a range of settings. Notable examples include the RESPECT prevention framework, the 16 Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for GBV in Emergencies Programming and the Statistical Framework for Measuring the Gender-Related Killing of Women and Girls (Also Referred to as "Femicides/Feminicides").
- **Amplified and joint public engagement and agenda-setting** through the UNiTE to End Violence Against Women campaign, building international momentum, raising public awareness and aligning messages across UN entities, governments and civil society. UNiTE's recent themes spotlighting solidarity with women's rights defenders (2022), sustained political commitment and financing—including in crises (2023) and femicide ("Every 10 Minutes, a Woman is Killed. #NoExcuse", 2024).
- **Funding for EVAWG programmes** through global initiatives such as Spotlight Initiative (over USD 500 million), the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women (102 million in multi-year grants), and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (over USD 100 million disbursed in 2023), acknowledging that some

funding is shared across mechanisms.[25] The Generation Equality Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence has also mobilised shared commitments across UN agencies, donors, and civil society, including over USD 5 billion in financial pledges on gender-based violence. Other joint initiatives include:

- Pacific Partnership Phase I: 2018 - 2023 (EUR 27.6M), Phase II: 2024 - 2027 (USD 19.15 M)
- PROTECT (2024 - 2026 (USD 14,991,152)
- Global Programme to end FGM Phase III (2018 - 2020) USD 73,752,709 Phase IV (2022-2030) USD 29,613,248
- Global Programme to end Child Marriage: Phase II (2020 - 2023) USD 100,046,951, Phase III (2024 - 2030) USD170,952,982
- Joint Programme on VAW Data (2018 - 2022) USD 5,488,436
- **Improved access to services** expanding multi-sectoral services for survivors. The Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence, developed through a joint programme by UN Women, UNFPA, WHO, UNODC, and UNDP, provides clear guidance and principles for service provision, based on agreed international standards, with relevance to diverse stakeholders and settings.
- **Supported civil society to play their part**, enabling thousands of organisations, including women's rights organisations, to actively shape and deliver UN-supported EVAWG programmes, especially through coordinated funding channels such as the UN Trust Fund, the Spotlight Initiative and the ACT to End Violence Against Women programme.
- **Increased the availability, quality and use of VAWG data**, with coordinated investments in prevalence studies and administrative data systems through initiatives such as the production of the global, regional and national estimates through the UN Women-WHO Joint Programme on VAW data, UNFPA's kNOwVAWdata, and shared tools such as the GBV Information Management System (GBV-IMS), the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker and statistical frameworks.

Spotlight Initiative: A System-Wide, One UN Approach to Ending VAWG

Launched in 2017, Spotlight Initiative is the UN System's most ambitious and coordinated global effort to eliminate VAWG. A partnership between the European Union (EU) and the UN, the Initiative was established with over EUR 500 million in seed funding. It operationalises the "Delivering as One UN" approach, bringing together 12+ UN agencies under the leadership of UN Resident Coordinators, working across 32 countries in collaboration with national governments and more than 1,250 civil society organisations.

Spotlight Initiative has a strong emphasis on interagency coherence and joint delivery for a comprehensive programme to end VAWG. It has institutionalised coordination structures within UN Country Teams, and fostered technical alignment through shared assessment frameworks, pooled funding, and unified results pathways. Spotlight Initiative's model demonstrates that coordinated UN action, when paired with flexible funding, strong national ownership, and feminist civil society leadership, can drive transformative, sustainable, system-wide responses to VAWG. It's estimated that by 2025, Spotlight Initiative's programmes will have conservatively prevented 21 million women and girls from experiencing VAWG.

25. To note: between 2017-2023, Spotlight Initiative distributed USD24.06M to UNTF and USD 12.56M to WPHF

Trust Fund to End Violence against Women and Girls, An inter-agency mechanism dedicated to end violence against women

Established in 1996, the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women and Girls (UN Trust Fund) is the only global grant-making inter-agency mechanism dedicated exclusively to ending all forms of violence against women and girls. Managed by UN Women on behalf of the United Nations system, the UN Trust Fund has awarded over $250 million to 725 initiatives in 140 countries and territories. Between 2019 and 2024, the Trust Fund supported 213 initiatives aimed at preventing and addressing violence against women and girls in over 70 countries and territories across five regions, with a total grants value of $102 million. Since 2018, the Trust Fund has provided support exclusively to CSO initiatives, of which 67 per cent were led by women's rights organisations between 2019 and 2024. During this time period, UN Trust Fund's partner organisations reached over 150 million people in initiatives to end violence against women.

The UN Trust Fund invests in sustainable change through demand-driven initiatives led by civil society organizations worldwide, particularly those operating at the grassroots level, focused on women's rights, and led by women.

This approach ensures that the long-term (minimum 3 years), flexible, and core funding directly supports initiatives that are relevant to the needs and priorities of women and girls in their context, and the civil society organizations that serve them.

OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS, UN INTERAGENCY MECHANISMS HAVE ENABLED JOINT PROBLEM-SOLVING, COLLECTIVE ACCOUNTABILITY, AND HARMONISED ADVOCACY, ALLOWING THE SYSTEM TO DELIVER A MORE UNIFIED RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS.

Photo: UN Women/Srijana Bhatta

3

EMBEDDING BEST PRACTICE STANDARDS: INDIVIDUAL AGENCY AND JOINT PROGRAMMING

The UN System plays a key role in advancing the global agenda to end VAWG through programming that is grounded in human rights and international standards. Across global, regional, and national levels, UN entities deliver technical assistance, advocacy, funding support, and direct programming in partnership with governments, civil society, and affected communities. The UN System plays a unique role in supporting Member States in implementing international normative frameworks, including the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Sustainable Development Goals, enabling Member States to translate normative commitments into concrete action which improve outcomes for women, girls and survivors.

UN entities operate through both individual mandates and joint programmes to shape legal frameworks, strengthen institutions, enhance service delivery, prevent and mitigate risks of violence at national and regional levels. The UN System's work spans diverse contexts, including development, humanitarian, and peacebuilding settings. Programming is tailored to country-specific needs which support survivor-centred approaches while adhering to globally endorsed standards such as the Essential Services Package for women and girls subject to violence, the RESPECT Framework, Inter-agency Minimum Standards for GBV in Emergencies Programming.

This chapter synthesises the contributions of individual agencies and joint initiatives across key areas of programming.

1. POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE REFORM AND IMPLEMENTATION

Normative frameworks place an obligation on Member States to have comprehensive laws and policy frameworks that address all forms of VAWG as a systematic violation of human rights. Member States are expected to provide for the prosecution of perpetrators, prevent violence, protect, and support survivors. Laws to address VAWG should be embedded in a broader legal framework based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination. Mounting evidence indicates that comprehensive EVAWG laws help reduce violence against women and girls with countries enacting domestic violence laws reporting lower rates of intimate-partner violence (9.5 per cent) compared to those without such legislation (16.1 per cent).[26]

Coordinated national policy frameworks are critical to sustaining progress against VAWG. National Action Plans bring together all relevant sectors to work toward common objectives, strengthening collaboration and avoiding redundant efforts. New analysis shows that the 12-month prevalence of intimate-partner violence is nearly 2.5 times greater in countries with weak EVAWG frameworks than in those with robust, multifaceted legal measures.[27]

1.1. UN System Action: At a glance

Between 2019 and 2024, UN entities supported a wide range of legal and policy reform efforts at national and regional levels to prevent and respond to VAWG. Drawing on the submissions to the Inventory, the UN System contributed to the

26. UN Women. 2024. Available at Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot 2024.

27. UN Women. 2025. Ending Violence against Women and Girls: Global Commitments, Local Actions. Available at https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2025/12/ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-global-commitments-local-actions

development, reform, or implementation of **laws, national action plans (NAPs), policies, and related regulatory frameworks** across multiple regions.

UN System action took multiple forms, including support for drafting and revising legislation; drafting and supporting NAPs and strategies through resourcing and technical advice; supporting implementation, monitoring, and institutional accountability. Some entities worked directly with governments, civil society and survivors to shape new legislation, while others contributed through capacity building, technical assistance, or advocacy for law reform aligned with CEDAW, the Istanbul Convention, the Belém do Pará Convention, and other normative instruments.

Across Inventory submissions the most common focus for **legal reform i**ncluded:

- **Domestic violence laws and criminal justice reforms**: This included expanding legal definitions of domestic violence to encompass psychological, sexual, and economic forms of abuse; increasing penalties and introducing accountability measures; and strengthening legal provisions for protection orders. Reforms also extended to ensuring gender-responsive access to justice, including survivor-sensitive investigation protocols, evidence standards, and prosecution guidelines, and the establishment of specialised mechanisms such as gender desks and protocols within justice institutions.
- **Laws and policies to address harmful practices**, including **female genital mutilation (FGM)** and **child, early and forced marriage and unions (CEFMU)**. These were supported through legal reform, policy development, and programmatic interventions. This has included engaging traditional and religious leaders to support law reform and enforcement. Efforts typically involved aligning domestic legislation with international human rights obligations, removing discriminatory legal provisions, and working to embed protection mechanisms for at-risk populations.
- **Legal and policy frameworks on TF VAWG**: Reforms included the criminalisation of various forms of TF VAWG including online harassment and image-based abuse. TF VAWG is also being integrated into civil law, as well as data protection laws supported by the development of normative guidance to harmonise definitions and legislative approaches across jurisdictions.

For policy development and **reform, the most common areas of focus included**:

- **NAPs on EVAWG and broader gender equality frameworks**: Frameworks were developed or strengthened across multiple countries and regions. These plans often featured costed implementation strategies, clear institutional coordination arrangements, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track progress. Many were integrated into wider national development frameworks and included multi-sectoral commitments to prevention, protection, and accountability. For emergency settings, national strategies for disaster response to VAWG were developed as standalone or integrated into broader disaster preparedness and response frameworks.
- **Sectoral and institutional policies** were supported to strengthen frontline prevention and response to VAWG. These included the development of standard operating procedures (SOPs) and protocols for police, justice officials, health workers, and other service providers, as well as context-specific guidance for traditional and community-based justice systems. A common focus was ensuring consistency in survivor-centred responses and reinforcing accountability across institutions.
- **Gender-responsive budgeting and monitoring** were introduced to ensure commitments could be translated into funded actions on the ground. Activities included the integration of EVAWG priorities into public financial management systems, the costing of NAPs, and efforts to track and increase resource allocations for laws and policies addressing VAWG.

This breadth of support reflects the UN System's critical role, not only in advancing legal and policy frameworks aligned with international standards, but in shaping how those frameworks are implemented through institutional reform, budgeting, and cross-sector coordination for the long term. These efforts directly support States in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In 2024, 79 per cent of countries reported developing or enhancing VAWG national action plans, an increase from 68 per cent in 2019. Some 90 per cent of countries prioritised the introduction and strengthening of laws to address VAWG in the past five years, up from 83 per cent in 2019.[28] This demonstrates a positive trajectory around State accountability and political commitment around fulfilling obligations around gender equality and human rights.

1.2. Joint programming

Spotlight Initiative

Under the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative significant progress was made in strengthening legal and policy frameworks. The Initiative contributed to the development or reform of 548 laws and policies representing a 26-fold increase in gender-equitable law reforms since 2019 for the Initiative and supported the strengthening of NAPs in 50 countries.

The Initiative focused on ensuring that laws and policies were aligned with international human rights standards, responsive to local contexts, and designed to enhance survivor protection and institutional accountability.

Legislative efforts addressed a range of issues, including domestic violence, femicide, harmful practices (such as FGM and child marriage), sexual harassment, and TF VAWG. The Initiative focussed on improving legal protections and rights of civil society, women's rights groups, and women human rights defenders, with more than 77 laws and policies developed since 2019 to safeguard their ability to advocate for and advance human rights.

Spotlight Initiative also helped strengthen traditional justice mechanisms and promoted survivor-centred legal reforms.

Spotlight Initiative also invested heavily in the development and implementation of robust policy frameworks, across various sectors including policing, justice, health and social services. These included costed NAPs, policies on campus sexual violence and workplace harassment.

Ensuring adequate resources for VAWG prevention and response has also been a focus for the Spotlight Initiative, for example, by supporting civil society to engage in and monitor gender-responsive budgeting processes. In four countries (Ecuador, Liberia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uganda), the Initiative's efforts can be reliably tied to allocations totalling nearly USD 50 million.

Across all efforts, the Initiative emphasised whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches, engaging governments, civil society, and affected communities in both design and implementation. By coordinating efforts across UN entities and leveraging pooled expertise, Spotlight Initiative exemplified the "Delivering as One" approach, demonstrating the collective impact of joint programming on laws, policies, and institutions to prevent and respond to VAWG.

The UNFPA–UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of FGM, active in 17 high-prevalence countries, has supported legal reforms in more than a dozen contexts. Through the influence of the programme, at least 19 countries have adopted or strengthened laws banning FGM. The programme provides technical assistance to governments while

28. United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. 2025. Report of the Secretary-General on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (E/CN.6/2025/3/Rev.1).

also engaging traditional and religious leaders and community advocates to promote enforcement and accountability.

1.3. Individual agency efforts

UN entities contributed individually through their programming and advocacy to advance legal and policy reform on VAWG. By focusing on their distinct mandates, multi-sectoral governance shifts have been possible through technical assistance, legal drafting, institutional capacity-building, support for policy development, and advocacy to align national frameworks with international standards. The examples below illustrate how different UN entities contributed to legal and policy change to better meet the needs of women, girls and survivors.

National Action Plans: Expanding scope and accountability

NAPs that champion multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder approaches and enable coordination between diverse actors (including civil society) are critical for a comprehensive, long-term and coordinated strategy to prevent and respond to VAWG.[29] Between 2019 and 2024, several UN entities, supported the development and strengthening of NAPs across a range of settings. These efforts were notable not only for their technical scope, but also for the innovative approaches taken to ensure sustainability, inclusion, and transformation. Notable achievements include:

Costed implementation plans: In Trinidad and Tobago, UN Women, through the Spotlight Initiative, led the development of the country's first costed National Strategic Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence (2023–2027), embedding financing strategies and accountability mechanisms directly into the plan.

Inclusive and participatory design: In Fiji, UN Women facilitated one of the most inclusive NAP development processes in the region, engaging more than 2,000 stakeholders across government, civil society, and communities. This wide consultation helped ensure the resulting National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls (2023–2028) was grounded in local realities and community ownership. In the Federated States of Micronesia, UNFPA conducted consultations, developing one of the first NAPs with dedicated state-level action plans, utilising participatory approaches to capture sub-national diversity and incorporating local government structures as part of nationwide strategies.

Prevention as a core pillar: In Samoa, UN Women supported the creation of a National Prevention Framework (2024), emphasising long-term, primary prevention and integrating evidence on social norms, community mobilisation, and behaviour change into national planning structures.

Evidence-informed practice and transparency: In North Macedonia, UNFPA supported the evaluation of the NAP 2018-2023 on the Istanbul Convention, helping to institutionalise quality standards, accountability and monitoring. In Fiji, based on monitoring and feedback from the NAP advisory body, UNFPA supported development of risk mitigation and sustainability frameworks to create an enabling environment for long-term and continuous implementation of the NAP, including during climate-related disasters.

Efforts to **support survivor-centred law reform** featured prominently in many Inventory submissions. For example, UN Women supported the expansion and implementation of Nigeria's Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act, contributing to its adoption by 36 of 37 states by 2023.

29. UN Women. 2023. Together for prevention: Handbook on multisectoral national action plans to prevent violence against women and girls. Available at https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/10/together-for-prevention-handbook-on-multisectoral-national-action-plans-to-prevent-violence-against-women-and-girls; The Commonwealth Secretariat. 2022. Guidelines for implementation: The whole system approach in addressing violence against women and girls in the Commonwealth. Available at https://www.thecommonwealth-ilibrary.org/index.php/comsec/catalog/view/960/956/8212

It supported legislative amendments in North Macedonia that criminalised stalking and online sexual violence. In Ecuador and Mexico, it supported the revision of criminal codes to include femicide and expand protections related to VAWG. In the Philippines, UN Women provided technical inputs to strengthen the *Safe Spaces Act*, extending legal protection to people experiencing online and public harassment. It also worked with justice and security actors in Tunisia, Zimbabwe, and Honduras to revise penal codes and procedures to be more survivor-centred and to integrate international human rights standards.

Agencies also led efforts to reform laws addressing **harmful practices**, such as UNICEF supporting child marriage law reform and enforcement in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. UNICEF also supported broader legal and policy reform to address CEFMU efforts through partnerships with line ministries of education, social welfare, and justice. This ensured that commitments to end VAWG are embedded in sector policies - supporting safe school frameworks, survivor-centred referral SOPs, and linkages with social protection systems to ensure that prevention and response are institutionalised across services used daily by women and girls across the world. UNFPA supported child marriage reform in countries such as Bolivia (reforms to criminal code about sexual violence, rape and early unions), Colombia and Peru (laws to prohibit child, early and forced marriage and unions (CEFMU) and the elimination of exceptions to marriage/unions before the age of 18), complementing its broader engagement on age of marriage legislation and social norm change. IOM provided policy guidance for protecting women and girls at risk of repatriation from harmful practice contexts, including in Syria and Iraq.

Inventory submissions also detailed legal efforts in relation to preventing and responding to **femicide**. UN Women supported major legal reforms on femicide in Mexico, Ecuador, and Argentina, including the introduction of dedicated criminal provisions and femicide protocols. UN Women collaborated with UNODC on developing the statistical framework for measuring femicide, enabling countries to better track and respond to gender-related killings. OHCHR supported the development of a regional protocol in Latin America to guide investigations into violent deaths of LGBTQI+ persons, a step toward more inclusive and responsive justice frameworks. In Argentina, UNFPA advocated for and supported legal reforms including mandatory training on gender perspective for civil servants ("Micaela Law", 2019) and the integration of "digital violence" into other forms of VAW ("Olimpia Law", 2023). These reforms allowed for a wider and more structural framing of VAWG and mainstreamed gender perspective into state institutions that prevent and respond to VAWG. In Chile, UNFPA advocated for and contributed to bills that generated the Comprehensive Law on VAWG ("Ley Integral", 2023) and to including obstetric violence into forms of VAWG through the "Ley Adriana", 2024.

On **technology-facilitated violence against women and girls** (TF VAWG), UN Women co-developed the Inter-American Model Law with the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI), supported by UNFPA and UNESCO, and advanced Human Rights Council resolutions affirming state obligations on online violence. UN Women launched in 2024 the global programme Accelerating Efforts to Address Digital Violence Against Women and Girls with Bolivia and Mexico as initial pilot countries. As part of this programme, and with the *Association for Progressive Communications*, UN Women conducted a series of regional expert meetings to inform the development of the Supplement on TF VAWG to the Handbook for Legislation on Violence against Women. UNFPA, in partnership with *Derechos Digitales*, conducted a comparative review of legal and policy frameworks across eight jurisdictions, which informed forthcoming Guidance on Rights-Based Law Reform. UNFPA and MESECVI also consulted youth in Uruguay to strengthen the model law. UNODC undertook legal gap assessments and supported reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina, alongside developing cyberviolence training materials for Southern Africa. UNFPA further supported legislative roadmap processes in the Pacific, Western Balkans, and Arab States, and launched the *Making All Spaces Safe* initiative in 2024 to integrate TF VAWG into national prevention

and legal agendas. UNICEF advanced national TF VAWG reforms, partnered with INTERPOL to strengthen cybercrime units, and developed global guidance on responsible business conduct.

Sexual harassment has also been a focus in the last five years. ILO has played a central role in supporting Member States in aligning national legal and policy frameworks with the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), including through technical guidance, workplace policy development, and sector-specific strategies such as in the garment industry and entertainment sector. UN Women and ILO jointly produced a handbook on addressing violence and harassment against women in the world of work, compiling emerging good practices, including the development of organizational policies and legal frameworks to combat sexual harassment across countries and sectors.

Improving **women's access to quality, survivor-centred justice** though law and policy reform was another important area of work. UNODC provided technical support to Viet Nam in reviewing its Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control, with a focus on aligning criminal procedures with survivor-centred principles to strengthen justice system responsiveness. In Panama, UNODC developed a gender-responsive litigation manual to improve the handling of domestic and sexual violence cases in court. UNODC also supported national justice systems in strengthening prosecution and judicial response to sexual violence, including training for justice officials and survivor-sensitive evidentiary practices.

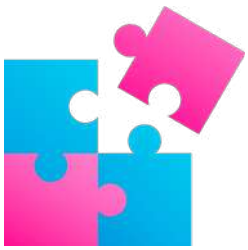
Regional commissions played a key role in advancing legal and policy frameworks. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), working with MESECVI and UN Women, promoted the Latin American Model Protocol for the Investigation of Gender-Related Killings of Women and supported capacity building for justice actors in Uruguay, Colombia, and Paraguay. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) facilitated technical exchange through the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, enabling Arab States to integrate commitments on ending violence against women and girls into national strategies and align with the 2030 Agenda. In Africa, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) convened ministers responsible for gender and women's affairs, leading to the endorsement of the African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, a binding regional instrument to guide national reforms and accountability. In Asia and the Pacific, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), together with UN Women, used the regional Beijing review conferences to keep ending violence against women and girls central to governments' commitments under the Beijing Platform for Action.

Legal and policy development in conflict and crisis settings featured prominently in Inventory submissions. UN Women advanced global guidance by developing and piloting the Framework for the Prevention of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Ukraine in 2024, offering a strategic tool for national actors. IOM supported governments in Iraq, Ukraine, and Ethiopia to establish reparations frameworks for survivors, including technical assistance to implement Iraq's Yazidi Survivors Law. UNFPA worked with national counterparts to ensure continuity of

WE URGENTLY NEED ACTION AT ALL LEVELS TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS, HOLD PERPETRATORS ACCOUNTABLE, AND INVEST IN SOLUTIONS TO PROTECT WOMEN AND GIRLS EVERYWHERE.

Towards Beijing+30 – UNiTE to end violence against women and girls, 25 November 2024

legal protection for displaced and crisis-affected populations, supporting a reparations law adopted in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2023 and the integration of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) into the new National Policy on Transitional Justice. Complementing these efforts, DPKO (now under DPO) advanced legal and policy guidance in peacekeeping contexts, helping host country security institutions adopt survivor-centred frameworks.



1.4. Gaps and challenges

Despite significant leadership by the UN System in supporting laws and policies to address VAWG, gaps remain in the design, scope, and implementation of these frameworks. Based on the evaluations and learnings from across UN agencies, the following gaps and challenges have been identified:

- **Limited accountability frameworks and a lack of allocated resources** undermine the implementation of NAPs. Many plans do not clearly allocate institutional responsibilities or include adequate monitoring and evaluation systems. National EVAWG strategies which were reviewed often lacked adequate costing and financing plans, and the implementation of NAPs was frequently siloed, lacking strong coordination across government sectors.[30]
- **Civil society participation remains uneven.** While some examples showcased inclusive, consultative processes, other contexts saw limited engagement of women's rights organizations, especially at early design stages of laws and policies. Evaluations warn that this can result in plans and laws that are insufficiently grounded in local realities, diminishing both relevance and impact.[31] Moreover, without buy-in from civil society (including groups that represent survivors), the implementation, monitoring and impact of these frameworks will be limited.
- **Legal reform efforts are not always comprehensive.** While notable gains have been made in criminalising certain forms of violence, data on laws show that gaps persist in areas such as marital rape, intimate partner violence (IPV), femicide, sexual harassment in public and digital spaces, TF VAWG and trafficking in people.[32] Even when legal frameworks exist, enforcement remains limited and discriminatory social and gender norms held by decisionmakers, policymakers and communities may block implementation.[33] Legal approaches also tend to focus more heavily on response and accountability, often with punitive approaches, with less emphasis on prevention, social and gender norm change, or structural inequality. The presence of discriminatory laws in some countries also undermines broader goals around gender equality which sustains VAWG.
- **Limited financial and institutional capacity undermines implementation.** Evaluations consistently point to a lack of sustained, earmarked financing for the operationalisation of legal and policy commitments to address

30. Spotlight Initiative. 2024. Final evaluation report. Available at https://www.spotlightinitiative.org/publications/spotlight-initiative-final-evaluation

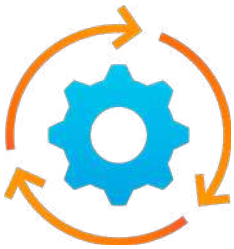
31. UNFPA. 2019. Joint evaluation UNFPA-UNICEF joint programme abandonment of female genital mutilation: Accelerating Change, Phase I and II (2008–2017). Available at https://www.unfpa.org/joint-evaluation-unfpa-unicef-joint-programme-abandonment-female-genital-mutilation-accelerating

32. United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. 2025. Report of the Secretary-General on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (E/CN.6/2025/3/Rev.1). Spotlight Initiative. 2024. Final evaluation report. Available at https://www.spotlightinitiative.org/publications/spotlight-initiative-final-evaluation

33. UNFPA. 2019. Joint evaluation UNFPA-UNICEF joint programme abandonment of female genital mutilation: Accelerating Change, Phase I and II (2008–2017). Available at https://www.unfpa.org/joint-evaluation-unfpa-unicef-joint-programme-abandonment-female-genital-mutilation-accelerating

VAWG. Delays in disbursement, fragmentation of funding sources, and a lack of long-term financing strategies reduce the impact and efficiency of EVAWG laws and policies.[34] Effective institutions, including information management and data systems, are essential to support the implementation and monitoring of laws and policies. Without effective monitoring systems in place, implementation will likely be restricted and less impactful. Moreover, without data and accountability systems, it may be difficult to implement and understand the effects of laws and policies for more marginalized groups.

- **Anti-rights and anti-gender backlash pose a growing threat.** Political resistance to gender equality is becoming more coordinated and visible, affecting the enabling environment for legal reforms.[35] Some countries have seen active pushback against gender equality policies, including efforts to dilute or roll back legislative protections for women and girls, or the institutionalization of gender equality mechanisms and entities, particularly in the area of VAWG.



1.5. Implications

The UN System has played a pivotal role in supporting the development, reform, and implementation of laws and policies to address VAWG. Legal reforms have expanded, and policy frameworks increasingly reflect a multi-sectoral and rights-based approach. The breadth of UN engagement reflects a shift from support for legislation alone to broader efforts to strengthen accountability, implementation, and institutional capacity. Despite this progress, gaps persist, particularly in enforcement, and the integration of prevention in policy frameworks. Sustained investment, national ownership and the inclusion of civil society groups that represent survivors remain key enablers of impact.

2. COMPREHENSIVE ESSENTIAL SERVICES

Best practice service provision for survivors of VAWG is grounded in a coordinated, multi-sectoral response that prioritizes the rights, safety, and well-being of survivors. Since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995, there has been significant growth in support services, often led by civil society organisations with specialist expertise. Research and practice consistently show that the quality and delivery of these services greatly influence their effectiveness. The Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence, developed by UN Women, UNFPA, WHO, UNODC, and UNDP, as well as the Inter-agency Minimum Standards for GBV in Emergencies, provide clear guidance and principles for service provision, based on agreed international standards, as well as being a jointly agreed and coordinated. Based on these standards, essential and life-saving services must, at a minimum, include accessible and high-quality support from the health, social services, police, and justice sectors. To be effective, services should be survivor-centred, comprehensive, and well-coordinated across all levels to ensure that survivors receive timely, holistic and intercultural support that promotes their healing, recovery, and long-term well-being.

34. Spotlight Initiative. 2024. Value for money assessment. Available at https://www.spotlightinitiative.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/Spotlight_Initiative_Value_for_Money_Assessment.pdf

35. UNRISD and UN Women. 2025. Understanding backlash against gender equality: Evidence, trends and policy responses. Available at: https://knowledge.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2025/09/understanding-backlash-against-gender-equality-evidence-trends-and-policy-responses

2.1. UN System Action: At a Glance

Between 2019 and 2024, the UN System supported a wide range of efforts to improve access to quality services for survivors of VAWG. This included direct service provision, training and capacity-strengthening of frontline actors, as well as system-building efforts to institutionalise coordinated, survivor-centred services across both development and humanitarian contexts. UN-supported interventions focused on service delivery were implemented across multiple regions, with a focus on improving reach, integration, inclusivity and accountability of services across multiple sectors.

Across the Inventory submissions, the most common focus for service delivery included:

- **Supporting the direct delivery of health, psychosocial, legal and protection services.** UN System programming supported expanding access to essential services for survivors, including clinical health care, psychosocial support, legal assistance, and emergency shelters and housing. These services were often delivered in coordination with national authorities and civil society partners and aligned with international standards.
- **Capacity-strengthening of service providers:** A major focus was placed on building capability of front-line services providers to respond effectively to VAWG, including healthcare workers, police, judicial officials, social workers, and humanitarian personnel. Capacity-strengthening efforts aimed to improve survivor-centred practice, strengthen referral pathways and coordination, and ensure consistent application of SOPs and protocols.
- **Integrating and coordinating services and systems:** UN entities supported the development of protocols, case management systems, referral systems, and interagency task forces to ensure that services were linked, survivor-centred, and accountable. These efforts aimed to contribute to more cohesive institutional responses, reducing fragmentation, and limiting risks of women and girls being underserved.
- **Promoting local and community-based approaches:** Innovations such as mobile service units and safe spaces were introduced or strengthened to reach marginalized groups, including rural communities, migrant and displaced women and girls, LGBTQI+ individuals, and persons with disabilities. UN entities drew upon these modalities to reduce barriers to access and foster trust and uptake of services.
- **Delivering in crisis and humanitarian settings:** UN-supported initiatives provided coordination mechanisms services, notably through GBV sub clusters and including clinical management of rape, case management, safe spaces and referrals, in a variety of crisis settings. Activities also included adapting service provision during COVID-19.
- **Improving justice system responsiveness:** Legal services and access to justice were improved through the development of survivor-sensitive investigation procedures, support for specialised police units, legal aid, and protocols for handling VAWG cases. In several countries, these efforts contributed to improved case outcomes for survivors and increased accountability for perpetrators.
- **Expanding and institutionalising quality standards:** UN entities integrated minimum standards and principles for service provision within national policy frameworks, aligning provision with global standards, and promoting institutional accountability. These efforts included costing of service packages, developing cross-sectoral guidance on how to deliver coordinated, survivor-centred services and monitoring service quality.

WE NEED QUALITY SURVIVOR-CENTRED ESSENTIAL SERVICES FOR ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS IN ALL CONTEXTS.

UNiTE! Invest to prevent violence against women and girls!,
22 November 2023

Adapting Services During COVID-19: System-wide resilience and innovation

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly increased the risks of VAWG, while simultaneously disrupting access to essential services. In response, the UN System mobilised rapidly to adapt service delivery across multiple sectors and contexts, ensuring continuity of care for survivors and mitigating the effects of lockdown-related isolation, insecurity, and service closures. The UN System supported services were reconfigured to function within the constraints of national public health restrictions. Adaptations included the use of mobile units, remote case management, and virtual counselling to reach survivors in crisis and conflict settings, as well as the adaptation of safe spaces and helplines to operate under emergency conditions.

Efforts to maintain essential health, legal, and psychosocial services were often coordinated through inter-agency mechanisms, national frameworks, integrating VAWG response into national pandemic preparedness and recovery frameworks.

In parallel, the UN System public information campaigns and digital outreach were scaled up to alert communities to the increased risks of violence and direct people to available services. Messaging was tailored to diverse populations and disseminated through multiple platforms, including social media, SMS, and community networks. These efforts helped reduce service access barriers, especially in rural and remote areas.

Crucially, the UN System's COVID-19 response generated institutional learning. New tools, referral systems, and protocols were developed to support flexible, survivor-centred programming in emergency contexts, relevant for a range of disasters or crises. Many of these innovations, including remote service modalities and intersectoral coordination mechanisms, have since been retained, adapted and institutionalised, reinforcing the UN System's long-term capacity to respond to VAWG in both stable and crisis settings.

These collective efforts reflect a system-wide effort toward focusing on quality, comprehensive, coordinated, and rights-based services that prioritise the

safety, dignity, and agency of survivors. This shift aligns with actions taken by Member States - 88 per cent of which reported in the 30-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action that they are increasingly prioritising comprehensive services[36]

2.2. Joint Programming

Joint programming efforts, particularly through Spotlight Initiative, the UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict Multi-Partner Trust Fund, and the Essential Services Package, have substantially strengthened survivor access to coordinated, quality services. These initiatives expanded access to health care, psychosocial support, legal aid, and emergency shelter, while also improving justice, police, and social services.

The Spotlight Initiative enabled nearly 3 million women and girls to access essential services, including long term recovery services. For example, in El Salvador, Spotlight Initiative helped establish the country's first public health clinic for trans women, offering tailored medical and psychological services and setting a precedent for inclusive mobile service units helped overcome infrastructure barriers in VAWG care. In Mozambique, the Initiative set up community clinics improving access to health services, especially in remote areas, reaching 99,000 women and girls. The Initiative has also foster accountability of perpetrators, including by strengthening the justice sector. For example, the Uganda Police Force built a rapid analysis DNA lab to maintain the quality of evidence and strengthen prosecution. In Jamaica, the Initiative supported the integration of gender experts and units into police stations. Across programmes, more than 100,000 frontline workers have been trained in survivor-centred, multi-sectoral care that leaves no one behind. As a result of these efforts, the Initiative led to improved conviction rates for VAWG, with the overall rate doubling across 13 countries and resulting in over 13,000 convictions.

The Essential Services Package (ESP) has served as a critical joint programme for strengthening coordinated, multi-sectoral VAWG service delivery. For 2022-2023, 55 countries scaled-up essential services aligned with international standards; 54 countries strengthened the coordination of services; 66 countries shifted towards justice and policing services that are gender-responsive and women-centred and 24 countries improved the quality of social service provision for VAWG survivors.

By promoting **common standards and survivor-centred care,** the ESP has sought to improve health, justice, policing, and social services. In Cambodia, ESP guidance informed national reforms such as the removal of user fees for forensic medical examinations, while also facilitating government ownership of referral pathways and standard operating procedures. This enabled more consistent service delivery and accountability across sectors. In Pakistan, the ESP shaped the development of crisis-responsive coordination mechanisms that were led by national authorities and operationalised during the 2022 floods, ensuring the continuity of GBV services in humanitarian conditions. In West and Central Africa, governments drew on the ESP to support clinical management of rape training for healthcare providers, reinforcing survivor care in fragile and conflict-affected settings. These examples illustrate how the ESP has catalysed structural change by strengthening government-led systems and institutional foundations for quality, coordinated services.

Meanwhile, the UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict provided targeted support in conflict-affected settings, including South Sudan, Ukraine, and Mali, contributing to improved survivor protections and higher conviction rates in 13 countries.

36. United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. 2025. Report of the Secretary-General on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (E/CN.6/2025/3/Rev.1).

2.3. Individual agency efforts

UN entities contributed individually through their programming, technical assistance, and partnerships to expand access to quality services for survivors of VAWG. These efforts spanned development and humanitarian settings, with agencies supporting multiple services, while also enhancing service quality through training, protocols, and community-based innovations.

Supporting access to **health services and clinical care for survivors** has been a priority. For example, UNFPA supported clinical management of rape (CMR) in multiple regions, including through the training-of-trainers, developing a new inter-agency CMR-IPV toolkit, and in Latin America, by partnering with PAHO to develop a clinical management course which is now being implemented by Ministries of Health in El Salvador, Brazil, Guatemala, and Ecuador. WHO collaborated with national health authorities in Eastern and Southern Africa and South-East Asia to strengthen referral pathways and improve provider readiness to respond to VAWG. UN Women provided technical support to improve health sector responses in multiple crisis contexts, including through developing guidance on integrating psychosocial and legal services into mobile outreach.

In the specific area of **mental health and psychosocial support** (MHPSS), UNFPA provided MHPSS services in conflict and displacement settings such as Sudan, Palestine, Somalia, Iraq, and Yemen, and supported the establishment of safe spaces for women and girls. OHCHR developed trauma-informed interviewing materials in collaboration with a psychologist to strengthen field staff engagement with survivors of sexual violence. These efforts collectively reflect the UN System's commitment to survivor-centred care, embedding trauma recovery and mental health as core components of service provision.

Several UN entities contributed to improving access to **safe housing and emergency shelter.** In Viet Nam, UN Women supported the establishment of safe houses and shelter services that provide women and children with protection, counselling, and referrals to essential services. In Egypt, UN Trust Fund partners provided tailored support to refugee young mothers, including mental healthcare, emergency cash grants, and referrals. In Nigeria's Rivers State, community-driven initiatives enhanced accessibility of services and strengthened accountability, supporting thousands of survivors to report abuses and seek help.

Access to justice was another consistent focus. In Mexico, the UN Trust Fund supported the creation of a network of feminist lawyers providing specialized legal aid and strategic litigation in gender-based violence cases. In Somalia and Somaliland, coalitions were strengthened to improve legal protections for displaced and minority women and girls. UNODC established multisectoral "one-stop" service centres in Kyrgyzstan and Egypt and trained justice actors. It also developed global tools such as a litigation manual for public defenders in Panama and supported gender-responsive policing reforms in Mauritania. UN Women expanded gender-responsive policing strategies across several countries, while in Thailand it trained police and prosecutors on survivor-centred approaches. UNICEF and UNDP worked with national justice institutions to establish Women and Child Protection Units, and UNITAR supported training for local authorities, law enforcement, and judicial actors on gender-responsive governance. The UN Transitional Justice Task Force further advanced survivor-centred transitional justice approaches, including reparations frameworks and truth-seeking processes for women affected by conflict-related sexual violence.

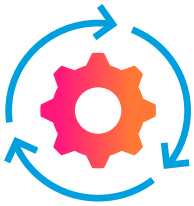
Several UN entities have implemented targeted efforts to **expand service delivery for marginalised groups,** addressing intersecting forms of discrimination and structural exclusion. UN Women has advanced intersectionality in the Essential Services Package by developing guidance and protocols that embed the "leave no one behind" principle, ensuring, for example, that referral networks in the Solomon Islands and Kiribati include services for women with disabilities, that Nigeria's state-level coordination mechanisms mandate participation of the Network of Women with Disabilities and the Association of Women with HIV/AIDS, and that Bangladesh's police help desks and victim support centres are tailored to elderly women and those with disabilities. UNFPA integrated an intersectional approach across its programming, notably through the WeDecide Programme, which enhanced GBV responses for women and young persons with disabilities. In Latin America and the Caribbean, UNFPA documented promising practices for intersectional responses to violence against Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and disabled women and girls. IOM addressed GBV risks among migrants with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions (SOGIESC) through research, service mapping, and technical guidance. UNODC facilitated the inclusion of people with disabilities and related CSOs in the stakeholder consultations for the revised *Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control* in Viet Nam and supported access to justice for women with disabilities in Egypt, by providing wheelchairs and braille printers and by training over 150 justice practitioners. These targeted efforts have helped to close longstanding gaps in the availability and quality of survivor-centred services for women and girls overlooked in mainstream responses.

55

countries scaled-up essential services aligned with international standards

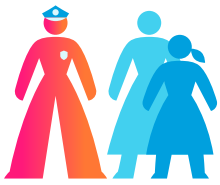
54

countries strengthened the coordination of services



66

countries shifted towards justice and policing services that are gender-responsive and women-centred



Global reach of the Essential Services Package Joint Programme in 2022-2023

Gender-Based Violence Services in Crisis Contexts

In conflict-affected and humanitarian settings, UN entities played a critical role in sustaining essential services for survivors, prioritising flexible, survivor-centred approaches that could adapt to rapidly changing conditions and security constraints.

UNFPA, as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) lead agency for GBV launched research and guidance on integrating cash and voucher assistance into GBV case management, delivered clinical care through reproductive health responses, and worked with women-led organisations to pre-position life-saving supplies and strengthen regional coordination platforms.

UNICEF sustained women- and girl-safe spaces, GBV case management, and psychosocial support in crises such as Ukraine, Sudan, DRC and Haiti, while rapidly adapting through mobile outreach, remote counselling, and digital referral pathways during COVID-19. It also expanded multidisciplinary services for child survivors, scaled up Barnahus centres, and integrated GBV into other programmatic sectors, including piloting models linking GBV and nutrition. Its virtual safe space *Laaha*, launched in 2021, has since reached over 1.5 million users worldwide.

Other UN entities also strengthened service delivery. IOM advanced integrated support through its GBV in Crises framework, piloting a Survivor Support Package to improve coordination across service sectors and expanding access to health and psychosocial care. UNHCR extended legal aid and mobile case management to reach displaced women in remote areas. FAO embedded GBV risk mitigation into food security and agricultural programming, while UNRWA expanded safe referral pathways and psychosocial support across its education, health, and relief programmes for Palestinian refugee women. The UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women directed 43 per cent of its funding between 2021–2024 to crisis-affected contexts, including special windows for forcibly displaced and refugee women, prioritising responses to sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and humanitarian settings.

2.4. Gaps and Challenges

The UN System's contributions have institutionalised quality standards, strengthened referral pathways, and enabled systemic change to advance the right to care, justice, and dignity for all survivors. Despite this important progress, persistent gaps and implementation barriers continue to limit the potential of services to ensure healing and recovery for survivors. The following section outlines where further efforts are needed:

The availability and quality of services remain highly uneven. Some regions experience fragmented service provision, weak referral systems, and limited coordination between sectors such as health, justice, and social services. Evaluations indicate that one-stop centres and coordinated referral models have shown promise, but coverage is often concentrated in urban areas, leaving rural and remote populations underserved. There are also risks around the sustainability of these services if they are not costed and embedded within national strategies, plans or policies. Integration between service providers, while improving, still requires stronger institutional linkages, common protocols, and shared accountability mechanisms.[37]

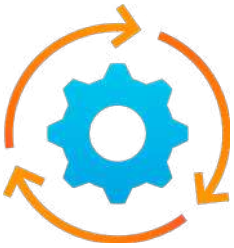
Access to services remains especially limited for marginalised groups, including LGBTQI+ people, women with disabilities, afro descendant and indigenous women and girls, migrant women, adolescent girls, older women and survivors in humanitarian or conflict settings. Although targeted efforts have improved outreach, many women and girls continue to face barriers related to stigma, discrimination, language, physical accessibility, or lack

37. Spotlight Initiative. 2024. Final evaluation report. Available at https://www.spotlightinitiative.org/publications/spotlight-initiative-final-evaluation; Spotlight Initiative. 2024. Compendium: Lessons learned from prevention programming.

of identification documents. Evaluations indicate that intersectional and culturally sensitive service delivery models remain the exception rather than the norm.[38]

While extensive investments have been made in training frontline responders, these efforts must be institutionalised to ensure sustainability and consistency. Staff turnover, burnout, lack of supervision, and insufficient resourcing can undermine service quality over time. Gaps in provider capacity are particularly acute in areas such as trauma-informed care, legal empowerment, and mental health support.[39] Promoting gender equality and cultivating respectful, inclusive workplaces is crucial to ensure that services and staff do not unintentionally reinforce harmful social norms or contribute to unsafe environments.

Despite the proliferation of services, funding shortfalls continue to limit scale-up and sustainability. Many programmes remain donor-dependent, and national budgets for VAWG services are often insufficient. The transition from donor-funded initiatives to government-led service delivery is constrained by weak institutional ownership and limited fiscal space. Evaluations show that without sustained public investment, services risk remaining ad hoc.[40]



2.5. Implications

The UN System has supported efforts to expand access to services and contributed to more coordinated, survivor-centred responses across diverse countries and contexts. The Essential Services Package and other joint programmes have helped promote and institutionalise standards for service delivery. There has been a significant focus on building capacities of stakeholders and ensuring services are resilient and adaptable in the face of conflict and crisis, including COVID-19. Looking ahead, further institutionalisation, sustainable financing, and intersectional approaches which leave no one behind will be critical for strengthening the sustainability and reach of services.

3. PREVENTION

Preventing VAWG requires addressing its root causes and risk factors. Evidence from numerous studies on what works to prevent VAWG calls for focus to be put on multi-pronged interventions at different levels – individual and relationship, community and societal – to transform unequal gendered power relations and address gender inequality as well as intersectional discrimination.[41] Developed in 2019 by WHO and UN Women, in collaboration with ten other UN, bilateral, and multilateral agencies, the interagency RESPECT framework to prevent VAWG sets out action-oriented steps to design, plan, implement, monitor, evaluate, and scale-up interventions and programs based on a public health and human rights approach. In 2025, it has been updated to

38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*
40. Spotlight Initiative. 2024. Value for money assessment. Available at https://www.spotlightinitiative.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/Spotlight_Initiative_Value_for_Money_Assessment.pdf. Spotlight Initiative. 2024. Final evaluation report. Available at https://www.spotlightinitiative.org/publications/spotlight-initiative-final-evaluation
41. UN Women. 2015. A framework to underpin action to prevent violence against women. Available at https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/11/prevention-framework

include interventions appropriate for humanitarian emergencies and address the unique and disproportionate risks faced by certain groups such as adolescent girls, women with disabilities, indigenous women, trans women and others.[42] Good practice in prevention focuses on long-term, multi-level interventions that combine community engagement, education, social norm transformation, and the promotion of positive masculinities to challenge the acceptability of VAWG.[43] Effective prevention also prioritizes women's economic empowerment, digital safety, and the leadership of women's rights movements. The RESPECT Framework, along with the implementation guidance, provides recommended action-oriented steps to design, plan, implement, monitor, evaluate and scale-up interventions and programmes and the site contains support resources in several areas.

3.1. UN System Action: At a glance

Between 2019-2024, the UN System scaled up prevention efforts aimed at addressing the root causes of VAWG. Prevention was embedded as a cross-cutting objective across many UN-supported programmes and frameworks, with actions spanning national policy support, community mobilisation, educational interventions, and public advocacy across multiple regions. These efforts were grounded in a shared understanding of prevention as essential to long-term systemic change and guided by UN frameworks such as the RESPECT Women Framework and the Framework for the Prevention of Conflict-related Sexual Violence.

Based on the Inventory submissions, common areas of focus in prevention include:

- **Transforming norms and behaviours:** UN entities supported the design and implementation of campaigns, community dialogues, arts-based interventions, and school-based programmes aimed at shifting harmful norms and gender stereotypes. These activities were often locally led and used participatory methods. Key strategies included working with traditional, religious, and youth and feminist leaders; promoting gender-equitable parenting; and championing positive masculinities.
- **Engaging men and boys:** Programmes across multiple regions engaged men and boys as agents of change, focusing on topics such as respectful relationships, non-violent conflict resolution, and caregiving. Interventions aimed to challenge patriarchal attitudes and build peer networks for gender-equitable behaviour.
- **Community-led and multisectoral approaches:** Prevention initiatives took whole-of-society approaches, engaging civil society, schools, workplaces, health services, media, and law enforcement. In several settings, prevention was integrated as a priority within local governance structures, emergency response planning, and post-crisis recovery frameworks.
- **Youth-focused programming:** Programmes placed a strong emphasis on working with adolescents and young people, using schools, sports, technology, and storytelling to promote healthy relationships and gender equality. Several initiatives also sought to strengthen life skills and leadership capacity among girls and young women to enable them to advocate for their rights and challenge violence. In particular, UN entities supported education systems, civil society organizations and other actors in the delivery of in- and out-of-school comprehensive

42. WHO et al. 2025. RESPECT women: preventing violence against women, 2nd ed. Available at https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240117020

43. Jewkes, R., Willan, S., Heise, L., Washington, L., Shai, N., Kerr-Wilson, A., Christofides, N. 2021. Elements of the design and implementation of interventions to prevent violence against women and girls associated with success: Reflections from the what works to prevent violence against women and girls? Global programme. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18(22), 12129.

sexuality education (CSE) based on international standards as an effective strategy in addressing driving factors for VAWG.

- **Integration into national frameworks:** UN entities supported the development of national prevention strategies and integration of VAWG prevention into broader NAPs. These efforts included support for gender-responsive education and curricula, safe school policies, and the development of costed, multisectoral prevention strategies aligned with international standards.
- **Evidence-based programming and coordination:** Prevention programming drew on evidence and established UN tools such as the RESPECT Women framework. Efforts were made to strengthen coordination among UN entities and national partners, ensuring consistent messaging and local adaptations of best practice.

These system-wide actions reflect large scale efforts to prevent violence by changing the social conditions that enable and normalise it. While results vary across settings, Inventory submissions highlight an emphasis on integrated, evidence-based prevention actions that addresses gender inequality as a root cause of violence.

THESE SYSTEM-WIDE ACTIONS REFLECT LARGE SCALE EFFORTS TO PREVENT VIOLENCE BY CHANGING THE SOCIAL CONDITIONS THAT ENABLE AND NORMALISE IT.

3.2. Joint Programming

UNiTE campaign

Launched in 2008 under the leadership of the UN Secretary-General, the UNiTE campaign was created to support the civil society-led 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. Managed by UN Women, UNiTE calls upon governments, civil society, women's organizations, young people, the private sector, media, and the UN system to join forces to address the global pandemic of violence against women and girls. From 25 November to 10 December every year, UNiTE calls on people everywhere to wear the colour orange and take action to end violence against women and girls in communities, at home, in public spaces, in schools and workplaces, during conflict and in times of peace.

In 2022, the UNiTE campaign called for solidarity with women's rights activists and support for feminist movements resisting the rollback on women's rights. In 2023, the focus was on the need for sustained political commitment from all stakeholders, especially increased funding in crisis contexts. In 2024, the campaign drew global attention to the alarming rates of femicide under the theme "Every 10 Minutes, a Woman is Killed. #NoExcuse".

Through joint programming by UN Women and UNFPA, the EU4Gender Equality initiative in the Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) reached

over 41 million people with messages promoting gender equality, challenging stereotypes and preventing violence against women and girls. To promote positive fatherhood, 3,672 men participated in 49 "Papa Schools," which provided parenting skills and encouraged violence-free relationships. The programme also produced resources such as a Papa School Manual, training materials on engaging men during pregnancy and childbirth, and a compendium on fatherhood programmes tailored to national contexts. In its second phase, the programme continues to prioritise GBV prevention with a stronger focus on measuring changes in attitudes towards violence, with results due in 2026.

Joint programming efforts led by UNFPA and UNICEF on **child marriage and FGM** have focused heavily on prevention through community engagement, social norm transformation, and adolescent empowerment. The Global Programme to End Child Marriage has supported girls' agency and voice through life skills education, safe spaces, and peer mentoring, while mobilising parents, religious leaders, and community groups to challenge discriminatory norms. During Phase II of the programme, more than 20 million girls were reached with life skills and comprehensive sexuality education and 66 million community members were engaged in dialogues and consensus building on gender equality and alternatives to child marriage.[44] Similarly, the Joint Programme on FGM has worked across 18 countries to foster community dialogue, promote public declarations of abandonment, and engage traditional practitioners in behaviour change. Both initiatives have leveraged schools, youth clubs, and digital platforms to amplify messages and build youth leadership, contributing to measurable shifts in attitudes and declining rates of support for these harmful practices in several contexts.

Spotlight Initiative

Spotlight Initiative implemented a broad spectrum of prevention interventions across regions, targeting the root causes of violence through legal reform, education, community mobilisation, and norm change strategies. Some 8,000 villages and communities across 17 Spotlight Initiative programmes established advocacy platforms to promote gender-equitable norms, attitudes, and behaviours, with 6 million people participating in community dialogues. In Honduras, the Cure Violence model was introduced in gang-affected areas to shift social norms through community dialogue. Since its launch, violence interrupters have prevented over 1,770 violent incidents. Around 65 per cent of the cases involved preventing femicide.

Engagement of men and boys was another core prevention focus for Spotlight Initiative. Close to 6 million men and boys were educated on positive masculinities, respectful relationships and non-violence conflict resolution. The Initiative promoted positive masculinities through sports, arts, schools, and partnerships with religious and traditional leaders.

Overall, the Initiative's prevention programming contributed to measurable changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours, including increased public awareness of violence as a rights violation and expanded community support for women's and girls' autonomy. It is estimated that by 2025, Spotlight Initiative will have conservatively prevented 21 million women and girls from experiencing gender-based violence.

In the context of ***crises and humanitarian responses***, UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict developed and piloted the *Framework for the Prevention of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence* in Ukraine. This guidance document operationalised primary and secondary prevention strategies and was supported by tools such as the Early Warning Indicators Matrix. The initiative marked a shift from reactive response to anticipatory, coordinated prevention in conflict-affected contexts.

44. UNFPA and UNICEF. 2024. Amplifying change: Harnessing collective power to end child marriage. 2023 annual results and Phase II (2020-2023) report. Available at https://mozambique.unfpa.org/en/publications/amplifying-change-harnessing-collective-power-end-child-marriage

3.3. Individual agency efforts

UN entities contributed to the prevention of VAWG through a broad range of interventions. Transforming discriminatory social norms and harmful gender stereotypes, particularly through community mobilisation, was a central focus of UN agency prevention efforts during the reporting period. UN Women and UNFPA have implemented community mobilisation approaches in multiple regions, including support for the rollout of the SASA! Model. UNFPA worked with traditional and religious leaders across multiple regions, including in West Africa and South Asia, to catalyse norm change and community-based protection systems. IOM carried out community-based programming to address harmful social norms among displaced communities, using peer dialogue, media engagement, and participatory learning. These combined efforts contributed to shifts in community attitudes, improved bystander intervention, and increased support for women's rights and services.

WE NEED TO FOCUS ON EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS, INCLUDING THOSE THAT PROMOTE POSITIVE GENDER NORMS, ATTITUDES, AND BELIEFS THAT ARE CAPTURED IN THE RESPECT FRAMEWORK ON PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS.

Towards Beijing+30 – UNiTE to end violence against women and girls, 25 November 2024

Scaling Community Mobilisation through SASA! Together

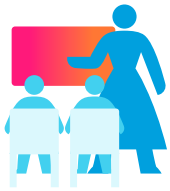
SASA! Together, an evidence-based community mobilisation approach developed by Raising Voices, has been a cornerstone of prevention programming supported by several UN entities, including UNFPA, UN Women, IOM, UNDP and the UNTF during the reporting period. The model focuses on shifting power imbalances in intimate partner relationships and transforming harmful social norms that underpin VAWG. Since 2010, the UN Trust Fund has supported Raising Voices to implement the SASA! methodology across eastern and southern Africa, with a third grant (2024–2026) under the ACT programme strengthening the VAWG Prevention Network in 20 African countries through feminist solidarity, collective care, and practice-based knowledge generation. The approach is featured in the UN Trust Fund's 2021 knowledge brief, *Learning from Practice: Community Mobilization to Prevent Violence against Women*.

The UN Trust Fund has also supported adaptations of SASA! globally: CDM in Honduras mobilized grassroots groups, reaching over 2 million people; CREAW and Trocaire in Kenya tailored the model for pastoralist and faith-based communities; Beyond Borders in Haiti and CWCC in Cambodia adapted it for women and girls with disabilities, reaching thousands directly. The Spotlight Initiative further rolled out SASA! Together in Uganda, training over 1,500 activists and, overall, building the skills of 15,390 community workers estimated to influence nearly 185,000 people.

SASA! Together has also been adapted for humanitarian and displacement-affected contexts, engaging host and displaced communities in norm change, bystander intervention, and collective accountability. These initiatives demonstrate the potential of scaling SASA! Together through grassroots activism, dialogue, and community leadership to prevent violence against women and girls across diverse contexts, with sustained technical support.

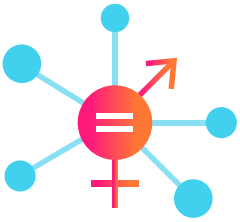
20

million girls were reached with life skills and comprehensive sexuality education



66

million community members were engaged in dialogues and consensus building on gender equality and alternatives to child marriage



Global reach of Phase II of the Global Programme to End Child Marriage

UN entities also focused on engaging **men and boys as allies in prevention**. UN Women advances violence prevention by transforming patriarchal power structures across individual, institutional, and societal levels, as articulated in *Transforming patriarchal masculinities: Learning from practice: Lessons from UN Women DRILS initiative*. Through engagement at the African Union and in Nigeria, the Council of Traditional Leaders in Africa (COTLA) has strengthened evidence and informed policy dialogue on engaging men and boys across the continent and strengthened prevention programming at the country level. At the community level, programs such as the Peaceful Villages initiative in Papua New Guinea have reached over 30,000 women, men, and youth to shift harmful norms, while in Fiji, sport-based prevention programs have engaged athletes and communities to promote positive masculinities and respectful relationships. UNFPA integrated respectful relationships and positive masculinity into sexual and reproductive health programmes for adolescent boys and fathers in the Pacific and Latin America, and together with WHO, UN Women and UNDP, produced *The Do's and Don'ts for Engaging Men and Boys* to guide effective programming. UNFPA also issued internal guidance on perpetrator programmes, setting out conditions for safe and ethical interventions with those who use violence. UNODC trained police in West Africa on power dynamics, communication and GBV prevention, while FAO mobilised male leaders in rural communities to promote shared decision-making and challenge harmful norms. UNHCR supported peer-led gender equality and conflict resolution sessions with male refugee youth. Across these efforts, the aim was to ensure that men's engagement complements women's rights work and contributes to more equitable relationships and safer communities.

To engage **young people** in prevention and change attitudes, UNESCO embedded gender equality within formal education systems, curriculums, teacher trainings, and developed violence-prevention tools for schools. UNESCO also advanced school-based prevention programmes in Latin America and Eastern Europe that engaged youth in designing peer-to-peer education campaigns on gender equality and prevention. UNFPA established youth advisory groups in several countries, ensuring that adolescent voices were included in national policy dialogues and that prevention strategies were youth inclusive. UN Women facilitated the creation of youth-led feminist collectives, including in Malawi, which supported local advocacy on early marriage and VAWG prevention. IOM supported displaced youth to co-design GBV prevention strategies that reflected their lived experiences and priorities. In Thailand, UN Women worked with schools to equip young people and teachers with the skills to challenge harmful norms and champion equality, making classrooms a frontline for preventing violence against women and girls.

UN entities recognised **women's economic empowerment** as a critical pathway to preventing violence by addressing structural inequalities and expanding women's autonomy. ILO embedded violence prevention into community-based livelihood programmes, promoted safe workplaces and addressed discriminatory labour practices through social dialogue and gender-responsive employment policies. It also developed and disseminated practical guidance, training materials, and employer toolkits to prevent workplace sexual harassment, targeting enterprises, trade unions, and vocational training institutions. UN Women supported social protection as a violence prevention intervention through cash transfer initiatives and vocational training programmes that incorporated gender-transformative components aimed at shifting power dynamics within households and communities. FAO implemented rural women's empowerment activities across agriculture and food systems, integrating GBV risk mitigation and economic resilience strategies alongside interventions. UNDP linked economic inclusion with violence prevention through initiatives that promoted women's access to financial services and entrepreneurship training. A consistent thread across these programmes was a clear focus on connecting women's economic empowerment with broader social transformation activities to reduce risks of backlash and to support a shift towards more equal, inclusive communities.

There have also been promising efforts to ensure prevention is prioritised in **national policy frameworks across diverse sectors**. For example, UN Women supported the development of comprehensive national prevention frameworks in Fiji and Samoa, which promoted whole-of-community engagement and cross-sectoral accountability for addressing VAWG. UN Women provided technical assistance to governments developing NAPs with a strong prevention focus, ensuring alignment with global evidence and best practices. UNFPA also prioritised the integration of GBV prevention into sexual and reproductive health services, family planning, and maternal health systems, recognising the importance of embedding prevention in public health infrastructure. WHO supported ministries of health to include primary prevention and early identification of GBV within national health strategies, especially in the context of maternal health and adolescent care. ESCWA provided regional guidance on integrating VAWG prevention priorities into sustainable development strategies across Arab States. The World Bank supported government-led social norms change initiatives and deployed operational tools such as the GBV Risk Mitigation Framework to inform project design and implementation across sectors, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

A growing body of evidence shows that **violence against women and violence against children** are interconnected through shared risk factors, social norms, and life-course pathways, highlighting the need for cross-sector collaboration despite remaining evidence gaps on effective joint strategies. The UN system is addressing these gaps by generating and translating evidence that examines violence across the life course, paying particular attention to how entrenched inequalities and harmful norms compound individuals' vulnerability to violence. For example, UNICEF developed guidance to organizations that care for children on Working at the Intersections of Violence Against Children and Violence Against Women, recognizing that women's safety and autonomy are essential to the children's wellbeing. Programs that support parents and caregivers are rapidly emerging as an intervention that has the potential of reducing both violence against women and violence against children and promoting gender equality, while at the same time improving health and education outcomes.

Prevention in humanitarian and crisis settings has also been a priority. The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) has supported gender-responsive peacebuilding processes in fragile and conflict-affected settings, integrating considerations of VAWG and approaches for prevention within political analysis and UN mission mandates. DPPA has also promoted the participation of women in peace negotiations, recognising the relationship between women's political participation, gender equality and VAWG. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) contributed

to system-wide efforts to prevent conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) through the deployment of Women Protection Advisers, support for CRSV action plans, and mandatory training for peacekeepers on sexual violence prevention in conflict zones. UNODA contributed to system-wide efforts to end VAWG by integrating gender considerations into disarmament and arms control frameworks, providing technical support to Member States on Security Council resolution 1325, and raising awareness on the gendered impacts of explosive weapons and small arms in conflict-affected settings.

Recognizing the importance of co-creating knowledge on what works and best practices in preventing violence against women and girls, the UN Trust Fund to EVAW collaborated with CSOs and WROs to capture and share practice-based insights. Co-created with grantees and researchers and published in 2021 and 2022, the "Prevention Series" identified ten key pathways to prevention - from community mobilization to law reform - emphasizing the vital role of feminist movements in driving impactful, context-specific prevention.[45]

PREVENTION IS OFTEN DEPRIORITISED IN FAVOUR OF SERVICE DELIVERY, WITH LIMITED INVESTMENT IN SUSTAINED NORM CHANGE.

3.4. Gaps and challenges

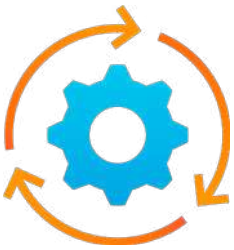
Despite important progress in prevention programming, significant challenges remain in scaling, sustaining, and institutionalising effective efforts across the UN System. Several evaluation reports point to some key lessons:

- **Long-term, community-led norm change remains underfunded and inconsistently supported**, despite numerous UN-supported interventions to address harmful gender norms and attitudes. Interventions that transform beliefs and norms around male privilege and women's subordination require intensive, sustained, multi-level engagement and political backing, factors that are not always present, especially in fragile or conservative settings.[46] Further, prevention is often deprioritised in favour of service delivery, with limited investment in evidence-based approaches for sustained norm change.[47]
- **Standalone economic approaches such as microfinance without gender-transformative components have shown mixed results** in reducing violence and may even increase risks in some cases.[48] Although many agencies support economic empowerment initiatives, combining economic interventions with empowerment training, participatory risk management and community mobilisation is more effective. This holistic approach which shifts the socioeconomic context in which women live, towards a

45. UN Women. 2022. Prevention series: Learning from practice: Lessons on preventing violence from civil society organization funded by the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women. UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women. Available at https://untf.unwomen.org/en/learning-hub/prevention-series
46. World Health Organization. 2019. RESPECT women: Preventing violence against women. Available at https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-RHR-18.19
47. Spotlight Initiative. 2024. Final evaluation report. https://www.spotlightinitiative.org/publications/spotlight-initiative-final-evaluation
48. World Health Organization. 2019. RESPECT women: Preventing violence against women. Available at https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-RHR-18.19

safer, more inclusive, prosperous and fairer society requires additional resources and cross-sector coordination.

- **While adolescent and school-based prevention programming has expanded, efforts remain fragmented.** There is strong evidence to support CSE as an effective prevention strategy, however work with children and youth has often lacked structured curricula, monitoring tools, and follow-up strategies to sustain impact beyond pilot phases.[49]
- **Community-level and public campaigns have reached wide audiences, but many still lack rigorous evaluation or rely on one-off events rather than sustained engagement.** Evidence from the RESPECT framework suggests that integrated, multi-component approaches, including group education, edutainment, and community mobilisation, are more effective but remain underutilised or poorly implemented.[50] Resource limitations and short-term programming often lead to a high prevalence of awareness raising activities, as opposed to evidence-based social norms and behaviour change communications.
- **Challenges persist in ensuring that prevention efforts are inclusive of and tailored to the needs of marginalised groups,** including LGBTQI+ people, persons with disabilities, Indigenous women, and migrants. Intersectionality isn't consistently applied across prevention programming, and prevention strategies rarely addressed the unique drivers of violence faced by excluded populations.[51]
- **Monitoring, evaluation, and scale-up mechanisms remain weak.** The RESPECT framework emphasises the importance of theories of change, context adaptation, and fidelity to core principles during scale-up.[52] However, evaluations found that many UN-supported initiatives lacked clear outcome indicators, baseline data, and mechanisms for documenting change, adaptation and learning. As a result, good practices are not systematically replicated, and evidence-informed prevention risks remaining the exception rather than the norm.[53]



3.5. Implications

Between 2019-2024, prevention has been a strong focus across UN-supported interventions, with a growing emphasis on social norm change, community mobilisation, and engagement of men and boys. Efforts are increasingly evidence-informed, drawing on frameworks such as RESPECT and incorporating youth leadership, digital strategies, and economic empowerment. Yet evaluations point to short funding cycles, limited scale-up, and inconsistent attention to marginalised groups. Moving forward, embedding prevention in national frameworks, scaling effective approaches, and ensuring long-term investments will be essential to shifting the structural drivers of violence.

49. Spotlight Initiative. 2024. Compendium: Lessons learned from prevention programming.
50. World Health Organization. 2019. RESPECT women: Preventing violence against women. Available at https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-RHR-18.19
51. Spotlight Initiative. 2024. Final evaluation report. https://www.spotlightinitiative.org/publications/spotlight-initiative-final-evaluation
52. World Health Organization. 2019. RESPECT women: Preventing violence against women. Available at https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-RHR-18.19
53. Spotlight Initiative. 2024. Final evaluation report. https://www.spotlightinitiative.org/publications/spotlight-initiative-final-evaluation

4. DATA, RESEARCH, MONITORING AND LEARNING

High-quality data and research are essential for informing effective policies, delivering services, monitoring progress, and driving accountability in efforts to end VAWG. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action highlighted that the absence of adequate, gender-disaggregated data made it difficult to design and monitor effective programmes. Since then, international standards have significantly advanced, including the 2013 Agreed Conclusions of the 57th Commission on the Status of Women, which called for the regular collection, analysis, and dissemination of reliable, comparable, and anonymized data across sectors, including police, health, and justice systems. Best practice now recognizes the importance of combining population-based prevalence surveys, administrative data, policy tracking, and emerging or alternative data sources to capture the full scope and nature of VAWG.

Prevalence surveys remain the key tool for estimating how many women experience violence, particularly given reporting rates remain low. Administrative data collected from services such as health, policing, and justice are also critical for understanding sectoral responses, resource needs, and service gaps. The participation of specialized VAWG organizations, grassroots women-led organizations, and experts in the design of data collection tools is considered best practice. Recent years have also seen the growth of policy data and innovative methods, such as more remote survey methodologies and big data analyses of violence in online spaces. These developments are helping to build a more comprehensive and responsive evidence base for eliminating VAWG.

4.1. UN System Action: At a Glance

Between 2019 and 2024, the UN system played a key role in advancing data collection, research, and monitoring on VAWG. UN-supported programming in this area was implemented across multiple regions, working in partnership with national governments, statistical agencies, civil society, and academic institutions. The UN system contributed to strengthening the availability, quality, and use of VAWG data to inform laws, policies, services and programming. These efforts were closely aligned with the monitoring of global commitments, including closing critical data gaps to track progress against the Sustainable Development Goals.

Based on the Inventory submissions, the UN system collectively focussed on these areas:

- **Prevalence and administrative data collection:** UN entities provided technical and financial support for national prevalence surveys, demographic and health surveys with VAWG modules, and other population-based studies. They also strengthened administrative data systems by supporting standardised case classification, harmonised indicators, and disaggregation by sex, age, and other characteristics. In some contexts, this included the integration of VAWG data into routine health, justice, social services information systems. Support was also provided through the implementation of the GBV Information Management System (GBVIMS) in humanitarian contexts.
- **Capacity-strengthening for data collection and use:** UN entities supported training and the development of tools for national statistical offices, government institutions, and frontline service providers to enhance the collection,

analysis, and use of VAWG data. Efforts included support for ethical data protocols, data sharing agreements, and improved reporting mechanisms in both stable and crisis-affected settings.

- **Filling data gaps on under-researched forms of violence:** The UN system supported research and data efforts that addressed historically under-documented areas, such as femicide, conflict-related sexual violence, trafficking in persons, and technology-facilitated VAWG, including through the development of statistical frameworks, global surveys, and survivor-centred monitoring mechanisms.
- **Development of monitoring and accountability frameworks:** UN-supported efforts included the design of indicators and dashboards to track the implementation of national action plans and legal commitments on VAWG. These frameworks helped institutionalise routine monitoring and promoted government accountability for progress on prevention, protection, and response measures.
- **Evaluations and knowledge generation:** Numerous programmes included evaluations and case studies to document what works in different contexts and to identify learning to inform future programming. This has also included engagement and support to civil society, grassroots organizations and women's rights organizations as knowledge producers. This has contributed to the global evidence base on effective strategies, including multisectoral coordination, norm change and survivor-centred care.
- **Humanitarian and crisis data systems:** In displacement and emergency settings, the UN system supported GBVIMS and conflict monitoring tools, helping humanitarian actors to deliver timely, data-driven responses and track patterns of risk and service needs.

Together, these efforts contributed to improved data availability, visibility of diverse forms of violence, and stronger evidence-based policy and programming. However, capacity and investment levels varied by region and data type, with continued reliance on donor funding and limited institutionalisation of national data systems in many contexts.

4.2. Joint Programming

Coordination of the UN System on VAWG research and data was further strengthened from 2019 to 2024. The United Nations Statistics Division continues to serve as the Secretariat of the **Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics.** Since 2006, the group has met annually to assess progress and explore strategies to enhance gender statistics, including data on violence against women, at national and global levels. Each meeting reviews achievements, identifies challenges and gaps, and provides guidance on future efforts to advance gender statistics. In addition, the **Inter-Agency Working Group on VAW Estimation and Data** (VAW-IAWGED) brings together all the co-custodians for SDG target 5.2 indicators, i.e. WHO, UN Women, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNODC and UNSD and meets regularly to exchange updates on VAW data progress and oversee the production of data for SDG target 5.2 indicators.

At the global level, entities advanced **frameworks and standards** to strengthen the evidence base. UNODC and UN Women developed the Statistical Framework for Measuring the Gender-Related Killing of Women and Girls (Femicide/Feminicide), adopted by the UN Statistical Commission in 2021 and now being implemented by multiple countries. They have supported training, piloting in seven countries and produced annual femicide reports through UNODC's global data portal.

A shared emphasis of joint work was placed on **ethical, survivor-centred approaches** that do no harm. During COVID-19, for example, UNFPA, UN Women

and WHO developed a one-page "Decision Tree on Data Collection on VAW and COVID-19," providing clear guidance on when and how data could be collected safely. Translated into 14 languages, the tool was rapidly taken up worldwide and became a global reference for governments, researchers, and service providers.

To galvanize member states to put **women and girls at the centre of their COVID-19 response and recovery plans**, UN Women and UNDP co-created in 2020 the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker. The Gender Response Tracker is a publicly accessible platform that assesses the gender sensitivity of policy measures adopted by Member States in response to the pandemic and provides important data to inform advocacy, policy and programming at global, regional and national levels. The platform is also powered by UNDP and UN Women country offices and by data from WHO, ILO, UNICEF, UNESCO, ESCWA, FAO, the World Bank and the IMF. The tracker captures four categories of national policy measures, including violence against women. The UN Women-UNDP joint report Government responses to COVID-19: Lessons on gender equality for a world in turmoil proposes an assessment of what governments have done to mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic on women and girls, identify gaps, bottlenecks as well as good practices, and develop a sense of the factors that may be associated with a stronger gender response across countries.

UNITED NATIONS ENTITIES PLAYED A PIVOTAL ROLE IN ADVANCING DATA COLLECTION, RESEARCH, AND EVIDENCE USE ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS.

Joint Programme on Violence Against Women Data

The Joint Programme on Violence Against Women (VAW) Data, led by UN Women and WHO, has made significant strides in strengthening national capacities for data collection, analysis, and use related to violence against women and girls (VAWG). The programme filled key data gaps to support evidence-based policymaking and track progress on SDG 5.2 (Eliminate violence against women and girls).

The Joint Programme worked to improve national statistical offices' capacities, developed global technical guidance, and advanced the use of big data and behavioural insights. Key achievements include the production of the first during the SDG era global, regional and national prevalence estimates on physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence (IPV) and the global and regional estimates on non-partner sexual violence (NPSV). The estimates provide, for the first time, accurate and reliable, internationally comparable statistics on violence against women, which are crucial to improve our understanding of the magnitude, nature and impact of this violence and how these may differ across settings and age cohorts, and to monitor changes over time.

Key achievements also include filling methodological gaps on the measurement of violence against women with disability, older women, psychological intimate-partner violence, administrative data and technology-facilitated VAWG; supporting prevalence studies and enhancing administrative data systems in over 20 countries; developing and rolling out tailored regional courses on VAW data production and use in the Arab States and East and Southern Africa regions; and translating data into action notably by operationalizing commitments made through the Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence.

Collectively, the Joint Programme has helped institutionalise VAW data within national statistical systems, improve data comparability, and promote survivor-centred, ethical approaches to evidence generation across development and humanitarian contexts.

Spotlight Initiative

The Spotlight Initiative significantly strengthened national capacities to collect, analyse, and use VAWG data. It supported 55 national statistics offices to align data systems with global standards, contextualise tools, apply ethical methodologies, and integrate VAWG indicators into statistical frameworks. More than 1,150 officers were trained, contributing to a 32 per cent increase in countries supported by the initiative regularly reporting on intimate partner violence.
At the national level the initiative enabled prevalence studies, perception surveys, and disaggregation efforts to better capture the experiences of marginalised groups. It also promoted cross-sector coordination, improving the availability of service and justice sector data.
Knowledge generation and learning were central. The Initiative invested in operational research, evaluations, and documentation of promising practices, producing studies on technology-facilitated violence, costing of interventions, and prevention approaches. Learning exchanges and communities of practice fostered South–South collaboration and the scale-up of effective models, ensuring evidence was applied to programming, policy, and advocacy.
In Central Asia, Spotlight mapped existing SGBV data and convened 85 representatives from statistical, health, psychosocial, and police sectors. The study found that while administrative data are widely collected, they are rarely compiled or published, with gaps in prevalence surveys, systematic attitude assessments, and reporting on psychological, economic, and harmful practices. Recommendations were produced for all countries in the subregion.

SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE PROMOTED CROSS-SECTOR COORDINATION, IMPROVING THE AVAILABILITY OF SERVICE AND JUSTICE SECTOR DATA.

4.3. Individual agency efforts

UN entities played a pivotal role in advancing data collection, research, and evidence use on violence against women and girls (VAWG), strengthening national capacities and generating new insights to inform programming and accountability.

To **enhance data availability**, global databases managed by UN entities were regularly updated and expanded. The World Bank expanded its Women, Business and the Law dataset to include GBV-related indicators, while OHCHR contributed to global monitoring of conflict-related sexual violence through the MARA system. The Global Database on VAWG, managed by UN Women upon establishment by the UN General Assembly, was fully revamped and updated, compiling more than 10,000 entries on policy measures taken by 194 countries and territories to prevent and respond to VAWG.

To **strengthen national statistical capacity,** UN Women advanced harmonised measurement tools on social norms and administrative systems through its Women Count programme. The United Nations Statistics Division convened the bi-annual Global Forum on Gender Statistics and regional workshops to build literacy and improve communication of gender indicators, including on VAWG. Regional Commissions also played a key role: ECLAC co-organised the Regional Forum on Gender Statistics in Latin America, UNECE maintained the Gender Statistics Database, and ESCAP supported projects to enhance resilience of national statistical systems.

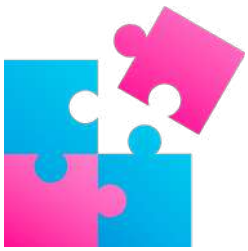
Women Count – Strengthening Gender Data Systems

The Women Count initiative, led by UN Women, represents one of the UN system's most ambitious global efforts to close gender data gaps and improve the availability, quality, and use of statistics to inform policy and action. Since 2016, the programme has worked across countries and regions to strengthen national statistical systems and support gender-responsive policymaking, including on violence against women and girls (VAWG).
Women Count supported governments to institutionalise regular data collection on VAWG, increase investments in national surveys, and strengthen administrative and service-based data systems. The initiative provided technical and financial support for the implementation of prevalence surveys, improvements in data disaggregation (e.g. by disability, age, and location), and the integration of VAWG indicators into SDG monitoring frameworks. During COVID-19, Women Count supported innovative survey tools to understand the nature and extent of VAWG in the context of the pandemic.
It also helped bridge the gap between data production and use by supporting the creation of gender data portals, building capacity among policymakers and journalists, and fostering greater public demand for gender data. In several countries, Women Count contributed directly to national action plans on gender equality and violence prevention by ensuring robust evidence underpinned strategic priorities.

Expanding **prevalence and administrative data systems** remained a priority. UNFPA scaled up its kNOwVAWdata initiative globally, expanding training and technical assistance from Asia-Pacific to Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and the Arab States. The programme broadened its curriculum to address harmful practices such as child marriage, FGM, and sex selection, and has trained officials, researchers, and practitioners who are now leading prevalence surveys and strengthening national data systems. In partnership with regional actors such as ECLAC's Observatory on Gender Equality, UNFPA has also supported tailored regional guidance and learning exchanges, helping countries to improve administrative data, integrate VAWG modules into national surveys, and develop safe, survivor-centred case management systems such as GBVIMS. UNICEF developed the International Classification of Violence against Children (ICVAC), providing operational definitions across all forms of violence. UNICEF complemented these efforts with a brief on measuring technology-facilitated violence against children, applying the ICVAC tool to capture new risks in the digital sphere.

Agencies also invested in understanding **emerging and intersectional forms of violence**. UN Women produced studies on VAW in politics in Ecuador, Türkiye and Uruguay, TF VAWG in the Arab States and in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, violence against LGBTQI+ persons, and the economic costs of VAWG in the Caribbean, while piloting approaches to remotely collect data during crises and applying big data in Asia-Pacific and in Libya to monitor online abuse. UNICRI contributed research on VAWG in the contexts of organised crime, terrorism and radicalisation, while UNRISD examined the structural and economic dimensions of VAWG, including social protection systems and care economies.

Finally, UN entities generated **new qualitative research and evaluations** to inform global learning. The Spotlight Initiative created dedicated knowledge hubs and maintained an evaluation library of close to 200 EVAWG projects. Similarly, the UN Trust Fund to EVAW generated and shared programmatic knowledge products and strategic assessments, ensuring that lessons co-created with civil society partners are widely accessible. In Latin America, UNFPA launched a GBV Community of Practice with members from public institutions and civil society, while the *Prevenir* initiative mapped prevention efforts across the region, and a new "4 Steps Toolkit" was developed with education ministries in seven countries. Together, these contributions demonstrate how diverse UN entities are filling evidence gaps, strengthening accountability frameworks, and building the global knowledge base to end violence against women and girls.



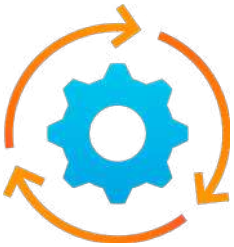
4.4. Gaps and challenges

Despite notable progress, persistent gaps undermine Member States' ability to generate, use, and promote high-quality, harmonised data and evidence on VAWG. Insights from evaluations and technical guidance reveal several key areas requiring attention.

- **Lack of integration and coordination remains a core challenge.** National VAWG data systems often lack integration across health, justice, and social sectors, with weak coordination between duty-bearers and data producers. Despite efforts to align with international standards, there is limited interoperability between systems, hampering comprehensive case tracking and survivor-centred monitoring. Evaluations highlight a "siloed approach to information systems" and noted that multiple actors often collect data using different tools, leading to duplication and data fatigue among frontline actors.[54]
- **Capacity constraints continue to affect the quality and frequency of data collection.** Several countries still lack the resources and technical capabilities to conduct VAWG prevalence surveys or to maintain routine administrative data collection that meets global standards. Even where data is collected, analytical capacity remains limited, affecting the production of actionable insights for policymaking and service delivery.[55] Weak case management systems also undermine coordinated administrative data collection systems.
- **The use of data for decision-making is uneven.** While awareness of the importance of VAWG data has increased, evidence uptake by national actors remains inconsistent. Challenges include limited institutional mechanisms to translate data into programming, underutilised data dashboards, and insufficient political will to fund and act on research findings.[56] Evaluations noted that many national stakeholders "were aware of data tools developed but had not applied them in practice", pointing to a disconnect between technical products, uptake and policy influence.[57]
- **Ethical and safety standards for VAWG data collection are not consistently upheld.** While various guidelines set out best practice principles, evaluations have found that adherence to survivor-centred and ethical protocols was variable, especially in conflict and humanitarian settings.[58] Risks to confidentiality, safety, and informed consent remain in contexts where capacity is low or political sensitivity is high.
- **Limited knowledge and capacity on technology and data collection.** Technology is increasingly used to collect, store and analyse VAWG data, but safeguards are not consistently applied. While digital tools enable efficiency, they also heighten risks to confidentiality and security, as most technology providers are not designed to protect sensitive survivor data.[59] This can leave survivors, organisations and governments vulnerable to targeting.[60] The rapid uptake of artificial intelligence, particularly generative AI, compounds these risks: unrepresentative datasets, mislabelled training data and algorithmic bias can reinforce harmful gender norms, meaning that poorly governed AI analyses may inadvertently entrench stereotypes and exacerbate violence rather than prevent it.[61]

54. UN Women and WHO. 2023. Final evaluation of the joint programme on VAW data. Available at https://www.unevaluation.org/member_publications/un-women-who-global-joint-programme-violence-against-women-data-end-term
55. *Ibid.*
56. *Ibid.*
57. *Ibid.*
58. *Ibid.*
59. UNFPA. 2023. Guidance on the safe and ethical use of technology to address gender-based violence and harmful practices: Implementation summary. Available at https://www.unfpa.org/publications/safe-ethical-tech-gbv
60. *Ibid.*
61. *Ibid.*

Data gaps persist on the experiences of marginalized groups. Many data systems fail to disaggregate by age, disability, ethnicity, migration status, or sexual orientation and gender identity. As a result, the experiences of marginalised women and girls remain invisible in many official statistics. While some progress has been made (e.g. in developing intersectional indicators), efforts to mainstream inclusive data practices are still nascent and often project based.[62]



4.5. Implications

The UN system has contributed significantly to improving the availability and quality of data on VAWG, supporting prevalence surveys, administrative data systems, and efforts to fill knowledge gaps on under-researched groups and forms of violence. Initiatives have strengthened both national capacity and system-wide coordination. However, gaps remain in the institutionalisation of data systems, use of evidence for decision-making, and funding for national ownership. Investing in sustainable, disaggregated, and ethically collected data remains essential for informing policy, tracking progress, and ensuring accountability.

5. SUPPORT FOR CIVIL SOCIETY AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS

Women's rights organizations and feminist movements have long been recognized as essential drivers of progress in eliminating VAWG, particularly in shaping policies, informing prevention and response strategies, and leading community-level interventions. Research shows that countries with strong and autonomous feminist movements are significantly more likely to adopt comprehensive policies to address VAWG.[63] Feminist organizations play a critical role not only in advocacy and accountability but also in the design and delivery of prevention programs and support services, often reaching the most marginalized women and girls. During the COVID-19 pandemic, countries with stronger feminist mobilization adopted more measures to address VAWG, underscoring the central role of these organizations in crisis response as well as long-term systems change.[64]

Best practice emphasizes the need to create enabling conditions that support the leadership and sustainability of women's rights organizations.65 This includes providing quality, flexible, core, and long-term funding, ensuring meaningful participation of women's rights organizations in the development of laws, policies, services, and prevention programmes, as well as strengthening accountability mechanisms that require government institutions and the private sector to respond to the priorities of feminist movements. It is also essential to establish spaces that facilitate feminist movement-building and to improve protections for women's rights defenders who face violence, harassment, and threats.

62. UN Women and WHO. 2023. Final evaluation of the joint programme on VAW data. Available at https://www.unevaluation.org/member_publications/un-women-who-global-joint-programme-violence-against-women-data-end-term

63. Htun, M., & Weldon, S. L. 2012. The civic origins of progressive policy change: Combating violence against women in global perspective, 1975–2005. American Political Science Review, 106(3), 548-569.

64. UN Women and UNDP. 2022. Government responses to COVID-19: Lessons on gender equality for a world in turmoil. Available at https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/06/government-responses-to-covid-19-lessons-on-gender-equality-for-a-world-in-turmoil

65. Spotlight Initiative. N.d. Women's movements. https://www.spotlightinitiative.org/womens-movements

5.1. UN System Action: At a glance

Between 2019 and 2024, the UN system consistently prioritised engagement with civil society, particularly women's rights organizations (WROs), recognising their leadership in advancing prevention, protection, and accountability for violence against women and girls. Programming across multiple regions reflected a growing system-wide shift toward more equitable partnerships with feminist movements, including expanded core funding and structured participation in policy and governance processes. Common areas of focus included:

- **Feminist movement strengthening:** Initiatives increasingly focused on building long-term movement resilience through collective learning, digital advocacy, intergenerational leadership training, and supporting feminist organising platforms.
- **Support to women's rights organizations and movements:** UN entities provided flexible funding, technical support, and capacity-building to grassroots and national-level WROs, including those led by and for marginalised groups such as migrant women, LGBTQI+ people, and women with disabilities.
- **Civil society participation in governance and accountability mechanisms:** UN-supported programmes facilitated WRO engagement in legislative reform processes, national action plan development, inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms, and crisis response platforms. There has also been support for civil society to engage with human rights bodies through shadow reporting.
- **Transforming UN partnerships with civil society:** Across the UN system, efforts were made to shift how the UN funds, collaborates with, and is accountable to feminist actors. This included removing administrative and institutional barriers to funding for women's rights organizations, providing more flexible and core funding aligned with feminist principles, and supporting civil society leadership in programme design, implementation, and monitoring. Mechanisms were also strengthened to enable co-learning, collective advocacy, and mutual accountability, including through global convenings, civil society reference groups, and dedicated funding for knowledge generation by grassroots actors.
- **Knowledge generation and amplification of grassroots voices:** UN entities worked with WROs to document local innovations, shape global guidance, and influence policy through participatory research, thematic convenings, and south-south learning exchanges.

These efforts contributed to a stronger enabling environment for feminist action and accountability at all levels, although resourcing and political space for civil society remained uneven across regions.

ACROSS THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM, EFFORTS WERE MADE TO SHIFT HOW THE UN FUNDS, COLLABORATES WITH, AND IS ACCOUNTABLE TO FEMINIST ACTORS.

5.2. Joint Programming

Spotlight Initiative

Spotlight Initiative has partnered with more than 1,000 civil society organizations (CSOs) across 32 countries, offering both financial and technical support for service provision, legal reform, prevention, and movement-building. During this period, Spotlight Initiative channelled more than USD 195 million to civil society organizations. Approximately 70 percent of Spotlight Initiative grantees were women's rights organizations, many operating at the grassroots level and in fragile or under-resourced contexts. The Initiative not only provided direct funding, but also supported grantees through capacity-building, joint programming, and peer learning mechanisms tailored to local needs and their own feminist priorities.

Spotlight Initiative's approach to movement-building focused on both sustainability and solidarity. In the Caribbean, regional programming fostered intergenerational feminist leadership, facilitating knowledge-sharing across islands and elevating young women's voices in national policy spaces. In the Pacific, women-led coalitions were given the opportunity and tools to co-develop national prevention frameworks and expand service coverage through community-based networks. Across Africa, Spotlight Initiative supported CSOs to promote inclusive policing models, shape legislative reforms, and strengthen accountability mechanisms, including through community monitoring of gender-responsive budgets. In Mozambique, civil society partners influenced national and subnational budgeting processes for violence prevention. In Nigeria, the Initiative supported CSOs to co-design community-based accountability frameworks that improved survivor access to justice and services.

At the regional level in Latin America, Spotlight Initiative supported the development of the Esperanza Protocol, the first international framework for investigating violence against women human rights defenders. This framework was developed through broad-based consultations with more than 100 human rights defenders and 20 civil society organizations. It has since guided legal and policy efforts in several countries and positioned feminist movements as co-creators of international human rights standards.

The Initiative also prioritised capacity development in partnership with women's rights organizations. Over 5,500 women's rights organizations and feminist movements received support to strengthen internal systems, engage in policy advocacy, and expand service coverage. Spotlight Initiative's support enabled these actors to participate in law reform, monitor implementation, and hold governments accountable to gender equality commitments.

In Southeast Asia, the Spotlight Initiative's programme "Safe and Fair" worked closely with civil society, trade unions and women's organisations across ASEAN, strengthening over 250 partnerships to expand referral services, build migrant women workers' leadership, and ensure their voices shaped policies on ending violence and safe migration. These achievements reflect a system-wide commitment to resourcing, protecting, and learning from feminist civil society as a vital force for change.

5.3. Individual agency efforts

Across the UN system, individual agencies have taken concerted action to support feminist and civil society actors through funding, capacity development, feminist movement-building, and participatory approaches to programming.

UN entities have provided sustained funding and tailored capacity development to strengthen women's rights organizations operating in complex and under-resourced environments. The UN Trust Fund to EVAWG provides core, long-term, and flexible grants that empower resilient civil society, and women›s rights organizations to lead effective, context-driven interventions. UN Women's ACT programme, launched in partnership with the European Union and the UN Trust Fund, provided targeted grants to women's rights organizations and convened global dialogues on feminist movement building and resilience. IOM facilitated access to funding for women-led organizations through flexible mechanisms that removed administrative barriers and enabled local actors to lead coordination and decision-making in emergency contexts. UNFPA also prioritised increased resourcing for women-led organisations, developing internal guidance to strengthen their selection and support in humanitarian settings.

UNITED NATIONS ENTITIES HAVE PROVIDED SUSTAINED FUNDING AND TAILORED CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT TO STRENGTHEN WOMEN'S RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING IN COMPLEX AND UNDER-RESOURCED ENVIRONMENTS.

213

Between 2019 and 2024, the UN Trust Fund supported 213 initiatives aimed at preventing and addressing violence against women and girls in over 70 countries and territories across five regions, with a total grants value of $102 million

67%

Since 2018, the UN Trust Fund has provided support exclusively to CSO initiatives, of which 67 per cent between 2019 and 2024 were led by women's rights organisations

150M

Between 2019–2024, the UN Trust Fund's partner organisations have reached over 150 million people in initiatives to end violence against women

Global reach of the United Nations Trust fund to End Violence against Women and Girls in 2019-2024

UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women and Girls

Between 2019 and 2024, the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women and Girls (UN Trust Fund) remained one of the most significant global funding mechanisms dedicated exclusively to supporting civil society efforts to end violence against women and girls. Established by General Assembly resolution 50/166 in 1996 and managed by UN Women, it is the only global, interagency grant-making mechanism exclusively focused on ending violence against women.

Between 2019 and 2024, the UN Trust Fund supported 213 initiatives aimed at preventing and addressing violence against women and girls in over 70 countries and territories across five regions, with a total grants value of $102 million. Since 2018, the UN Trust Fund has provided support exclusively to CSO initiatives, of which 67 per cent between 2019 and 2024 were led by women's rights organisations.

Between 2019–2024, the UN Trust Fund's partner organisations have reached over 150 million people in initiatives to end violence against women.

These grants supported interventions in its three outcome areas: prevention, access to essential services, and strengthening laws and policies. Beyond grant-making, the UN Trust Fund to EVAW provided core, flexible and long-term funding combined with technical accompaniment, and tailored capacity-building to strengthen organizational effectiveness and resilience. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the UN Trust Fund to EVAW adapted flexibly to emerging needs, enabling grantees to sustain essential services, transition to remote modalities, and address increased risks of violence.

UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women and Girls

The support to CSOs and WROs has gone beyond traditional grant making by centring long-term accompaniment, collective learning, and feminist principles. It introduced innovative modalities such as the SHINE platform, a multilingual online hub which promotes knowledge exchange and peer-to-peer learning. It also launched the ACT initiative to support collective action, care, and transformation among WROs. Under ACT, eight feminist organizations received tailored grants and participated in a global gathering in 2024 on feminist organising and resilience.

The UN Trust Fund invests in sustainable change through demand-driven initiatives led by civil society organizations worldwide, particularly those operating at the grassroots level, focused on women's rights, and led by women. This approach ensures that the long-term (minimum 3 years), flexible, and core funding directly supports initiatives that are relevant to the needs and priorities of women and girls in their context, and the civil society organizations that serve them.

To **strengthen feminist leadership and collective action,** UN entities invested in movement-building, community organising, and leadership development. UN Women amplified feminist voices by engaging digital rights and technology activists, and through youth and civil society leadership programmes. Its ACT programme provided flexible funding, strengthened coalitions, and facilitated cross-regional learning, while also supporting feminist advocacy to counter backlash. In Asia, UN Women partnered with the Asia Network to End GBV, a civil society-driven network advocating for survivor-centred prevention and response. UNFPA strengthened support for women-led organisations by developing internal guidance to improve their selection and resourcing, directing a significant share of humanitarian funding to WROs. In Latin America and the Caribbean, it worked with regional feminist and youth networks to systematise good practices and advance

intersectional approaches, partnering with groups such as CLADEM, Equimundo, ECMIA and the Afro-Latin women's network.

UN entities also played a convening role, **linking civil society with decision-makers** to influence policy and programme design. UN Women facilitated inclusive consultations in Fiji, Trinidad and Tobago, and Samoa to co-develop national action plans and prevention frameworks. UNDP supported women's coalitions in transitional justice and peacebuilding processes, while FAO worked with rural and Indigenous women's groups to integrate GBV prevention into agriculture and food security programmes.

Civil society engagement was embedded **across programming**. UN entities supported the development of the Esperanza Protocol in Latin America through several years of global consultation including 600+ human rights defenders, judicial experts, the UN and Organization of American States mandate holders, UNODC partnered with legal advocacy groups in Mexico, Nigeria and Viet Nam to provide legal aid and survivor-centred litigation tools, and UNHCR worked with refugee-led organisations in Kenya, Uganda and Lebanon to deliver culturally relevant services. UNESCO engaged youth-led groups in Africa and Latin America to co-create gender-responsive education initiatives, while WFP supported women-led organisations in humanitarian protection and coordination mechanisms in South Sudan and the Sahel.

Together, these efforts reflect the UN system's recognition of feminist leadership, lived experience, and community-rooted expertise as central to ending violence against women and girls. By resourcing local organisations, embedding feminist knowledge into programme cycles, and supporting coalition-building, UN entities have promoted more inclusive, transformative, and sustainable approaches to prevention and response.

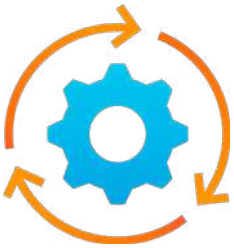
5.4. Gaps and challenges

Despite important progress, persistent gaps and barriers continue to impact support for women's rights organizations to prevent and respond to VAWG. The following section outlines where further efforts are needed.

- **Limited and uneven resourcing of feminist and grassroots organizations persists.** While UN entities have increasingly recognised the centrality of feminist civil society in ending VAWG, financial and technical support remains fragmented and inconsistent. Assessment found that despite efforts to channel more resources to women's rights organizations, many local actors continued to face barriers accessing funding due to complex requirements and short funding cycles. This challenge was echoed in multiple Inventory submissions, which noted that support to civil society was often short-term and insufficient to sustain movements or enable meaningful institutional development.
- **CSOs are facing backlash, shrinking civic space and increased safety concerns.** Those working in politically sensitive environments or advocating for the rights of marginalised women and LGBTQI+ people, frequently reported facing backlash, violence, harassment, threats, and restrictions on their work. Several UN entities flagged the need for greater investment in protection mechanisms for human rights defenders, alongside efforts to safeguard digital and physical civic space.[66] The Esperanza Protocol emerged as a response to this protection gap, but wider implementation and uptake remain limited.

66. UN Women, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNDP, and UN Trust Fund. 2024. Spotlight Initiative thematic assessment: Civil society engagement and women's movement building.

- **Tokenistic engagement remains a challenge.** Although participatory approaches have become more common in UN programming, some civil society actors raised concerns about superficial consultation, extractive engagement in data collection, or limited influence over programme design and decision-making. Evaluations note that power imbalances persisted in joint programming processes, with civil society often treated as implementers rather than equal partners in agenda setting and governance.[67]
- **Underrepresentation of marginalised groups hampers intersectional approaches.** Inventory submissions and evaluation reports indicate that while efforts were made to reach diverse civil society actors,[68] organizations led by Indigenous women, persons with disabilities, LGBTQI+ people, and migrants were underrepresented in many political and programmatic spaces. Applying the Leaving No One Behind commitment to working in civil society should be prioritised to ensure a more systematic commitment to intersectionality and tailored support which responds to the needs and priorities of minoritised organizations.
- **Investment in feminist movement building is limited and short-term.** While many UN-supported initiatives involved CSOs in service delivery or awareness campaigns, fewer focused on building the long-term organising power of feminist movements. Evaluations noted a tendency to fund project-based interventions as opposed to sustained movement-building approaches.[69] This limited the UN system's ability to contribute meaningfully to structural change led by civil society actors.



5.5. Implications

The UN system's engagement with civil society, including women's rights organizations, feminist movements and community-based actors, has been central to advancing the EVAWG agenda. Support ranged from capacity strengthening and funding access to partnership in service delivery, legal reform and norm change. However, structural barriers persist: funding remains unpredictable and often project-based, limiting sustainability; engagement is not always equitable or accessible to smaller, grassroots or marginalised groups; and shrinking civic space in many contexts poses major risks to activists and their organizations. Looking ahead, UN entities have an opportunity to further institutionalise and resource partnerships with civil society as strategic actors, including through core funding mechanisms, co-creation of programmes and advancing efforts to protect civic spaces. Finding ways to meaningfully support movements and go beyond conventional project-based activity funding will be important. Collectively, these approaches will be critical to ensuring that EVAWG efforts are locally grounded, survivor-centred and responsive to community needs.

67. Spotlight Initiative. 2024. Final evaluation report. Available at https://www.spotlightinitiative.org/publications/spotlight-initiative-final-evaluation
68. UN Women, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNDP, and UN Trust Fund. 2024. Spotlight Initiative thematic assessment: Civil society engagement and women's movement building.
69. Spotlight Initiative. 2024. Final evaluation report. Available at https://www.spotlightinitiative.org/publications/spotlight-initiative-final-evaluation

4

CONCLUSIONS AND OUR COMMITMENT

CONCLUSIONS

Over the past five years, the UN System adapted to changing patterns and emerging forms of violence and multiple crises. The UN System has advanced collective efforts to end VAWG through strengthened coordination, advancing normative frameworks and standards, delivering evidence-based programming, and sustained partnerships with civil society, the private sector, and Member States. Work across multiple regions has shown that coordinated UN action, when rooted in human rights principles, and implemented with local leadership, can, prevent violence, empower women and girls, and contribute to inclusive, peaceful and sustainable development.

During this period, there has been important progress in setting new normative standards on VAWG. The UN System's focus on setting new international norms, resolutions and monitoring adherence to commitments has enabled a foundational shift in global, regional and national approaches to VAWG. The UN System's drive towards coordination and joint programming has generated initiates that are greater than the sum of their parts. By leveraging the separate and distinct mandates, expertise and networks of different UN entities, joint programmes have been able to maximise resources and deliver comprehensive EVAWG programmes in a range of settings from stable development contexts to humanitarian crises, reaching survivors in remote, hard to reach settings.

A primary focus of programming has been supporting laws and policy frameworks. Through UN System support, countries have strengthened legal protections for survivors, aligning laws with international human rights standards. Crucially, many of these advances were driven by partnerships with civil society and informed by survivors.

The UN System's focus on rolling out essential services is significant because it moves beyond short term service provision to institutional strengthening, ensuring that women and girls receive consistent, quality, survivor-centred support regardless of their identities or location. In 2022-2023 alone, through the Essential Services Package joint programme, 55 countries scaled-up essential services aligned with international standards and best practice. In response to COVID-19, programmes pivoted to ensure remote service delivery was available to those in need.

Evidence-based prevention approaches have been a major priority for the UN System. Through the Spotlight Initiative, it is estimated that by 2025, 21 million women and girls will have been prevented from experiencing violence. Across multiple regions, the UN System has worked in partnership with women's rights organizations, schools, media, governments and traditional leaders to connect with youth, men and boys, and communities to shift harmful norms, using tools like the RESPECT Framework. Prevention remains an integral, but too often underfunded element of EVAWG activities.

The UN System has supported data collection and capacity-building across multiple regions, focusing on expanding national prevalence studies, administrative data integration, data dashboards, national statistics, and building evidence around under-researched forms of violence such as femicide, trafficking, and TF VAWG. This systematic focus on data is a sustainable contribution to the fight against VAWG, it enables informed decisions, exposes gaps in reach, as well as hidden or emerging VAWG trends, and ensures that responses are evidence-based and accountable.

The UN System's support to women's rights organizations, feminist movements and civil society more broadly has been essential to preventing and responding to violence. Major joint programmes and initiatives, such as the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women and Women Peace and Humanitarian Fund have prioritised partnerships with civil society. Through Spotlight Initiative alone,

nearly $195 million was channelled directly to civil society actors and over 5,000 local women's rights organizations reported an increase in agency and influence. Feminist and women's rights organisations continue to operate under chronic financial insecurity, in shrinking civic spaces, and often at risk to their safety. In some settings, political backlash has undermined hard-won gains, underscoring the fragility of progress.

Yet significant challenges remain. While many countries have strengthened their legal frameworks, implementation and enforcement often lags behind. This is compounded by insufficient funding, particularly for grassroots women's rights organizations that are on the front lines of prevention and response. Despite improvements in coordination, evidence-based interventions are insufficiently integrated into national systems or scaled up for wider impact. The delivery of essential services continues to be undermined by a lack of sustained investment in systems and institutions. Too often, efforts rely on short-term, project-based approaches that are not embedded within NAPs, strategies or adequately resourced by national governments. High staff turnover and risks around vicarious trauma or burnout are important issues that must be considered in strengthening service delivery. Building a truly effective and inclusive service delivery system requires long-term, predictable investment in institutions, human resources, along with a commitment to survivor-centred approaches and leaving no one behind.

This is amongst the backdrop of the intensifying backlash against gender equality, human rights, and feminist organizing. Anti-gender movements and political resistance are undermining hard-won gains, weakening protections, and shrinking the civic space needed for advocacy and accountability. Additionally, while data systems have improved, many countries still lack high-quality, disaggregated, and regularly updated data, especially on marginalized populations such as Indigenous women, LGBTQI+ individuals, and women with disabilities. These gaps hinder evidence-based policymaking and obscure the full scope of violence. Marginalized groups also continue to face disproportionate barriers to accessing services, particularly in humanitarian or rural, remote contexts. Furthermore, while community-led prevention initiatives show promise, changing deeply entrenched social norms and gender power dynamics is a long-term process. Without sustained investment, political commitment, and local ownership, the risk remains that even the most promising impactful interventions will be short-lived and with untapped potential to drive the systematic change required to end VAWG for the long term.

Additionally, accelerating climate change is amplifying the drivers and risks of violence against women and girls. More frequent and severe climate shocks are eroding livelihoods, displacing communities, and straining protection systems, creating conditions where exploitation, child marriage, intimate partner violence, and trafficking increase. Yet many countries still lack gender-responsive, localized and integrated climate and VAWG policies and data, making it difficult to design targeted prevention and response measures. Women most affected by climate impacts also face major barriers to participating in decision-making or accessing adaptation resources, further entrenching inequality.

Ending VAWG is a prerequisite for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and fulfilling the UN's mandates across peace, development, and human rights. As the UN marks its 80th anniversary and Member States reflect on 30 years since the Beijing Platform for Action, system-wide efforts on EVAWG stand as a case study in operationalising the "One UN" model. Looking ahead, deeper coherence, sustained investment, and a renewed focus on inclusion and accountability will be essential to close persistent gaps and accelerate progress.

1. A COMMITMENT TO DELIVER AS ONE

Eliminating VAWG by 2030 is only possible if all parties, including the United Nations system, stand together with a shared vision and bold leadership, while recognizing the key role of women's rights organizations in driving change. Amid overlapping crises and intensifying backlash, the system recommits to delivering as one, working with greater coherence, efficiency and resolve across its diverse mandates.

Moving forward, the United Nations system will:

1.1. Stand together to turn commitments into concrete actions

It will closely monitor the translation of global, regional and national commitments and policies into investments in systems, services and institutions that make the right to live free from VAWG a reality. Coordinating support to Member States, in close partnership with women's rights organisations, will help to secure the necessary expertise, knowledge and resources to achieve the bold commitments to zero violence by 2030 that were made in the Beijing+30 Action Agenda. The United Nations will resist backlash, defend hard-won gains, and anticipate and respond to new and emerging forms of violence and risks.

1.2. Coordinate to achieve evidence-based impacts at scale

The costs of VAWG are enormous. The latest estimates suggest that they could amount to around 2 per cent of global Gross Domestic Product. Needs are rising and global resources are shrinking. The United Nations will further develop evidence and modelling approaches to duplicate the most high-impact interventions at scale. Stronger coordination will maximize resources, further leverage United Nations expertise and avoid duplication through stepped-up joint programming. Integrating and elevating actions to end VAWG in joint programming and country-level processes, including Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, should help prioritize and embed these efforts in political engagement and programme planning. Improved tracking of financial contributions and results should demonstrate how the combination of actions by the different specialised United Nations entities enables to achieve transformative impact.

1.3. Strengthen partnerships for sustainable, locally led transformation

VAWG exists in every country, community and context. Responses must be everywhere too – embedded across sectors, institutions and levels of society, both online and offline. Ending VAWG demands a whole-of-society approach. The United Nations system must continue deepening collaboration with governments, women's rights organizations, civil society, the private sector and communities to prevent and respond at scale and with sustainable, meaningful impacts. Continued support to locally led and owned solutions is key. High-quality partnership with women's rights organizations, including through multi-year and core funding, is essential. Women's rights organizations are the first to respond to the impacts of VAWG on individuals and communities, and they remain engaged long after the headlines fade.

Looking at the achievements and challenges between 2019-2024 help the UN System determine the path ahead. It reveals where progress has been made, where gaps remain, and where urgent effort is needed to turn commitments into action. Together, we can fulfil the promise of the 2030 Agenda: a world where all women and girls live free from violence.

UN WOMEN EXISTS TO ADVANCE WOMEN'S RIGHTS, GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS.

As the lead United Nations entity on gender equality and secretariat of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, we shift laws, institutions, social norms and services to close the gender gap and build an equal world for all women and girls. Our partnerships with governments, women's movements and the private sector, coupled with our coordination of the broader United Nations, deliver lasting changes. We make strides in four areas: leadership, economic empowerment, freedom from violence, and peace, security and humanitarian action.

UN Women keeps the rights of women and girls at the centre of global progress – always, everywhere. Because gender equality is not just what we do. It is who we are.

UN WOMEN

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