

SESSION FOUR - GLOBAL

Fostering Civil Society Engagement through Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation

[Key Lessons Learned and Promising Practices](#)

The Spotlight Initiative Global Learning Session - **Fostering Civil Society Engagement through Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation** - brought together Spotlight Initiative teams and civil society partners to build a common understanding of Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PME). Participants gained greater insight into how a participatory approach to monitoring and evaluation better surfaces the underlying structural factors that perpetuate discrimination, bias, and inequality and, as such, contributes to improved programming to end violence against women and girls. The session also fostered discussions on the challenges to meaningfully implement PME, and ways to further integrate PME in Spotlight Initiative programmes. Furthermore, the session sought to analyze, further refine/revise and validate the [PME guidance note](#) while identifying and sharing concrete mechanisms and ways forward to further integrate PME into Spotlight Initiative programming. To support the (practical and meaningful) implementation of PME, this product highlights critical lessons learned and promising practices surfaced during the session from Spotlight Initiative programmes and partners in Belize, Malawi, and Niger, as well as in other contexts.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

To effectively implement participatory approaches to monitoring and evaluation, all key stakeholders engaged have the opportunity to critically “re-think” the **Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) function**. This entails shifting from a “policing” mindset to a **participatory mindset**. As the findings from country-level pilots have shown, **PME is a ground-breaking and collective exercise** that contributes to:

- a) Empowering rights holders and building trust and mutual collaboration
- b) Adapting programme strategies to local realities
- c) Fostering collaboration and partnerships between local communities and other programme partners
- d) Ensuring the principle of leaving no one behind is streamlined across the programme cycle.

To achieve these results, **we can generate a substantive shift in mindsets and perceptions around M&E.**

- To successfully promote participatory approaches, it is important to **engage rights holders and local communities from throughout the programme cycle - from design and implementation to monitoring and evaluation**. This will contribute to enhancing **co-ownership and collaboration**, ensuring that programme goals and overall objectives are aligned with the (varied) needs expressed by those benefiting from programme interventions.
- In PME, the **process is as important as the outcome**. In other words, transforming the traditional methods of M&E and data collection by centering rights holders, survivors, community members, and the demands of movements (among others, including those meant to benefit from Spotlight interventions) - is, in itself, a transformative result: it challenges the top-down conception of monitoring and fosters trust-building and more equitable relationships.
- As the country-level pilots have shown, PME can **contribute to multiple and intersecting results** that will ensure programme strategies and interventions **adequately respond to local priorities and to the needs of all women and girls:**
 - 1/ Involving civil society partners, rights holders and key stakeholders (such as local authorities) in monitoring and evaluation processes ensures that their feedback and lessons learnt are captured in a timely manner, contributing to the Initiative's decision-making.

2/Participatory methods allow critical recommendations to surface from rights holders. This enables rights holders to **actively shape programme strategies, facilitate (corrective) action, if needed, so that programming is more effective/better advances efforts to EVAWG).**

3/ Participatory approaches are crucial to foster engagement and **empower local communities by amplifying their voices and views.**

- Participatory methods of M&E require **agility and flexibility. It is critical to rethink the more traditional distribution of roles within programming.** Spotlight Initiative programmes must ensure that power is shared with community members, rights holders and those impacted by programming. This is essential if PME is to be effective and truly respect and promote the insights of local community members, and the women and girls meant to be supported by Spotlight programming.
- Participatory approaches take **time and resources**, often requiring a reimagining or reallocation of budgets (and at times an increase in budgets). The process of change is often not linear, with iterative learning - as PME surfaces critical insights - throughout. **Allocating adequate time and resources is therefore central to the success of PME.**



“PME CONTRIBUTES TO THE TRANSFORMATIVE AGENDA OF ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS, AND DECOLONISING DEVELOPMENT.”

Lara Fergus
GRG Coordinator

PROMISING PRACTICES

- **The Spotlight Initiative in Malawi** engaged in an innovative practice by **including the perspectives and experiences of communities and rights holders into the design and implementation of the programme’s Midterm Review**. Through focus groups discussions, key informant interviews and one anonymous survey, this inclusive process had two main objectives: to check whether women and girls and other stakeholders felt the programme was relevant and sustainable, and to assess what was and was not working (and why) so that the Malawi Spotlight team could recalibrate programming. As a result of rights-holders’ feedback and insights, the country team was able to identify bottlenecks and find mitigating solutions, shaping the interventions that have been prioritised in Phase II. Moreover, this innovative practice will contribute to increasing the quality and sustainability of programming in the Initiative, and enhance ownership and participation.
- **The Spotlight Initiative in Belize** adopted a promising practice by embracing a collaborative approach with civil society partners throughout the programming cycle, **including in monitoring and reporting processes**. Through community-based dialogues with implementing partners and beneficiaries, stakeholder consultations, and programmatic visits, the voices of civil society partners are meaningfully reflected in programming. This has promoted **shared learning and improved co-ownership of the programme**. Moreover, to ingrain this promising practice in the Initiative’s strategy, the team created an M&E framework that embeds PME (ensuring this approach is not simply adopted ad hoc, but rather institutionally grounded, carried out systematically and sustainably over time).
- **The Civil Society Reference Group (CSRG) in Niger** is fully engaged in a promising practice by **piloting the [Global Strategy on Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation](#)**. Through a participatory and inclusive approach, the CSRG undertook monitoring field visits, during both the Mid-term Assessment process and Spotlight annual reporting period. This approach aimed at collecting data and capturing impact stories on the results of the Initiative from the perspectives of rights holders and community members (better understanding what is beneficial to their lives). This has fostered **CSRG engagement in decision-making processes and has enabled voices from civil society to be streamlined and amplified through formal and informal structures**. Overall, PME in Niger has resulted in empowering rights holders and local communities, providing an opportunity for them to be heard. PME has also allowed country-level Spotlight Initiative teams to receive ongoing feedback from right holders about the impact on the ground and adapt programme interventions to local needs in a timely manner.
- **In Sudan, within the framework of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation**, PME was widely implemented to **measure change over time in gender and social norms**. Through *The Most Significant Change Technique (MSC)*, the Initiative adopted the promising practice of engaging rights holders to **jointly identify the most significant impacts of the Initiative on their families and communities**. The Initiative jointly identified the added value of programme interventions **through the lens of its agents of change**. Through the MSC technique, impact stories have been transformed into the subject of collective discussion, analysis, verification and documentation, **ultimately enabling the production of recommendations ground in local priorities, and adapting programme strategies accordingly**.

“PME HAS CONTRIBUTED TO FOSTERING TRUST WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND RIGHTS HOLDERS. AS THE CIVIL SOCIETY REFERENCE GROUP, WE HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO AMPLIFYING THE VOICE OF RIGHTS HOLDERS AND USING THEM TO INFORM RELEVANT RECOMMENDATIONS.”

Soumaila Amadou Moumouni
Member of Civil Society Reference Group Niger

“WOMEN AND GIRLS IN MALAWI FELT THAT THE PROGRAM WAS RELEVANT TO THEIR NEEDS AND THEY ACKNOWLEDGE THE NEED OF CONTINUING WORKING TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN WHICH REMAINS WIDESPREAD.”

Teemar Kidane
Spotlight Initiative Coordinator in Malawi

“IN BELIZE WE ARE WORKING TOGETHER WITH OUR CIVIL SOCIETY NATIONAL REFERENCE GROUP TO EFFECTIVELY REACH RIGHTS HOLDERS IN COMMUNITIES. THROUGH STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS WE HAVE ALSO ADDRESSED LIMITATIONS AND ENSURE FLEXIBILITY AND RAPID ADAPTATION TO EMERGING CHALLENGES.”

Pamela Bradley
Spotlight Initiative Coordinator in Belize



Access the Global Learning Session on Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation presentation, recording, and resources [here](#) and further information on PME [here](#).