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14–25 March 2022

Item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda*

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: gender mainstreaming, situations and programmatic matters

Report of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women on the activities of the United Nations trust fund in support of actions to eliminate violence against women

Note by the Secretary-General

Summary

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith, to the Commission on the Status of Women and the Human Rights Council, the report of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) on the activities of the United Nations trust fund in support of actions to eliminate violence against women, which was prepared in compliance with General Assembly resolution [50/166](#).

* [E/CN.6/2022/1](#).



I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Trust Fund in support of actions to eliminate violence against women is a global, multilateral grant-giving mechanism that supports efforts to prevent and end violence against women and girls. It was established by the General Assembly in 1996, in its resolution [50/166](#), and is administered by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) on behalf of the United Nations system. The trust fund raises and distributes funds to support multi-year projects to address, prevent and ultimately eliminate violence against women and girls. The trust fund benefits from strong institutional support from UN-Women and its regional, multi-country and country offices and works closely with the rest of the United Nations system through its inter-agency Programme Advisory Committee.¹

2. The trust fund's long-term vision is a world of global solidarity in which all women and girls live free from all forms of violence and enjoy and exercise their human rights. This vision is in line with international human rights and humanitarian law, agreed norms and standard-setting instruments at the global, regional and national levels. The trust fund's work aims to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically Goal 5.2, to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

3. The present report, prepared for the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women and the fiftieth session of the Human Rights Council, describes the impact and achievements of the trust fund and its grantees in 2021.

4. During the year, the trust fund managed a grants portfolio of 157 projects aimed at preventing and addressing violence against women and girls in 68 countries and territories, across five regions, with grants totalling \$74.7 million. Grant recipients were primarily civil society organizations, the majority (59 per cent) being women's rights organizations (see figure I).²

5. As of December 2021, contributors to the trust fund included the Governments of Australia, Austria, Canada, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. Support was also received from the UN-Women national committees of Australia, Austria, Germany, Iceland, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, the Spotlight Initiative partnership between the European Union and the United Nations and partners including Conscious Step, Futures without Violence, the Mary Kay Foundation, Mary Kay Inc., Soko, the UN-Women for Peace Association and the Wellspring Philanthropic Fund.

¹ In 2021, members of the Programme Advisory Committee at the global level included: the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; the United Nations Development Programme; the United Nations Population Fund; the United Nations Children's Fund; the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women); and the World Health Organization. It also included intergovernmental organizations and other experts at the global and field levels, including representatives from the Centre for Women's Global Leadership, Equality Now, and the South African Medical Research Council.

² Other types of organizations that were funded include: human rights organizations (10 per cent), international non-governmental organizations (10 per cent), development-focused organizations (4 per cent), organizations of persons with disabilities (2 per cent), with other types of organizations making up less than 1 per cent of grants.

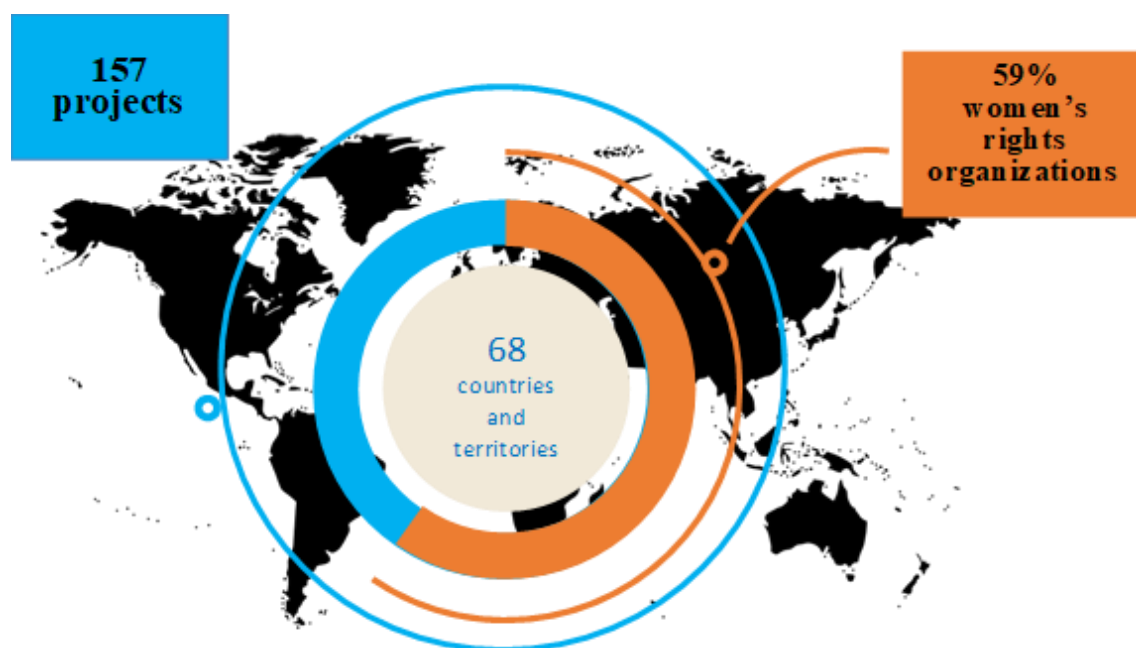
6. The year 2021 marked the twenty-fifth year of the trust fund, created in 1996 in direct response to the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. During that time, the trust fund has supported a total of 609 of the most promising and high-quality projects to prevent, address and end violence against women and girls, with each year seeing an increase in the number of projects managed – from 36 in 1997 to 157 in 2021.

7. The trust fund's partnerships with civil society across the globe have grown significantly over the years, rising from managed grants worth a total of \$800,000 in 1997 to \$72 million in the managed grant portfolio by 2021. The trust fund's wide outreach, which is illustrated by consistent annual demand, with almost 2,000 applications from civil society organizations, allows it to identify key local and national partners for the United Nations system and support and elevate practice-based expertise and knowledge to inform the ecosystem on ending violence against women.

8. As a United Nations system-wide grant-making entity specialized in ending violence against women, the trust fund is a mechanism for partnership fostering across the United Nations system and beyond, that brings together partners from civil society and Member States for collective action in the spirit of mutual enablement. The fund's work contributes to the United Nations development system reform commitments on improved coordination to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals.

9. The results of the past 25 years, including during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis, which have included responding to natural disasters and political turbulence around the world, clearly show that the trust fund remains uniquely placed to adapt and respond to grantees working to prevent and end violence against women and girls. The fund's unique body of experience has informed the formulation of its strategic direction for the period 2021–2025.

Figure I
2021 trust fund grants portfolio



Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

II. Context in 2021

10. Violence against women and girls remains the most widespread breach of human rights – a long-standing pandemic whose many forms and manifestations are exacerbated in times of crisis. Indeed, prevalence figures for violence against women and girls released in 2020 by the World Health Organization, which were based on 2018 data – that is, before the stark rise in violence against women due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic – confirmed that 1 in 3 women around the world had been subjected to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner or non-partner, indicating that levels of violence remain disturbingly high and gains in women's rights fragile.³

11. As multiple and overlapping crises increase globally, sharply illustrated by the effects of COVID-19, rapidly changing contexts threaten the rights gained by women and girls and further raise the rates, severity and manifestations of violence against them. In 2021, COVID-19 continued to present profound challenges for women and girls, as well as for women's rights organizations. Emerging data from a recent multi-country gender assessment by UN-Women of the impact of COVID-19 on violence against women, using innovative remote methodologies, confirmed an increase in such violence in Cameroon, Kenya, Thailand and Ukraine; further assessments are ongoing.⁴ In addition, since the COVID-19 pandemic began, data released by UN-Women has shown how violence against women increased; 45 per cent of women reported that they or a woman they know has experienced a form of violence against women, with 1 in 2 younger women reporting having experienced violence.⁵ The global context of coinciding crises along with COVID-19, such as conflict and climate-related crises, will continue to have an impact on more people and disproportionately affect women and girls.

12. The impact of such crises on violence against women is alarming; conservative estimates indicate that at least 1 in 5 displaced or refugee women has experienced sexual violence.⁶ Across the world in 2021, civil society organizations continued acting as first responders in the face of crises and correlated surges in violence against women and girls. Lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis show the adaptability and resilience of civil society and women's organizations in response to rapidly changing contexts, with their ability to maintain vital services for survivors and ensure that the focus remains on ending violence against women and girls.⁷

13. As set out above, the ongoing coinciding crises are adversely affecting the right of women and girls to live without violence. Such crises include the long-term

³ United Nations trust fund in support of actions to eliminate violence against women, *Annual report 2020: We are 25!*, available at https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20untf/images/2021/annual%20report%202020/un%20trust%20fund%20to%20evaw_annual%20report%202020.pdf?la=en&vs=4731.

⁴ UN-Women, "Emerging data on violence against women confirm a shadow pandemic", available at <https://data.unwomen.org/features/emerging-data-violence-against-women-confirm-shadow-pandemic>.

⁵ UN-Women, "Measuring the shadow pandemic: violence against women during COVID-19", available at <https://data.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/documents/Publications/Measuring-shadow-pandemic.pdf>.

⁶ Alexander Vu and others, "The prevalence of sexual violence among female refugees in complex humanitarian emergencies: a systematic review and meta-analysis", *PLoS Currents Disasters*, 18 March 2014, ed. 1, available at <http://currents.plos.org/disasters/index.html%3Fp=11337.html>.

⁷ United Nations trust fund in support of actions to eliminate violence against women, "COVID-19 and the impact on civil society organizations: working to end violence against women and girls" (New York, September 2020). Available at <https://untf.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/09/six-months-of-global-pandemic-covid19-impact-on-violence-against-women-and-frontline-organizations>.

consequences of natural disasters and human-made disasters, such as conflicts and war. Trust fund grantees have played a key role in the preparedness and response system throughout 2021 and adapted their work to ensure the safety of both survivors of violence and of their staff. Extreme challenges remain, however, owing to the ongoing and protracted nature of crises. For example, in August 2021, Haiti was struck by a devastating earthquake, causing large-scale damage and affecting the activities of trust fund grantee Initiative pour un développement équitable en Haïti. Through adaptations from the grantee and flexibility from the trust fund, the organization developed an emergency fund that enabled them to distribute food packages and sanitary kits to 150 women with disabilities who are survivors of violence. In Afghanistan, the efforts of Women for Afghan Women face a severe backlash with respect to rights previously gained for women. The organization saw the halting and extreme disruption of its work to prevent and respond to violence against women in internally displaced and refugee communities. A representative of the organization said that: “as a women’s rights’ organization, all we are asking for is that the basic rights all human beings are entitled to should be granted to Afghan women”.

14. Strengthening preparedness and response to evolving and emerging crises that generate rapid changes in context will remain central to the work of the trust fund and the support provided to grantees to facilitate their adaptive capacity and organizational resilience.

III. Strategic plan, 2021–2025

15. The trust fund’s strategic plan for the period 2021–2025 builds on the results and lessons learned over its 25-year history; on the accomplishments of the five years of its previous strategic plan, which ended in 2020; as well as on analysis of the current context and emerging issues, as identified and validated by key stakeholders, including the fund’s Programme Advisory Committee, through a consultation process. Aligned with and directly contributing to key United Nations inter-agency initiatives and joint programmes and UN-Women work on ending violence against women and girls, the strategic plan for 2021–2025 and its intended results are aspirational and subject to resourcing and institutional enablement.

16. An analysis of the results of the previous strategic cycle showed that trust fund grantees reached at least 54.6 million people, mostly women and girls.⁸ Those reached included at least 1.6 million women and girls who benefited directly through services, empowerment activities and protection from violence, including more than 150,000 survivors of violence, as well as agents of change, duty bearers, rights holders, project participants and recipients of outreach activities.

17. Key results and lessons learned from the previous strategic plan, 2015–2020, included the urgent need for locally based services, rooted in feminist principles, for women and girls experiencing intersecting and multiple forms of oppression and discrimination.⁹ Many grantees strove to address harmful behaviours, but deep-seated norms remain hard to shift in a three-year period, which underlines the importance of accounting for time, core and flexible funding to strengthen feminist movements.

⁸ Number of people benefiting from trust fund grantee projects per year: 2016: 6,279,168; 2017: 6,362,155; 2018: 7,885,356; 2019: 3,010,386; 2020: 31,071,058.

⁹ United Nations trust fund in support of actions to eliminate violence against women, *Strategic Plan, 2021–2025*, available at <https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20un/f/images/2021/strategic%20plan%202021/2021strategic%20planfinal%20002compressed.pdf?la=en&vs=1907>.

18. The trust fund's work will continue to be led and informed by women's experiences and civil society efforts to end violence against women and girls, recognizing women's and survivors' agency, the expertise and knowledge generated by civil society and women's rights organizations and the importance of mutually enabling relationships with key stakeholders. Through long-term and flexible funding, the trust fund will enable more civil society and women's rights organizations to implement demand-driven initiatives to end violence against women and girls, coupled with support for programmatic sustainability and organizational resilience.

19. In addition, the fund will foster collaborative and inclusive knowledge production, exchange and learning and endeavour to ensure that knowledge produced by civil society and women's rights organizations and practice-based learning on ending violence against women and girls has an increasing impact in informing the United Nations system and key partners.

20. The trust fund's strategic plan is aligned with the UN-Women strategic plan, 2022–2025, and works towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically Goal 5. As an intervention in the UN-Women strategic plan, the trust fund's strategic plan is an institutional entry point for strengthening coordination efforts to end violence against women across the United Nations system and with civil society partners, including through the Generation Equality action coalition on ending gender-based violence.

21. The trust fund will continue to fund interventions under three outcome areas: (a) improved access for women and girls to essential, safe and adequate multisectoral services; (b) improved prevention of violence against women and girls through changes in behaviours, practices and attitudes; and (c) increased effectiveness of legislation, policies, national action plans and accountability systems.

22. During the first year of implementation of the strategic plan, 2021–2025, the trust fund launched its twenty-fifth call for proposals for applications, with a focus on ending violence against women during times of crisis. Adopting an intersectional approach focused on preventing and ending violence against marginalized women and girls and paying special attention to organizational resilience and programmatic sustainability in rapidly changing and complex environments, the call for proposals integrates lessons learned from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women's rights organizations.

IV. Responding to crisis-related violence: learning the lessons from the COVID-19 crisis

23. Trust fund grantees continued to adapt activities to protect women and girl survivors of violence, modifying project delivery in the context of the challenges posed by COVID-19. The lessons learned and adaptation results show how civil society and women's rights organizations respond in rapidly changing contexts to remain vital resources for women and girls. Civil society and women's rights organizations reported that it was increasingly clear that the impact of the pandemic needed to be viewed as an ongoing protracted crisis and that valuable lessons had been learned.¹⁰ Those insights inform efforts to respond to current and future challenges, which will build on the adaptations, organizational resilience and core and flexible funding that have characterized the trust fund's responses to COVID-19.

¹⁰ United Nations trust fund in support of actions to eliminate violence against women, "COVID-19 and the impact on civil society organizations: working to end violence against women and girls".

24. The trust fund analysed past projects to extract relevant lessons on project adaptations in the face of a range of crises. Some general observations and trends emerged that were applicable to previous natural and human-made crises and were also reflected in and informed the response to COVID-19. For example, crises frequently resulted in increased violence against women and girls, which was often linked to the closure of services, for example schools, which in turn resulted in an increased risk of sexual and other forms of violence against women and girls, such as early and forced marriage. Other consequences of crises, such as economic distress, displacement and social dislocation, also affected the prevalence of violence against women and girls.

25. For civil society organizations, crises frequently mean greater difficulty in reaching women and increased demand for services, often as a result of resources being diverted to deal with the crisis. Delays may also be experienced in project delivery, organizations can lose access to premises to conduct work and may have to contend with a negative impact on staff security and local implementing partners' weakened institutional capacity.

26. Civil society organizations adapted their operations to provide immediate relief and support to women and girls, which frequently offered an entry point to ensure women's safety. Lessons learned as part of the immediate response to COVID-19 – for example providing cell phones, assistance with Internet access and laptops, revising workplans and conducting rapid assessments – all contributed to a crucial reference body of experience, which informed the trust fund's work in 2021 and will continue to be drawn upon. Indeed, this analysis provided timely information to the United Nations system and acted as an early warning system about increased violence.

27. Trust fund grantees continued to realign efforts to fill gaps in sustainable, structural and societal support for ending violence against women and girls, which were exacerbated by services and support being diverted to address COVID-19.

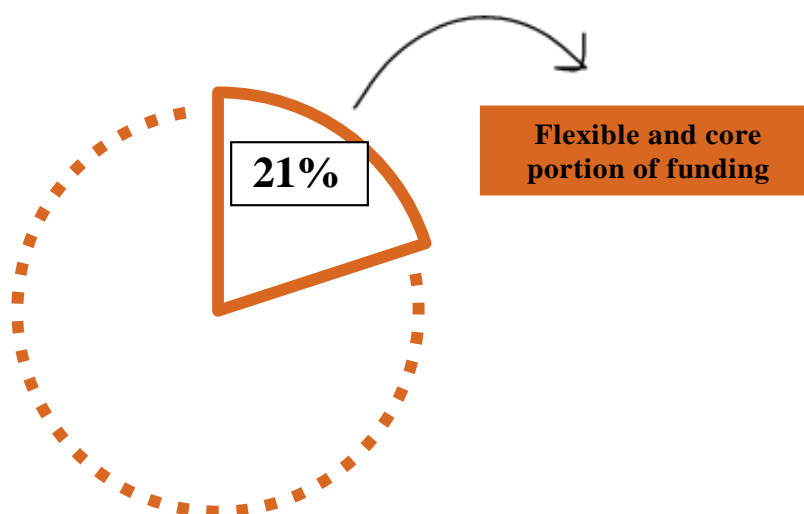
28. Trust fund grantees continued to adapt to their rapidly changing contexts, such as by pivoting to the use of innovative technologies to reach women and girls. However, grantees continued to report that the ongoing economic impact was affecting women and noted the increase in violence against women, especially sexual and gender-based violence, which accompanied lockdown measures intended to curb infections. For example, the Institute for Young Women's Development in Zimbabwe, funded under the Spotlight Initiative, reported that although it continued, with its implementing partner JASS (Just Associates) Southern Africa, to carry out both physical and virtual work despite lockdown measures, the direct effect of the pandemic threatened to overload staff. As part of its risk mitigation strategy, the grantee reviewed COVID-19 protocols and refined its institutional continuity plans. In addition, it worked to bridge the digital divide by providing smartphones to community facilitators and a vaccination programme, which gained momentum at the beginning of the second quarter of the year, also shaped the grantee's protocols.

29. Those lessons are informing the trust fund's implementation of its strategic plan for 2021–2025. For instance, in its call for proposals, launched in November 2021, the trust fund has instituted contingency and core funding budget lines of up to 21 per cent for small organizations to ensure the organizational resilience of civil society and women's rights organizations and allow for quick adaptations in rapidly changing contexts (see figure II). This includes funds for general operating and other direct costs as well as an additional 7 per cent of core funding to small organizations requesting small grants. In addition, the trust fund will increase and expand the self-care and collective care budget line to \$5,000 to support grantees in taking care of their staff members' physical and mental health and well-being.

30. Despite the very challenging circumstances, grantees achieved significant results during the year, in some cases devising innovative ways to operate in an evolving context. Grantee adaptations and interventions were varied and driven by local needs and circumstances. Nevertheless, a number of themes emerged, including the importance of flexible and core funding. An understanding of the importance of flexible and swift responses, underpinned by relationships of trust, helped ensure that vital civil society organizations, especially women’s rights organizations, were able to survive and adapt in the face of COVID-19. Funding adaptations under the Spotlight Initiative in response to COVID-19 provided a particularly compelling example of the need for flexibility.

Figure II

Flexible and core funding budget lines for small organizations



V. Spotlight Initiative of the European Union and the United Nations

31. In partnership with the Spotlight Initiative of the European Union and the United Nations, the implementation of the trust fund’s projects funded under the Initiative continued in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, with a focus on strengthening and supporting women’s rights groups and autonomous civil society organizations (outcome 6 of the Spotlight Initiative “Theory of Change”). The global, multi-year partnership between the European Union and the United Nations to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls by 2030 funded single-country and multi-country projects across 15 countries in sub-Saharan Africa – Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Ghana, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe – and five countries in Latin America – Argentina, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico. It funded an initial total of 35 projects in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, all now past the midway point of project implementation.

32. The trust fund also supported an additional 20 grantees in sub-Saharan Africa with funds provided by the Spotlight Initiative to advance institutional strengthening for crisis response and maintain or adapt existing interventions to end violence against women, with a focus on the most at-risk and marginalized women and girls. Grantees are using those funds to continue to adapt to the ongoing crisis, innovating as necessary and often playing a vital role as first responders. In Somalia, one grantee

(International Solidarity Foundation) responded to rising levels of female genital mutilation and child marriage, following school closures, by reaching rural communities and maintained social distancing by hiring a vehicle and loudspeakers to broadcast messages.

33. Grantees continue to face context-specific challenges during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The way in which grantees adapted organizationally and programmatically to the pandemic provides important indicators for future work to end violence against women and girls in times of concurrent crises. For instance, grantees reported that the infusion of resources for the COVID-19 response was strengthening their crisis response, with grantees reaching rights holders with food, hygiene supplies and other emergency parcels, while also directing funds to ensure their organizational resilience by enabling remote working modalities.

34. In Zimbabwe, “Speak it Loud”, a project implemented by the international non-governmental organization Voluntary Service Overseas to amplify the voices of women’s movements to address violence against women, made considerable progress in ensuring that civil society organizations had the institutional capacity to facilitate resource mobilization initiatives. The project provided support to 15 civil society organizations on how to ensure their programmes reflect and mainstream key elements of social accountability, such as rights, space, voice and power, with an emphasis on the need to adopt a rights-based programming approach. The project also continued to address the particular challenges posed by COVID-19 by providing food packs to 900 women and girls who were survivors of sexual or gender-based violence, living with HIV/AIDS or living with a disability. The situation was worse for women and girls living with a disability who could not access social protection schemes and were at an increased risk of violence. The food packs reduced negative coping mechanisms and highlighted the need to empower women and girls with sustainable livelihoods.

35. In 2021, Ethiopiaaid, working in collaboration with its Ethiopia-based partner, the Association for Women’s Sanctuary and Development, a women-led organization, provided a safe house and professional tailored support services for 182 survivors of violence. All survivors reported improvements in well-being from their first entry into the safe house, and 150 safe-house residents were able to reintegrate into the community. Capacity-building training on ending gender-based violence was provided for 242 education professionals, who reported that they now feel confident to refer suspected cases of violence against women and girls. In addition, 57 criminal cases were followed, with five cases resulting in prison sentences for perpetrators; 42 were the subject of ongoing trials. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the project provided food and personal protective equipment to 30 low-income women-headed households in the community and to 35 former safe-house residents who were facing significant income challenges. A total of 60 staff members of the Association for Women’s Sanctuary and Development were able to continue their work safely, despite COVID-19, strengthening their organizational resilience and sustainable response to the pandemic while maintaining support and outreach to survivors of violence against women and girls.

36. Across the board, grantees continue to report a sharp rise in violence against women and girls. Rising rates of domestic violence continue to be reported in the context of lockdowns, while school closures have led to rising rates of female genital mutilation, teenage pregnancies and child marriage. Women and girls from marginalized groups continue to be particularly severely affected. For example, one grantee in Zimbabwe (Family AIDS Caring Trust) reported that the lockdown has severely exacerbated the vulnerability of self-identified sex workers to violence, as they are forced to turn to private locations because the bars and pubs where they usually work are closed.

37. Grantees have also adapted in the face of concurrent crises, including natural disasters. For example, women involved in projects in several communities in Honduras were directly affected by the series of hurricanes that caused floods and landslides across Central America. As a result, grantees had to redirect project funds towards crisis response, providing emergency support such as food packages and hygiene kits.

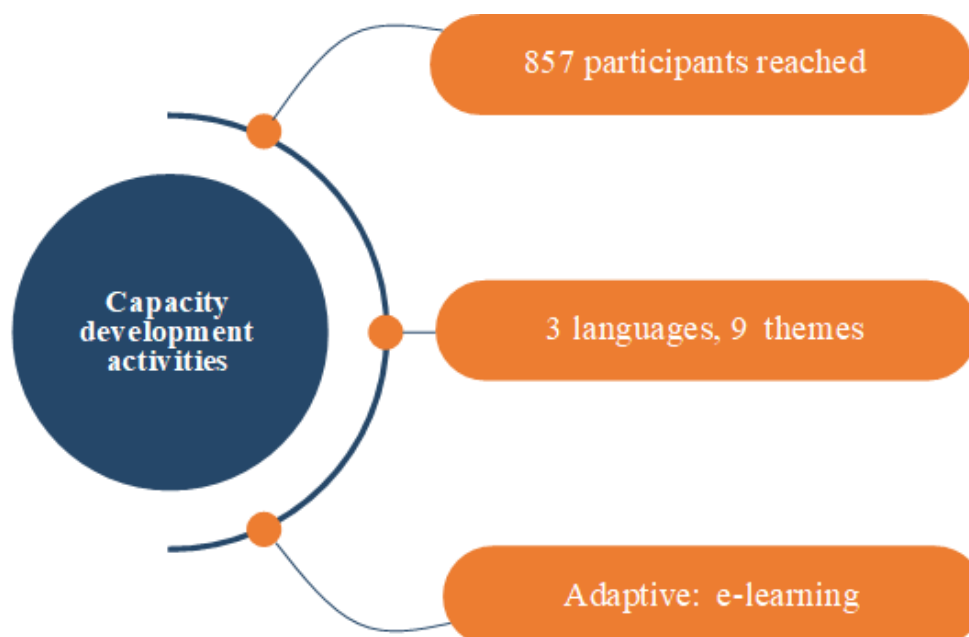
38. Grantees continued to adapt to maintain project progress in highly unpredictable operating contexts. Almost all grantees requested to modify their projects in response to the pandemic, some on multiple occasions. In Cameroon, the Association for the Protection and Education of the Child engaged five grass-roots women's rights organizations and associations in raising awareness of violence against women and girls and COVID-19. The purchase of tablets and a generator improved the project's ability to ensure the continuous dissemination of information and key messages. Five partnerships were formed with women's rights organizations and government ministries in order to improve the response to the intersection between COVID-19 and violence against women and girls. A total of 50 first responders, including health workers, were trained in psychosocial support, thereby helping to improve their support to communities affected by movement restrictions.

VI. Achievements

39. In 2021, while grantees were still responding to the long-term crisis of COVID-19, several were also contending with multiple crises, compounding the impact on violence against women and on response efforts. In order to ensure that organizations were able to maintain their vital role as first responders, the trust fund invested in building organizational resilience, a cornerstone of its strategic plan for 2021–2025.

40. Through its capacity development activities, which reached 857 participants through nine thematic webinars in three languages, grantees received training covering topics such as data collection, monitoring, ethics, safety and reporting; the use and retention of information will be assessed in early 2022 (see figure III). In addition, the trust fund provided e-learning courses on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse, fraud awareness and project management. Attendance for the training was 48 per cent higher than required by the fund, with participation from 95 per cent of the organizations awarded grants in 2021.

Figure III
2021 capacity development webinar activities



41. The trust fund’s strategic plan, 2021–2025, prioritizes projects to reach the most marginalized women and girls and those experiencing intersecting forms of discrimination, while placing importance on an intersectional approach and the principle of leaving no one behind. Over the course of the strategic plan, the trust fund will enable the organizations representing the most marginalized groups to play a central role in delivering survivor-centred and demand-driven initiatives. While the year’s crises affected the prevalence of violence against women and girls in a wide range of contexts, some groups were disproportionately negatively impacted, underscoring yet again the crucial role played by locally based services rooted in feminist principles in meeting the needs of women and girls at particular risk. Trust fund grantees took great steps to ensure their efforts reached the most at-risk women and girls. For instance, in Zimbabwe, the Institute for Young Women’s Development facilitated a partnership with Deaf Women Included to create a safe shelter for women with disabilities. Also in Zimbabwe, Voluntary Service Overseas supported 900 women and girls with food packs, specifically reaching women and girl who were survivors of violence, living with HIV/AIDS or living with a disability. In the State of Palestine, the Women’s Affairs Technical Committee trained 100 community police officials in community safety and awareness, focusing specifically on refugee and internally displaced women and girls.

42. In addition, in 2021, as part of its prevention series entitled “Learning from Practice” (see sect. VIII below), the trust fund released a brief exploring intersectional approaches to preventing violence against women and girls. The brief analysed how trust fund grantees identified multiple groups of women at risk of violence because of their intersecting identities and sought to address that issue by designing partnership-based projects on preventing violence against women.

A. Preventing violence against women and girls

43. Prevention continues to be a major aspect of grantees' work, often in combination with improving service provision or policy implementation. Indeed, approximately 66 per cent of funded projects have a prevention component.

44. A meta-analysis, commissioned by the trust fund in 2020, found that prevention projects, regardless of the form of violence they address or their setting, effectively promote positive attitudes and beliefs and raise awareness about ending violence against women, providing important lessons on how to translate awareness into action.¹¹ Factors influencing the successful outcome of prevention projects include: investment in the skills of community facilitators and community members; the engagement of men and boys; context-tailored interventions; survivor-centred project design; mid-course project adaptations to address barriers to action; and a gender-transformative approach designed from the ground up and with clear objectives for behaviour change.

45. In order to amplify the unique role that civil society organizations, especially women's rights organizations, play in preventing violence against women and girls, the trust fund co-created a series of knowledge briefs, in collaboration with 70 grantee organizations and researchers, entitled "Learning from Practice". Participants' practice-based knowledge provided key insights into a set of themes – such as community mobilization, engaging faith-based and traditional actors, exploring intersectional approaches, providing training for behaviour change, managing resistance and backlash and adapting programming – that are relatively underexplored in the field of ending violence against women and girls. Collectively, this practice-based knowledge elevates the insights and expertise of women's rights organizations as a resource and their potential to inform and improve programming, funding and policy decisions on ending violence against women. Each brief also provides key recommendations for practitioners, donors and researchers, as well as insight into the specific challenges and adaptations needed within each theme during the COVID-19 pandemic.

46. Despite the ongoing challenges created by COVID-19 as well as other contextual shifts experienced by grantees, organizations achieved significant results in the field of prevention during 2021.

47. A project to increase the capacities of women with disabilities to become leaders in their communities and to demand policy change, implemented by Initiative pour un développement équitable en Haïti, actively pivoted and responded to the immediate needs of women and girls with disabilities following the earthquake which struck Haiti in 2021. The project was able to respond, with trust fund support, to provide individual and group medical and psychological support to 90 women and set up a mobile clinic to reach those most at risk of being left behind. A total of 119 women with disabilities were reached through project activities and received training on understanding the intersections of gender-based violence and disability. Participants stated that they were better able to identify discrimination and gender-based violence; had a good knowledge of the various institutions that can protect them; were able to recognize harmful practices regarding gender and disability; and were more likely to seek help and report cases of gender-based violence. The grantee reached more than 5,000 people through sensitization seminars delivered by its

¹¹ United Nations trust fund in support of actions to eliminate violence against women, *What can we learn from evaluations of projects funded by the UN trust fund to end violence against women?*, available at https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20un/f/publications/2020/meta-analysis/untf_meta-analysis_5_final-compressed.pdf?la=en&vs=3706.

partner, Association pour la promotion de la famille haïtienne, on International Women's Day.

48. In Serbia, the women-led Association Fenomena is using proven and innovative education and campaigning methods to educate women, young people, journalists, educational institutions and the public at large about gender-based violence in order to transform harmful attitudes, including victim-blaming, and change behaviours. It is also encouraging survivors of violence to call helplines and get access to the services they need. Despite the significant impact of COVID-19, the project made progress during the year. For example, the pandemic led to a 25 per cent increase in calls registered by the specialized helplines run with the Women Against Violence Network. The grantee also conducted eight workshops with four partners that reached a total of 73 girls, including a number of Roma girls, after which participants reported an increase in self-confidence and in their feeling of security.

49. Supported by a trust fund small grant, the women-led organization Organisasi Harapan Nusantara (OHANA) in Indonesia is implementing a project to prevent violence against women and girls living with disabilities in five districts of Yogyakarta city. During the reporting period, the grantee provided 31 women with disabilities, including a migrant woman, with community-based training on addressing gender-based violence and how to report abuse and violence. At the end of the training, 25 participants said they felt empowered and had a better understanding of their rights, gender-based violence and trauma healing. The project also trained five service providers and support staff on working with women and girls with disabilities: five legal officers, 20 social and/or welfare workers and 33 health professionals obtained increased knowledge of standard operating procedures for working with women with disabilities who are survivors of violence. Adaptations necessitated by COVID-19 included the development of online workshop modules for communities on preventing and ending violence against women and girls and hybrid meetings for project coordination.

B. Improving access to multisectoral services

50. Under this pillar of work, the trust fund supports projects to improve access to specialized support services and improve service provision for women and girl survivors of violence and those at risk. Women's rights organizations played an essential part in multisectoral coordination, with grantees providing 158,736 women and girls with support through such specialist services during the previous strategic plan period. Those services included long-term psychological counselling, medical care, shelters, helplines and legal aid. The urgent need for locally based services rooted in feminist principles is particularly evident in relation to groups of women and girls experiencing intersecting and multiple forms of oppression and discrimination, including women and girls living with disabilities, those living in poverty in urban and rural areas, internally displaced and refugee women, indigenous women and members of religious or ethnic minorities.

51. Ensuring women's access to essential and adequate services, a role played by women's rights organizations as first responders, proved more important than ever during COVID-19, as organizations stepped in to fill the gaps created as services were diverted. Flexibility in project implementation enabled grantees to reach more women and girl survivors of violence and those at risk.

52. In Viet Nam, Hagar International is implementing a project with a special focus on women and girl survivors of trafficking, indigenous people, ethnic minorities and women and girls living with disabilities. During the reporting period, survivors of 70 cases of gender-based violence, including 69 cases of domestic violence, were

supported, all of whom were safely protected by the authorities, especially the police and local leaders, and provided with legal, health, livelihood and psychological services by Hagar. Emergency response teams conducted 360 visits to support the survivors of the 70 cases of violence, who had access to multisectoral services thanks to the project. In addition, 1,400 people participated directly in communication campaigns on preventing violence against women and girls. A total of 60 village leaders and the Women's Union of four communes were trained in psychological first aid, initial support for survivors and gender equality and self-awareness. As a result of the establishment of peer groups, 32 female survivors of violence, who were members of peer groups, received counselling and were trained in areas including national legislation, gender equality, human rights, the effect of trauma on survivors and children, and business planning. In terms of increasing authorities' commitment to ending violence against women and improving the quality of interventions to support people experiencing gender-based violence, 160 staff (112 women and 48 men) at the provincial, district, commune and village levels were provided with knowledge on project management and supervision, case management, trauma-informed care and group management skills.

53. A project implemented by Club Eney in Ukraine is adapting and implementing an evidence-based intervention called Women Initiating New Goals of Safety. It is also working to improve access for at-risk women to essential, safe and adequate services and raising awareness about gender-based violence in communities. During the reporting period, Club Eney directly reached 211 women who use drugs, self-identified sex workers, women living with HIV and internally displaced women. Among those reached, 68 women were linked to additional services and 12 women accessed shelter. In a follow-up session conducted three months later, 79 per cent of participants reported a decrease in repeated abuse, a better understanding of different types of abuse and decreased tolerance towards violence. Thanks to the grantee's networking and advocacy, there is now a local shelter in Poltava that accepts women who use drugs.

54. A project implemented in Argentina by Fundación para la promoción de la economía social y cooperativa is working to support and empower women survivors of intimate-partner violence to gain access justice and services. During 2021, the grantee had to make a number of adaptations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, it did deliver a number of project objectives. Counsellors' trainings for women leaders in target neighbourhoods began, with 34 women registered for training as counsellors in women's rights and to assist other women experiencing gender-based violence; 26 received a training certificate. Those who consulted counsellors reported being satisfied with the service received. Women who took part in the training process developed tools and knowledge about their rights and the networks formed to provide support to counsellors and to accompany them in the process helped increase their self-esteem, confidence, security and effectiveness. Neighbourhood counsellors reported that they had provided assistance to women survivors/victims of 253 cases of violence.

C. Fostering implementation of law and policy

55. The trust fund's meta-analysis (2020) found that projects are more likely to strengthen institutional responses when engagement strategies with policymakers are well planned and focused. Many grantees reported facing challenges in ensuring that women's rights organizations were included in crisis response planning, specifically in COVID-19 responses, as well as in coinciding crises. Under the implementation of the trust fund's strategic plan, 2021–2025, grantees continue to foster implementation

and advocacy for the integration of international norms and standards into domestic laws and policies.

56. In the State of Palestine, the Women's Affairs Technical Committee is implementing a project in Area C of the West Bank focused on access to justice, primarily for women and girls who are displaced or at risk of being displaced. During 2021, project activities implemented included police training activities, which had a positive impact on participants and increased the demand for such training for more police personnel. Gender justice initiatives, especially in terms of media and campaigns, helped increase women's and girls' knowledge surrounding violence against women and girls and led to an increase in positive judgments in cases and to greater participation by women in the community. Improvements in the response of those administering justice to survivors of violence against women and girls were encouraged through, for example, the training of judges (10 judges had participated in ten training sessions by September), court administrators (10 administrators participated in eight sessions) and police (100 officers participated in community safety and awareness programmes, with a focus on refugee and internally displaced women and girls).

57. A project implemented by Steward Women, a women's rights organization, aims to empower survivors of rape and early marriage in the Jondoru and Rubkona-Bentiu camps for internally displaced people in South Sudan. During 2021, 1,223 project key stakeholders were reached in both Jondoru and Rubkona, including the local government, community leaders and survivors. The project worked with authorities to inform government policies on rape and child/early marriage; specifically, the South Sudan Law Reform Commission has requested Steward Women to draft a position paper on why marital rape should be considered a crime, as part of the review of the Penal Code Act, Section 247 (3) on marital rape. The grantee also held policy dialogues with community leaders to strengthen their knowledge and increase their awareness of rape and child/early marriage; community leaders acknowledged that rape and early marriage are serious issues in Jondoru. Policy dialogues reached 137 community leaders, who actively participated in the dialogues. In addition, during 2021, 75 women survivors received emergency dignity kits, 25 survivors received medical support, 48 received training in business skills and 50 survivors received livelihood support.

58. In Armenia, the Women's Resource Centre is working to change the discriminatory narratives, attitudes and behaviours of State and non-State actors regarding sexual and gender-based violence in the capital, Yerevan, and three regions of Armenia where sexual violence is particularly prevalent. The Women's Resource Centre is working with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to organize courses for the National Institute of Social Work. A course on gender-sensitive social work and work with survivors/victims of domestic violence will now be a mandatory part of the education programme. The grantee is also currently working on recommendations for the revision of the Labour Code of Armenia regarding sexual harassment in the workplace. Despite COVID-19 challenges, post-war issues and an increase in the number of cases of sexual and gender-based violence, the Women's Resource Centre has been able to provide better services to women and girl survivors of violence. For example, 94 women and girl survivors of violence were reached through the safe spaces developed by the project and 10 survivors applied for long-term psychological assistance.

VII. Knowledge and learning

59. The trust fund strategic plan, 2021–2025, includes a commitment to elevate practitioner-based knowledge and evidence to inform global agenda-setting to end violence against women and girls. Over the next five years, the trust fund will prioritize investment in knowledge co-produced with civil society and women’s rights organizations and external researchers. A high priority is given to inclusive knowledge exchange, facilitated by the trust fund, to ensure that practitioner-based knowledge informs the ecosystem on ending violence against women. The trust fund also developed a multilingual online knowledge exchange and collaboration platform, to enable donors, practitioners and researchers to work together more effectively towards the common goal of ending violence against women and girls. Civil society organizations have long expressed the need for a safe space to connect, to share knowledge and to learn together. Therefore, in collaboration with the Spotlight Initiative, the trust fund built this platform, initially for its grantee organizations, in order to host consultations in over 50 languages on the prevention knowledge briefs and make the practice-based knowledge from this series more dynamic. In 2022, the platform will be launched to include more stakeholders, such as donors and researchers, within the wider ecosystem on ending violence against women.

60. As a contribution to these objectives, the trust fund facilitated eight virtual knowledge exchange events with at least 37 grantees from nine countries, in 2021, to create opportunities for grantees to share their experience and knowledge with other grantees in the same country and explore collaboration opportunities between grantees and with UN-Women country offices.

VIII. Prevention series

61. As part of its commitment to elevating practice-based knowledge, the trust fund commissioned a prevention series of 10 papers on “Learning from Practice”, to be produced in collaboration with 70 grantees and external researchers. Each paper in the series draws on the monitoring and evaluation reports of 10 civil society organizations that are implementing prevention projects funded by the trust fund in different countries and contexts. The findings identified 10 key pathways to prevent violence against women and girls. Each theme is explored in conversations with 10 grantees, resulting in one detailed report per theme, published on a rolling basis starting in July 2021 and into 2022. As of December 2021, eight reports had been published on the trust fund’s website. Findings from a selection of the published reports are set out below.

62. Community mobilization engages with a broad range of actors and can reduce violence among entire communities, but its effectiveness relies heavily on implementation and context. Interventions need to be culturally relevant, appropriate and tailored to priorities and needs within and across communities. An example of this is Raising Voices’ experience of using the “SASA!” methodology, which showed the importance of translating material into local languages and testing it with communities before roll-out. In addition, interventions must reflect the socioeconomic context and incentives. For example, MADRE in Nicaragua was able to increase women’s economic independence and decision-making abilities by providing local women farmers with seeds, and therefore with greater food security, while the Breakthrough Trust in India provided young volunteers with references to increase their employment opportunities. Engaging across and within community groups is key and requires relationship-building, which takes time, trust and mutual respect. The brief also offered recommendations to donors (for instance, ensuring longer-term and flexible funding cycles or fostering a culture of learning) as well as

to researchers (for example, doing further research on how community mobilization can foster change at the institutional level).

63. Faith-based and traditional actors are increasingly recognized as essential in promoting beliefs, norms and practices that support and enable the prevention of violence against women. Civil society organizations are uniquely placed to engage with these actors and over the years have done so in various ways. In Liberia, for instance, Episcopal Relief and Development engaged early with senior religious leaders, which resulted in higher uptake among grass-roots faith leaders in later intervention activities and formal institutional backing for ending violence against women and girls. In Nepal, Restless Development opened up a dialogue with faith leaders and communities on the root causes of a harmful menstruation practice (*chhaupadi*), to disconnect the harmful practice from the sacredness surrounding it as a pathway to preventing violence.

64. Intersectional approaches to preventing violence against women and girls have also proved effective and the brief highlighted the need to identify specific groups of women and girls who face multiple forms of discrimination in order to understand how these intersect in dynamic ways. For example, in Moldova, HelpAge realized that most services to prevent violence against women and girls were unaware of the needs of older women and the violence they experienced in their homes and therefore ignored them. Civil society organizations emphasized the value of women's participation in prevention, not only in the identification of specific groups and the development of project design, but also during project implementation. For example, Fundació Sida i Societat, which works with self-identified sex workers in Guatemala, learned from the women themselves what their needs and priorities were and then adapted their programme design by regularly carrying out focus groups with migrant self-identified sex workers. Finally, civil society organizations also emphasized the need for further deepening the intersectional practice by placing at the centre of driving change the experiences of those who current systems and power relations marginalize or put at risk in overlapping ways.

65. The design phase on preventing violence against women is critical, complex and needs to be participatory, and designing trainings is a crucial component of most of these programmes. Training needs to support learning as well as unlearning trajectories by ensuring that the power dynamics do not replicate what the interventions are attempting to dismantle. For instance, the Breakthrough Trust in India trained youth social change activists in video-based storytelling as a strategy to bridge theoretical knowledge with contextually relevant learning. Training also needs to engage a wide set of stakeholders in the project system.

66. Empowering women and girls at different levels – political, economic, social and psychological – is key. A strategy often used to implement social empowerment in interventions to prevent violence against women and girls is the recruitment of community facilitators, which can effectively shift women's agency over time. For example, the Free Yezidi Foundation in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq adapted its project as the women community facilitators' sense of agency and ownership of intervention activities grew over time. In Nepal, the Story Kitchen organized storytelling workshops, "brave spaces", where community facilitators became agents of change by interviewing other women survivors of the country's civil war, offering them a chance to reclaim their dignity and their own narratives.

67. Adolescent-focused interventions show the importance of tapping into girls' own sense of safety to inform violence prevention programming. Most of them worked on twin tracks of having girls-only safe spaces, while recognizing that existing public and private spaces may feel unsafe for girls and working to reclaim those spaces. Therefore, programmes need to be tailored to adolescents' diverse needs

through such tactics as mobilizing agents of change around adolescent girls. For example, Grassroot Soccer in South Africa trained soccer coaches as facilitators and mentors for HIV and violence prevention among adolescent girls.

IX. The way forward

68. The experiences of the trust fund and its grantees over the past 25 years, and not least during the reporting period, have shown the importance of an increased focus on resilience, flexibility and collaborative engagement. That focus provides a strong and evidence-based foundation for efforts to end violence against women and girls in the coming period, through the implementation of the trust fund's strategic plan for 2021–2025. The lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis have highlighted how coinciding crises will shape the context for future work to end violence against women and girls and that the practice-based knowledge gained by civil society and women's organizations are an invaluable resource for addressing these challenges. Exchange, collaboration and sharing context-driven approaches are at the heart of the trust fund's unique convening role. Greater global awareness in recent years of the scale and impact of violence against women and girls is welcome and the increased body of knowledge about how it can be addressed and eradicated invaluable. Ensuring that resourcing matches the scale of the task, so that this wealth of knowledge can continue to make a real difference to the lives of women and girls, remains a crucial function, however, and one that the trust fund continues to pursue with vigour.
