

UGANDA

end
child
marriage

A voice. A chance. A future.

COUNTRY PROFILE

2022



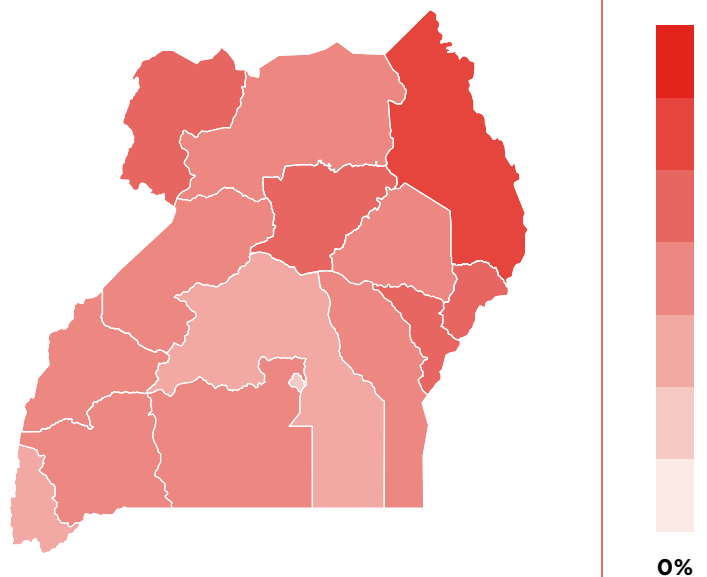
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“ This knowledge helped me realize that my father was denying me the rights of deciding the man to marry and the right time of getting married. I am now an empowered woman: I know my rights and I can defend myself. With knowledge in family planning and prevention of gender-based violence, I am now able to report my father whenever he tries to harass me and my siblings [...] I’m currently using the skills I acquired from the trainings to tailor clothes and make snacks which I sell to earn money to support my family. The business helps me to take care of my children and pay rent. Whenever I am sick, I have money to go for medical treatment unlike before.”

— *Kyosimire, participant in the Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents programme*

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FIGURE 1: Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18.



Note: This map is stylized and not to scale. It does not reflect a position by UNFPA or UNICEF on the legal status of any country or area or the delimitation of any frontiers.

The global context

Child marriage threatens the lives, the well-being and the futures of girls around the world. Globally, the prevalence of child marriage has declined by around 15 per cent since 2010. Nevertheless, COVID-19, climate change and conflict have had lasting effects on poverty, school dropout and inequality, triggering increases in child marriage. UNICEF estimates that the COVID-19 pandemic alone will have put more than 10 million additional girls at risk of child marriage by 2030.

Ending child marriage is a global priority:

93 governments have signed up to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 5.3 to end child, early and forced marriage, and 43 countries either have, or are working on, national action plans to end child marriage. Girls' education is a consistent protective factor against child marriage, with child marriage rates among girls who complete secondary school 66 per cent lower than among girls with no education, and 80 per cent lower among those who complete higher education. COVID-19 increased the number of school dropouts, thereby increasing the risk that girls who are out of school will not return. Girls who drop out of school are significantly more likely marry early, and 87 per cent of married adolescent girls are out of school.

Global advocacy and dialogue

In 2022, the international community made key commitments to end child marriage at global and regional forums. On 15 November 2022, the United Nations General Assembly Third Committee resolution on child, early and forced marriage,¹ led by Zambia and Canada, was adopted by consensus. A total of 125 Member States sponsored the resolution (compared to 114 co-sponsors the last time the resolution was put forward in 2020). Countries which sponsored the resolution for the first time included: Antigua and Barbuda, Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mauritius, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Several of the countries have a high prevalence of child marriage — and, by sponsoring, demonstrated their political commitment to ending it. The resolution highlights the urgent need to reach the poorest and most marginalized girls and women—while calling upon the international community to increase its efforts to end child, early and forced marriage. It recognizes how global health threats, climate change, conflicts and forced displacement can have a particularly negative impact on women and girls and which, by extension, can also increase child, early and forced marriage. The resolution appreciates the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage and other

1 See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventy-seventh Session, Third Committee agenda item 64(a) (A/C.3/77/L.19/Rev.1)*

similar global, regional, and national initiatives, encouraging coordinated and comprehensive approaches across sectors and at all levels.

In March 2022, the Global Programme and partners led a high-level side-event at the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), a session which culminated in the CSW66 Agreed Conclusions, calling for action to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of policies and programmes on climate change, and environmental and disaster-risk reduction. This session, “No Time to Lose: Child Marriage and the Triple Crisis”, enabled United Nations Member States and other stakeholders to improve their collective understanding of the effects of the triple crisis on child marriage, and what could be done in response.

Child marriage country context

In Uganda, 8.9 million girls aged 10–19 are at risk of harmful practices, including child marriage, despite the legal provisions under the 1995 Constitution of Uganda and the global community’s pledge to end

child marriage and other forms of violence against girls. Although the legal age threshold for marriage in Uganda is 18 years, getting married formally or informally before then is common. Child marriage continues to affect nearly half of all girls in Uganda. Some districts, for example, Busoga (58 per cent), Acholi (59 per cent), Bunyoro (58 per cent) and Tororo (52 per cent) have higher levels of child marriage compared to central districts, such as Kampala, Wakiso and Mukono, which have a prevalence of 21 per cent.



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Key highlights in 2022



204,181 adolescent girls actively participated in **life-skills or CSE** in programme areas.



More than **301,000** individuals (boys, girls, women and men) participated in **group education or dialogue sessions** on the consequences of, and alternatives to, child marriage, **the rights of adolescent girls** and gender equality.



Nearly **3 MILLION** boys, girls, women and men were reached by **traditional or social media messaging** on child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls and **gender equality**.



13,880 adolescent girls were supported by the programme to **enrol and/or remain in** primary or secondary **school**.

Overall programme performance

TABLE 1: Summary of output indicator performance (2022)

Indicator	Target	Result
Indicator 1111: Number of adolescent girls (aged 10-19) who actively participated in life-skills or CSE interventions in programme areas	203,690	204,181
Indicator 1121: Number of girls (aged 10-19) supported by the programme to enrol and/or remain in primary or secondary school	13,692	13,880
Indicator 1211: Number of boys and men actively participating in group education/dialogues that address harmful masculinities and gender norms	42,000	78,713
Indicator 1221: Number of individuals (boys, girls, women and men) who participate in group education/dialogue sessions on consequences of and alternatives to child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls and gender equality	126,000	301,842
Indicator 1222: Number of individuals (boys, girls, women and men) reached by mass media (traditional and social media) messaging on child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls and gender equality	3,116,374	2,997,765
Indicator 1223: Number of local actors (e.g., traditional, religious and community leaders) with meaningful participation in dialogues and consensus-building to end child marriage	2,245	3,373
Indicator 1231: Number of CSOs newly mobilized in support of challenging social norms and promoting gender equality by the Global Programme (cumulative)	14	14
Indicator 2121: Number of primary/secondary/non-formal schools in programme areas providing quality gender-friendly education that meets minimum standards	235	551
Indicator 2131: Number of service delivery points in programme areas providing quality adolescent-responsive services (health, child protection/ gender-based violence) that meet minimum standards	319	415
Indicator 2211: Number of partnerships (both formal and informal) established to deliver adolescent-responsive social protection, poverty reduction and economic empowerment programmes and services	4	4
Indicator 3111: Number of policies or legal instruments addressing child marriage drafted, proposed or adopted at national and subnational level with Global Programme support (cumulative)	9	9
Indicator 3121: Number of subnational plans with evidence informed interventions to address child marriage	21	15
Indicator 3211: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that focus on what works to end child marriage (cumulative)	3	3
Indicator 3212: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that apply a gender analysis (cumulative)	2	3
Indicator 3221: Number of south-to-south cooperation events (conferences, expert visits, peer consultations, study tours, communities of practice) supported	2	8

Providing intensive support to marginalized girls

The Global Programme closely collaborates with the Basic Education and Adolescent Development (BEAD) programme, which aims at accelerating Ugandan progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by contributing to SDG 4 (Promoting lifelong learning) and SDG 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women

and girls). Together, they helped implement several ways for training adolescents in selected districts. A comprehensive life-skills toolkit covering 10 core competencies and a broad range of themes (violence, sexual and reproductive health, HIV, active participation, financial literacy and innovation, with specific modules on child marriage and teenage pregnancy) was finalized and launched by the Ministry of Education and Sports and rolled out as a co-curricular activity in school clubs. Discussions continue on entry points for structured implementation among out-of-school adolescents,

and on Government ownership and sustainability. A total of 1,734 teachers (874 male and 860 female) in 738 schools in 23 districts were trained on the toolkit, and acquired enhanced knowledge and skills which have supported adolescents.

“ We have a high [number of] cases of child marriages in Adjumani, with 176 girls married and another 60 girls pregnant this year [2022] alone. They need to be empowered because adolescents face a lot of challenges, such as sexual and domestic violence and emotional abuse. If we don’t give them the skills they need to be assertive, confident and able to make informed decisions, we will have failed at our job.”

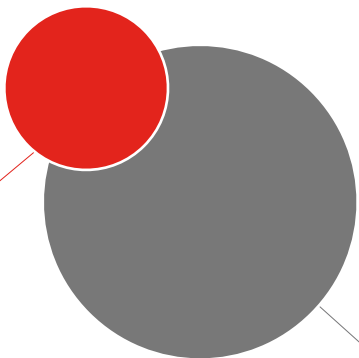
— Philip Akuku Kaya, the Principal Education Officer, Adjumani district

The Ministry of Education and Sports and multisectoral partners also mainstreamed sexuality education in extra curricula activities in selected schools. The revised guidelines for the Prevention and Management of Teenage Pregnancy in School Settings in Uganda were adopted as a school policy, and were used by trained head teachers, caregivers/senior women and men, students (girls and boys), and the support staff to give life-skills training to a total of 204,181 adolescent girls in, and out of, school. These included 1,478 refugee girls and 897 girls who are pregnant, or mothers who re-enrolled in school and improved their knowledge on their rights, SRH and financial literacy.



Following the reopening of schools after the prolonged closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Global Programme, in collaboration with BEAD, the Ministry of Education and Sports and Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development embarked on a massive “Go Back and Stay in School” campaign. This was led by district education officers and other implementing partners. UNICEF also designed and implemented an adolescent-led peer-to-peer campaign to re-enrol children in school or in alternative learning pathways. Some 300 (115 male and 185 female) adolescent peer advocates and 297 (150 male and 147 female) adult champions were trained on adolescent participation and youth-led advocacy to support the campaign and community dialogues on school re-enrolment. The Peer2Peer (P2P) campaign, covering 16 districts, was also supported. Some 1,780 adolescent volunteers engaged out-of-school children, including teenage pregnant girls and child mothers, to re-enrol in school within the scope of the national campaign, ‘Protect the girls, save the nation’. This

1.3
MILLION
married
before
age 15



4.9 MILLION
married
before age 18

Uganda is home to nearly **5 million child brides**; **1 in 3** young women were married in childhood.

FIGURE 2: Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18.



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contributed to the learning and skills-training of 7,090 out-of-school adolescents, including the return to school of 879 pregnant girls and child mothers.

Additionally, 1,051 over-age out-of-school adolescent girls accessed alternative accelerated education programmes at primary and secondary levels in two refugee-hosting districts. The Global Programme also supported 4,907 out-of-school adolescents (3,708 girls and 1,441 boys) to attain literacy and numeracy skills.

“Being a child mother has been a very hard thing for me to bear that I wouldn’t wish on any other girl. The father of my child, who is also a teenager, would beat me up every day. I am glad that I have the opportunity to return to school. As a peer advocate, I will use my experience as a teenage mother in school to encourage adolescents not to fall into the same trap that I did. In my community, I am encouraging fellow girls like me who have gotten pregnant and given birth, to go back to school.”

— 17-year-old teenage mother and peer advocate in Abim district

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Child marriage continues to involve mainly adolescent girls from poor families, marginalized groups and poor and remote communities. Its prevalence has been exacerbated by the impact of climate change such as floods and drought,

as well as conflicts and insecurity, internal displacement (especially in the Karamoja region), the continued influx of refugees especially from the Democratic Republic of Congo and the effect of public health emergencies such as COVID-19 and Ebola. The outbreak of Ebola in Uganda in September 2022 also limited the implementation of, and engagement with, programme activities, especially in the last quarter of the year.

The life-skills tool kit and the sexuality education framework need to be adapted for marginalized out-of-school adolescents with low literacy levels. Also, delivering a 38-hour course on life-skills training requires some creativity, and mentorship, to ensure that adolescents engage fully, and stay until the end.

Discussions continue with religious groups in some districts who have restricted the scope of CSE with adolescents both in and out of school. However, the implementation of CSE has been enabled by the launch of the life-skills tool kit, which embedded sexuality education using more acceptable language.

The general apathy and lack of interest in going back to school due to the prolonged school closure and the aftermath of COVID-19 made it difficult to convince marginalized adolescent girls to return to school, and to keep going. Some girls, who were married, had children and who were engaged in some vocational and livelihood ventures were the most difficult to convince. However, many were inspired to return to school after the launch of the national campaign ‘Protect the Girl, save the nation’ led by Janet Kainembabazi Museveni, the First Lady and Minister of Education and Sport, the Vice-President Jessica Alup and the Prime Minister Robinah Nabbanja.

Social networks built around young people's clubs, such as those for sports, art and caring for the environment are important entry points for creating safe spaces for adolescent girls. The Global Programme uses these spaces to share critical information on SRH and sexuality education and for referral to services. There is an opportunity to scale up this approach, to reach more groups of out-of-school adolescents and young people.

The engagement of young people from marginalized and disadvantaged backgrounds as agents of change is essential. Volunteers and peers can support the scale-up of skills development interventions and other actions aimed at adolescent empowerment within formal systems and at community level.

The programme's priorities in 2023 include:

- expanding the implementation of the structured adolescent life skill training using the adolescent innovative life-skills tool kit and the global UPSHIFT social entrepreneurial skills programme
- using the Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescent programmes to deliver sexuality education for in- and out-of-school adolescents
- continuing to support the national campaign to end teenage pregnancy and child marriage
- further engaging with the Government at national and decentralized levels to scale up the life-skills programme, and ensuring its sustainability, especially among out-of-school adolescents
- strengthening cross-sectoral collaboration with BEAD and the education sector
- strengthening engagement with young people as agents of change in mobilizing out-of-school adolescent girls to return to school.

Enhancing the family and community environment

The Global Programme supported, in target districts, the dissemination and implementation of the SRH Male Involvement Strategy, run by the Ministry of Health, and GBV Male Involvement Strategy, run by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. This led to the emergence of strong social change structures such as male action groups and Engaging Men through Accountable Practice

(EMAP). In subcounties where these structures groups are present, there has been evidence of GBV prevention and response and the promotion of SRH services. The open discussions led by the community mobilization programme SASA! on healthy relationships, positive masculinities and harmful gender norms deepened understanding on:

- supportive roles of men
- human rights
- positive engagement and relationships with women, boys and girls
- child marriage, GBV and SRHR.

During 2022 IRC, Action Aid and district government structures reached 78,713 men through the male action groups, EMAP and 'men alone' dialogues. The male action groups rescued 20 girls from child marriages or FGM in districts where these harmful practices exist.

“It was in 2020 during the COVID-19 lockdown when I met a man who convinced me to get married to him and since the situation at home was beyond and my parents could not afford food, I was forced to get married. While with my parents in the village, I used to struggle fetching firewood for sale to afford basic needs for myself and when movements and businesses were restricted due to COVID-19, I could no longer do any business, the only option was to accept to get married. After getting married in November 2020, my husband started mistreating me until I was forced to come home in February when I was pregnant. Upon getting back to my parents, they took me back by force and I stayed under mistreatment until I gave birth. After giving birth, my husband could not provide for me with any support until I was rescued by one man who works with Action Aid as community change agent. These talked to my mother, counselled and she accepted me back home. He convinced my parents to take me back to school, which my mother accepted.”

— Lynnette



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Families and communities, traditional and local leaders and local media and social media influencers, were mobilized and engaged through different regional and community dialogues on child marriage, teenage pregnancy and broader adolescent development and well-being issues, including the rights of adolescent girls and alternatives to child marriage. This was part of the national campaign to prevent rape, teenage pregnancy and child marriage and to promote positive parenting. The implementation of a comprehensive parenting programme at community level also provides an opportunity to strengthen dialogues with parents, and traditional and religious leaders on alternatives to child marriage, human rights and gender equality. Traditional institutions were supported on strategic dialogues that build consensus on child marriage and other key adolescent developmental issues. Local actors, such as religious leaders, reached 1,754 people with information on alternatives to child marriages.

The Global Programme supported the high-level commitment to end child marriage and teenage pregnancies by the King of Alur cultural institution, spearheading a campaign against child marriage and pregnancies to create awareness in the region.

“The reverend preached to us on dangers of early sex and teenage pregnancies, I think it’s important for all girls to marry at the right age when we have completed school.”

— Cherop Christine, during a dialogue session

The Global Programme supported Action Aid International to conduct a regional dialogue on ending child marriage and teenage pregnancy which targeted girls and women from the Teso, Karamoja and Sebei subregions, and which was conducted with support of women and technical staff from the Ministry of Health Reproductive Health Unit. In addition, AAU collaborated with the model and musician Irene Ntale to inspire young girls and teenage mothers to pursue their dreams, including going back to school. The programme also engaged mentor mothers, district leaders from community development, media and staff from a ministry reproductive health unit who supported a presentation on sexual and reproductive health which reached 88 girls who acquired knowledge on bodily integrity, SRHR and self-care.

“I have been inspired, even though I have a baby I can still have a better future, I’m glad I attended this meeting to learn from other girls.”

— Apulasi, a teenage mother from Kumi

In total, 301,842 men, women, boys and girls in 29 districts participated in group education/dialogue sessions on the consequences of, and alternatives to, child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls, and gender equality.

About 5 million people were reached in 13 languages by 25 radio stations, and in 6 languages by 6 TV stations, with messages on child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls, and gender equality. Some 4,734,387 people were reached by the social media campaign #EndTeenagePregnancies with messaging on child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls and gender equality (shared on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook).

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Gender-transformative change is a gradual process in Uganda. Its culture, and its patriarchal society, are new to the idea of challenging deep rooted gender issues and harmful masculinities and to promoting gender equality. Although the programme reaches many men and boys it still encounters resistance to mobilizing and engaging with the target group.

Programme implementation in some parts of the country was hampered by insecurity, especially the Karamoja region, due to cattle rustling and disarmament, where big gatherings were restricted. The outbreak of Ebola in some parts of the country towards the last quarter of 2022 also hindered planned community interventions. However, media platforms were effectively utilized, including the platforms of local councils, parasocial workers, village health team members, religious leaders, cultural leaders and SASA! and MAGs activists, which helped to sustain engagement with target populations.

The Global Programme will continue to engage religious and cultural leaders to carefully identify allies and support networks at all levels to promote gender equality and confront the causes of child marriage and other harmful practices.

The participation of families, communities, and religious and cultural leaders in the development of a costed multisectoral national strategy to end child marriage and teenage pregnancy and the comprehensive national parenting programme, including regional and community-level dialogues, increased the appreciation of the challenges of child marriage among these duty bearers. These processes also empowered them with information and knowledge to participate

meaningfully in consensus-building dialogue, and it also fostered commitment to addressing child marriage and promoting alternatives.

There is a need to increase support for programmes that reach and engage adolescents themselves, their parents and caregivers to enable them to find alternatives for their livelihoods and family well-being, other than child marriage.

Strengthening systems

The Global Programme helped to strengthen child well-being committees at national and district levels. Support was also provided for the committees to organize quarterly meetings. These enabled stakeholders and partners to review workplans, implementation strategies and approaches with a gender-responsive lens. The committees also identified and discussed gaps and challenges as well as sharing experiences and lessons learned.

The Global Programme enhanced the knowledge and skills of social workers at district and subcounty level and parasocial workers at community level, which contributed to gender-responsive integrated case management, from case identification, to referral to services to case



closure. Further, the programme supported the integration of gender-based violence (GBV) into the national child helpline, SAUTI 116.

The Global Programme collaborated with BEAD and the Ministry of Education and Sports, on improving the quality and equity of learning outcomes at lower primary school level. This was done by improving the prevention of, and response to, VAC in 766 schools. The Ministry of Education and Sports, and the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development approved a register of violence against children in schools register.

The programme also enabled 54 health facilities to offer improved access to sexual and reproductive health information and services for marginalized adolescent girls. Health workers improved their knowledge and skills on psychosocial support and provided an integrated range of sexual and reproductive health services for 1,274 adolescent girls. The Global Programme also supported the setting up of 21 district action centres linked to SAUTI, which will deliver integrated child protection and GBV services. The programme supported community-based child protection centres in 361 communities (including 35 in refugee communities) in collaboration with the United Nations Refugee Agency, UNHCR, and other implementing partners.

Teachers were trained on the revised guidelines for the Prevention and Management of Teenage Pregnancy in School. Some 251 schools in programme districts adopted the guidelines as a policy, which strengthened a safe and positive learning environment for adolescent girls, especially pregnant girls and child mothers who re-enrolled and returned to school.

The Global Programme also supported training in 300 secondary schools on the sexuality education framework, which improved the quality of gender-responsive education for adolescent girls in the programme districts. Some 1,622 teachers, caregivers and school nurses improved their knowledge and skills on sexuality education, including sexual and reproductive health and rights in the 300 schools in Tororo, Kyegegwa, Amuru, Nwoya, Pader, Agago, Kitgum, Lamwo and Kasese districts. These actors then mentored adolescents, giving them information and providing referrals to protection and prevention services. Further, training of marginalized adolescent girls in the districts of Amuria, Bududa, Butaleja, Katakwi and Mayuge were encouraged to stay in school during menstruation after 515 teachers and club patrons made menstrual health pads. Copies of the national sexuality education framework



were sent to teachers which gave them a clearer idea of gender-responsive education and provided a common approach for its implementation. All this training was supported by the Health/HIV Unit of the Ministry of Education and Sports, with the National Curriculum Development Centre and the departments of Secondary Education, Guidance and Counselling, Teacher Education and Gender Unit.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Public health emergencies, such as the outbreak of Ebola, suck financial and human resources from the implementation of adolescent-friendly and gender-responsive health services for marginalized adolescents, especially girls. Advocacy must be sustained for the integration and mainstreaming of these services during emergencies.

Most schools, to make up for the prolonged closures of schools caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, prioritized the implementation of core curriculum subjects and activities. This resulted in delays to the implementation of sexuality education. Formal and non-formal club activities were also affected by restrictions on gatherings and movements especially in hard-to-reach communities, which were exaggerated by the outbreak of Ebola.

The sexuality education framework was scaled up with its integration into the new lower secondary curriculum. In addition, the implementation of the school re-entry guidelines for pregnant adolescent girls led to improvements in the implementation of gender-responsive education. The programme will continue to work with the Ministry of Education and Sports to roll out the guidelines and scale up sexuality education in schools.

Building partnerships

As mentioned above, the Government launched its national campaign ‘Protect the Girl, Save the Nation’ in 29 districts with support from the Global Programme and other United Nations agencies. The national campaign addresses rape, teenage pregnancy, child marriage and promotes positive parenting. It specifically aims to:

- agree sustainable solutions, with key stakeholders
- support relevant ministries and organizations to take the necessary action in line with the law.

The campaign used a multisectoral approach with multiple stakeholders, including religious leaders, media, members of parliament, NGOs, CBOs, influencers, and local governments to develop strategies and action plans that were implemented through:

- a peer-to-peer ‘Go Back to School’ campaign which UNICEF supported in Karamoja and northern Uganda, while UNFPA encouraged adolescents to reach their peers in West Nile, Acholi, Karamoja and in Kampala
- development of a communication strategy for messages on child marriage and teenage pregnancy broadcast by 25 radio stations and 6 TV stations, complemented with community dialogues in 29 districts
- high-level advocacy led by the First Lady, the Vice-President and the Prime Minister – which mobilized ministries, departments and agencies, members of parliament, local governments, United Nations agency heads and staff, donor representatives, civil society, diplomatic corps, development partners, special interest groups including the youth and women, cultural and religious leaders, media and the general public.

The campaign achieved:

- increased awareness of the magnitude of child marriage and the cost of inaction on teenage pregnancy among communities and leaders
- galvanized partnerships between the Government, partners, CSOs, parents and caretakers, local and community leaders, as well as adolescent girls and boys to address child marriage and teenage pregnancy in Uganda
- a sustained national call to action to end child marriage and teenage pregnancy and to support teenage mothers.

“On behalf of the Government of Uganda, I reiterate support towards the campaign and rallied all Government structures to contribute to ending harmful practices. Religious leaders, the judiciary, ministers, members of Parliament, district leaders, resident district commissioners, police, local council and all leaders, it is your duty and responsibility together with Government to protect and save ‘our girls’ and to create an environment in which they can grow and explore their full potential.”

— Hon. Robinah Nabbanja, Prime Minister of Uganda

Facilitating supportive laws and policies

The Global Programme led innovative multisectoral stakeholder consultations at national and subnational levels. These built consensus on a national five-year strategy to end child marriage and teenage pregnancy. The strategy, implemented at all levels to achieve “a society free of child marriage and teenage pregnancy” was also developed to improve child and adolescent well-being. It aligns with the most recent United Nations General Assembly Resolution on Child, Early and Forced Marriage (A/RES/75/167) and SDG 5 (achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls).

The programme also supported the development of the revised costed National Disability Policy and Action Plan (2022-2027). This demonstrates the Government’s



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commitments and enables it to track the achievement of the SDGs while upholding ensuring the principle of ‘leaving no one behind’. The revised policy, guides and informs stakeholders on the urgency for focused planning, evidence-based resource allocation, results-based implementation, and accountability in respect to persons with disabilities, and marginalized adolescent girls who are vulnerable to child marriage and other harmful practices.

The Global Programme continued to support national and subnational action plans on the dissemination and implementation of the menstrual hygiene management guidelines, male engagement strategy and the national guidelines for school re-entry for adolescent girls as well as the sexuality education framework in over 15 districts. The programme also supported the training of district focal persons on gender-responsive child-friendly budgeting.

The programme further supported improvements to the Justice Law and Order sector (JLOS) to help survivors of VAC and GBV, including child marriage, to access justice. Some 68 key officials, including High Court judges, the JLOS technical team, registrars, deputy registrars, assistant registrars, chief magistrates, the police, the office of the director of public prosecutions, prison staff, the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development, and advocates from private practices acquired enhanced knowledge and skills to support survivors of sexual and GBV, including children, women and girls, refugees, internally displaced people and people with disabilities. The programme used the media to raise awareness about trials for sexual and gender-based violence, and on the key roles of the judiciary, the office of the director of public prosecutions, probation and social welfare officers and the community in promoting justice for adolescent girls

and women. In 2022 the Global Programme supported the judicial system to deal with 88 per cent of sexual and GBV cases, including cases of child marriage.

The public policy maturity model

Elimination of harmful practices such as child marriage requires the integration of strategic approaches, processes, systems and information. UNFPA and UNICEF recognize the role national action plans play in strengthening policy coherence to achieve this. Lessons from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development peer review process emphasize that the plans need:

- political commitment and policy statements
- policy coordination mechanisms
- systems for monitoring, analysis and reporting.

UNICEF has developed and tested a policy maturity model and tools for assessing public policies to end harmful practices and achieve SDG 5.3 by 2030 in 12 countries (Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Lebanon, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zambia).

The maturity model provides a framework for key national stakeholders to review and assess national policy approaches and systems for

- eliminating and preventing female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage
- identifying priorities or critical investments
- building consensus around the interventions.

The model is structured around six intermediate outcomes and different subdomains that are defined by distinct levels of maturity i.e., weak-building; average-enhancing; good-integrating; and excellent-mature (see Figure 4).

TABLE 2: Snippet of the policy maturity model

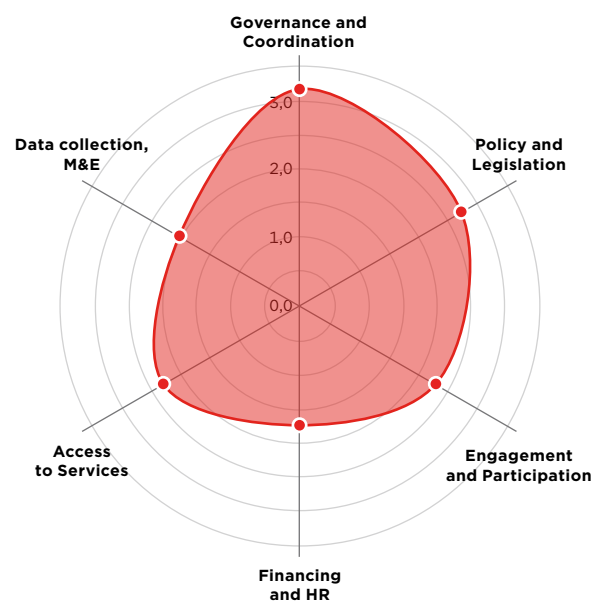
Intermediate Outcome	Sub-Domains	Score
Governance and Coordination	A1: Political Commitment	✓
	A2: Coordination structures	✓
	A3: National Action Plans	✓
Policy and Legislation	B.1: Legislation, policies and implementation mechanisms	✓
Engagement and Participation	C1: Independent complaint mechanism exists for children and women	✗
	C2: Civil Society Engagement, including women and children	✓
	C3: Community based mechanisms for Harmful practices prevention	—
Financing & HR	D1: Financing of harmful practices services	✓
	D2: National budget establishment	—
	D3: National Budget execution	—
	D4: National Budget amount	✗
	D5: National Budget monitoring and review	✗
	D6: Human Resources	✓
Access to Services	E1: Availability of Standard Operating Procedures and/or Protocols for harmful practices services	—
	E.2: Understanding and articulation of harmful practices system	✓
	E3: Modelling testing and scaling of harmful practices services	—
	E4: Availability of harmful practices services, case management and referral systems	✓
Data collection, M&E	F1: Administrative data systems and monitoring to routinely generate data on FGM	—
	F2: Data security and governance	✗
	F3: Research and surveys	—

The benchmarks for each level of maturity have been defined and require certain priorities, processes, and results to be achieved for each subdomain, and can be contextualized by country. Feedback from the testing emphasized the role of the model as:

- a useful advocacy tool
- something that builds Government accountability and action towards elimination of harmful practices
- a tool to review and track the implementation of a national action plan.

On average, overall country ratings on a 4-point scale ranged from 1.8 (weak-building in Bangladesh) to 3.0 (good-integrating in Zambia). Financing and human resources (rating 1.3) emerged as the area where countries were rated the least, while governance and coordination (rating 2.7) were rated highly.

FIGURE 3: Policy maturity assessment for Uganda



Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

The Global Programme supported the development of costed subnational action plans to deal with the problem of child marriages. Although these were approved by district councils, monitoring indicates that these plans were not allocated any budgets.

The programme will continue to work on expanding and strengthening partnerships to ensure that budgets are allocated for the implementation of these plans.

Uganda has developed several policies, in line with international human rights standards, aimed at preventing child marriage, and protecting the rights and well-being of marginalized adolescents. However, the next step is implementing and enforcing existing laws and policies, and ensuring public awareness.

Generating and applying data and evidence

The Global Programme supported a committee set up by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development on child well-being and also the national multisectoral Task Force on child marriage.

This support contributed to the development of a comprehensive Government research agenda (2022–2025) which listed key areas and issues to be investigated, in order to generate data and evidence for policies and strategies to combat child marriage.

The programme supported the multisectoral Task Force on child marriage under the leadership of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. The task force initiated the assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on child marriage and FGM and its implications for adolescents during 2022. The findings of a pilot study, conducted in three districts, were presented during the National Symposium on the Well-Being of the Girl Child. The findings have several implications for policy and programming that are mutually reinforcing.

The data and evidence generated from these studies guided high-level stakeholder dialogues and consultations, including engagement with parliamentarians at national level and district council representatives, which are shaping Government policies and commitment towards addressing the risk factors driving child marriage.

The Global Programme will build on its partnership and support of the Strategic Technical Assistance for Research (STAR) initiative to explore data and evidence generation on child marriage to inform programme strategy and direction.



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COUNTRY PROFILE

2022

