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Norwegian experiences with specialised police teams in combatting sexual and gender-based violence

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CoP – community-oriented policing
CRSV – conflict-related sexual violence
DCPJ – HNP Central Directorate of Judicial Police
DRC – Democratic Republic of Congo
FGM – female genital mutilation
FPU – formed police units
HNP – Haitian National Police
IPO – individual police officer
MINUJUSTH – United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti
MINUSMA – United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MINUSTAH – United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti
MONUSCO – United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
OECD DAC – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Development Assistance Committee
PCC – police contributing country
SGBV – sexual and gender-based violence
SOP – standard operational procedures
SPF – Sudanese Police Force
SPT – specialised police team
SPU – special protection unit
SSNPS – South Sudan National Police Service
ToC – theory of change
ToT – training of trainers
ULCS – Unit for the Investigation of Crimes of Sexual Violence
UN – United Nations
UNDP – United Nations Development Programme
UNITAMS – United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission
UNMISS – United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNPD – United Nations Police Division
UNPOL – United Nations Police
WPS – Women, Peace and Security

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examines Norway's deployment of specialised police teams (SPTs) for sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in Haiti (2010–2019), Sudan (2021–2023) and South Sudan (2019–present).¹ SPTs were designed to provide targeted, specialised support to host-state police services, contributing to Norway's commitments under the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. It compares the planning, implementation and outputs of the three SPT projects.

Across the three missions, SPTs have delivered – and in South Sudan, continue to deliver – a range of concrete outputs. These included training of trainers (ToT) programmes, operational and investigative training, mentoring and co-location with national police, support to specialised SGBV units, and – most notably in Haiti – the establishment of SGBV offices, integration of SGBV training into the police academy and community-focused awareness raising. These outputs addressed clear technical gaps in policing responses to SGBV.

The findings show that the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of SPT efforts are heavily shaped by the political and institutional realities of each setting. While SGBV is a critical challenge in all three countries, SPT planning did not always consider the sociopolitical context or the problematic legacy of police institutions (particularly in Sudan and South Sudan) where elements of the police have historically been implicated in SGBV and other abuses. This undermined a core assumption of the SPTs' theory of change (ToC): that survivors would trust the police and police could credibly investigate such cases.

Effectiveness was further constrained by a wide range of external factors, including weak legal frameworks, low institutional capacity, corruption, funding and coordination challenges in UN missions, limited trust in police, and high turnover among host-state officers. These conditions often prevented SPT-supported skills and procedures from being applied in practice.

Sustainability proved another difficult dimension. In Haiti, many SGBV structures established by the SPT later declined or closed due to political collapse and escalating violence. In Sudan, premature mission termination meant that few outputs could take root. In South Sudan, institutional instability, corruption, limited resources and frequent rotations have undermined efforts to embed new practices. Across all three missions, political volatility and structural fragility were the main barriers to lasting impact.

Overall, the study finds that while SGBV-focused SPTs can deliver valuable outputs, their long-term contribution depends on whether the surrounding political, legal and institutional environment enables these outputs to translate into meaningful improvements for survivors. Future deployments must therefore be grounded in realistic expectations and a deeper understanding of the complexity in which SPTs operate.

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INTRODUCTION

In conflict-affected areas, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) disproportionately affects women and girls, undermining their safety, dignity and participation in society. Donor-supported police reform therefore plays a central role in strengthening accountability systems and improving the capacity of local security institutions to prevent and respond to such violence. Within this landscape, the United Nations Police (UNPOL) has become an increasingly important component of United Nations (UN) peace operations.

Debates in the UN have long centred on how to make UN policing more effective. In 2010, Norway introduced a new policing model: the specialised police team (SPT). SPTs are multidisciplinary teams of experts seconded by one or more UN Member States to provide targeted operational support, capacity-building, and service development to host-state police in specialised policing. As part of this initiative, the first SPT was deployed by Norway to the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) in 2010 to strengthen the Haitian National Police's (HNP) capacity to prevent and prosecute SGBV at a time when sexual violence had sharply increased after the earthquake. The SPT came to be seen as an innovative and effective approach, described by some as 'the future of UN policing'. The model was subsequently adopted in other UN missions as host states increasingly requested specialised expertise to address institutional capacity gaps. SGBV remains one such gap in many fragile and conflict-affected environments.

Norway's engagement aligns with the Norwegian Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2023–2030), which emphasises integrating gender perspectives in peace and security efforts and strengthening the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in security-sector reform. Deploying SPTs to support local police in responding to SGBV represents a concrete expression of this commitment.

However, the effectiveness of this approach, and how it can be improved, remains an open question. This study therefore examines the experiences, challenges and achievements of three SGBV-focused SPTs that Norway has been involved in: Haiti (2010–2019), Sudan (2021–2023) and South Sudan (2019–present). The SPTs sought to strengthen host-state police capacity to address SGBV through several activities. The underlying logic assumed that if host-state police gained specialised skills, structures and tools for handling and preventing SGBV, they would respond more effectively to such cases, contributing to improved justice outcomes for victims and reduced levels of violence. Activities included different training activities, operational capacity-building, infrastructure development and awareness raising.

The analysis examines the planning, implementation and outcomes of these initiatives, exploring what was achieved and why, by identifying mechanisms, contextual conditions and implementation experiences that shaped the results. It applies selected Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) criteria – relevance, effectiveness and sustainability – to assess how well the SPTs aligned with local needs, how far they achieved their intended changes and whether any improvements are likely to endure. One should note that this is not a systematic comparison of outputs. The missions differ substantially in mandate, duration, scale and documentation, making quantitative comparison neither meaningful nor reliable. Instead, the study draws primarily on accounts from SPT personnel, supported by available reports and evaluations, to understand how SPTs function in practice and which factors enable or hinder their performance.

The findings suggest that while the project-based SPT model has the potential to deliver targeted support to host-state police on SGBV, and did produce important outputs such as training of trainers (ToT), strengthened specialised units and SGBV awareness activities, its overall effectiveness depended heavily on supportive political, institutional and operational conditions. Across all three missions, impact was constrained by structural weaknesses in national justice systems and SGBV legislation, limited resources in the host-state police and SPT projects, pervasive corruption, low levels of public trust in the police, and high staff turnover. The findings also highlight that cooperation and funding

challenges in the UN, such as unclear coordination structures, reliance on personal relationships, and delayed or insufficient funding, hampered implementation and often forced teams to scale down or alter planned activities. Implementation challenges could also have been mitigated through more thorough local consultations during planning – something that was done well in Haiti but not in Sudan or South Sudan. Although the SPT emphasis on SGBV was highly relevant in all three countries, the projects did not sufficiently consider the sociopolitical context, including that in several settings, police had themselves been implicated in SGBV. Sustainability, continued political instability, weak institutions and frequent personnel rotations pose significant risks to the durability of SPT-supported improvements.

The study provides insights into what works in combatting SGBV through international police reform and peacekeeping, and to offer recommendations for Norway's future engagement in UN policing, including lessons relevant for the ongoing mission in South Sudan. Given that the Haiti SPT has already been evaluated (Tøraasen 2021; Caparini and Osland 2016) and the Sudan SPT ended prematurely, particular attention is given to the SPT in South Sudan for learning and potential improvements.

The report begins by outlining the SPT model and providing background on the political situation and SGBV-related challenges in Haiti, Sudan and South Sudan to situate the SPTs operating conditions. It then presents the methodology used, followed by a threepart findings section examining planning, implementation and outcomes, assessed against relevance, effectiveness and sustainability. The report concludes with recommendations derived from the findings.

SPTS ON SGBV IN PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS

SPTs are multidisciplinary teams of experts in specific fields of police work, seconded by one or more UN Member States to provide operational support, capacity strengthening and service development to host-state counterparts (Caparini and Osland 2016). They emerged in the 2000s as a complement to traditional UN policing models based on individual police officers (IPOs) and formed police units (FPUs; Hunt 2024).

Over time, SPTs have become increasingly attractive. For host states, they offer access to specialised expertise to address specific institutional capacity gaps. For police contributing countries (PCCs), they enable personnel, sometimes with dedicated funding and equipment, to work towards clearly defined objectives. For the UN Police Division (UNPD), SPTs provide a flexible way to respond to targeted police development needs in existing missions, without expanding bilateral programming (Hunt 2024). Their project-based approach, centred on a theme such as SGBV, helps ensure appropriate expertise and clearer roles and expectations for deployed personnel (UN representative/SPT Member 2025).

This report examines the experiences, challenges and achievements of three SPTs supported by the Government of Norway: Haiti (2010–2019), Sudan (2021–2023) and South Sudan (2019–present). The Haiti SPT was Norway-led with Norwegian and Canadian personnel; the Sudan SPT was a joint Norway–Germany initiative, and the South Sudan SPT consists of Norwegian and Finnish personnel. The SPTs prioritised strengthening national police capacity to address SGBV and, in Sudan and South Sudan, conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). The SPT in Sudan also prioritised community policing. In the three UN missions, the SPTs engaged in capacity-building activities such as curriculum development on SGBV, training of SGBV instructors (ToT), and operational training and awareness raising on investigative standards and victim-centred approaches. It also included strengthening operational capacity through supporting specialised SGBV units in the host-state police and mobile courts, developing standard operational procedures (SOPs), ameliorating case registry systems for SGBV cases, and, to a lesser extent, developing infrastructure (office space) for SGBV investigations and raising awareness on SGBV issues through workshops with community leaders, etc.

SPTs are formally deployed at the request of the UN Secretary-General and, in practice, at the request of field missions through the police commissioner. Deployment decisions are based on mission mandates, host-state needs assessments and existing police development plans, supported by capacity-gap analyses conducted by the mission and UNPD. SPTs globally have been established on several topics such as SGBV in the cases here, but also counter-terrorism and organised crime in Mali (MINUSMA) and organised crime and general policing capacity in MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The mission prepares a project document outlining objectives, composition, timeframe and terms of reference, in coordination with UNPD and contributing PCCs.

SPTs typically operate under the capacity-building and development pillar of the police component, reporting to the head of pillar while remaining under the authority of the police commissioner. They hold the legal status of ‘experts on mission’ and are generally deployed for a minimum of 12 months, with possible extensions of up to three years (Hunt 2024). Teams usually consist of two to 15 police officers and civilian experts, often from countries with similar policing cultures (Norwegian Police Directorate representative 2021). Increasingly, however, they include IPOs from other regions to strengthen local expertise and address language and contextual needs.

Peacekeeping, political dynamics and SGBV in Haiti, Sudan and South Sudan

The increased prioritisation of SGBV in UN peace operations is rooted in the WPS agenda. Successive Security Council resolutions have reframed SGBV in conflict-affected settings as a peace and security concern, obligating missions to strengthen prevention, response and investigative capacity. This emphasis is closely aligned with Norway’s long-standing

WPS commitments, where combatting SGBV and supporting gender-responsive policing figure prominently in foreign policy and its contributions to UN peace operations.

SGBV: Definitions

SGBV refers to acts that cause physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm and that stem from genderbased inequalities and discrimination (SIDA 2010). It includes violence in private and public spheres, such as intimate partner violence, sexual assault, child marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM) and so-called 'honour crimes' (UNHCR 2025). Although women and girls are most affected, individuals with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, expressions and sex characteristics also face heightened risk (UN Women 2025b).

While SGBV is a global phenomenon, it is often intensified in fragile and conflict-affected settings where insecurity, weak institutions and the breakdown of social norms amplify gender inequalities (Osman et al 2022). Earlier understandings framed SGBV in conflict as opportunistic or as a tactic of war. More recent scholarship, however, views it as a form of political violence embedded in gendered power relations and discriminatory social norms (Davies and True 2015). Thus, SGBV is not merely a byproduct of conflict but an extension of longstanding gender injustices that are exacerbated during crisis.

The following sections outline the political and institutional environments in Haiti, Sudan and South Sudan at the time of the SPT deployments. Although the three settings differ significantly, they share core features: entrenched gender inequalities, pervasive insecurity, inadequate legislation on SGBV, and limited justice-sector capacity to prevent and respond to SGBV. These conditions shaped the rationale for deploying SPTs and the operational constraints the teams encountered, and, as the findings will show, also influenced the relevance, effectiveness and prospects for sustaining impact over time.

Haiti

Even before the 2010 earthquake, Haiti faced deep gender inequalities and chronic political and economic fragility. Genderbased discrimination was pervasive, and Haiti ranked among the lowest countries globally on indicators of human development, gender equality and women's security (GIWPS 2025; UNDP 2025). The devastating earthquake of 12 January 2010, killing an estimated 220,000 people and displacing 1.5 million, further destabilised an already fragile state. Infrastructure collapsed, state capacity eroded, and social and economic dislocation intensified.

In this environment, women and girls became increasingly vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation. Overcrowded and insecure internally-displaced-person camps lacked adequate security and services, leaving many exposed to assault. One study estimates that as many as 10,000 individuals were sexually assaulted in the six weeks following the earthquake (Kolbe et al 2010). A 2011–2012 survey found that residents of high-density, low-income urban areas were 27 times more likely to experience sexual assault than those in low-density, more affluent areas (Caparini and Osland 2016; MADRE et al 2014). These patterns reflected longstanding forms of SGBV perpetrated by armed gangs, paramilitary groups and other violent actors.

In this setting of entrenched gender inequality, weak institutions and escalating levels of SGBV, the Norwegian SPT was deployed under MINUSTAH to help strengthen the HNP's ability to prevent, investigate and respond to SGBV. The HNP, established in 1994 after the demobilisation of the armed forces, remained relatively young and under-resourced when MINUSTAH deployed in 2004. The earthquake further weakened police infrastructure and capacities. Many HNP officers lacked formal training, discriminatory attitudes towards survivors were common, and corruption and weak investigative practices resulted in high dismissal rates. Survivors often refrained from reporting due to fear of reprisals, social stigma, economic dependence and little trust in the justice sector (Jagannath 2011). Today, while gang-related sexual violence accounts for the majority of SGBV cases in Haiti, UN humanrights reporting indicates that police officers have also been implicated in serious abuses, including rape during securityforce operations (BINUH 2025; U.S. Department

of State 2023). The HNP has also faced serious allegations of corruption and abuse, including extorting money from citizens, misusing government resources and colluding with gangs (Espérance 2023).

Haiti's legal framework on SGBV remains incomplete and outdated. While rape was criminalised in 2005, other forms of violence – including domestic violence, marital rape, psychological abuse and coercive control – remain insufficiently addressed or entirely absent from the penal code. Multiple attempts to address these shortcomings has been blocked by political instability and lack of a functioning parliament (Tøraasen 2023).

Sudan

Sudan entered its transitional period in 2019 with similarly entrenched patterns of SGBV and gender discrimination. Following the ouster of President Omar alBashir, a joint civilian–military transitional government was formed under Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, with elections planned for 2023. To support this transition, the UN established UNITAMS in 2020, a political mission with a mandate to strengthen constitutional reform, human rights, accountability mechanisms and ruleoflaw institutions. With this mandate, UNITAMS created a SPT emphasising CoP and SGBV/CRSV.

The establishment of the SPT reflected longstanding concerns about SGBV in Sudan. Under the alBashir regime, sexual violence had been used and tolerated as a tool of political repression (Nihar 2024). This continued into the transitional period, with widespread sexual attacks on women protestors documented during the 2018–2019 uprising (Omer 2022), and persists today as a weapon of war used by the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces (Human Rights Watch 2024). By 2019, Sudan ranked among the lowest globally on human development and gender equality indicators (UNDP 2025), with SGBV manifesting in multiple forms: restrictions on women's mobility and public participation, domestic and sexual violence, forced and child marriage, and widespread FGM, affecting an estimated 87% of women and girls (UN Women 2024). Sudan scored zero out of 100 on the Women, Business and the Law indicator assessing legal protections against violence (Osman et al 2022).

Although the transitional authorities initiated reforms to remove discriminatory laws (such as finally criminalising FGM), legislation addressing SGBV remains deficient. There are still no laws criminalising domestic violence, child marriage remains legal and rape continues to be conflated with adultery in certain legal provisions. Police and justice institutions lacked the training, standardised procedures and survivorcentred approaches required to address SGBV/CRSV, and prosecutors operated without uniform protocols. More troublingly, reports indicate that police and military personnel themselves frequently perpetrate SGBV and enjoy legal immunities that protect them from prosecution (SRI 2021). Strong social stigma further contributes to underreporting and limited access to justice.

It was in this political transition, weak rule of law institutions and severe gender inequalities that the UNITAMS SPT was established, to build police capacity in CoP and SGBV/CRSV and to support broader efforts to strengthen Sudan's justice sector.

South Sudan

The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) was established in 2011, the day before South Sudan's independence, through Security Council Resolution 1996 to consolidate peace and support statebuilding. Its mandate expanded significantly after civil war erupted in December 2013, when violence spread rapidly and hundreds of thousands sought refuge inside UNMISS bases. UNMISS became the central international actor supporting the peace process and preventing renewed mass violence.

By the time the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict was signed in 2018, nearly two million people had been displaced and more than half the population, around 7 million, required humanitarian assistance (NUPI 2019). Although large-scale offensives subsided, UNMISS reported a dramatic rise in sexual violence, noting 'grave

concern' that conflict-related SGBV had become normalised and persisted despite the peace agreement (UNMISS 2019). An internal assessment identified at least 134 cases of rape or gang rape between September and December 2018 alone, alongside abduction, forced marriage and sexual slavery perpetrated by armed actors.

As in the other cases, the roots of SGBV in South Sudan extend beyond the conflict. Structural gender inequalities, harmful sociocultural norms and extremely low development indicators create pervasive vulnerability. UNICEF (2020) estimates that 65% of women and girls have experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime, while 51% have experienced intimate partner violence. UN Women (2025a) describes SGBV as 'embedded in the sociocultural fabric of South Sudan', including widespread early and forced marriage.

Amid escalating concern, the Security Council requested strengthened SGBV prevention and response measures in UNMISS. Under its evolving mandate (which includes protection of civilians, support to humanitarian delivery and human rights monitoring), the mission faced growing demands for specialised SGBV expertise. In response, the UNMISS Police Commissioner adopted a projectbased approach and established an SPT to provide targeted capacity building, improve investigative practices and support national authorities in strengthening their response to SGBV.

The South Sudan National Police Service (SSNPS) operates in an extremely challenging environment shaped by years of conflict, political instability and institutional fragmentation. The force includes several former militia integrated with minimal screening or training, resulting in a fragmented and inconsistent institutional culture. More than 70% of officers reportedly lack formal police training, and the organisation suffers from severe shortages of resources, equipment and logistical capacity (HSBA 2017). Relatedly, corruption permeates 'all levels of the state apparatus', including the police. Indeed, South Sudanese citizens have consistently identified the police as the most corrupt institution in the country, with bribery commonly reported in interactions with law enforcement (Harutyunyan and Maslen 2023).

South Sudan's legal framework on SGBV is partially developed but highly inconsistent. While rape and sexual violence are criminalised and harmful practices against children are prohibited, marital rape is not criminalised, and child marriage remains legal through loopholes. Harmful customary practices, particularly bride price and forced or early marriage, persists, while enforcement of the legal framework is weak and often undermined by the prominent role of customary courts. South Sudan has drafted an Anti-Gender-Based Violence Bill intended to address these shortcomings, but it has not yet been passed (Equality Now 2026).

UNMISS remains one of the UN's largest and most complex peacekeeping missions, with a police ceiling of more than 2,100 personnel, and continued responsibility for supporting the peace process, humanitarian operations and preparations for upcoming national elections. These mission dynamics shaped the environment in which the SPT was deployed and influenced both the opportunities and constraints it encountered.

METHODOLOGY

This study examines the planning, implementation and outcomes of Norway's SPT engagements on SGBV, seeking to understand not only what was achieved but also why certain outputs materialised while others did not. Given the complex and fluid environments in which the SPTs operated, and the presence of multiple actors and initiatives, the study adopts a contribution analysis. Rather than establishing direct causal attribution, it identifies plausible pathways through which SPT activities may have influenced outcomes (Mayne 2008). This is an interpretive yet systematic approach: it seeks to explain results by examining underlying assumptions, contextual conditions and alternative explanations that may have shaped the observed changes.

Contribution analysis typically builds on an underlying theory of change (ToC). Although the SPT projects did not articulate an explicit ToC,² a reconstructed version was developed for this study based on project documents, stated objectives and the intended outcomes of the interventions. In simplified form, the underlying logic assumed that if host-state police gained specialised skills, structures and tools for handling and preventing SGBV, then they would respond to these cases more effectively, ultimately contributing to improved justice outcomes for survivors and a reduction in SGBV over time. The reconstructed ToC outlines the causal pathways linking SPT activities to expected changes in police practice, institutional capacity and SGBV response, and identifies the assumptions that needed to hold for these changes to materialise.

The ToC provides the analytical foundation for assessing contribution using selected OECD DAC evaluation criteria. 'Relevance' considers the extent to which objectives and design responded to beneficiary needs and institutional priorities. 'Effectiveness' examines the degree to which intended results were, or are expected to be, achieved. 'Sustainability' assesses whether benefits are likely to endure over time, considering financial, social and institutional conditions. Table 1 illustrates how these criteria are operationalised in this study.

2 This does not appear in the available documentation, and interviewees did not make explicit reference to a ToC.

Table 1: Operationalisation of relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of the SPT projects

DAC criterion	Operationalisation	Guiding questions
Relevance	Assesses how well SPT objectives and design aligned with identified needs, institutional priorities, legal frameworks and sociocultural dynamics in each context.	<p>Were SPT objectives aligned with documented SGBV challenges?</p> <p>Did the SPT reflect national policing needs and reform priorities?</p> <p>Was the approach appropriate given existing legal and policy frameworks?</p> <p>Did the SPT design respond to local gender norms, stigma and barriers to reporting?</p>
Effectiveness	Evaluates the extent to which intended outputs and outcomes were, or are likely to be, achieved.	<p>Were planned activities delivered as intended?</p> <p>How did contextual factors, such as funding, corruption, legal gaps, coordination and trust in the police, shape the implementation and results of SPT activities?</p> <p>Were there indications that SPT activities contributed to changes in knowledge, attitudes or practices among police personnel?</p> <p>Were SPT-supported tools, structures or procedures used in practice during the project period?</p> <p>To what degree did cooperation with UN actors, justice institutions and local partners support or hinder the SPTs' intended results?</p>
Sustainability	Considers the likelihood that benefits and capacities supported by the SPT will endure, considering institutionalisation, ownership, resources and broader political conditions.	<p>Were new skills, procedures or structures integrated into national systems (eg police schools, SOPs)?</p> <p>Are trained officers retained or frequently rotated?</p> <p>Is there continued funding or political support for SGBV response?</p> <p>Do implementing institutions show ownership of reforms?</p> <p>Are activities resilient to instability or resource constraints?</p>

The three missions differed substantially in mandate, leadership, size, duration, resources and political context. Haiti hosted a long-standing SPT that concluded as planned, Sudan's SPT was short-lived and ended abruptly, and the South Sudan SPT is ongoing. These differences shaped both implementation and results. The study therefore emphasises contextualisation, analysing each mission's specific conditions rather than treating them as directly comparable, thereby avoiding overly generalised conclusions.

The analysis draws on interviews and documentary sources, including reports, evaluations, project plans and mission guidance materials. Documentation has been collected from the Norwegian National Criminal Investigation Service (Kripos) and the UNPD in New York. The availability and quality of documentation vary significantly across cases. While final reports exist for Haiti and Sudan, allowing to 'take stock' of total output, available reporting for South Sudan is largely scattered and incomplete. The most comprehensive evaluation of the South Sudan SPT that could be obtained for this study dates to 2020, followed mainly by some monthly reporting and a few biannual reports. These differences limit comparability and the reliability of numerical indicators. The study therefore places greater weight on qualitative interpretation to understand implementation, outcomes and contextual influences.

Thirteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with current and former SPT members, representatives from the Norwegian National Police Directorate, UNPOL personnel in the missions and the UNPD in New York. Many of the interviewed SPT members had served in two or even all three of the examined missions, providing valuable comparative perspectives and contributing to analytical saturation. Due to security considerations and practical constraints, most interviews were carried out via video conferencing.

This approach enables an analysis of how SPT work unfolded in practice, rather than relying on non-comparable quantitative data. The study has limitations: the interview sample is relatively small and accounts are retrospective and subjective. In the scope of this research, it was not possible to interview civil society organisations working on SGBV

in Sudan and South Sudan (only in Haiti), and having those external perspectives might have altered or deepened some findings. Still, the strong consistency across interviews, combined with alignment between interview data and available documentation, enhances confidence in the reliability of the findings.

The findings will be presented in the next sections, corresponding to the planning, implementation and outcomes of the SPT projects. Together, these sections illustrate how decisions made during the planning phase shaped subsequent implementation, and how they influenced the projects' relevance, effectiveness and sustainability.

PLANNING THE PROJECTS

The planning section of the findings examines how the three SPTs were conceptualised, how objectives were defined, what preparatory steps were taken and how funding arrangements were established. It identifies similarities, differences and recurring challenges across missions, as well as the evolution of the SPT.

Objectives and conceptualisation

A core principle in SPT planning is that the theme should reflect host-country needs. Given the severe SGBV challenges described above, this was the case in Haiti, Sudan and South Sudan. In practice, however, topic selection involves negotiation between the mission and contributing countries and requires approval in New York. UN personnel noted that the process is shaped by both 'supply and demand': the expertise donors can provide and how it aligns with their foreign policy priorities (UN representative/SPT Member 2025). Norway and other Scandinavian countries have long prioritised SGBV, which helps explain the high number of SGBV-focused SPTs. The emphasis on SGBV and CoP also aligns with UN strategic priorities, supported by existing guidance and training materials.

The idea for an SPT in Haiti was initiated by the then Norwegian Police Adviser to the UN in New York, following discussions on how to improve the approach to the UN police keeping mission. The traditional approach until this time was through IPOs and FPU. However, differences in policing cultures and frequent rotations of UN police personnel proved challenging for the police teams. It was believed that having a SPT with relevant expertise and a focused mission would be more effective and ensure continuity. When the earthquake struck in Haiti in 2010 and cases of SGBV soared, it was suggested that Norway, which had Haiti as one of the partner countries in development, would send a SPT prioritising crimes in SGBV (Tøraasen 2021).

The main objective of the Haiti SPT programme was to professionalise and strengthen the operational capacity of the HNP to prevent, investigate and prosecute SGBV (Caparini and Osland 2016). The first phase, originally planned to end in 2013, was extended to 2015 due to financial and procurement delays. Building on the progress and lessons from this initial phase, a second project (SPT2 2015–2019) was launched with a sharper emphasis on improving the investigative skills of officers specialising in SGBV cases.

SPT2 was anchored in the HNP's Development Plan, which identified the need for a specialised SGBV unit in the judicial police. This unit, the Unit for the Investigation of Crimes of Sexual Violence (ULCS), was established in 2015 and became the main institutional priority of the specialised team. Alongside strengthening ULCS, the programme sought to enhance the professionalism of HNP investigations more broadly, reinforce preventive measures, and expand specialised SGBV capacity at the departmental level through targeted training.

While the first project concentrated primarily on police capacity, the second phase aimed to create a more harmonised and system-wide approach to SGBV investigations. This included closer cooperation with prosecutors, investigative judges and other justice actors, as well as awareness-raising workshops for civil society and community leaders. According to SPT staff in Haiti, adopting this wider perspective was essential for ensuring that justice actors understood their roles and how their responsibilities connected to others in the justice chain. The intention was to prevent SGBV cases from stalling once they left police hands and strengthen sustainability by involving multiple institutions – an important safeguard with political instability (Norwegian Police Directorate representative 2025). The Haiti SPT was Norway-led and initially composed of Norwegian police officers, with two Canadian officers later added to provide additional expertise, particularly French-language capacity, and to help ensure continuity of activities after the team's departure.

The Haiti pilot SPT model was deemed a successful innovation and was subsequently adopted in other UN missions, including in Sudan and South Sudan. The Sudanese UN mission (UNITAMS) was a *political* mission created to support Sudan's democratic

transition, unlike the Haitian and South Sudanese peacekeeping mission. The SPT in Sudan was a German–Norwegian team which sought to specifically enhance the capability of the Sudanese Police Force (SPF) in addressing SGBV/CRSV and CoP. The mission prioritised the systemic development of CoP as the SPT’s main working philosophy as a way to restore trust in the Sudanese police which had been destroyed during the al-Bashir regime (SPT Member 1 2025). The expected outcomes of the intervention were: 1) the development of standardised policies and manuals for CoP and addressing SGBV/CRSV, 2) enhanced engagement between the SPF and the communities, 3) an increased number of trained SPF officers on CoP, 4) a systematic database in place regarding SGBV, 5) enhanced SGBV/CRSV response and investigation capabilities in the SPF, and 6) a specialised gender/SGBV investigation unit in the SPF. It consisted of three sequential phases, intended to last until July 2024. However, the mission was suspended after the outbreak of conflict in April 2023 and has not been able to return since.

Norway’s engagement in the South Sudan SPT began in 2019. Although an SPT had existed in UNMISS for several years, it had not functioned as intended and was effectively relaunched when Norway was invited to join alongside Finland. The South Sudan SPT was designed to strengthen national capacity to address SGBV and CRSV. In addition to members from Norway and Finland, the SPT recruited several IPO from African countries to bring regional perspectives and essential language capabilities.

The SPT in South Sudan was designed to enhance the capacity of the South Sudanese National Police Service (SSPNS) and other national justice authorities to address SGBV and CRSV. For this, the primary outcomes of the project were: 1) enhanced SSPNS capacity to address SGBV cases, including increased quality of investigations, increased number of police officers trained to investigate the cases and consistency with due legal procedures; 2) enhanced cooperation between the SSNPS and the directorate of public prosecutions; 3) referral pathways for victim support identified and coordinated through the UN Population Fund, GBV Sub-Cluster Coordinator and UNICEF; and 4) enhanced incident reporting and information analysis through mission-wide use of SAGE implemented by mission leadership. As of spring 2026, the SPT project is in its seventh phase (now referred to as ‘quarter’) and ongoing.

Table 2: SPTs on SGBV

Host country and UN mission	Period	SPT priority area	Team composition	Overall objective
Haiti MINUSTAH and MINUJUSTH	2010–2019	SGBV	Norway (lead), Canada	To professionalise and strengthen the operational capacity of the HNP to prevent, investigate and prosecute SGBV
Sudan UNITAMS	2021–2023	SGBV, CRSV, CoP	Norway, Germany (co-led)	To enhance the institutional capacity of the SPF in addressing SGBV, CRSV and the systemic development of CoP
South Sudan UNMISS	2019–present	SGBV, CRSV	Finland (lead), Norway plus two IPOs with regional/language expertise	To enhance the capability and capacity of the SSNPs and other justice chain authorities to prevent, investigate and prosecute SGBV and CRSV

After the first project in Haiti, the emphasis of SPTs shifted increasingly towards sustainability and local ownership. Similarly, the SPT model has gradually evolved from prioritising exclusively on police capacity-building to also working with other justice actors. This approach is explicit in the South Sudan SPT's overall objectives, and interviewees reported it was intended in Sudan as well, though implementation was cut short by the mission's evacuation (SPT Member 1 2025). The emphasis on sustainability and local ownership has led to two important decisions regarding SPTs: all SPT projects should include a ToT component and each mission should establish a steering committee. The steering committee is a relatively recent development and brings together UN agencies, including United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) representatives, local justice actors, the SPT and local police. The idea is to create a space where local police can advise on the direction of the project and where the SPT can get help in resolving challenges (Norwegian Police Directorate representative 2025). While some SPTs in Mali and the DRC reported success with this model, others found it more difficult to get real value from it. In South Sudan, for example, interviewees noted that the steering committee was established too late to secure local ownership or ensure that the host state fully understood the purpose of the SPT (SPT Member 2 2025).

This broader approach is also reflected in who can serve on an SPT. Teams now include not only police officers but also civilian specialists such as psychologists and legal experts (SPT Member 2 2025; Norwegian Police Directorate representative 2025). Experiences from Haiti highlighted the importance of language and contextual knowledge in addition to technical expertise in SGBV investigations. The Haiti SPT therefore included two Canadian police officers to provide French-language capacity. Building on these lessons, later SPTs began integrating ordinary IPOs from neighbouring or regional countries to strengthen linguistic competence and contextual awareness – an approach intended to enhance local ownership and improve operational effectiveness.

This shift has not been without trade-offs. Recruiting personnel from diverse policing cultures can introduce different expectations and standards of practice (SPT Member 3 2025). Nevertheless, most SPT members reported few cooperation challenges in the team. In fact, the South Sudan SPT emphasised that having an Arabic-speaking police officer and an African SGBV specialist was not only beneficial but crucial (SPT Member 4 2025). Because understandings of SGBV vary across cultures, regional expertise helped the team establish a shared conceptual basis and navigate culturally sensitive issues. As one member explained:

Having an expert – specifically a country expert – on the team is essential. You can come from Norway or Finland with a lot of knowledge, but it doesn't work if you don't understand the context. That is crucial. And having an interpreter who spoke Arabic and also had a professional background and was a full team member – that is important. Because standing there teaching with interpreters who do not understand the subject means you simply do not get through (SPT Member 2 2025).

Hence, the expanded, multi-disciplinary composition of SPTs appears to have strengthened the teams' ability to understand context, communicate effectively and deliver relevant capacity-building.

Preparing the projects

The Haiti SPT programme was designed following extensive consultations with local police and justice actors to understand needs on the ground and how best to address them. As part of the preparations, Norwegian senior officers travelled to Haiti on a fact-finding trip where they met with the MINUSTAH mission leadership and main HNP officials who confirmed that police capacity training emphasising SGBV was needed and welcome. Following this, the Norwegian National Police Directorate, assisted by the gender adviser in the UNPOL at the Department of Peace Operations in New York, worked to strengthen the HNP's capacities to prevent, investigate and prosecute SGBV by deploying an SPT to work under MINUSTAH. This collaborative approach was also intended to foster local ownership and support sustainability once the SPT mandate ended. The SPT's goals further corresponded closely with the priorities outlined in the HNP Development Plan, written by the HNP and the UN. The extensive planning process in Haiti reflected that it was the first deployment of an SPT, requiring detailed consultations and careful consideration, as the very conceptualisation of SPTs was unfolding simultaneously.

The Sudanese and South Sudanese plans were designed following a stock-taking exercise on the capacities and organisation of the police force and other prosecutorial bodies to manage and address SGBV cases. Thus, while the design of both programmes was needs-based, it did not involve as detailed consultations with local police forces as was done by the Haiti SPT mission. It was further decided that a joint assessment should be completed before deploying a SPT in new missions. A separate fact-finding mission recommended by the UN guidelines was not conducted prior to the deployment of the SPTs in both countries. Further, unlike the Haitian model, the project objectives were agreed by the host state but were not enshrined in the police development plan. The plans were drafted in New York based on reports from the missions (SPT Member 3 2025).

While a fact-finding mission to South Sudan was lacking before the SPT's deployment, team members participated in planning when they arrived in South Sudan with local police, justice actors and the UN:

People came from New York, and we had many meetings with the local police and prosecutors, as well as within the UN system and with others, such as the courts and so on. It was an assessment conducted in order to develop the project plan that was drawn up at the time (SPT Member 1 2025).

The South Sudan SPT also likely benefitted from the insights, lessons learned and institutional memory from the earlier SPT project in UNMISS, as the new team effectively represented a 'reboot' of that earlier effort.

The SPT in Sudan, however, had to start 'from scratch' and did not involve thorough consultations with local police. According to SPT members, project planning was largely undertaken at UNPOL Headquarters in New York, and the resulting project plan appeared generic rather than adapted to Sudan. Team members noted that it resembled earlier plans used in South Sudan rather than being grounded in a needs assessment of Sudanese policing structures or SGBV dynamics. As one member put it,

There were some people in New York who had put it together...It looked very similar to the plan we had in South Sudan. It wasn't specifically adapted to Sudan (SPT Member 1 2025).

This limited consultation had several consequences. First, SPT personnel did not feel sufficiently prepared for the mission. No assessment of the SGBV situation had been conducted prior to their arrival, leaving the team to complete basic contextual analysis during their first months in Sudan. Before deployment, consultations were held with

members of other SPTs, such as the team in Mali. While this provided some insight, mainly about bureaucratic resistance and internal UN challenges ('Most of the advice... was that you have to stand your ground and fight for it'; SPT Member 2 2025), it did little to prepare the team for Sudan. They described arriving with 'very little information about the country and the situation' (SPT Member 1 2025), and as only two Norwegian officers deployed, they lacked the broader contingent-based support structure they had relied on in South Sudan.

Second, the limited early engagement with the Sudanese police likely weakened local ownership – an aspect consistently emphasised with SPTs as essential for success. Without prior dialogue or joint planning, it became more difficult for the team to anchor the project in the SPF or establish a shared understanding of priorities and expected tasks. This lack of clarity was reflected when the Sudan SPT was asked to deliver courses on riot policing and corruption in addition to SGBV, indicating that main counterparts did not fully understand the purpose or mandate of the team.

SPT members suggested that these shortcomings were largely due to the nature of the mission. UNITAMS was a small and newly established political mission with almost no UN police presence when the SPT arrived. As one member recalled,

When we came down there, there was nothing. This was a completely new mission...very different from what we had been on before. And very little police. When we got down there, we were the first (SPT Member 1 2025).

With no existing police component to facilitate access to Sudanese counterparts, early consultations were practically difficult.

The Sudan experience therefore illustrates that lessons from earlier SPTs cannot always be replicated across missions. Differences in mission type, size and timing, combined with the amount of access to local institutions, shape how much SPTs can be co-designed with host-state police and how well-prepared team members can be before deployment.

Funding decisions

A major advantage for the Haiti SPT was its access to separate, earmarked funding from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, amounting to US\$1.2 million during the project (Caparini and Osland 2016). Although the funds were channelled through the UN mission, they were reserved for SPT activities. Several team members, however, described significant early difficulties accessing these resources through UN administrative systems. As one former member recalled,

Many training sessions were almost cancelled because we couldn't get the money out. We spent a lot of time and discussion at the finance office to get the money released (SPT Member 2 2025).

These delays were substantial and contributed to the first project phase being extended by two years.

While the Haiti SPT benefitted from a substantial, dedicated budget, the SPT model moved away from this approach. It was decided that future SPTs should, in principle, deploy without their own earmarked funding. Although external funding from contributing countries could still be an advantage, the intention was that SPT activities should be integrated into the wider mission budget to strengthen sustainability and ensure alignment with mission priorities (Norwegian Police Directorate representative 2021). This change also reflected lessons from Haiti, where accessing earmarked funds proved administratively challenging (SPT Member 5 2021).

In Sudan and South Sudan, SPTs therefore relied entirely on mission budgets. As in many other UN missions, the primary resource for implementing civilian tasks, including police capacity-building, was international staff rather than dedicated project funding (Caparini and Osland 2016). According to SPT personnel, the absence of earmarked

financial support was a main reason the SPTs in Sudan and South Sudan reported far fewer concrete outputs than the Haitian team. Whereas the Haiti SPT's funding issues were temporary and eventually resolved, the teams in Sudan and South Sudan operated under persistent funding constraints and faced competition for scarce mission resources, limiting the scope and scale of their activities. This will be discussed in further detail below.

IMPLEMENTATION AND OUTPUTS

The implementation section analyses how each SPT translated its mandate into practice through concrete outputs, grouped into broad categories such as professionalisation and training, infrastructure development, operational capacity-building, and community outreach and awareness-raising. An overview is provided in Table 3. Owing to uneven documentation across missions, the overview is not exhaustive, but it draws on available reports and interviews with SPT members to ensure the most significant activities are captured.

Professionalisation and training

All three SPTs sought to strengthen national police capacity on SGBV through curriculum development, ToT, operational training, and awarenessraising on investigative standards and victimcentred approaches. In Haiti, the SPT prioritised professionalising the HNP through a cascade ToT model: 35 officers received an initial tending instructor course, followed by five-day courses delivered to peers, reaching more than 1,000 officers during the first project phase. Training emphasising investigative skills, victim interviewing, including child victims, and addressing cultural attitudes towards SGBV. As one SPT report stated, the goal was not only ‘to transfer technical skills, but more ambitiously to effect a change in mentality among HNP personnel at all levels regarding crimes of sexual violence’.

Table 3: Overview of interventions

	Professionalisation and training	Infrastructure development	Operational capacity	Community engagement and awareness raising
Haiti	ToT Seminars for senior HNP officers Trained officers at specialised course abroad Developed curriculum integrated into police education On-site trainings/co-location	Refurbished, equipped office for HNP coordinator for gender and women's affairs Built ULCS unit Created SGBV classroom at the Haitian police school Equipped police school library with SGBV materials Established 13 specialised SGBV offices Supported establishment of one-stop centre	Created centralised unit for oversight and harmonisation (ULCS) <i>Attempted</i> to install new case registry system Developed SOPs	Workshops ('sit-ins') with community leaders in all regional departments
Sudan	ToT Developed training curriculum Basic courses on SGBV prevention and investigation Workshop in SGBV awareness On-site trainings/co-location	Some fundraising efforts	Mapped operational environment Improved understanding of referral pathways <i>Planned</i> to revise and strengthen SGBV/CRSV case management systems	CoP initiatives
South Sudan	ToT On-site trainings/co-location Contributed to scenario-based training and interviewing child victims Sent instructors to the mobile courts programme	Some fundraising efforts	Supported/cooperated with special protection unit (SPU) Strengthened coordination across the criminal justice chain through cooperation with juvenile courts and one-stop centre <i>Attempted</i> to establish a case management system and collected data from police station Developed SOPs (with UN agencies)	Awareness-raising workshops (eg with students) Participated in radio broadcasts

The SPT also developed an SGBV training programme that was later integrated into basic training at the HNP school, where, from 2014, all new cadets received one week of SGBV instruction as part of their seven-month curriculum. Ten officers, including seven women, were funded to attend a specialised course at the Quebec Police Force; four were later assigned to the ULCS. The team further promoted co-location strategies, bringing specialised units into shared physical spaces to improve operational coordination.

To reinforce leadership engagement, the SPT and the HNP organised four-day seminars for 51 senior officers. Women, who comprise around 10% of the HNP, were prioritised to strengthen representation and ensure women's perspectives were included. Participants were selected by the HNP gender focal points, who also attended. According to SPT estimates, more than 25% of HNP officers in each department received SGBV training during the first project period. The team conducted thorough evaluations of these courses, including participant surveys.

In Sudan, the SPT was mandated to develop and implement training in CoP and SGBV/CRSV at both operational and mid-management levels. During the first year, the team produced numerous curriculum documents, including lesson plans, presentations and supplementary materials. Most of the training did not start until the second year, which involved four ToTs (two of which emphasised SGBV), two basic courses on preventing and investigating SGBV, and one workshop on SGBV awareness. 177 police personnel

from all levels, including 67 women, received training. Ten of these were handpicked as instructors for future training. The team was planning a new round of courses when the war broke out in 2023.

According to SPT personnel, implementation in Sudan was hindered by start-up coordination issues. UNITAMS was a new mission, and all communication with the Sudanese police initially had to go through the 'international cooperation' division, creating significant bottlenecks. As one member recalled, 'We were there for a very, very long time before we even got to meet Sudanese police personnel' (SPT Member 1 2025). Funding constraints compounded these challenges. For nearly a year, the team had insufficient resources to run a full course, only later managing to use police premises for training. Structural barriers, limited time due to the outbreak of war in April 2023 and corruption in participant selection meant that ToT activities were largely foundational, to prepare the ground for future teams. One SPT member reflected, 'We realised that, as the first team, our job was to facilitate those who came after us. That became our goal in a way' (SPT Member 1 2025). However, with the outbreak of war and the subsequent evacuation of UNITAMS, the benefits of this groundwork have yet to materialise.

The ongoing SPT in South Sudan has similarly emphasised ToT and technical assistance, but progress has been slowed by Covid19, funding limitations, bureaucratic delays and a volatile security environment. Initial training needs assessments of mid- and operational-level officers were halted by the pandemic, and while four ToTs were reported as completed by 2023, funding and resource constraints meant that only a single ToT was delivered during a 14-month period in 2024–2025. ToT is resource intensive – a ten-day course followed by a three-day refresher – and competing budget priorities in the mission made planning difficult. These constraints led the SPT to prioritise less costly forms of professionalisation, such as on-site training at police stations (co-locations; SPT Member 2 2025).

While precise figures are unavailable due to limited access to documentation, the team has conducted over 100 co-locations, providing guidance on human rights, investigative techniques and victim interviewing. However, some SPT members questioned the effectiveness of these co-locations. Securing appointments was often challenging, leading to impromptu visits and limited access to relevant staff. Consequently, many visits became informal updates on recent cases rather than substantive training opportunities. Local confusion over multiple international actors sometimes created fatigue, which is a common challenge in large UN missions like UNMISS. One interviewee observed, 'When we left a police station, new police officers arrive and ask almost the same questions we do' (SPT Member 6 2025), reflecting local uncertainty about different UN components. The SPT sought to mitigate this by coordinating field visits with other actors.

Limited resources in the police further complicated training. As one SPT member noted, 'They don't have anywhere to sit. They don't have chairs. Where are we supposed to conduct training? Out in the sun in 40 degrees – that doesn't work' (SPT Member 4 2025). Ensuring that training reached the right participants was another challenge. SPT members in Sudan and South Sudan expressed frustration that they could not control participant selection directly but could submit a 'wish list' of officers with an SGBV focus – requests that were often ignored. Officers without an SGBV mandate, such as traffic police, were sometimes sent instead, driven by internal incentives linked to per diems and transport allowances. This reflected widespread corruption in South Sudan and the alarming reality that police and other public officials had not been paid since October 2023 (SPT Member 4 2025).

To increase visibility in the wider UN mission, the SPT participated in 'induction training' for newcomers to UNMISS, clarifying the team's mandate and capacities. As one member explained, many UNPOL officers 'don't really know what an SPT is' (SPT Member 2 2025), making internal awareness raising essential. Interviewees also noted persistent pressure by UNPOL to redeploy SPT members to other tasks, despite the team not being a redeployable resource. With competition over an increasingly tight budget, positioning the team effectively within the wider mission was seen as a crucial task among team members.

Despite these challenges, the team contributed to wider initiatives. The SPT in South Sudan contributed to wider capacity efforts as instructors to the mobile courts programme and collaborated with a crime scene investigation team on scenario-based training. The team also delivered modules on interviewing and handling child victims, drawing on Norwegian methods designed to support the child and the interviewer.

Women's participation has been an important priority; repeated advocacy with the SSNPS leadership led to improvements, with one course including 11 of 16 participants being women. The team also supported Project Christine, a leadership programme to strengthen women's representation in the police, reflecting a broader commitment to institutional gender balance and respecting survivors' preferences. As one team member explained, this was also a way to counter the militarised legacy of the young SSNPS, where some officers may have previously served in armed groups:

You should be allowed to choose whether you talk to a man or a woman...In the past, it was the military who committed abuses, and then they took off their uniforms and became police officers – and now (victims) are expected to sit there and explain themselves to them... (SPT Member 4 2025)

Across all areas, funding constraints and bureaucratic processes frequently dictated which training activities could proceed. SPT personnel in South Sudan emphasised that implementation often followed the 'ebbs and flows of available resources', with planned courses delayed or cancelled when funding or approvals were not forthcoming.

The deteriorating security situation further disrupted training and co-location activities. In South Sudan, one member described the environment as 'de facto civil war', which made travel to police stations and delivery of training unpredictable. While in Haiti, political unrest and roadblocks forced postponements. Nonetheless, co-location strategies and targeted ToT programmes enabled the SPTs to provide practical guidance, build technical skills and raise awareness on SGBV issues. However, implementation challenges and structural barriers limited the full delivery of planned outputs for professionalisation and training.

Infrastructure development

Developing infrastructure to support and strengthen police capacity was a main objective of the Haiti SPT. According to team members, the lack of adequate facilities was one of the Haitian police's biggest challenges in addressing SGBV at the start of the project (SPT Member 2 2025). The SPT therefore aimed to establish one or two dedicated offices per regional department to serve as confidential reception spaces for SGBV victims and to equip units with the tools needed for SGBV investigations. The project built, refurbished and equipped 13 specialised SGBV offices across nine of Haiti's ten regional departments (Tørraasen 2021). These offices provided victims with a private and secure environment to report incidents, which was an important feature where stigma often prevents survivors from seeking help (Caparini and Osland 2016).

The project also supported Haiti's first one-stop centre at Justinien Hospital in Cap-Haïtien, enabling victims to access medical care, legal assistance and police services in one location (Tørraasen 2021). Additional contributions included refurbishing and equipping the office of the HNP coordinator for gender and women's affairs, creating an SGBV classroom at the Haitian police school, equipping the school library with new materials, and constructing the office for the newly established ULCS unit, with funding from Norway and Canada.

Conversely, infrastructure development was not an objective of the Sudan or South Sudan SPTs. The extensive infrastructure work in Haiti was made possible by the substantial earmarked budget attached to the project – funding that later SPTs did not have. In Sudan and South Sudan, SPTs relied entirely on mission budgets, which left little room for facility development.

Nevertheless, SPT personnel in South Sudan reported efforts to raise UN funds to improve basic infrastructure where possible, for instance, advocating for a proper evidence-storage room for the juvenile court, where evidence is stored in a container (SPT Member 2 2025; SPT Member 4 2025). The team has also become a 'door-opener', helping local police and partners such as embassies identify potential funding sources and prepare applications, even though the SPT itself cannot finance such projects. Similarly, the Sudanese team had been working to secure funding for a one-stop centre for women and children before the mission was evacuated.

Operational capacity

All three programmes placed significant emphasis on strengthening broader aspects of operational capacity, particularly coordination in the police and across the wider criminal justice system. However, the approaches adopted by the SPTs varied.

In Haiti, efforts prioritised centralisation and standardisation. The HNP Development Plan (2012–2016) had identified the need to develop a specialised unit on SGBV in the HNP Central Directorate of Judicial Police (DCPJ). Thus, the SPT helped establish a dedicated SGBV unit, the ULCS, whose purpose was to have a centralised SGBV office with national responsibility to develop common strategies and procedures that would guide the HNP's response to SGBV. The unit would also oversee the application and harmonisation of these strategies and procedures across the country, particularly with the SGBV offices in the regional departments, manage professional development, and develop focus areas and national campaigns on SGBV. The unit was intended to follow up on other SGBV initiatives implemented over the years and thus secure sustainability after the departure of the SPT. This institutional strengthening was further reinforced in 2018, when the ULCS moved into new premises and received additional staffing and infrastructure.

In South Sudan, the SPT built on existing institutional structures, particularly the pre-established SPU, working closely with its personnel. The priority was on strengthening coordination across the criminal justice chain, including the police, prosecutors, courts and healthcare providers. Thus, the team supports the one-stop centre at Juba Police Hospital and works closely with the juvenile courts. According to SPT members, this reflects a need for 'overall coherence' and demonstrates that the priority is not solely police capacity.

This emphasis is also evident in another priority of the South Sudan SPT: the mobile courts programme. South Sudan's weak justice system and limited infrastructure mean that access to courts remains a major barrier for SGBV victims. Mobile courts were introduced to reduce prolonged detention, strengthen accountability for serious crimes, including SGBV, and build public confidence in the justice system. While operated by the South Sudanese judiciary, these courts receive logistical and financial support from UNMISS and international partners, including Norway. The SPT contributes by training police officers in case preparation and SGBV investigation procedures ahead of mobile court deployments.

In Sudan, coordination efforts were more exploratory, which reflects SPT members' accounts of having to start from scratch in a new and small mission. Stakeholders, partners, donors and relevant legal frameworks were mapped to provide a clearer overview of the operational environment (UNITAMS 2022). This process improved understanding of referral pathways and the roles of different actors prior to the project's premature termination. Unlike in Haiti and South Sudan, however, there was no reported emphasis on developing guidelines or SOPs for victim support and coordination.

Across all areas, weak case management systems and the absence of reliable SGBV statistics emerged as a critical challenge. In response, SPTs prioritised improvements to case registration and database management. In Haiti, a new case registry system was installed across SGBV offices to track cases; however, by 2021, the system was reportedly not in use (Tøraasen 2021). In Sudan, plans were underway to revise and strengthen SGBV/CRSV case management systems before the project ended (UNITAMS 2022). In South Sudan, the SPT attempted to establish a case management system and collected data

from police stations, though efforts were complicated by the number of actors involved and the risk of double reporting. Evaluations found that an electronic system had not been finalised ('still pending' as per the last report from 2023) and that data collection remained fragmented, with no reliable mechanism to ensure consistent reporting from the SSNPS (UNMISS 2020).

Finally, the development and implementation of SOPs formed part of the SPT mandate in some cases. The Haiti SPT, with instructors from the police school, assisted the HNP in developing a SOP for police investigation of SGBV cases and disseminated electronic and hardcopy versions to police stations around the country, as well as to new cadets at the HNP school. In South Sudan, the SPT collaborated with UN agencies (especially UNDP) and local police to develop similar procedures for the SPU. However, a main challenge was ensuring that SOPs were adapted to local constraints. Given severe resource limitations, many standard forensic and investigative practices were not feasible. As stated by an SPT member:

Because we can clearly see the major challenges they face, and then you start thinking: *How are they supposed to manage?* We held a course on securing evidence in abuse cases – how to handle the evidence and how to present it in court. But if you don't even have a swab to collect DNA, and you have nothing to analyse the DNA with, then it all becomes a bit hopeless (SPT Member 4 2025).

Thus, the SPT prioritised the development of context-appropriate procedures, such as actions that local officers could realistically carry out. This highlights the broader importance of tailoring operational guidance to the realities of low-resource environments, rather than replicating models from more resource-rich settings. At the same time, it highlights the tension SPT personnel faced between promoting international standards and accommodating the practical constraints on the ground.

Community engagement and awareness raising

Lastly, the SPT programmes in all three countries included activities to engage communities and address social barriers to reporting and responding to SGBV.

In Haiti, this took the form of 12 workshops conducted with local community leaders across all regional departments. These sit-ins were designed to foster a shared understanding of SGBV cases, victim care and prevention strategies (SPT Member 7 2021). Participants included HNP officials, judges, local council members (*kaseks*), mayors, health professionals, religious leaders, student representatives and journalists. In total, 221 individuals participated. The workshops were led by a female judge specialised in SGBV, alongside representatives from the ULCS unit in Port-au-Prince (Tøraasen 2021). The approach emphasised dialogue and cross-sector engagement to address social norms and strengthen local responses.

In Sudan, community engagement was framed within CoP. The programme aimed to support the SPF in implementing CoP initiatives (UNITAMS 2022). However, due to the truncated timeline, many of these activities were not realised. In South Sudan, the SPT conducted awareness-raising workshops targeting broader audiences (although not to the same extent as Haiti) including university students, on SGBV and CRSV.

Beyond formal workshops, SPT members engaged in additional outreach activities to increase awareness and strengthen the local response environment. One example was participation in radio programmes on Radio Miraya, a UN-operated station with wide local reach. In these broadcasts, SPT staff joined representatives from organisations such as the Red Cross and the one-stop centre to discuss issues related to abuse and respond to listener questions. Such initiatives were seen as opportunities to extend engagement beyond institutional actors and contribute to broader public understanding. SPT members highlighted the potential impact of these outreach efforts. In one instance, children affected by conflict and abuse were invited to share their experiences on air, providing a rare public platform for their voices (SPT Member 4 2025).

Overall, these outreach activities complemented the SPTs' core institutional focus by raising awareness, fostering community engagement and addressing misconceptions about their role. They also underscore the importance of engaging wider societal actors where only formal justice mechanisms may be insufficient to address deeply rooted challenges.

ACHIEVEMENT OF OUTCOMES

This section assesses the extent to which the SPTs achieved their intended results, applying the OECD DAC criteria and revisiting the reconstructed ToC discussed earlier. As outlined in that ToC, the SPT model assumes that strengthening police skills, structures and procedures will translate into improved SGBV responses and, over time, contribute to better justice outcomes. This section examines the degree to which these expected pathways were realised.

While a comprehensive assessment of outcome achievement is beyond the scope of this study, this section reviews reported progress against the stated outcomes and identifies several overarching challenges. These relate to relevance, effectiveness and sustainability, and build on issues highlighted in the implementation analysis, particularly where important assumptions in the ToC did not fully hold.

Relevance

In this section, we assess the relevance of the SPTs by examining if their objectives aligned with each host country's SGBV challenges; they reflected national policing needs and priorities; they responded to local gender norms, stigma and barriers to reporting; and the overall approach was appropriate given existing legal and policy frameworks.

The SPTs' emphasis on SGBV was well aligned with the documented challenges in Haiti, Sudan and South Sudan, where such violence has long been severe and widespread. In Sudan and South Sudan, the programmes also targeted CRSV, which was especially relevant given protracted conflicts, attacks on civilians and the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war. However, while SPT members recognised these challenges, the programmes did not fully consider that elements of the police had previously participated in SGBV violations and, in some cases, continued to do so. As discussed previously, this history complicates the logic and expected outcomes of police-focused SGBV reform.

Thus, the emphasis on CoP in Sudan is an important attempt to address the deep mistrust between citizens and the police. A similar emphasis on police–community relations would likely have been valuable in Haiti and South Sudan, since trust in law-enforcement institutions is a critical precondition for reporting SGBV and CRSV. When survivors are required to report to officers from institutions associated with past perpetration, barriers to disclosure become particularly high. This not only limits reporting but also challenges important assumptions in the SPTs' ToC, especially the expectation that improved skills and structures will automatically translate into better cases being registered, investigated and followed up.

The prioritisation of training women police officers in all three missions is one way of addressing this trust deficit. Where SGBV is highly taboo, the presence of women officers may make it easier for survivors to come forward. Yet this approach risks relying on essentialist assumptions that women officers are inherently more empathetic or trustworthy, while inadvertently shifting responsibility away from male officers, who are equally accountable for providing professional, survivor-centred responses. It also risks framing SGBV as a “women's issue,” overlooking the fact that men and boys may also be victims.

These dynamics reveal a broader tension: while the SPT model aims to transfer skills, strengthen structures and promote international standards, its impact depends on the legitimacy, integrity and trustworthiness of the institutions applying those standards. This highlights the need for SPT designs to integrate explicit trust-building measures, integrity safeguards and survivor-centred pathways, thus going beyond technical training to address the deeper issues that shape whether survivors feel safe engaging with the police in the first place.

A comparison of the planning phases across the three SPTs makes it clear that early and meaningful consultation with host-state police is essential for designing initiatives that are relevant and feasible. In Haiti, this engagement was strong: the SPT's emphasis on strengthening the HNP's operational capacity and professionalising SGBV responses aligned closely with needs identified during the initial factfinding mission and with the

HNP's own strategic plans. This appears to have made the project relevant from the outset and ensured that the causal pathways assumed in the ToC, especially the link between training, capacity development and improved investigations, rested on a relatively realistic understanding of the institutions.

While the SPT in South Sudan had no dedicated factfinding mission prior to deployment, the team engaged in planning discussions once in the mission area, including meetings with local police, prosecutors and relevant UN actors. The SPT also benefitted from lessons learned and insights from an earlier SPT initiative in UNMISS, effectively giving the new team a reboot with more contextual knowledge than in Sudan but less structured preparation than in Haiti. While this provided some grounding, the planning phase was still constrained compared to Haiti, and several contextual assumptions in the ToC, such as institutional readiness and available resources, remained insufficiently assessed at the outset.

The Sudan SPT illustrates the opposite dynamic of the Haitian one. Planning was largely topdown, driven by the UN rather than by substantive engagement with Sudanese police leadership – circumstances that were mostly beyond the SPT's control. Consequently, the project plan was never properly adapted to Sudan's existing constraints or needs. This weakened the relevance of the intervention and meant that several important assumptions in the ToC (including institutional readiness and cooperation) were unlikely to hold from the beginning. Some SPT members questioned whether their presence was genuinely wanted. In such a setting, the underlying logic of the intervention becomes far less relevant. These differences underscore the importance of grounding SPT design in robust analysis and close collaboration with hoststate institutions. Without this, there is a risk of developing interventions that may be technically sound on paper but misaligned with realities on the ground.

Across countries, the SPTs' emphasis on capacity building in the police and the broader justice sector reflected a more holistic understanding of the challenges related to SGBV, particularly in South Sudan and in the second phase of the Haiti programme. Simultaneously, community engagement (such as the awareness-raising workshops in Haiti) acknowledged that SGBV cannot be addressed through policing or punitive measures alone. This broader approach strengthened the relevance of the SPTs. Cooperation with UN Women and some local women's organisations, such as onestop centres, helped bring in valuable insights. However, collaboration with grassroots victim support groups was limited across all three missions, representing a missed opportunity given their deep knowledge of local dynamics and the trust they often hold in affected communities.

Interviews with SPT members also highlighted that community-level activities can fall short if they do not address the entrenched cultural norms and discriminatory practices that drive SGBV and CRSV. In Haiti and Sudan, community-focused work tended to concentrate on reducing barriers to reporting rather than tackling the deeper gendered inequalities that sustain violence. And there are, of course, limits to what a police-focused team can realistically do within its mandate. SPTs may succeed in influencing attitudes and practices within the police, but shifting wider social norms requires different types of actors and sustained community engagement that go beyond the scope of police reform. This is why more systematic collaboration with other organisations, both in the UN system and, importantly, with local civil society groups, would likely have strengthened the relevance of the SPTs. Such partners are likely better positioned to challenge harmful norms and support survivors in ways that police alone cannot, especially considering the beforementioned problematic role of the police in many conflict-affected settings.

Effectiveness

Assessing and comparing the effectiveness of the three SPTs is challenging. Reported SGBV case numbers are unreliable, as confirmed by SPT staff across all three cases, and the missions themselves are at different stages (completed in Haiti, ongoing in South Sudan and prematurely terminated in Sudan). Additionally, the teams used different, sometimes limited, methods for measuring progress, often prioritising the number of

courses delivered, personnel trained or colocations conducted, along with participant feedback. Several SPT members expressed frustration about the pace of progress and how difficult it was to measure it in a meaningful, qualitative way, especially in the UN system that tends to prioritise quantifiable outputs.

While the implementation section covered what the SPTs achieved (and did not achieve) regarding outputs, this section emphasises the contextual and institutional factors that shaped, or are likely to shape, the extent to which those outputs translated into intended outcomes. It draws on the reconstructed ToC to assess which underlying assumptions held, which did not and how this influenced the programmes' overall effectiveness.

Cooperation and funding

Across all missions, cooperation with UN actors and local partners played a decisive role in shaping effectiveness. In Haiti, the first SPT struggled to establish its place in UNPOL due to inadequate intake procedures and a lack of basic resources such as office space, vehicles and equipment. Coordination with the Haitian justice system was also limited; as one team member noted, the SPT spent months collecting information 'that other sections of MINUSTAH had previously collected' (SPT Member 7 2021), illustrating weak communication between police and civilian components. Bureaucratic delays in accessing project funds further impeded implementation, with disbursements sometimes taking months (SPT Member 8 2021; SPT Member 7 2021).

The teams in Sudan and South Sudan, who lacked earmarked funding from Norway, had to compete for limited funding in the mission. The Sudan SPT's initial lack of funding limited its ability to plan or launch activities. Funding eventually became available through the police advisory unit budget, enabling a few capacity-building activities, and the SPT leveraged partnerships with UNDP and UNICEF, which came with some funding (SPT Member 1 2025; SPT Member 2 2025). However, cooperation with UNITAMS was shaped not only by bureaucratic processes but also by interpersonal dynamics, including 'connections' and influential contacts in navigating mission structures. Such reliance on individual relationships made cooperation unpredictable and, at times, fragile (SPT Member 3 2025).

In South Sudan, the SPT benefitted in some respects from a more established mission but still faced coordination challenges. Limited office space, personnel shortages and lack of vehicles constrained operations, and coordination with UNPOL and other capacity-building efforts across the mission remained inconsistent due to the absence of stakeholder mapping or clear focal points. While the SPTs drew on the expertise of UN Women and a few women's organisations, including one-stop centres, collaboration with local community groups was sporadic. Given their close connection with survivors and knowledge of local dynamics, more systematic engagement with these actors might have helped the SPTs better understand where police responses were falling short and how to make their work more effective on the ground. These cooperation and funding patterns mattered for effectiveness because the ToC assumes an enabling institutional environment where planned activities can be delivered and coordinated. In several cases, especially Sudan and parts of South Sudan, this assumption did not hold.

Furthermore, the absence of dedicated funding after the Haiti SPT helps explain why the Haitian mission appears to have been more effective than the Sudanese and South Sudanese ones. In the latter cases, teams experienced repeated delays and cancellations of planned activities because funds were unavailable or tied up in slow UN procedures. This forced the SPTs to de-prioritise resource-intensive interventions, such as ToT, and instead rely more heavily on cheaper activities like short on-site trainings and co-locations, which several members regarded as less impactful (and sustainable; SPT Member 6 2025; SPT Member 4 2025).

These constraints created considerable frustration in the teams. As one experienced SPT member put it:

What I've said every time I've been on an SPT team is: Why haven't we had our own budget? Having to extract money from UN systems is a nightmare. It causes delays, frustrations and a lot of work (SPT Member 2 2025).

In practice, the new funding model, combined with the bureaucratic nature of the UN system, limited what the SPTs could accomplish. Conceptualising the SPT without its own budget had direct consequences for effectiveness: the team in South Sudan, for instance, could not deliver several of the activities originally envisioned in the project plan and instead prioritised lower-cost activities that aligned less well with the intended design and ToC.

Corruption, resource constraints and lack of trust in the police

A second major constraint on effectiveness was the widespread corruption present across all cases. In South Sudan, corruption permeates large parts of the state apparatus, including the police. South Sudanese citizens have consistently identified the police as one of the most corrupt institutions, with bribery frequently reported in interactions with law enforcement (Transparency International 2011). According to SPT personnel, many officers are particularly vulnerable to corrupt practices because they, and other public servants, had reportedly not been paid since October 2023. Similar challenges existed in Haiti and Sudan, where low salaries and weak oversight have long made bribery common in the police.

Corruption has particularly severe consequences for SGBV survivors. In Sudan and South Sudan, victims are required to obtain a police-issued medical reporting form (Form 8) to make a complaint or access health services. SPT staff reported that victims often had to pay for this form, sometimes as much as US\$20. In poverty-affected settings, such fees are a significant barrier to reporting and likely lead to numerous unrecorded cases.³ This also deepens mistrust between communities and the police and undermines efforts to build a victim-centred response.

While corruption undermined the effectiveness of nearly all SPT initiatives, many staff members emphasised the limited scope for addressing it directly, given the SPT's mandate and the sensitivities of intervening in internal police practices. Efforts were therefore largely confined to raising the issue during trainings, co-locations and other engagements (SPT Member 2 2025). As one SPT member admitted: 'To be honest, we ignored it. It's a Pandora's box and not our task' (SPT Member 3 2025). Corruption also influenced the SPT's own activities. In some training programmes, senior personnel reportedly took a share of the stipends intended for participants. As another staff member explained: 'We knew that if we started addressing it, there would be no trainings at all – it's not easy' (SPT Member 4 2025).

Beyond corruption, the deeper issue of trust in the police emerged as a significant obstacle. In all countries, especially Sudan and South Sudan, the police have historically been implicated in SGBV violations, either directly or as part of armed and militarised structures. This history fundamentally complicates the role of police in responding to SGBV. Survivors may be expected to report crimes to institutions that, for some, are associated with perpetration rather than protection. Several SPT members underscored this challenge, noting that many officers had previously served in armed groups ('...some were soldiers who were simply placed into a police uniform'; SPT Member 2 2025) and the boundaries between military and police roles were still blurred. This mistrust has direct implications for the ToC, which assumes that improved skills, structures and procedures will lead to increased reporting and better investigations. However, when survivors do not trust the police, these pathways break down. Even well-trained officers cannot improve

³ There are other highly problematic sides to Form 8. For instance, due to misinformation among health personnel regarding loss of virginity, bleeding or presence of sperm, the form has been used to wrongly 'prove' that rape has not taken place (HRW 2006).

case numbers or outcomes if victims do not feel safe coming forward or if communities avoid the police due to corruption, past abuses or militarised behaviour.

Additionally, basic resource constraints severely limited effectiveness. In South Sudan, the lack of privacy, furniture, transport or even paper hampered the police's ability to follow up on SGBV cases, regardless of training. Similar limitations were reported in Haiti, where police stations lacked the equipment necessary for sensitive investigations or confidential victim interviews. These constraints further eroded important assumptions in the ToC, particularly that improved skills would be usable in practice and survivors would choose to engage with the police.

Legal constraints

Gaps and ambiguities in the legal frameworks of all three countries posed significant challenges for the effective handling of SGBV cases. Interviewees noted that unclear or incomplete provisions, particularly those relating to sexual offences against minors, made it difficult for police to categorise and process cases appropriately. Thus, even well-designed training risks were undermined by inconsistent, outdated or conflicting laws. Several SPT members stressed that these issues required a broader review of national legal frameworks to ensure that police had the capacity and legal tools to address SGBV effectively.

Reliance on customary law further complicated implementation. In South Sudan, this challenge extended into the police institution, which may be linked to many police officers lacking basic education. As noted by one SPT member:

In South Sudan, they rely on local legislation and a local judge, and that is what they tend to follow. So, we need to bring someone from the prosecution service into the trainings to explain which laws are actually applicable (SPT Member 2 2025).

These legal and normative barriers highlight another assumption in the ToC that struggled to hold in practice: that police investigations operate in a functioning legal system capable of following through on cases. When the legal framework is weak, contradictory or largely superseded by customary practice, improvements in training or investigative practice cannot easily translate into improved justice outcomes for survivors. In short, even motivated officers face structural constraints that limit the impact of SPT-supported reforms.

Sustainability

This section examines the extent to which the benefits and capacities supported by the SPTs are likely to endure beyond the programme. The analysis considers the degree to which new skills, procedures and structures were integrated into national systems; whether trained officers remained in relevant positions or were frequently rotated; the availability of continued funding and political support for SGBV response; the level of institutional ownership; and the resilience of SPT-supported activities to instability, resource constraints and shifting security conditions. These factors indicate how sustainable the SPTs' contributions are likely to be in the longer term.

A core perceived advantage of the SPT model is its potential for greater sustainability compared to traditional UN policing. Interviewees emphasised that the model's continuity, overlap between rotations and emphasis on developing national instructors creates longer-term institutional memory and reduces the start-from-scratch dynamic common in other UN deployments. As one interviewee explained, the SPT's long-term planning and emphasis on building national training capacity 'has a greater chance of success' than repeatedly training new incoming personnel (SPT Member 1 2025).

Despite considerable progress in achieving its intended outcomes, the sustainability of the Haiti SPT was moderate at best and was later severely undermined by the country's multidimensional crisis and escalating gang violence following the assassination of President Moïse in July 2021. By mid-2021, nine of the original 13 SGBV offices remained operational but faced major logistical and resource constraints, including lack

of electricity, equipment and basic supplies. The closure of four offices increased travel distances and costs for victims, likely reducing reporting and access to specialised support. Even the remaining offices operated with minimal staff (only 46 officers nationwide) and insufficient investigative resources. Important SPT-supported structures struggled to sustain their functions. The case-registry system was not used, and no reliable statistics were available. The one-stop centre closed, and although the ULCS remained operational, it lacked the resources and institutional support needed to fully assume its intended role following the SPT's departure. Basic SGBV training continued at the police school until at least June 2021, but its long-term continuity is unclear. Investments in infrastructure, while impactful during implementation, proved vulnerable in Haiti's volatile institutions. As one team member noted, upgraded premises risked being repurposed by other units, especially when SGBV investigators struggled to maintain their institutional standing (SPT Member 8 2021).

The Sudan SPT was prematurely terminated, and most planned activities were never implemented. Consequently, its sustainability cannot be meaningfully assessed. The outbreak of civil war in April 2023 further undermined prospects for sustaining even the initial outputs achieved, such as training curricula and CoP mapping exercises. The collapse of state institutions and mass displacement of police personnel compound the uncertainty surrounding sustainability.

In South Sudan, while ongoing, several important factors already point to risks for long-term impact. The SPT aimed to promote sustainability by developing a ToT programme for the SSNPS. The team has managed to conduct some ToTs but not as many as planned. This has been largely due to financial constraints, leading the team to prioritise cheaper activities that are less sustainable, such as on-site trainings. Structural factors in the SSNPS also undermine sustainability. Frequent rotations, typically every three years, result in constant turnover among important personnel, eroding institutional memory and the continuity needed to consolidate SGBV expertise. Interviewees described repeatedly mentoring motivated investigators, only to see them transferred shortly thereafter (SPT Member 4 2025). This rotation system also affected Sudan, presenting similar sustainability risks (SPT Member 1 2025). Efforts to strengthen ownership through units such as the SPU provide some institutional anchoring, as personnel tend to remain in post longer (SPT Member 2 2025). However, the pervasive corruption across South Sudanese institutions poses a major challenge to sustaining improvements in SGBV case handling and overall police performance.

The three missions show that while the SPT model has strong potential for sustainability, its long-term impact depends on whether the core assumptions in the ToC hold. In practice, political volatility, high turnover, corruption, weak justice systems and chronic resource shortages meant that several of these assumptions did not. In Haiti, which is generally considered a successful SPT regarding output, many improvements proved difficult to maintain once the SPTs withdrew. This suggests that sustainability cannot rely on training and structures alone; it also requires an enabling institutional environment and sustained commitment from national and international actors.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SPTs are often presented as an innovative approach to UN policing. Developed to provide targeted, specialised support to hoststate police services, they aim to address critical capacity gaps that traditional UNPOL structures have struggled to meet. Norway has played a central role in shaping SPTs by contributing to the original design and deploying several police officers to SPT missions. Prioritising capacitybuilding around SGBV has been one of Norway's concrete contributions to the WPS agenda.

While the SPT model holds clear potential for strengthening UN policing, and many former and current SPT personnel and UN staff express confidence in it despite challenges, this report has critically examined how these efforts have worked in practice. By comparing SGBV-focused SPTs in Haiti, Sudan and South Sudan, the report identifies what the teams could achieve, where they fell short and why, and what main challenges must be addressed for SPTs to fulfil their potential.

Comparisons across the three missions also highlight how much context matters. An important insight from Haiti is that even when an SPT is initially viewed as highly successful, delivering a wide range of outputs and benefitting from dedicated funding, this does not guarantee longterm impact. Many of the structures established during the Haiti SPT are no longer operational: several SGBV offices have closed, the ULCS lacks essential equipment and the onestop centre is no longer functioning. These developments underscore a central lesson: sustainability is extremely difficult to achieve in very poor and politically unstable settings, even when resources are available during implementation. Without an enabling institutional environment and continued national support, the gains made through intensive capacitybuilding can quickly erode once the SPT withdraws.

The experiences of the SPT in Sudan show the importance of thorough, early consultation with national police counterparts. The Sudan SPT was planned largely through a topdown UN process, with little engagement from Sudanese police, meaning the project was never fully adapted to local needs or realities on the ground. This also meant the team's presence was not always clearly wanted and the team felt unprepared. The case demonstrates why SPTs cannot simply copy project designs from one context to another, especially in countries where the police have played different and sometimes harmful roles regarding SGBV. Meaningful consultation is therefore essential for relevance and to ensure the intervention's underlying logic fits the context it aims to serve.

An important insight from South Sudan is how deeply institutional instability shapes what an SPT can achieve. The SPT's activities were (and continue to be) repeatedly undermined by structural issues in the SSNPS, particularly frequent rotations, corruption and severe resource shortages. Officers who had been trained and mentored were often transferred within a few years, eroding institutional memory and making it difficult to embed new practices. The team's ability to deliver more sustainable capacity-building activities, such as ToT, was further limited by financial constraints and the need to prioritise cheaper, short-term interventions. These dynamics show that even well-designed initiatives struggle when the institutional foundation is unstable, and they highlight the need for SPTs to account for staffing patterns, resourcing realities (for the team and host-state police) and corruption risks when planning for long-term impact.

In conclusion, the cases from Haiti, Sudan and South Sudan show that SPTs operate in deeply volatile political and institutional environments that fundamentally shape what they can achieve. For SPTs to succeed, their design must explicitly consider the constraints of conflict-affected settings and adjust ambitions, activities and timelines accordingly. Building a more realistic and context-responsive SPT model is essential if future deployments are to deliver meaningful improvements for survivors of SGBV. Based on the findings of this study, we propose six recommendations for future SPTs and the continuation of the SPT in South Sudan:

1. **Interrogate the ToC before deployment.** Before launching an SGBV-focused SPT, teams should develop an explicit ToC and critically assess whether the basic assumptions of the ToC are viable in that context. This includes if police are trusted, they have been perpetrators, survivors are likely to report to them and the institution has the legitimacy needed for SGBV-related work. This step is essential for ensuring the relevance and ethical grounding of an SPT.
2. **Deploy SGBV-focused SPTs only where legal, political and justice-chain conditions allow for meaningful follow-through.** Improved police practice has limited value if the surrounding legal and institutional environment cannot support investigations or prosecutions. SPTs should be deployed only in settings with a minimum legal basis for responding to SGBV/CRSV or where complementary reforms across the justice chain are planned and resourced. Without these conditions, many SPT contributions risk being largely symbolic.
3. **Match funding to political feasibility, not just technical design.** Haiti showed what stable funding can achieve; Sudan and South Sudan showed what happens when funding is insufficient or fragmented. Future SPTs need predictable budgets aligned with the political likelihood of achieving results, not only the number of planned activities.
4. **Build sustainability through institutional and political strategies, not only ToT.** ToT alone cannot create sustainability in environments with high staff turnover, corruption or institutional volatility. SPTs should integrate protected positions, leadership commitments and links to justice-sector reform into their sustainability planning.
5. **Work closely with local civil society and international partners supporting survivors.** Where trust in the police is low, and police may have played harmful roles, civil-society organisations often hold greater legitimacy and closer connections to survivors. These actors, primarily local women's organisations but also international humanitarian agencies such as UN Women and UNICEF, should be treated as core partners rather than optional add-ons. Structured cooperation can strengthen survivor trust, improve contextual grounding, support prevention and awareness-raising, and help bridge gaps that police-centred interventions alone cannot address.
6. **Adapt design to the role and history of the police.** Project templates cannot be copied across missions. Where police are feared or mistrusted, the entry point may need to shift towards community-based approaches, mixed-actor strategies or slower confidence-building work before training can have meaningful impact.

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