

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?

The EU and the UN have launched a new partnership to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. It galvanises political commitment at the highest levels and contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and more specifically [Goal 5 on Gender Equality](#). It will do so by building new multi-stakeholder partnerships and providing large-scale, targeted support, backed by an initial dedicated financial envelope in the order of EUR 500 million.

The Initiative will focus on all forms of violence against women and girls that are prevalent and contribute to gender inequality. Its focus is on: domestic and family violence; sexual and gender-based violence; harmful practices; and trafficking in human beings and sexual and economic (labour) exploitation.

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: 35% 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%.

Worldwide, more than 700 million women alive today were married as children. 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/cutting 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.

What is needed to end and prevent violence against women and girls?

A comprehensive approach is needed, involving a wide range of stakeholders. It must cover the development of laws and policies, prevention of violence before it happens and access to essential services for survivors, as well as include data collection and research.

Social mobilisation is also necessary to change social norms and behaviours, including men and boys, traditional and religious leaders, private sector and other relevant stakeholders.

Awareness-raising campaigns on the extent and impact of violence are an important component of prevention efforts. They need to be complemented with educational programmes and community mobilization to generate sustained results.

Increasing women's participation in political processes has shown to result in better legislative outcomes for women and a more responsive state.

Additionally, perhaps the greatest indicator of strong legislation on ending violence against women has been correlated with the existence of a strong

women's civil society movement.

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 campaign UNiTE 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.

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

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. Progress is undeniable:

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.

In 2016, the European Commission committed EUR 419 million for specific actions for gender equality and women's empowerment. Among the programmes, the EU funded a specific action targeting 16 Sub-Saharan countries focusing on female genital mutilation. The support (EUR 12 million to a joint programme led by UNFPA and UNICEF) aimed at engaging with civil society organization men and boys, traditional leaders etc., as to change the social norms which make the mutilation so largely practiced.

Data for 2017 have to be released but the EU is supporting different programmes to fight against violence against women and girls. In Zambia, for instance EUR 25 million have been allocated to 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. In very recently, a large programme to fight against domestic violence has been adopted for the Pacific region (EUR 13 million)

Today, the EU has launched the Spotlight initiative together with the UN, showing with this its firm commitment against all forms of violence against women and girls.

What has the EU achieved?

The EU is working together with UNFPA and UNICEF to fight Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and child marriage in 16 African countries. This is done through an innovative approach aimed at changing social norms and attitudes. The EU provided support to organise large-scale community discussion sessions based on human rights, collective decision-making in communities and extended social networks, and community and district-wide public declarations for the abandonment of FGM/C.

These activities are starting to bear fruits: with EU and support from other international organisations, **Senegal** is close to becoming the first country in the world to declare total abandonment of FGM/C. Between 2008 and 2011, the number of villages declaring abandonment increased from 300 to 5,315, about 550 communities or a 16% increase per year. The project has led to comparable successes in **Egypt** and **Sudan**.

In **Pakistan** a project is being implemented to fight poverty through women's empowerment and community mobilisation, building social capital for better access to basic services and income generation. This is done by providing social guidance, technical and financial assistance to the rural poor in Sindh. This programme is expected to increase by 30% and diversify the incomes of over 700 000 targeted households, as well as to deliver access to public services, such as water, education and health for 70% of the targeted households.

The new EU-UN Spotlight Initiative, backed by a dedicated financial envelope in the order of EUR 500 million, will enable multi-stakeholders to intensify action in mutually reinforcing core areas of strengthening legislation and policies, institutions, prevention, services and data at national level, advancing SDG 5 on Gender Equality.

What actions are partner countries taking 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.