Spotlight Initiative Belize
Civil Society National Reference Group
Terms of Reference

Background and Objective

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is an egregious human rights violation that cuts across all countries and cultures. It hinders the achievement of women and girls’ human rights and their abilities to live and love and reach their full potential in safety and dignity. Eliminating VAWG and achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment is, therefore, a pre-requisite to achieving the 2030 Agenda.

In September 2017, the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU) launched the Spotlight Initiative -- a global partnership to eliminate all forms of VAWG. Backed by a financial investment of EUR 500 million, the Initiative will operate in five regions (Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Pacific) and respond to all forms of VAWG, with a particular focus in specific regions on domestic and family violence (Belize), sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices, femicide, trafficking in human beings and sexual and economic (labour) exploitation. In line with the 2030 Agenda, the Initiative will fully integrate the principle of ‘leaving no one behind’ and adopt a multi-stakeholder approach.

For decades women’s movements have been at the forefront of the fight to eliminate violence and harmful practices against women and girls across the globe. Their expertise spans all the Outcomes of the Spotlight Initiative’s comprehensive Theory of Change -- supporting the implementation of laws, policies and interventions in order to prohibit, prevent and sanction all forms of VAWG; tackling impunity; ensuring timely, adequate and high-quality multi-sectoral services for survivors; educating women and girls on their rights, as well as men and boys on the harmful consequences of traditional notions of masculinity; addressing social and cultural norms that perpetuate and enable discrimination; ensuring accurate, reliable and meaningful data on all forms of VAWG; and building alliances, movements and solidarity across the world to eliminate VAWG and advance progress on gender equality and women’s empowerment more broadly.

The Spotlight Initiative intends to work closely with women’s movements and relevant human rights-based civil society organizations (CSOs) on the design and implementation of the Initiative and its Country Programmes in a mutually supportive and reinforcing way, deploying and building upon their vast knowledge and experience, developed at global, regional, national and community levels.

To this end the Initiative will establish a Civil Society National Reference Group (CSNRG) in Belize as an institutional mechanism to harness civil society expertise. The CSNRG will have a dual responsibility — as advisors to the Spotlight Initiative and as advocates and partners for the realization of its objectives.
Mandate

The CSNRG is a group of at least 10 and no more than 15 pre-eminent national and local experts on eliminating VAWG and harmful practices (HP) as well as on women’s rights more broadly. The CSNRG will also nominate its members to serve on the National Multi-Stakeholder Steering Committee of the Spotlight Initiative as non-voting representatives (civil society representatives must comprise a minimum of 20% of the total membership of all multi-stakeholder committees/groups that form part of the governance structure of the Initiative at the country level).

The CS-NRG will be constituted via an independent process led by civil society and facilitated by the UN and involving no other stakeholders.

Roles and responsibilities of the CS-NRG are as follows:

- Provide advice on the overall strategic direction of the Spotlight Initiative’s Country Programme in Belize and on cutting-edge national policy issues on eliminating VAWG.
- Provide advice and perspectives on current eliminating VAWG and related issues where the Spotlight Initiative’s advocacy, leadership and support to civil society advocacy is important.
- Partner on high-level advocacy and communications as well as political dialogue, including by supporting visibility and promotion of the Initiative’s goals at the national level.
- Support efforts at dissemination of the messages of the Spotlight Initiative on eliminating VAWG to the public, from the national to the community level, especially to marginalized groups, youth and the media.
- Provide advice on ongoing interventions, possibilities for scaling up the Spotlight Country Programme in Belize.
- Serve as an interactive space and open forum for dialogue between the Spotlight Initiative and women’s rights organizations, groups and networks working on eliminating VAWG, including on global, regional, national and local developments, trends and risks related to such work.
- Engage in broader consultations with groups and networks, especially at the local and grassroots levels, at regular intervals to update them and solicit input on the performance of the Spotlight Country Programme in Belize and for advocacy, research, learning and action.
- Provide feedback (including via an annual monitoring report) on the Spotlight Country Programme implementation as well as advice on addressing challenges.
- Periodically connect with the global and regional Civil Society Reference Groups to share knowledge and lessons learnt as well as develop solutions to common challenges, with a view to supporting the achievement of the Initiative’s results.

In addition to advising the National Multi-Stakeholder Committee of the Initiative, the CSNRG will have a close working relationship with the Spotlight Technical Team in Belize to ensure its systematic engagement in providing technical advice and informing programming on addressing VAWG, including for the most marginalized groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, which is key to responding to Agenda 2030’s ‘leaving no one behind’ imperative.
Membership Criteria

- All members included in the CS-NRG should be leaders with significant experience working on women’s rights and gender equality and have expertise in eliminating VAWG. Additionally, members should include individuals with knowledge of human rights and feminist frameworks and experience in issues of protection.
- In line with the SDG principle of national ownership, leaders or members of national and/or local/community-based women’s rights organizations/networks and other relevant networks of CSOs working on eliminating VAWG using a human rights-based approach.
- In adherence with the leaving no one behind (LNOB) principle, intersectionality and diversity of communities/constituencies should be well represented, and survivors of VAWG, sexual and reproductive health and rights activists, leaders of indigenous groups, LBTQI leaders, representatives of organizations of persons with disabilities, grassroots organizations, community-based organizations, networks and movements, labour/trade unions and women activists living with HIV, migrant, domestic, informal and sex workers considered for inclusion.
- Geographic balance will be a key consideration to ensure fair representation of all districts on the CSNRG.
- At least 50% of the CSNRG members should represent women’s rights movements and feminist organizations.
- The remaining seats shall include representatives from important constituencies working on eliminating VAWG using a human right based approach: youth networks and networks of men and boys; progressive faith-based groups and persons with Disabilities, Key Populations (sex workers, LGBTI) and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, and ethnic and indigenous groups.
- CS-NRG members will not have any formal affiliations with governments or political parties.
- CS-NRG members join the group in their individual capacities and not as representatives of their organizations.
- The selection committee will ensure the geographic balance and representation of constituencies is ensured with the selection of the CS-NRG members.

Knowledge of English will not be a pre-condition for participation in the CS-NRG. All efforts will be made to ensure language accessibility as well as accessibility to physical spaces.

Compensation

Participation in this group is voluntary. There is no remuneration, in cash or in kind, for participation/engagement in the Civil Society National Reference Group.