

Questions and Answers: EU-UN Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls



What is the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls?

In September 2017, the EU and the UN launched an ambitious joint partnership to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls worldwide. It aims at mobilising commitment of political leaders and contributing to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and more specifically [Goal 5 on Gender Equality](#) and Goal 16 on inclusive and peaceful societies. It does so by building new multi-stakeholder partnerships and providing large-scale, targeted support, backed by an initial dedicated financial envelope from the EU of €500 million.

The Initiative aims at ending on all forms of violence against women and girls, targeting those that are most prevalent and contribute to gender inequality across the world.

The Spotlight Initiative will deploy targeted, large-scale investments in Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Pacific and the Caribbean, aimed at achieving significant improvements in the lives of women and girls.

Which countries are covered by the Spotlight Initiative around the world and which forms of violence?

In **Africa**, Spotlight aims to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence, including harmful practices. The programme worth €250 million is under implementation across Liberia, Malawi, Mali Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Uganda and Zimbabwe. It will also include a regional component to scale up existing initiatives on fighting female genital mutilation and child marriage and joint activities with the Africa Union.

In **Asia**, the Spotlight Initiative is focussing on ending female trafficking and labour exploitation. The “Safe and Fair” programme, worth €25 million and implemented through the International Labour Organization and UN Women, aims at ensuring that labour migration is safe and fair for all women in the ASEAN region. It focusses on countries of origin – Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Philippines, Vietnam – and countries of destination – Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand.

Further, €32 million are devoted to projects addressing gender-based violence

in “forgotten crises”. The initiative is now rolling out and includes activities in Yemen, Iraq and Palestine, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Sudan, Mali and Chad; Ghana, Liberia and Mali.

In **Latin America**, the €50 million initiative focuses on ending femicide, with targeted programmes in Argentina, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico, and on empowering regional networks.

The **Pacific** regional Spotlight programme was launched last March with a budget of €50 million and focuses on ending domestic violence in the region.

This will be followed by actions to tackle family violence in the **Caribbean region**, supported by an envelope of €50 million; the countries selected are Haiti, Jamaica, Grenada, Belize, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Why is the Spotlight Initiative focusing today on the Pacific region and on domestic violence?

The Family Health and Safety Studies (FHSS) conducted by UNFPA across 11 Pacific countries show the high rates of violence against women and girls in the region: e.g. 68% of women in Kiribati, and 64% of women in Fiji and Solomon Islands experience physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner over their lifetime. In Timor-Leste, a 2016 Asia Foundation prevalence study found that 59% of women experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner over their lifetime [\[1\]](#). In Solomon Islands, 37% of women report that they have been sexually abused before age 15. The most common perpetrators were: boyfriend (36%), stranger (24%), family member (20%) and male friend of family (16%). Many incidents of sexual violence involve young girls and children living with extended family, who are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse, e.g. children from outer islands sent to live in urban centres to complete secondary education.

The objective therefore is to intervene to prevent violence against women and girls addressing the root causes of gender inequality and of violence: with activities like advocacy for policy and legislative reform where needed, and law enforcement. Prevention through formal and informal education, community based dialogue and initiatives; involving men, especially traditional leaders and faith-based organisations; access to quality services (health, social services, police and justice) for the victims; training and capacity building targeting teachers, lawyers, social workers, police forces, civil servants; media campaign to change perception.

The programme can count on an envelope of €50 million.

Why is the Spotlight Initiative focusing on Africa and why FGM and child marriage?

FGM and child marriage have reached epidemic levels in Africa. Female genital mutilation has been documented in 30 countries, mainly in Africa. Based on rigorous evaluation of criteria the following countries were selected under the Spotlight Initiative: Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

Why is the Spotlight Initiative focusing on femicide in Latin America?

Femicide has reached epidemic levels in Latin America. The region is home to 14 of the 25 countries with the highest rates of femicide in the world, where 12 women are assassinated every day.

The Spotlight Initiative in Latin America will focus on eliminating femicide in five countries: Argentina, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico. These countries were selected on the basis of agreed criteria including the level of femicide prevalence in the country and secondary criteria, which assessed the government's commitment to the issue, in addition to an enabling environment including for civil society, national and partner capacities.

In 2016, there were 254 femicides in Argentina, 349 in El Salvador, 211 in Guatemala, 466 in Honduras and 2,813 in Mexico.

Femicide is the most prevalent form of violence against women in the region. Ninety-eight per cent of femicides in the region go unprosecuted.

What is FGM?

Female genital mutilation consists of the (partial or complete) removal of the external female genitalia, and the infliction of other injuries to the female genitalia for no medical reasons. The EU contributes to eliminating FGM/C globally.

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About child marriage.

Some 700 million girls and women alive today were married as children, and a further 280 million girls alive today will be married by age 18 if this issue is not tackled with urgency. This is one of the reasons forced child marriage was included in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under goal number 5 on gender equality, on which the EU is a fierce defender and supporter together with many international partners.

What is femicide?

Femicide is when a woman or girl falls victim to an attack and is killed merely because of her gender. It is rooted in gender inequality, social, cultural or religious norms and attitudes within traditional societies.

What is the European Union doing concretely against gender-based violence in developing countries?

The EU is strongly committed to gender equality, the empowerment of women of

all ages and the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls around the world. The European Consensus on Development identifies gender equality and women's empowerment as a critical cross-cutting issue in EU development cooperation. The Agenda 2030 has put gender equality and women's empowerment firmly at the centre of the SDGs, not only through the stand-alone SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 16 on peaceful societies, but also as a cross-cutting element central to the achievement of all 17 SDGs. The EU's work is guided by the key objectives stipulated in the EU's Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy, the new European Consensus on Development and the EU Gender Action Plan II.

The EU's Gender Action Plan 2016-2020 has set an ambitious target to mainstream gender actions across 85% of all new EU initiatives by 2020. Significant progress has been made:

92% of all new initiatives adopted in area of the EU's foreign policy and around 60% of all new initiatives adopted in the EU's International cooperation and development work have been marked as mainly or significantly aiming at promoting gender equality and/or women empowerment.

The actions supported by the EU around the world, include indicatively:

- Support to the UNFPA/UNICEF joint programme on ending female genital mutilation in 16 Sub-Saharan countries, aimed at engaging with civil society organizations, men and boys, traditional leaders etc., as to change the social norms, which make the mutilation so largely practiced. (€12 million)
- In Zambia, a programme aiming at strengthening the institutional capacity of the national authorities to fight against sexual and gender based violence, to prevent it, to change the social norms and mind set which lead to discrimination and violence, and to improve access to comprehensive services for victims. (€25 million)
- The EU has recently announced a €5 million financial support to the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize laureates, Nadia Murad and Dr Denis Mukwege for concrete projects in favour of women who are victims of sexual violence. **5 projects aiming at fighting against sexual and gender-based violence** in the most remote areas and in forgotten crisis were contracted in December 2018 in the frame of the GPGC global call for proposals (**€32 million** in total). The projects' activities will take place in Bangladesh; Iraq, Palestine and Yemen; Cameroon, Chad, Ghana, Liberia, Mali and Sudan.
- In the Pacific, a regional programme to combat domestic violence (€13 million).
- In Latin America, two regional flagship programmes on women's empowerment and ending violence against women and girls is underway, and considered key for the inclusive and sustainable development of the region. (Under the Eurosocial+ and AI Invest 5.0 programmes (2016-2021, €32 million)
- In Uruguay, a programme establishing early warning systems for risk of gender violence and strengthening the role of female police officers.
- In Argentina, programmes have focused on establishing tools to prevent gender-based offenses.

- In Chile, programmes to reinforce and monitor the training plan for public agents to change the perceptions of violence against women and girls as intra-family violence, which is widespread and tolerated.
- In Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, a programme to support the elaboration of a permanent regional plan to combat gender violence by the Council of Ministers and the Democratic Security Commission of the Central American Integration System to combat gender violence.
- In Peru, a programme to create and implement the National Observatory and Regional Observatories of Violence against Women.

What is the UN doing to end and prevent violence against women and girls?

- UN entities continue to support the Member States of the UN to further advance the global legal and policy framework in addressing violence against women and girls.
- The UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, which is managed by UN Women on behalf of the UN System, provides support to innovative approaches to stem and prevent the pandemic of violence. Since its inception, the fund has provided grants to 426 initiatives in 136 countries, amounting to a total of USD 116 million.
- The UN Secretary General's UNiTE campaign to End Violence Against Women, which amongst its many activities initiated Orange Day, proclaims every 25th of the month as a day to raise awareness. It has garnered support for other high-profile initiatives from celebrities, including sports stars in Europe, to raise the profile of the issue.

Is €500 million enough to end violence against the world's women and girls?

No. The EU's initial investment of €500 million – the largest single commitment to eliminate violence against women ever – will serve as seed money to fund innovative and transformative programmes. Other donors and actors will need to join and support the Spotlight cause to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5. The EU, together with UN, is doing an extensive outreach for other potential donors to join and contribute additional funds, to allow widening the number of countries and regions to be included in the initiative.

How many women and girls are victims of violence?

Violence against women and girls is one of the most systematic and widespread human rights violations around the world. Thirty-five percent of women worldwide are estimated to have experienced, at some point in their lives, either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or sexual violence by a non-partner. In some countries, this figure goes up to 70%.

More than 700 million women alive today were married as children, in various parts of the world. Of those women, more than 1 in 3—or some 250 million—were married before the age of 15.

About 70% of all human trafficking victims detected globally are women and girls.

At least 200 million women and girls alive today have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM) in 30 countries.

Around 120 million girls worldwide (over 1 in 10) have experienced forced intercourse or other forced sexual acts. By far the most common perpetrators of sexual violence against girls are current or former husbands, partners or boyfriends.

What are the consequences of violence against women and girls?

The impact of violence ranges from immediate to long term physical, sexual and mental health consequences for women and girls, including death.

It also has tremendous personal, societal and economic costs all around the globe: from greater health care and legal expenses to productivity losses.

What are the root causes of violence against women and girls?

Violence against women and girls is a complex issue that is rooted in gender inequality and discrimination, as well as unequal power relations between men and women, which exist in varying degrees across all communities in the world.

Low economic and social status of women increases the risk of violence that women face. Increasing economic independence is important to help survivors leave abusive relationships.

Prevention work must lie at the core of addressing this challenge. But despite some promising practices, prevention interventions remain small-scale, fragmented and stand-alone activities, under-resourced and lacking impact evaluation.

Are there reliable data to show the prevalence of violence against women and girls?

Understanding the extent, the nature, and the consequences of violence against women and girls is important to inform legislation, policies and programmes. To that end, the EU and UN Member States have made efforts to collect data and compile statistics related to the prevalence of different forms of violence against women and girls, especially domestic and intimate partner violence.

The availability of prevalence data on violence against women and girls, however, remains uneven across and within countries. Quality, reliability and comparability of the data across and within countries remain a challenge.

Are there legal and policy frameworks to end violence against women and girls?

There has been a growing momentum to eliminate and prevent all forms of violence against women and girls. Governments have adopted international and regional policy and legal agreements, such as the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

At least 119 countries have passed laws on domestic violence, 125 have laws on sexual harassment and 52 have laws on marital rape.

The Spotlight Initiative will build on this progress to help eliminate violence against women and girls.

What is different about the programmes under Spotlight?

Studies have shown that well-designed and comprehensive programmes that reach the most marginalised women and girls can be effective in eliminating violence. Each Spotlight Initiative country programme is purposefully designed to address legislative and policy gaps, strengthen institutions, promote gender-equitable attitudes, provide quality services for survivors and reparations for victims of violence and their families, produce disaggregated data and empower women's movements, while leaving no one behind.

For more information

[Press release – EU-UN Spotlight Initiative: at the forefront of ending violence against women and girls](#)

[Press release – Spotlight Initiative – EU and UN fight against domestic violence in the Pacific region](#)

[Press release – European Union and United Nations join forces to end femicide in Latin America under the Spotlight Initiative](#)

[EU-UN Spotlight Initiative](#)

[Questions and Answers about Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting \(FGM/C\)](#)

^[1] The Asia Foundation, 2016:
<http://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/nabilan-main-report-scre-en-2016-06-01.pdf>