COUNTRY PROFILES 2022

end
child
marriage
A voice. A chance. A future.

UNFPA-UNICEF **Global Programme to End Child Marriage**
COUNTRY PROFILES 2022

BANGLADESH

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A voice. A chance. A future.

COUNTRY PROFILE
2022
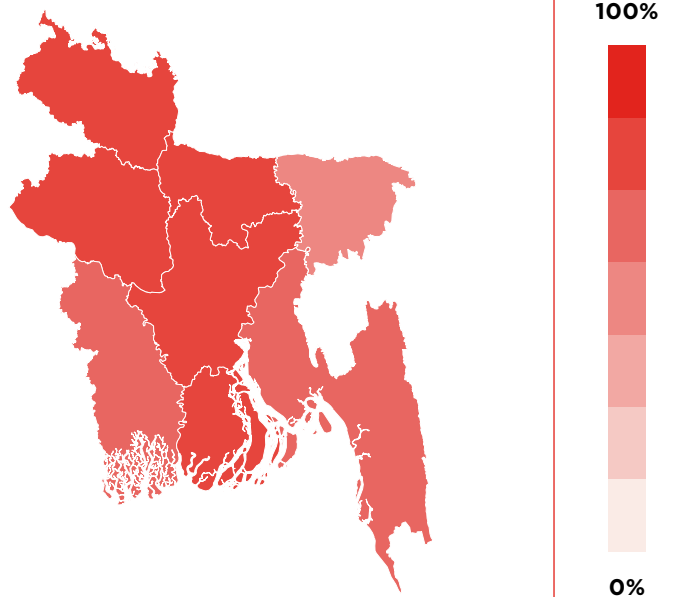
" My wife was passionate about studying, but she did not get the chance to continue. After the programme I have realized this, and I try my best to reduce my wife's workload and let her study again."

— *Babla Mia, 25, Gaibandha*

Belgium partner in development | Canada | Co-funded by the European Union | Government of the Netherlands | Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation | Norad | UKaid from the British people | ZONTA INTERNATIONAL EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH SERVICE & ADVOCACY | UNFPA | unicef for every child

↘ BANGLADESH

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 le gal status of any country or area or the delimitation of any frontiers.

100%

0%

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

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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.

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↘ Key highlights in 2022

More than
15 MILLION
people were reached through **3,800 imams and female teachers**, trained by the programme, at madrasas,[a] with **key messages on ending child marriage and violence** against children.

a   Type of educational institution, often religious.

More than
49 MILLION
people were reached through Season 3 of the **education-entertainment drama series** *'Icchedana'*, addressing **key adolescent issues**, and the 'I make my rules' digital campaign.

3,015 **boys and men**
participated in **intergenerational and peer-to-peer dialogues** to promote **positive masculinities**.

8,295 **adolescent girls**
were given **educational support**, and also bicycles to support their **transportation** to and from **school**.

25,393 **vulnerable adolescent girls**, including girls who are out of school, participated in training on life skills, **gender-transformative sexual and reproductive health and rights**, and entrepreneurship.

480 **child journalists** from
24 districts who have been trained by the programme produced over **150 news reports** and published **30 new videos** on ending child marriage, **girls' empowerment**, gender inequality and other issues related to gender discrimination.

The child marriage country context

Bangladesh has been making gradual progress in achieving the SDGs, however, poverty, social inequality and discrimination against women and girls is still a major challenge. UNICEF estimates that there are 38 million child brides in Bangladesh, 13.4 million of whom were married before the age of 15. In Bangladesh, child brides have traditionally been more likely to live in poorer, rural households and less likely to have had more than a secondary education. However, a health survey has revealed an upward trend in the number of child marriages in non-slum urban settings, from 25 per cent to 28 per cent in the last 8 years. This has led to a significant jump in the adolescent pregnancy rate in non-slum urban settings, from 13 per cent to 20 per cent, the same level as that in slum areas.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic profoundly affected the everyday lives of girls for two years in Bangladesh, there is no statistical evidence that the rate of child marriage substantially increased during the pandemic, based on a survey supported by the Global Programme.

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	**149,503**	**83,412**
Indicator 1121: Number of girls (aged 10–19) supported by the programme to enrol and/or remain in primary or secondary school	**4,200**	**2,008**
Indicator 1211: Number of boys and men actively participating in group education/dialogues that address harmful masculinities and gender norms	**35,000**	**97,722**
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	**256,151**	**268,675**
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	**5,680,000**	**1,595,470**
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	**6,000**	**5,920**
Indicator 1231: Number of CSOs newly mobilized in support of challenging social norms and promoting gender equality by the Global Programme (cumulative)	**3**	**10**
Indicator 2121: Number of primary/secondary/non-formal schools in programme areas providing quality gender-friendly education that meets minimum standards	**50**	**1,004**
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	**63**	**110**
Indicator 2211: Number of partnerships (both formal and informal) established to deliver adolescent-responsive social protection, poverty reduction and economic empowerment programmes and services	**10**	**10**
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)	**5**	**4**
Indicator 3121: Number of subnational plans with evidence informed interventions to address child marriage	**45**	**45**
Indicator 3211: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that focus on what works to end child marriage (cumulative)	**6**	**2**
Indicator 3212: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that apply a gender analysis (cumulative)	**6**	**3**
Indicator 3221: Number of south-to-south cooperation events (conferences, expert visits, peer consultations, study tours, communities of practice) supported	**1**	**1**

Providing intensive support to marginalized girls

The Global Programme continued to use multisectoral approaches linked to Government programmes and schemes to empower adolescent girls, building the knowledge and life-skills of those at risk of child marriage, and linking them to protection services and employment opportunities. The programme:

- institutionalized life-skills education by the training of trainers in teaching colleges
- supported national education departments to develop and integrate life-skills education into schools' national curriculum frameworks
- established and facilitated adolescent safe spaces in communities and schools
- established digital learning and engagement platforms.

UNICEF targeted 56,000 of the most marginalized adolescent girls through the alternative learning pathway model. However, this intervention mainly depends on local small entrepreneurs whose businesses were badly affected by COVID-19. The delays in rolling out the programme meant only 15,575 girls were reached during 2022.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) tailored the life-skills education curriculum to meet the needs of married girls, focusing on assertive communication, gender equality and family planning. As a result 9,818 adolescent girls, including 3,355 who were married, received gender-transformative sexual and reproductive health and rights information at community level.

UNICEF in Bangladesh conducted an internal survey of married and unmarried adolescent girls using the KOBO tool (software used for collecting and managing data in challenging environments). The girls attended clubs set up for them, where they discussed decision-making in marriage, the use of menstrual products and their access to a cellular phone. The survey found that:

- 92.1 per cent of adolescents regularly, or somewhat regularly, (more than 80 per cent of sessions) attended the clubs' comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) sessions
- 7.9 per cent were irregular attendees, or attended fewer than five sessions during the entire curriculum
- 63 per cent of the girls' fathers were the primary decision makers on their marriages
- 2.5 per cent of mothers had any say in these decisions
- 9 per cent of girls make their own decisions
- 16 per cent of families come to a mutual decision
- 50 per cent of adolescents who menstruate regularly are using disposable sanitary pads
- 20 per cent are using pieces of clothing during menstruation
- more than 64 per cent had access to someone's cellular phone
- 24 per cent owned a personal cellular phone
- 12 per cent said they do not use a phone.

Globally, more and more girls want to be independent, but they are held back by harmful practices and negative social norms. The Global Programme, in collaboration with the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, the Department of Youth

13.4 MILLION married before age 15
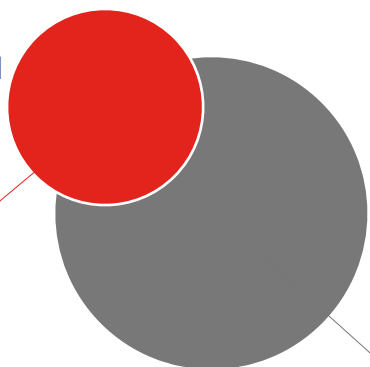
34.5 MILLION married before age 18

Bangladesh is home to over **34 million child brides**; **1 in 2** 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.*

Development and the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, developed a 'career pathway' booklet for adolescent girls in 2022, helping girls to identify how they can reach their career goals. The booklet provides information on traditional and non-traditional professions for girls, a checklist and a list of institutes that provide education and training, as well as useful services. The booklet was trialled with married and unmarried adolescent girls at community level before publication.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

The majority of married adolescent girls in the Global Programme are from the most disadvantaged families in the country, living in tea gardens and urban slums, facing high levels of poverty and exclusion. In 2022, adolescent girls from urban slum areas registered low levels of attendance in the alternative learning pathway programme, partly because of multiple deprivations; their families are constantly evicted without notice and, at times, forced to leave their homes due to flooding and fire breaks.

In communities in Bangladesh, the programme has created a platform to better coordinate people working for women's rights, feminist and youth-led organizations and subnational Government structures.

To ensure the sustainability of economic empowerment (livelihood skills and income-generation), adolescent girls need the support from a network of Government and non-government services. The programme will continue to create better income-generating opportunities for them by strengthening the capacities of civil society organizations (CSOs), service providers and the private sector.

In 2023, the alternative learning pathway programme has been evolving into three different interventions for the most marginalized and vulnerable adolescent girls and young women – informal apprenticeship, entrepreneurship and centre-based skills-training. Documentation of this process will be another key focus for 2023, to inform its scaling-up.

Enhancing the family and community environment

A recent baseline study, on knowledge, attitudes, practices and norms related to harmful practices in Bangladesh, highlighted that 50 per cent of community members know about the need to abandon harmful practices. However, fewer than 30 per cent of adolescents could mention three benefits of abandoning harmful ways of disciplining

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An assessment of intergenerational dialogues, focusing on couples, revealed that married adolescent girls later reported better communication between themselves and their husbands and in-laws around their aspirations. Husbands were generally aware of, and expressed support for, their wives' career aspirations. Similarly, unmarried adolescent girls reported more positive communication between themselves and their parents, with the parents expressing increased support for their daughters. However, male participants reported that they share household chores only when female family members are sick or not at home. Alarmingly, participants said that intimate partner violence often occurs when wives make 'mistakes' or disobey their husbands, and mothers often placed responsibility on themselves to adjust to, or accept, the situation. Some fathers believed husbands should be more patient with, and listen to, their wives. However, adolescent boys from intergroup dialogues said in interviews that neither they, nor their relatives, believe in a gendered division of household work.

The respondents said that, following the dialogues, they had changed the decision-making process in their families to ensure that female relatives were involved in decision-making and that their opinions were heard.

children. UNFPA and UNICEF continued to focus on expanding knowledge and changing attitudes through group counselling on positive gender norms. They are also promoting positive parenting practices through fathers' groups, and through helping community and religious leaders to engage with male caregivers to change their attitudes and to act in their community to prevent child marriage. In 2022, 768,654 people in targeted communities participated in various forms of dialogue sessions.

The programme organized more than 10 dialogues between married adolescent girls and their partners, including their parents and in-laws, to discuss issues related to their aspirations, the division of household labour, control over women, family planning methods and services, sexual and reproductive health, and gender-based violence (GBV). In addition, more than 15 group dialogues were organized between unmarried adolescent girls and boys and their parents to discuss the young peoples' aspirations and how their families can help them reach those aspirations.

> " When I come home from working as a day labourer, my wife does everything for me: from bringing fresh clothes for a bath, to serve food. I never thought about how much work I have to do in the household, I never used to think about what else could be done in the house like cooking, eating and sleeping. My wife is pregnant, and she does a lot of work at home, so now I share the housework [with her]."
>
> — *Sahin, 21, married to an adolescent girl in Potuakhali, Bangladesh and participant in a couples' workshop*

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Implementing community engagement activities and attempts to reach marginalized people, particularly in remote areas, has been hampered by the phasing out of partnerships with CSOs. It has also been affected, particularly in rural areas,

> " My father has not accepted my wife well since my marriage. After the programme, he has changed. He has returned home after buying fruits for my wife."
>
> — *Shohel, 22, from Gaibandha*

by UNICEF and its Government counterparts moving from a project-based approach to one of scaling up interventions. Nevertheless, this approach has led to a greater use of community structures, with leaders and community groups becoming more involved in supporting girls' rights. In 2022, more Chairs of rural councils ('Union Parishads') and their members committed to ensuring that girls are safe and free from sexual harassment in their communities.

This change has come about through the programme and its Government partners successfully adopting interventions that include a public demonstration of positive attitudes, such as the intergroup and intergenerational dialogues. It has also led to the increasing effectiveness of UNICEF Government counterparts in promoting positive child-caring practices by adolescents' parents and caregivers. Contextualized guidelines for adolescent participation in the dialogues have been developed and rolled out, in addition to monitoring mechanisms being adapted to improve social and behavioural change programming.

Strengthening systems

Through the Global Programme, support was provided for:

- establishing 22 adolescent-friendly health centres
- building the capacity of comprehensive, adolescent-friendly, health services (including those related to gender-based violence and mental health)
- facilitating reporting using the information management systems DHIS2 and the Directorate General for Family Planning information system
- organizing quarterly meetings to reviews progress on adolescent health
- conducting facility-based 'adolescent health days'.

Overall, in 2022, 143,579 boys and girls (93,614 girls) received services from adolescent-friendly health service centres in 12 districts supported by the Global Programme. Nearly 11,000 adolescents accessed contraception and 87,019 received counselling and treatment for reproductive tract infections or sexually transmitted infections. Further, around 2,275 adolescents were reached in 65 secondary schools in 12 districts (Bhola, Patuakhali, Barguna,

Gaibandha, Sirajganj, Jamalpur, Sherpur, Khagrachari, Rangamati and Moulvibazar) and 840 adolescents were reached with sexual and reproductive health and rights services in 12 secondary schools run by Dhaka North City Corporation. The programme also supported the development of an 'adolescent website', which gives sexual and reproductive health and rights education, and which has had 10.4 million visitors.

A total of 121 secondary schools in Jamalpur, Bogura and Patuakhali districts were helped to keep running their anti-sexual harassment committees, as per Bangladesh High Court Guidelines. The committee members were trained on the guidelines and how to implement interventions at their schools. Each committee has at least five members, with female Chairs where possible and they meet, on average, once a quarter. During these meetings, the members discuss issues such as:

- informing students about harassment complaint boxes
- any complaints received
- roles and responsibilities of the committee members
- their next course of action.

Gender promoters and technical officers from the State gave the meetings logistical support and conveyed messages from the Global Programme on monitoring mechanisms and documentation.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Although the Government, together with the Global Programme, has prioritized the establishment of anti-sexual harassment committees in schools, access to adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights information is still a challenge in Bangladesh. Government agencies, especially the National Curriculum and Textbook Board, do not think it is appropriate to integrate CSE in the revised curriculum, due to Bangladeshi culture, as they think that some of the content and terminology is not suitable for the students. Parents, schoolteachers, local community leaders, peers and key gatekeepers are therefore hesitant to undertake discussions on sexual and reproductive health issues. Most of the anti-sexual harassment committees were formed, or became operational, in 2019 with training on case management, referral systems and committee management. However, COVID-19

and its after effects have continued to hamper the operations of the committees as most trained members could not be retained or remain motivated.

Nevertheless, the programme has still been able to create a platform to better coordinate people working for women's rights, feminist and youth-led organizations and subnational Government structures in the prevention of sexual harassment in schools. External committee members from the community have played an essential role in preventing sexual harassment by patrolling known hot-spots for this and gatherings of local youths when school finishes each day. This lets the community know about the existence of the school committees and helps people feel safer sending their girls to school. In 2023, the programme will support the national dissemination of the Sexual Harassment Prevention Guidelines for secondary schools and create peer leader groups in 210 secondary schools.

The involvement of multiple stakeholders, including the Department of Administration and Local Government Institute, and engagement of local community members, especially adolescents and youth through adolescent clubs and youth groups, have helped local people take ownership of this issue. It has also generated demand, contributing to an increased uptake of adolescent-friendly services in health and family planning facilities. Various campaign-based activities and school-based sessions, including courtyard sessions, have significantly contributed to raising awareness on the importance of adolescent sexual health and the prevention of sexual harassment.

Building partnerships

The Global Programme mapped the capacity of feminist and youth-led organizations, and resources in promoting the rights and well-being of adolescent girls and in amplifying girls' leadership by engaging the support of boys and men. Some 22 community-based organizations were selected, and partnerships were established to increase community awareness about changing social norms, ending harmful practices and creating a broader network or forum for adolescent girls and young people to participate as community change-agents. Currently, 240 of the most marginalized and vulnerable adolescent girls are benefiting from income-generating activities provided through referral networks of the newly mobilized organizations. Concerned Women for Family Development, a partner organization of the Global

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Programme, and 15,200 boys and men are engaged in promoting positive masculinities through community-level courtyard and tea stall meetings.

The Global Programme continues to support the activities of two training centres run by the Department of Women's Affairs in Bogura and Jamalpur districts. The well-equipped centres offer certified training in information technology and computers to vulnerable adolescent girls, as part of an empowering approach to end child marriage. In 2022, 32 girls were trained in basic information technology and computer skills that will help them earn a living from home from home.

The Global Programme also established links with local organizations that provided referral services to more than 240 adolescent girls from vulnerable families and communities to complete training on income-generating skills including tailoring and hand embroidery.

Investment in and support to youth-led, women-led and feminist CSOs

Partnerships are important for advancing gender-transformative programming and, recognizing this, in 2022 the Global Programme assessed the extent to which the CSOs were implementing gender-transformative approaches – based on the partners identified as focusing on promoting girls' and women's rights from the previous year (24 in Bangladesh). The assessment aimed to provide guidance for UNFPA

and UNICEF on how to better identify and support opportunities to advance gender-transformative approaches within the Global Programme.

FIGURE 3: *Assessment of interventions of partner organizations in Bangladesh, on the gender equality continuum*
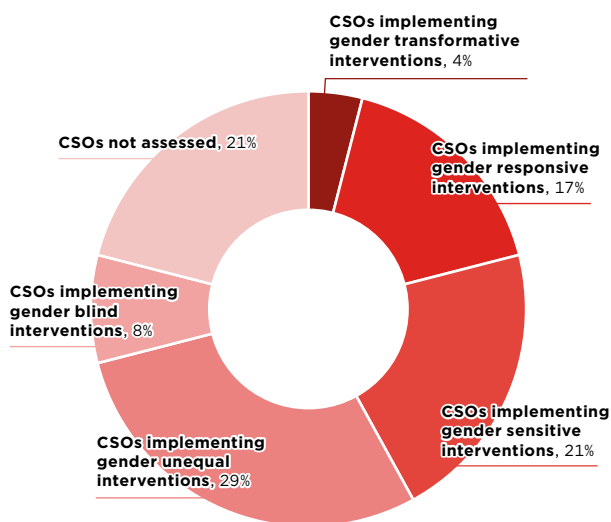
The assessment was conducted by building on information from various online resources, including the CSOs' websites, reviews of available annual reports, analysis of strategy documents, social media pages, descriptions and commentary about the CSOs from external parties (for example funders, coalitions, or networks), and news articles.

The assessment revealed that many of the CSOs which partner the Global Programme in Bangladesh do not have an online presence. This makes it difficult to fully assess their approach, however, the surveys submitted suggest that the organizations have a limited-to-moderate understanding of gender-transformative change and, while their work is important, their internal structures do not appear to promote gender-transformative results. The learning, impact, policy and strategy metrics were consistently marked on the lower end of the gender equality continuum. Compared to other countries, Bangladesh had the most gender-blind organizations, with a general sense that the organizations are not prioritizing gender-transformative approaches in their work. Of more concern is the fact that Bangladesh is the only country with organizations ranked as gender negative. There were concerns that the organizations themselves were entrenching harmful gender profiles in terms of policies for hiring employees. There were also concerns that some of these organizations' activities

perpetuate gender stereotypes. For example, several programmes appear to be focused on girls, such as offering training for working in beauty parlours and tailoring, while programmes for boys relate to training in cellular phone servicing. The assessment recommended systematically incorporating partner CSOs in the roll out of the programme's Gender-Transformative Accelerator tool, as well as strengthening their capacities to implement gender-transformative programming.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

In northern Bangladesh, flooding from torrential rains is affecting the livelihoods of families and increasing the vulnerability of adolescent girls to child marriage. The Global Programme has established partnerships with grass roots organizations to extend financial loan systems to families, along with other social protection mechanisms implemented by the Government, to deal with economic shocks and to ensure that adolescent girls are retained in school and colleges. These grass roots organizations have been able to collaborate with other Government and non-governmental organizations to extend support for economic empowerment and livelihood services to the most disadvantaged adolescent girls and their families.

Increased efforts to support CSOs in Bangladesh are recommended. Assistance with conducting gender analyses, training on developing appropriate policies and feminist approaches to structuring an organization would be beneficial to most of the organizations. Moreover, it is suggested that the CSOs receive support and training to develop an online presence and undergo communications training to better share their work. This will likely contribute to better education and awareness, as well as help create systemic change. The CSOs in Bangladesh could also benefit from a series of group training with UNFPA and UNICEF in order to improve their structural and substantive work.

Facilitating supportive laws and policies

National and subnational action plans and strategies

A focus on equity, engaging children, adolescents and families in hard-to-reach areas and marginalized communities is essential for ending child marriage. The Global Programme continues to advocate with

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governments to allocate public financial resources for the implementation of national policies and programmes at decentralized levels, including the funding of good quality education, health and protection services for adolescent girls. Since the inception of the programme, the number of countries implementing a costed national plan or strategy to end child marriage has increased from 7 in 2018 to 33 in 2022. Some 15 of these countries have also allocated public financial resources for the implementation of these action plans. There are 11 Global Programme focus countries with costed action plans (excluding Yemen) and of these, 8 have allocated public financial resources for their implementation.

The Global Programme is supporting Bangladesh to develop a costed national action plan with a monitoring and evaluation framework. The Global Programme is further supporting the cascaded roll out of the Model District Initiative (from the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs) in six districts to serve as a way of implementing the:

- Child Marriage Restraint Act (CMRA) 2017
- Child Marriage Restraint Rules 2018
- National action plan to end child marriage and other related legal and administrative instruments.

The Model District Initiative will be replicated in other districts of the country to meet the SDG targets.

Policies and legislation

The Global Programme and its partners are leading policy advocacy efforts to close administrative loopholes in the Children Act 2013 that are enabling the perpetuation of the sexual abuse and exploitation of children and child marriage. Sectoral and multisectoral training on the Act and draft rules have been rolled out in 23 districts with the participation of 1,423 child affairs police officers, juvenile court judges, probation officers, social services officers and legal aid officers at district and Upazila level.

The Global Programme has engaged the Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat (BAPPD) to promote awareness in schools on the dangers of child marriage and other issues relevant to youth and adolescents. BAPPD also organized a meeting between the Standing Committee of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and key stakeholders to review measures taken to prevent sexual violence and child marriage as per High Court directives during the year.

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 & 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 4: *Policy maturity assessment for Bangladesh*
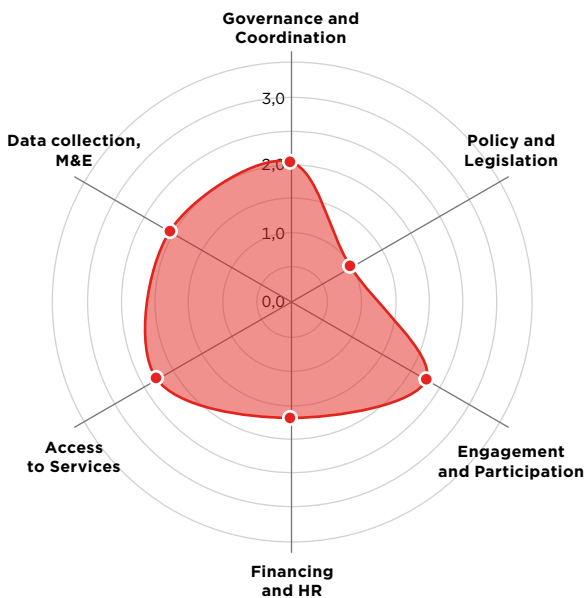
Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Weak coordination among relevant ministries and a lack of understanding of child protection issues continue to pose major challenges for the implementation of laws and policies in Bangladesh. In 2022, the Global Programme developed a training module on the Child Marriage Restraint Act 2017 and the Child Marriage Restraint Rules 2018, in addition to training 75 trainers to support the cascaded rolling out of the training module.

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Support will be provided by the Global Programme towards:

- developing a monitoring and evaluation framework and costing the national action plan to end child marriage in Bangladesh
- advocacy with the Government ministries and parliamentarians for budget inclusion at the national and district level to implement the national action plan to end child marriage
- rolling out the menstrual health management strategy
- collaboration and advocacy with the Government and relevant stakeholders to finalize the Rule of Children Act and developing the capacity of duty bearers at subnational level
- developing, and distributing nationally, sexual harassment prevention guidelines for secondary schools.

Generating and applying data and evidence

In 2022, the Global Programme in Bangladesh conducted two studies; the 'Situation of child marriage during COVID-19: A rapid study' and 'Menstrual health management in urban slums'. The findings of these studies show the different needs of adolescent girls in the social contexts in which they live. The findings and the resulting recommendations further highlight the importance of continued investment in data, especially in mechanisms that would enable data-gathering during public health emergencies such as COVID-19. They also show the need for their use in informing effective, relevant interventions. These studies also highlight the urgent need to invest resources in adolescent girls. Educated and healthy girls stay in school longer, marry later, delay childbearing, have healthier children, develop life-skills and earn higher incomes. They can help lift themselves and their present and future families out of poverty. Not only will investing in, and empowering, girls ensure that they fully enjoy their childhood free from the risk of marriage, but it also ensures that they can maximize their capabilities and options, helping the country to achieve its economic and development goals.

In 2022, UNICEF developed and published a statistical profile of child marriage in Bangladesh. This details how common the practice is, the characteristics of these marriages, and provides insights into the lives of child brides across key domains of well-being. The profile also shows trends in the practice and whether the country is on track to reach the 2030 SDG target. The country profile is aimed at supporting decisions by governments and civil society in terms of targeting interventions, and enabling progress to be monitored.

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BURKINA FASO

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end child marriage
A voice. A chance. A future.

COUNTRY PROFILE
2022

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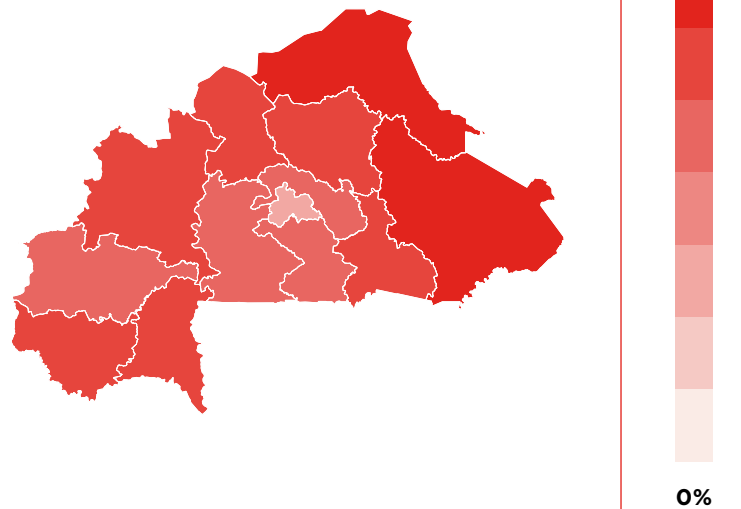
> " Even in a traditional society, a young girl cannot legally marry until she is 17 years old. This is important because, before that, the girl is not mature. And since we don't get married in even years, the girl who has an impediment when she is 17 will have to wait until she is 19 or 21. So there is no opposition with our traditions."
>
> — *Customary leader during a workshop in Koudougou*

↘ BURKINA FASO

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

100%

0%

Note: This map is stylized and not to scale. It does not reflect a position by UNFPA or UNICEF on the le gal 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

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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.

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↘ Key highlights in 2022

268,875 **people engaged in dialogue sessions** on the consequences of, and alternatives to, child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls and gender equality.

83,412 **adolescent girls** were trained in life-skills or comprehensive sexuality education (CSE).

2,008 **vulnerable adolescent girls** were provided with support to continue their education, including receiving bicycles to **help them travel to and from school**.

1,414 **village committees** in six regions were reached with **social communication activities** on gender norms, the causes of child marriage and its consequences on the lives of adolescents.

Another **1,095** **villages** publicly declared the **abandonment of harmful practices** such as child marriage, FGM and violence against children.

1,095 community-based child protection units were established, and **8,031 influential community members** were enabled to **support community surveillance mechanisms** in their villages to prevent child marriage.

5,920 traditional, religious and **community leaders** were mobilized to **act in dialogues** and consensus-building platforms **to end child marriage**.

More than **1.5 MILLION** people were reached with **messaging addressing child marriage** through the campaign *'Don't call me madam'*.

Child marriage country context

Child marriage is common in Burkina Faso, with 52 per cent married before the age of 18. UNICEF estimates that there are more than three million child brides in Burkina Faso, and of these, more than 500,000 married before age 15. Child marriage persists here largely due to traditional and familial practices and beliefs. The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly affected the everyday lives of girls in Burkina Faso, and the rights of children were also severely affected by the security and humanitarian crises in the north, centre-north, east, Boucle du Mouhoun, Sahel and centre-east regions.

Overall, in 2022, the insecurity has led to the closure of 6,253 primary and post-primary schools. These represent almost a quarter of the country's educational institutions, with more than 500,000 girls affected. The security and humanitarian crises have also led to the closure or only partial functioning of 606 health facilities in eight regions. These represent 42 per cent of the nation's health facilities, depriving nearly two million people of access to health care. The closure of some courts, police and gendarmerie stations and the widespread presence of internally displaced people has also exacerbated the number of child marriages in the eight most crisis-affected regions.

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	149,503	83,412
Indicator 1121: Number of girls (aged 10–19) supported by the programme to enrol and/or remain in primary or secondary school	4,200	2,008
Indicator 1211: Number of boys and men actively participating in group education/ dialogues that address harmful masculinities and gender norms	35,000	97,722
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	256,151	268,675
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	5,680,000	1,595,470
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	6,000	5,920
Indicator 1231: Number of CSOs newly mobilized in support of challenging social norms and promoting gender equality by the Global Programme (cumulative)	3	10
Indicator 2121: Number of primary/secondary/non-formal schools in programme areas providing quality gender-friendly education that meets minimum standards	50	1,004
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	63	110
Indicator 2211: Number of partnerships (both formal and informal) established to deliver adolescent-responsive social protection, poverty reduction and economic empowerment programmes and services	10	10
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)	5	4
Indicator 3121: Number of subnational plans with evidence informed interventions to address child marriage	45	45
Indicator 3211: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that focus on what works to end child marriage (cumulative)	6	2
Indicator 3212: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that apply a gender analysis (cumulative)	6	3
Indicator 3221: Number of south-to-south cooperation events (conferences, expert visits, peer consultations, study tours, communities of practice) supported	1	1

Providing intensive support to marginalized girls

The Global Programme not only works with adolescent girls at risk of child marriage, but also with family members, including women, men and boys, influential community members such as religious and traditional leaders and female leaders, law enforcement authorities, health facilities, and schools and community structures such as village development committees. This wide approach takes into account the importance of the interaction between these groups and structures, complemented by interventions to bring meaningful change.

In 2022, the Global Programme supported the establishment of 1,353 adolescent clubs and 1,394 safe spaces in 1,458 villages to ensure that adolescent girls are empowered to make informed choices about their lives. Some 83,412 adolescent girls at risk of child marriage (44,536 girls out of school and 241 girls with disabilities) were empowered, through the Global Programme, with life-skills education and training in sewing and garment making. Another 2,025 vulnerable girls were trained and provided with specially adapted equipment and materials for the development of income-generating activities.

The Global Programme has supported 38,876 girls who participate in club activities to remain in school. Adolescent girls have been systematically identified and their families, as well as local leaders and influencers, have been engaged in discussions about the girls' fundamental right to education and information on sexual and reproductive health, as well as their right to make choices about when and who to marry without constraint. As institutional

protection through education is a key factor in preventing child marriage, another 2,008 of the most vulnerable adolescent girls were supported to enrol and remain in school, with 1,740 receiving help with school fees and 268 being given bicycles to ensure they can get to and from school.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

The ongoing insecurity in some regions of the country undermines national efforts to promote girls' education as an alternative to child marriage. Indeed, the closure of 6,253 primary and post-primary schools due to the deterioration of the security situation in six regions, including attacks directed against children in schools, deprived 523,194 girls of appropriate institutional protection. By being out of school for long, these adolescent girls are vulnerable to child marriage, sexual violence and teenage pregnancies.

Targeting out-of-school girls in order to empower them is challenging as, without schools, there is no strong platform to bring girls together. This affected the programme results, with most planned school-based interventions and targets not fulfilled. In response, the programme is supporting the development of an evidence-based implementation manual and monitoring framework — led by the charity CARE International — to ensure a stronger involvement of girls who are out of school.

The programme will continue to identify and support schoolgirls attending clubs while ensuring that the Ministry of Social Action and the Ministry of Education finalize a harmonized package for school support. Girls already enrolled will be monitored and a new cohort will be identified and supported.

584,800 married before age 15
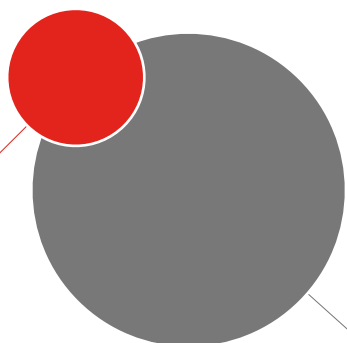
3.2 MILLION married before age 18

Burkina Faso is home to over **3 million child brides**; **1 in 2** 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.*

Enhancing the family and community environment

The programme in Burkina Faso, despite its political transition and security, humanitarian, economic, and food crises, increased the number of people who received messages on child marriage or who have participated directly in community dialogues promoting the ending of child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM). To engage people effectively, the programme used key strategies such as community involvement, communication for behaviour change, social mobilization and the capacity-building of local actors. The programme brought together technical staff from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF, the Government and civil society to develop a gender-transformative approach including the promotion of positive masculinities, and in maintaining momentum through advocacy at the highest levels to accelerate the sustainable abandonment of child marriage.

Overall, 97,722 men, including 50,012 adolescent boys, were engaged in dialogues on positive masculinities and the consequences of harmful practices. Transforming social norms to accelerate the elimination of child marriage requires strengthening community dialogues and advocating for adolescent girls' rights. The programme reached 268,675 people, including 158,968 girls and women, through community dialogues, with key messages

on the school monitoring of adolescent girls, child marriage, FGM, unwanted pregnancies, adolescent family planning, gender-based violence (GBV), environmental protection and conflict management.

The programme mobilized 5,920 traditional, religious and community leaders to take part in dialogues and consensus-building platforms to end child marriage. UNICEF mobilized traditional and religious leaders from nine regions (centre-west, centre-east, centre-north, Boucle du Mouhoun, Hauts-Bassins, Cascades, north and Sahel) to renew their commitment to continue challenging social norms that perpetuate child marriage, by signing a declaration to promote the rights of girls and women in their communities.

As a result, in 2022, 1,095 new villages publicly declared their abandonment of harmful practices such as child marriage, FGM and violence against children. There are now a total of 4,549 villages which have publicly declared this since the start of the programme. The programme is supporting this by helping to establish community-based child protection units (CCPE) in each village, supervised by Government structures and institutions.

UNFPA continued its high-level advocacy for the protection of adolescent girls from child marriage through its 'Don't put the ring on her finger' campaign. Additionally, UNICEF, renewed its 'Don't call me madam' campaign, reaching 30,000 young

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people and an estimated 10 million television viewers. The strengthening of strategic alliances with traditional and social media networks helped the programme also reach 1.6 million people, including 656,699 girls and women, with key messages on ending child marriage, adolescent girls' rights and gender equality.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

The effects of the insecurity and COVID-19 has continued to push men and boys away from local communities, especially rural ones, in search of better living conditions. This has affected the programme's strategy of dialogues with boys and men on promoting positive masculinities. At national level, political instability has resulted in shifting Government priorities, directly affecting the mobilization of domestic resources to support programmes and coordination activities.

However, the use of community members to implement activities within villages has facilitated access to the most at-risk children. Indeed, their involvement enabled the programme to be deployed in areas difficult to access – including those under the control of armed groups, despite these groups' direct threats to the activities.

Strengthening systems

Child Protection, education and health systems, including information management systems, have been made more effective and efficient in how they deliver services for adolescent girls. Due to the prevailing insecurity, humanitarian access in most of the crisis-affected regions is increasingly restricted. Measures which the programme implemented to ensure the continuity of services during the first wave of COVID-19, can now be used during the security crisis. These include the use of community members to implement activities in villages under the control of armed groups. The programme has also adjusted its targeting to consider areas heavily impacted by insecurity, and areas hosting internally displaced people, to strengthen actions to protect vulnerable and at-risk adolescent girls from different social groups.

The programme also supported the establishment of 1,095 CCPEs and identified and helped 8,031 influential community members to continue raising awareness in their villages, and to identify and report protection issues. The implementation of CCPEs emphasizes the need for women and young people to participate, to counter power dynamics within communities. Thus, more than 53 per cent

of the members of the newly established CCPEs are women or young people. The fact that community members are monitoring harmful practices within communities affected by insecurity has enabled the implementation of measures to mitigate the risks of child marriage and FGM. Overall, community-driven interventions enabled the identification and protection of more than 210,351 girls at risk of, or survivors of, child marriage or FGM, including 122,968 adolescent girls who received prevention and care services related to child marriage.

UNICEF supported the Ministry of National Education, Literacy, and the Promotion of National Languages to implement the 'Child-Friendly Quality School' initiative (EQAME), particularly at primary school level, to ensure the retention of girls in education. Some 1,004 schools with the EQAME label provide a good quality education that considers gender and meets minimum standards in the areas targeted by the programme. The EQAME training guide includes specific modules on parental education and child protection and gender and gender-sensitive pedagogy. The initiative has also established a systematic referral mechanism between child protection and education practitioners to manage social issues that may hinder education for young girls, such as child marriage.

In 2022, UNFPA supported 55 service delivery points to ensure the continuity of health services offered to adolescents in the Diapaga, Dori and Nouna health districts.

- **25,617 adolescent girls** benefited from modern **contraceptive methods**
- **14,770** of the girls were **new users**
- **4,124** were **treated** for sexually transmitted infections
- **1,366** were **tested for HIV**, of which 11 tested positive.

UNFPA also trained 70 judicial staff on the use of the Child Marriage Data and Information Collection Guide to enable them to help disseminate information and data needed for decision-making and programming on ending child marriage.

Social services and CSOs supported by UNICEF, enabled 676 survivors of child and forced marriage to receive care, including psychosocial support, family mediation, alternative care, sexual and reproductive health and legal care. In addition, 643 girls who are survivors of various forms of violence, as well as 40 boys, were also provided with protection services.

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Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

The political transition and the multiple crises have disrupted the working of institutional structures, hampering them from delivering protection and care services to adolescent girls. However, the establishment and training of CCPEs has ensured continuity in providing prevention and response services for girls who are survivors, or at risk of violence and harmful practices.

The programme has made it possible to provide each village with enough trained community-based actors who can monitor, carry out communication and advocacy activities and/or make referrals. The introduction of these actors has meant an end to the potential duplication of community initiatives and limited the exposure of actors to direct attacks by armed groups.

Building partnerships

Investment in and support to youth-led, women-led and feminist CSOs

Partnerships are important for advancing gender-transformative programming and, recognizing this, in 2022, the Global Programme assessed the extent to which the CSOs were implementing gender-transformative approaches – based on the partners

identified as focusing on promoting girls' and women's rights from the previous year (nine in Burkina Faso). The assessment aimed to guide UNFPA and UNICEF on how better to identify and support opportunities to advance gender-transformative approaches within the Global Programme.

FIGURE 3: *Assessment of interventions of partner organizations in Burkina Faso, on the gender equality continuum*

CSOs implementing gender transformative interventions, 11%

CSOs implementing gender sensitive interventions, 44%

CSOs implementing gender responsive interventions, 44%
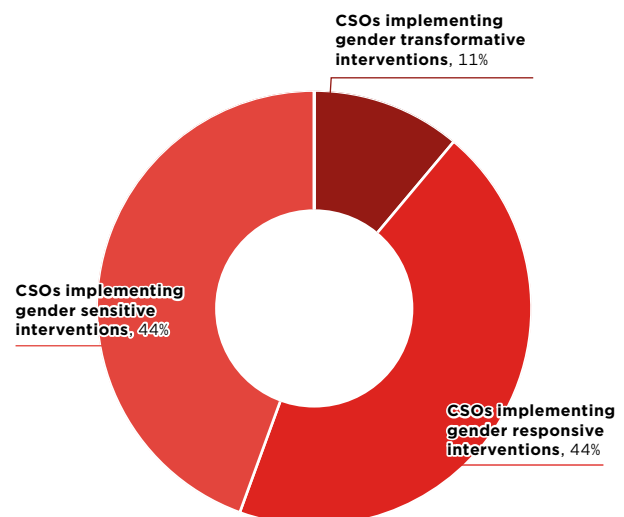
The assessment was conducted by building information from various online resources, including the CSOs' websites, reviews of available annual reports, analysis of strategy documents, social

media pages, descriptions and commentary about the CSOs from external parties (for example funders, coalitions, or networks), and news articles.

The gender-responsive organizations demonstrated a relatively nuanced understanding of gender-transformative approaches. The CSO projects show their attempts to address gender norms and sociocultural barriers to gender equality. With very minor improvements, many of the gender-responsive CSOs can become gender-transformative, both structurally and substantively.

The association Voix de femmes stands out as a good example of this, having multiple policies, staff gender training and good team and leadership dynamics. The organization uses a two-year period for strategy development and publishes annual reports, which track progress against gender equality targets. Changing the social and cultural environment is seen as a central part of its efforts to end GBV, and the organization focuses on empowering people to defend and advance their own rights. It has implemented numerous programmes targeting gender norms and beliefs and institutional power relations, e.g., strategic litigation to recognize customary marriages. The organization appears to work with teenagers in order to change their social and cultural beliefs and combines the provision of direct services with awareness-raising efforts among the general community.

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Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

The organizations listed as gender-sensitive appear to struggle with fully understanding gender-transformative approaches. For example, while the organizations score relatively well on some of the institutional measures, such as policies, they did not appear to have a deep understanding of the meaning of gender-transformative programming or of the systemic/institutional causes of gender inequality, and they do not appear to be addressing the underlying social and cultural practices that affect gendered outcomes. There appear to be some gaps in training, monitoring and evaluation, and understanding systemic change as a metric.

Greater support is needed to ensure CSOs conduct gender analyses and gender training. Guidance may be necessary for supporting CSOs to network with other international feminist groups, especially those promoting children's rights. There is also a need to provide support for getting policies in place and potentially training on what transformative gender work means in practice.

Facilitating supportive laws and policies

The Government coordinated a multisectoral platform to end child marriage, which monitored progress and served as a framework for accountability. This framework offers the opportunity to highlight challenges and propose solutions, including adaptation to life post-COVID-19, and to strengthen partnerships. The programme's support has enabled the country to adopt an operational action plan with a budget for 2022–2024, implemented with the help of practitioners specializing in the protection of children's rights. At a humanitarian level, the platform's frameworks for the areas of responsibility on gender-based violence and child protection take into account the issue of child marriage. Thanks to the momentum generated by these coordination efforts, both the humanitarian needs overview and the humanitarian response plan integrate the issues of risk mitigation and prevention, and the response to survivors of child marriage.

UNICEF provided technical support to the Government in revising the relevant provisions of the Personal and Family Code. The process began several years ago and experienced delays as successive governments

changed priorities, and also because of social issues related to the proposed changes. In 2022, the advocacy of UNICEF and UNFPA, in partnership with CSOs, led to the resumption of discussions on the code, and its finalization during a national workshop. The proposed reform addresses the social determinants of child, and forced, marriage. It harmonizes the age of marriage of 18 years for both boys and girls. A judge's ability to make exemptions on age is maintained but cannot be less than 17 years for both boys and girls. The code also recognizes customary and religious marriages and recommends their transcription in the civil registers, plus the inclusion of the place of celebration of the marriage or the place of residence of the spouses. This transcription enables oversight on the age of the spouses, their consent and the ability to report any offenders.

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*

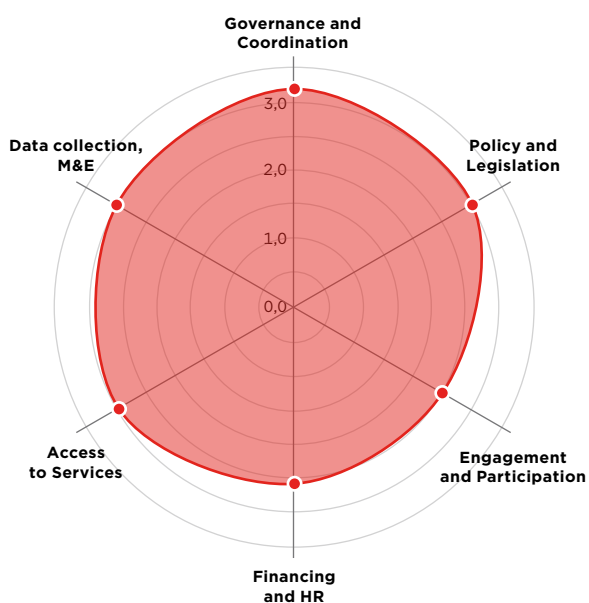| Intermediate Outcome	Sub-Domains	Score
Governance and Coordination	**A1**: Political Commitment	✔
	A2: Coordination structures	✔
	A3: National Action Plans	✔
Policy and Legislation	**B.1**: Legislation, policies and implementation mechanisms	✔
Engagement and Participation	**C1**: Independent complaint 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	—

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The policy maturity assessment for Burkina Faso has several highlights:

- The country has a strong political commitment to eliminate harmful practices, with a high-level declaration outlining its commitments. It has coordinated multisectoral organizations with an official mandate which meet regularly, and a clear action plan aligned with national statistical frameworks.

- Laws and policies specifically protect women and girls, including those most at risk of harmful practices. They are enforced at national and subnational levels and monitoring and routine review mechanisms ensure the laws are in line with international human rights standards.

- There is an independent complaints procedure. This enables complaints from, or on behalf of, women who have been denied services, or who have received services related to harmful practices. There is a specified time given for responding.

- CSOs are widely engaged in strengthening political commitment, planning and budgeting processes, monitoring and reporting on harmful practices and there are engagement forums for women, young people and children supported by the Government. Community protection mechanisms are also in place to engage with women and children, and are fully accountable.

- The Government and partners have allocated adequate financial resources on interventions to eliminating harmful practices. Funding is timely and is accessible to the relevant sectoral ministry(ies), with regular reviews. Key stakeholders benefit from regular capacity-building and monitoring services for harmful practices.

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 4: *Policy maturity assessment for Burkina Faso*

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Due to the political situation, the revised Persons and Family Code could not be presented at the Ministerial Council. The continuity of services has been jeopardized by the closure, or relocation, of some civil registration services due to the security situation. The biggest challenge in the near future is to leverage resources to sustain civil service modernization, including its digitization.

An active civil society alongside Government action contributes significantly to the implementation of national policies and the application

of legal sanctions. The work of civil society has been instrumental in ensuring the continuity of preventive and curative services for children.

Generating and applying data and evidence

In 2022, the programme helped the National Coalition to End Child Marriage in Burkina (CONAMEB) to conduct an analysis of administrative and secondary data on the impact of the security and health crisis on child marriage. The findings outline the crises' effect on the availability and supply of preventive and curative services, and the effect of the crises on the prevalence of child marriage.

- The challenges in accessing these services in the most affected communities become worse in security and humanitarian crises. This is especially so in the regions where child marriage prevalence rates are above the national average (north centre, north, Boucle du Mouhoun, east and Sahel) as they are the most affected by insecurity and therefore inaccessible by humanitarian workers. Similarly, care services and schools here are closed due to insecurity.

- The closure of some courts, police and other law enforcement stations due to insecurity leaves survivors without recourse to appropriate legal protection.

- Intensive campaigns are impossible in communities where armed groups are in control. The groups prevent anyone in these communities from advocating change and trying to improve people's knowledge about the consequences of child marriage.

- The Government's coordination, monitoring and evaluation of public policies on child marriage has been directly affected by political transitions and the change in national priorities, as a large part of the state budget is now devoted to the fight against insecurity.

Effect of the crisis on the prevalence of child marriage:

- The regions most affected by insecurity are areas that have a high prevalence of child marriage.

- The widespread presence of internally displaced people has exacerbated the issue of child marriage and affects many vulnerable and at-risk adolescent girls

and could, if this crisis continues to worsen, lead to a spread of child marriage as a survival coping mechanism for families.

- High death rates among men could lead to higher rates of child marriage among boys due to 'sororate' practice.

In addition, the programme supported the use of the Gender-Transformative Accelerator tool in the analysis of approaches related to gender-transformative change. As well as analysing the level of ownership of strategies and their contributions to accelerate change, the gender-transformative assessment made it possible to develop a plan to accelerate progress.

Strengthening gender-transformative programming to end harmful practices in Burkina Faso

A Gender-Transformative Accelerator (GTA) tool workshop was held in April 2022 with the active participation and engagement of technical staff from UNICEF (9), UNFPA (4), the Government (4) and CSOs (12 representing 6 organizations). Much of this workshop was reactivating the national coalition's activities and strengthening overall programming.

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The workshop focused on identifying opportunities for shared action among the coalition members. The GTA process is meant to incorporate gender-transformative elements into existing workplans, so key stakeholders were asked to identify crucial areas within their activities where gender-transformative approaches can have an immediate, and potentially amplified, impact. Participants underlined the need to consider the specific context of Burkina Faso which is marked by:

- political transition
- security and humanitarian crises
- COVID-19 and its lingering effects on the economy
- a looming food crisis due to low rainfall.

The National Strategy to End Child Marriage is also under review and will be updated in 2023.

Through participatory discussion, the workshop participants decided to focus on:

- girls' skills, agency and empowerment
- addressing masculinities and engaging men and boys
- community mobilization to create an enabling environment
- systems-strengthening.

Participants prioritized three types of actions to take:

- scale up safe spaces and adolescent girls' clubs
- policy advocacy and parliamentary engagement and systems-strengthening work
- social mobilization of communities, and the facilitation of more dialogue.

The programme supported the development of a policy brief on child marriage to guide the UNICEF country office in understanding trends and drivers for child marriage, and options to accelerate and scale up efforts to end the practice in different contexts. The brief also provides a way of analysing the country situation and identifying high-impact investment areas to end child marriage. The brief will be further used to facilitate a platform for south-south knowledge exchange on issues related to child marriage in West, central, eastern and southern Africa.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

There are few evaluations of child marriage interventions in Burkina Faso – and fewer still have costed the interventions and the costs per beneficiaries. UNFPA and UNICEF in Burkina Faso are producing detailed annual updates of programme achievements in the form of the annual reports and country profiles. These documents present the quantitative outputs and targets reached during 2022, as well as challenges and lessons based on programme implementation. However, these reports include very little monitoring of outcomes or evaluation of findings. Possible reasons for this include:

- gathering and analysing outcome and impact level data is expensive and requires a relatively high level of technical expertise
- the Global Programme has prioritized output monitoring, statistical analysis of Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) and multiple indicator cluster data, baseline studies and qualitative research on child marriage patterns and drivers
- the Global Programme has not yet invested adequate resources in measuring outcome-level results.

This limits the amount and depth of the programme's learning and its contributions to the country's evidence base related to child marriage programming.

ETHIOPIA

end child marriage
A voice. A chance. A future.
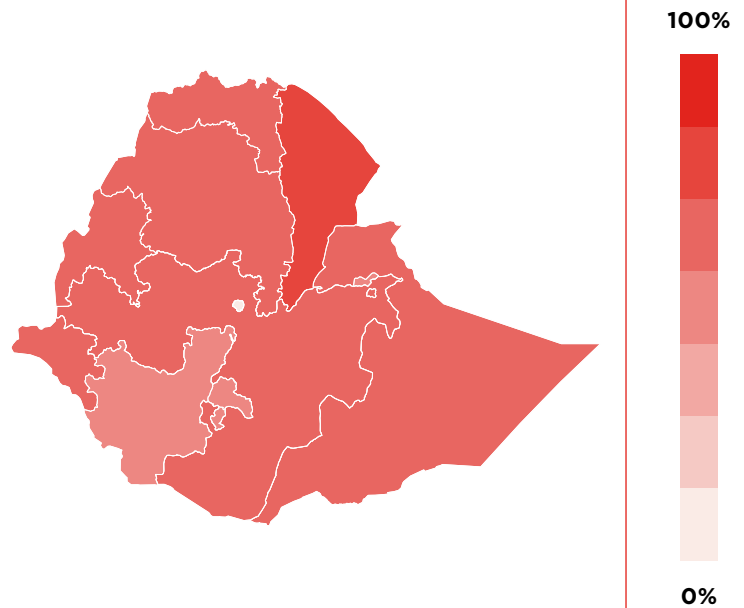
COUNTRY PROFILE
2022

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" I attended the forum and learned a lot about the dangers of child marriage and other harmful practices. I was unhappy with the marriage, but I had no real understanding of what the negative consequences were and what could be done to get myself out of the situation. My father was not happy as well. He married me off because the community elders insisted, so it was easier to convince him against the marriage using the information I gained at the forum. After I told my father what I had learned, he was extremely supportive. We reported the case to the Office of Women expert who supported us throughout the marriage cancellation process and encouraged me to re-enrol in school."

— Mafuza Jemal, 17, Grade 8 student, Haramaya, Oromia region

↘ ETHIOPIA

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 le gal 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

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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.

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Key highlights in 2022

145,415 **adolescent girls** (120,356 unmarried and 25,059 married) and **13,382 adolescent boys** benefited from life-skills **training**, sexual and reproductive health information and comprehensive sexuality education (CSE). Among the adolescent girls empowered, **409 have a disability**.

33,674 **adolescent girls** received support to **continue their education**, despite the repeated school closures due to the ongoing conflict and drought in some areas. **More than 3,000 girls received dignity kits**, containing menstrual hygiene supplies, which contribute to **improving girls' school attendance**.

10,557 **religious** and other **community leaders** were mobilized to champion **change towards ending child marriage** in their communities.

613,989 **individuals** (boys, girls, women and men) participated in **group dialogue sessions** on the consequences of, and alternatives to, child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls and gender equality to change social norms.

More than **2 MILLION individuals** (boys, girls, women and men) were **reached by mass and social media messaging** on child marriage and gender equality.

Nearly **1,300** **women's development groups and youth groups** were supported to conduct community surveillance **to identify child marriage arrangements**, negotiate with families and provide referrals for adolescent girls to protection and care services. As a result, **1,740 child marriage arrangements were cancelled** and **2,611 referred**.

Child marriage country context

There are 18.6 million child brides in Ethiopia, 8.1 million of whom were married before the age of 15. The prevalence of child marriage among girls stands at 40 per cent, a 30 per cent reduction since 1991, showing that, even in countries where the prevalence of child marriage is high, progress is possible. However, in order to meet the SDG target to end child marriage by 2030, progress would have to be greatly accelerated. If the rate of reduction remains at current levels, the prevalence will be 9 per cent by 2050; and if the rate of reduction is doubled the prevalence will be 2 per cent by 2050.

Overall programme performance

TABLE 1: *Summary of output indicator performance (2022)*

Providing intensive support to marginalized girls

The lingering effects of COVID-19, drought and the conflict in some regions have increased the vulnerability of adolescent girls and their families. Adolescent girls are at increased risk of teenage pregnancies, school dropout and child marriage in programme areas. Displacement due to the drought and conflict resulted in many families losing their household income and exposed school-going girls to child marriage, and to sex and child labour trafficking. The Global Programme, at the onset of the crisis, provided direct economic support to these girls and their families. To sustain this support, the Global Programme has successfully linked and leveraged support for girls and their families to the Government's Productive Safety

Indicator	Target	Result
Indicator 1111: Number of adolescent girls (aged 10–19) who actively participated in life-skills or CSE interventions in programme areas	108,926	145,415
Indicator 1121: Number of girls (aged 10–19) supported by the programme to enrol and/or remain in primary or secondary school	44,200	33,674
Indicator 1211: Number of boys and men actively participating in group education/ dialogues that address harmful masculinities and gender norms	36,788	72,435
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	740,090	613,989
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	3,063,000	2,180,428
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	1,986	10,557
Indicator 1231: Number of CSOs newly mobilized in support of challenging social norms and promoting gender equality by the Global Programme (cumulative)	41	31
Indicator 2121: Number of primary/secondary/non-formal schools in programme areas providing quality gender-friendly education that meets minimum standards	247	304
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	730	797
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)	2	2
Indicator 3121: Number of subnational plans with evidence informed interventions to address child marriage	8	11
Indicator 3211: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that focus on what works to end child marriage (cumulative)	8	6
Indicator 3212: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that apply a gender analysis (cumulative)	8	6
Indicator 3221: Number of south-to-south cooperation events (conferences, expert visits, peer consultations, study tours, communities of practice) supported	3	5

Net Programme (PSNP). The capacity of organizations such as community care coalitions and gender clubs have also been strengthened, through training, to mobilize community resources to support girls at risk of dropping out of school.

The Global Programme, in collaboration with its implementing partners, has institutionalized life-skills education through a training of trainers scheme in teachers' colleges. In 2022, 347 gender club representatives and school principals from 304 schools completed a certified master trainer's course in comprehensive life-skills that integrated knowledge on ending child marriage and FGM. In addition, a core team was established in teacher training colleges to undertake technical and monitoring activities in schools so that the life-skills education meets the set standards and to ensure facilitators are provided with on-the-spot technical guidance and support. Safe spaces were established for out-of-school adolescent girls in the community, based on age cohorts (10–14 years and 15–19 years). Overall, the programme reached 145,415 adolescent girls with comprehensive life-skills education which included 57,668 out-of-school girls and 87,747 girls from the 304 schools in the 29 woredas targeted by the programme. In order to build a movement of change-agents to end child marriage and gender inequality, the programme also targeted 13,382 adolescent boys within these communities with life-skills education and awareness-training on positive masculinities, power dynamics and gender equality.

A randomized baseline survey, backed by the Global Programme, of girls aged 10–14 years revealed that 53 per cent knew about the consequences of child marriage, with no differences between the intervention and control areas. Some 78 per cent of the girls agreed that girls should have the same opportunities in the community as boys, and with the idea that women should participate equally with their husbands in making household decisions. Fewer than half (45 per cent) were a little supportive of the use of intimate partner violence with no differences between intervention and control areas.

Using the multisectoral alternative learning programme known as 'Bete' (my home), UNICEF and its partners provided out-of-school adolescent girls and boys, especially those from low-income families, with education materials in safe spaces, so that they could learn numeracy and literacy skills to enhance their performance in school. Overall, 33,674 girls received support to enrol and stay in school. In addition, more than 3,000 girls received dignity kits which contribute to improving girls' school attendance.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

The conflict has delayed implementation of the programme in many of the target areas, particularly in the Tigray, Afar and Amhara regions. Due to insecurity, it was impossible to teach adolescent girls life-skills in some districts in Amhara and Afar.[2]

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2   Kobo, Debark Zuria, Argoba, Dehana, Artumafursi, Jilitumega, Wogidi, and Merhabtie districts in Amhara region and Dalol, Megale, Koneba, Erebti and Berhale in Afar.

8.1 MILLION married before age 15

18.6 MILLION married before age 18
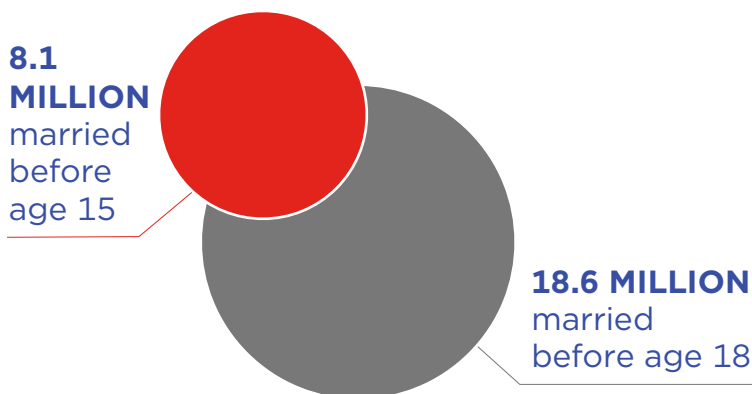
Ethiopia is home to over **18 million child brides**; **4 in 10** young women were married in childhood.

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

Families displaced in some woredas have lost their household incomes and have been unable to meet the basic needs of their school-going children. This has resulted in families and children requiring comprehensive support (including meeting their economic needs) beyond the Global Programme, through collaboration with other partners. UNICEF stopped the provision of direct economic support to school-going girls in the middle of the implementation period, leading to the programme facilitators designing a new way of leveraging support for them from the stakeholders of the Ethiopian PSNP.

Though the support, both material and financial, was limited, the girls used it as an opportunity to continue their education which shows its importance for them. Strengthening community structures, such as community care coalitions and gender clubs, is critical to further improving their ability to mobilize more resources and continue supporting girls and boys at risk of dropping out of school due to economic challenges.

The development of the out-of-school girls' (OOSGs) comprehensive empowerment manual was delayed, because the onset of COVID-19 hampered the formative assessment needed to guide the design in 2021. The layers of consultation needed with key actors to get clearance on the content, especially that related to sexual and reproductive health and sexuality also contributed to the delay.

During the development process, the programme continued adapting life-skills education to reach schoolgirls. Issues related to the different situations of OOSGs require an innovative and motivational approach for them to complete the training as they are often busy with household chores and some of them are also engaged in various income-generating activities. The roll out of the new manual will involve the Village Savings and Loan Associations in some groups for testing and it might be considered for scaling-up, based on the test results.

One of the lessons learned from the year is that the school's administrations and the community, via the parent-teacher association members, are important in enrolling and retaining adolescent girls in primary school. In 2023, there is a need for school administrations to continue collaborating with the committees established to combat harmful traditional practices and community surveillance mechanisms.

Gender club members and school management provide crucial support for adolescent girls and boys at risk of dropping out of school. They have been instrumental in identifying vulnerable individuals and giving them the self-confidence, through school-based psychosocial support, that has resulted in the adolescents continuing their education. Life-skills education has also contributed a lot to improving school attendance: absenteeism among trained adolescents is almost none.

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Enhancing the family and community environment

The quality of community conversations has been enhanced by the redesigning of the community conversation manual. The programme achieved this by working with traditional, religious and community leaders, with a focus on using conversations to build consensus.

The new manual takes a gender-transformative approach; it is relevant to different age groups and prepares participants to jointly envisage a model community and, ideally, successful adult marriages. It responds to adults' and adolescents' situations and facilitates sessions that enable intergenerational dialogue. These dialogues drive change in social and gender norms through encouraging people to reflect on the assumptions and beliefs which perpetuate child marriage, violence and gender inequality. They look at the consequences of child marriage as well as alternative behaviours, and facilitate consensus-building on collective action against child marriage.

This led to many community groups developing action plans and revising customary laws to end child marriage. Despite displacements due to internal conflict, 613,989 people in targeted communities were involved in these dialogues. During 2022, 72,435 men and boys were engaged in structured dialogues; there were discussions for only men and boys, and also for mixed groups. This has contributed to encouraging men and boys to take up their roles as champions in supporting girls at risk of marriage and those girls whose families are forced to accept marriage proposals. This approach was crucial in communities that have a highly patriarchal system and where the main decisions (at individual, communal and societal levels) affecting the lives of women and girls, such as marriage, are made by men. Marriage is the main destiny for girls, thus, changing their situation requires men and boys to change their attitudes.

A humanitarian toolkit, appropriate to emergency settings, has also been developed and translated into the four languages of the Amhara, Oromo, Afar and Somali regions. Training-of-trainers' toolkits have also been provided for 260 social workers across the target regions.

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Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

The previous lack of a standardized manual with a clear tracking tool and implementation guide had been a major challenge in this drive to use community conversations to build consensus; it led to trainers having to use references from other countries that were not adequately adapted to the local or regional contexts. The programme's development of a culturally sensitive manual and implementation guide specifically for adolescent boys and men in Ethiopia addressed this gap.

Conflict and drought has forced men and boys to spend time looking for water and pastures for their livestock, which has led to low attendance in some key programme interventions. To address this, some activities are being delivered at the watering points to reach men and boys, particularly in Afar, Somali, Oromia and the Southern Regions Nationalities and Peoples (SNNP) regions.

The security context in Ethiopia has delayed the finalization of the men's and boys' engagement intervention package and implementation guide as it is difficult to collect data from the programmatic-focused regions. The delayed data-collection hindered the completion of the formative assessment, which could provide vital information to inform the evidence-based development of the manual and the guidelines.

There were several additional challenges for the programme:

- Limited institutional capacity of faith-based organizations led to the delay in implementing some of the critical activities, including a knowledge, attitude and practice survey among religious leaders that UNICEF technically and financially supports.

- The Inter-religious Council of Ethiopia is composed of seven major denominations, and deliberating issues related to child marriage takes longer due to sensitivities, for example, around the age of marriage. Thus, to achieve consensus, thorough consultation and communication are required for the regional leaders and institutions.

Several lessons were learned.

- The critical importance of engaging men and boys is based on their role in the cancellation of child marriage arrangements, as noted by the programme and other national and regional stakeholders. A classic example is from the Amhara region, particularly the Oromo special zones, where a father rescued his 14-year-old daughter from marriage after being given by her mother to a man living in one of the Gulf countries. The bride price was even returned, and the marriage arrangement was cancelled. Despite the man attempting to abduct the girl, her father stood by her and supported her in continuing her education.

- It is crucial to have manuals and implementation guidelines focused on men and boys, to instil an effective process for changing social and gender norms. For the first time, the process of developing the manual and the implementation guide has been executed in a participatory and consultative manner, incorporating the opinions and wishes of men and boys in ending child marriage. These tailor-made tools for engagement will significantly change the quality of gender-transformative programmes (including CSE for boys) that promote healthy relationships, positive masculinities and gender equality and will encourage the scaling up of the intervention.

- Tracking progress has been addressed in the monitoring and evaluation section of the redesigned community conversation toolkits.

Strengthening systems

The national case management framework has been rolled out, under the leadership of the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs and the UNICEF child protection system strengthening team. Services have become more accessible, linked and increasingly managed by trained community workers. As a result, more than 18,673 girls received legal aid, psychosocial help, health services, and security (temporary safe shelters).

The Global Programme strengthened gender clubs in schools through training and the provision of gender-focused supplies, identified as a critical need. Vulnerable girls at risk of school dropout and, by extension, child marriage, who attended gender clubs in 304 schools were given capacity-building training on life-skills, and menstrual pads and educational materials.

- The Global Programme provided technical and material support for 116 health facilities. This included:

- training on adolescent- and youth-friendly service provision

- on-site technical support

- provision of supplies

- establishing and strengthening youth-friendly corners within health facilities

- strengthening referral links between schools, associations and facilities.

Some 243 front-line health workers (48 male and 195 female) have been trained on youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services to enable them to provide appropriate services to adolescent girls. In Gambella, Norwegian Church Aid (NCA)-SYNOD in collaboration with the regional health bureau, conducted comprehensive adolescent and youth-friendly reproductive health service training for 45 health care providers. The purpose of the training was to build their capacity and to establish youth-friendly reproductive health services within public health facilities. It will also help to increase access to, and utilization of, good quality reproductive health services, including the provision of age-appropriate information and services.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Implementing the programme has been interrupted in some districts, due to the conflict in northern Ethiopia, and the spillover of the war into the Amhara and Afar regions. This has particularly affected the capacity-building of schools and the provision of good quality, gender-responsive education for adolescent girls, including CSE related to child marriage. It is difficult to get data on this from woredas in some instances, as most of data-collection points and systems in these areas have been affected by the conflict.

The education sector does not have enough funding to cover all Global Programme target regions and woredas; as a result, the education component is being implemented in 29 selected districts against the 128 districts originally targeted.

In parts of Afar and Somali regions, some of the target schools have been closed due to drought. The guardians/parents of school-going children have moved out of their settlements in search of water and pasture or, if their livestock have been wiped out, to settle in sites for internally displaced people.

One of the lessons learned is that regional-based teachers' colleges are crucial in enabling teachers to provide good quality, gender-responsive education for adolescent girls, including CSE in school and non-school settings. Moreover, the teachers' colleges train all teachers during in-service and refresher training. It is vitally important for the programme to increase the colleges' ability to offer teachers' capacity-building initiatives and to encourage the sharing of experiences on the efforts to end child marriage, including during school cluster meetings.

In 2023, the programme will prioritize several interventions.

- It will implement the newly developed school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) community conversations at school level. The regional education bureau is waiting for the Ministry of Education to endorse this so that it can be adapted and implemented across the regions. This will familiarize all teachers, students and parents with procedures for reporting abuse and harassment at school.

- It will conduct capacity-building on technical competence on SRGBV to demonstrate gender-responsive classroom practices for teachers.

- It will establish a partnership with the teachers' colleges to support the training of community resource persons/facilitators in delivering the out-of-school girls' engagement manual.

Building partnerships
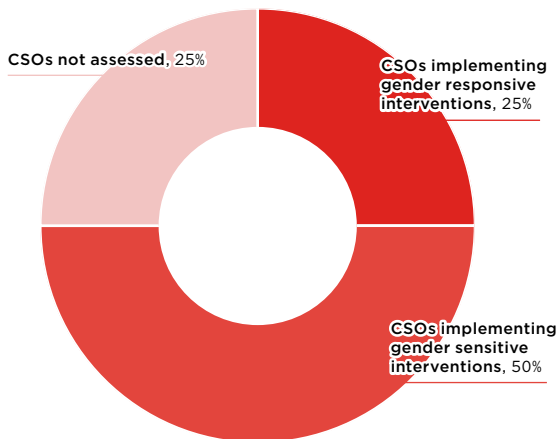
- The programme managed to mobilize 1,300 women's development groups, women's associations and youth groups to collaborate on ending child marriage and to promote gender equality in their communities. Key to this was:

- assessing their technical and financial support needs

- organizing different capacity-building trainings

- sharing information, education and communication materials

- supporting their outreach activities

- inviting them to be part of review meetings organized at different levels.

- These organizations identify child marriage arrangements and potential violence, negotiate with families to reject child marriage, and link girls and their families with essential services related to ending child marriage.

Investment in and support to youth-led, women-led and feminist CSOs

Partnerships are important for advancing gender-transformative programming and, recognizing this, in 2022, the Global Programme assessed the extent to which the CSOs were implementing gender-transformative approaches – based on the partners identified as focusing on promoting girls' and women's rights from the previous year (four in Ethiopia). The assessment aimed to guide UNFPA and UNICEF on how better to identify and support opportunities to advance gender-transformative approaches.

FIGURE 3: *Assessment of interventions of partner organizations in Ethiopia, on the gender equality continuum*

CSOs not assessed, 25%

CSOs implementing gender responsive interventions, 25%

CSOs implementing gender sensitive interventions, 50%

The assessment was conducted by building on information from online resources, including: the CSOs' websites, reviews of available annual reports, analysis of strategy documents, social media pages, descriptions and commentary about the CSOs from external parties (for example funders, coalitions, or networks), and news articles.

There is significant potential for Ethiopian CSOs to be gender-transformative. Substantively the organizations are carrying out important and effective work, including advocating for legislation and awareness around child marriage and FGM. For example, CARE, a CSO partner in Ethiopia, places women and girls at the centre of its humanitarian responses. The organization's programming is gender-responsive and intersectional. It has a gender equality and inclusion policy through which it commits to incorporating gender equality in all the work that it does, internally and externally. The organization also recognizes that gender is non-binary and adopts an inclusive approach to diversity in its programming. However, some CSOs ranked as gender-sensitive appear to lack a coherent understanding of gender-transformative approaches and fall short in terms of structural markers. There are some gaps in relation to how CSOs communicate their impact, illustrative of weaknesses with policy and strategy, learning and monitoring, and knowledge generation.

With support in terms of conducting gender training and analysis it is likely that the gender-sensitive organizations will become gender-transforming. Targeted support on policy development and guidance on monitoring and evaluation tools could greatly benefit these CSOs. Moreover, workshops on the value of a gender-transformative approach will likely improve understanding which, in the long term, will positively influence the organizations at structural and substantive levels.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Groups led by women and young people in Ethiopia are not registered and structured as CSOs. Although the groups are established and supported by the Government, the programme cannot directly fund them due to internal United Nations guidelines, rules and regulations on partnering with community-based organizations. Hence, the programme is planning to engage women's associations at the regional and woreda level by supporting partnerships between the Bureaux of Women and Social Affairs and women's associations which are legally registered and play critical roles in mobilizing communities as well as promoting gender equality.

However, the capacities of women-led and youth-led groups and organizations are weak. They require further investment to strengthen their technical and institutional level capacities so that they can achieve expectations set by the programme and other stakeholders.

One of the key lessons learned is that formal child protection structures generally collapse at the onset of emergencies caused by conflict or climate change events. It is important to work closely with community groups such as women-led and youth-led organizations which are usually part of the community and are available to help vulnerable girls at risk of child marriage when all other actors have limited presence.

- Positive results can be achieved by:
- supporting partners in redesigning manuals targeting women-led and youth-led organizations and groups to influence at scale their contribution to ending child marriage
- exploring available platforms for women-led and youth-led organizations so they can engage with similar groups in other countries and establish strategic partnerships.

Facilitating supportive laws and policies

The Global Programme supported the federal and regional governments and non-governmental partners to continue the implementation of the National Costed Road Map to End Child marriage and FGM 2020–2024. The programme's support includes building the capacity of governmental and non-governmental actors to lead, support, monitor and report on the implementation status of the map. These entailed organizing high-level advocacy initiatives with members of the standing committee of the national parliament and the regional councils to enable them to monitor and hold key sectors accountable in implementing the plan in line with the programme's mandate. In 2022, 210 parliamentarians and council members (109 female and 101 male) worked to support the efforts in rolling out the costed road map, including increasing domestic/federal exchequer funding for ending child marriage in Ethiopia.

In 2022, the Global Programme support was particularly instrumental in undertaking the revision process of the SRGBV code of conduct at national level and its contextualization by the regions/subnational states. The national code has now been finalized and Oromia, Somali and Sidama regions, among others, have drafted their regionally adapted versions ready to be endorsed by regional officials.

The Global Programme also supported the Gambella region Bureau of Women and Child Affairs and the Bureau of Justice in revising family law to consider

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the cultural contexts of communities, including the protection needs of women, children, and the family institution in general, from gender equality and human rights perspectives. This has been done by learning from a review of other regions' experiences, revisiting the existing evidence and technically and financially supporting consultations organized at different levels. Several contentious issues need to be addressed:

- dowry payments drive the child marriage of girls and result in degrading treatment for boys (even, in some cases, causing them to be beaten to death) when they fail to fulfil the payment
- the suggestion that the age of marriage for boys should be increased to 21 so that they are properly mature and economically fit to start families
- ways in which the law can support development of an accountability framework for regional officials including banning their involvement in child marriage.

The consultation among the experts and key stakeholders in the regions and at the federal level will continue until a consensus is reached.

The review and endorsement process of the family laws in Afar and Somali regions have not progressed due to resistance from community leaders and some officials. The main issues challenging the process include:

- the minimum age of marriage
- polygamy
- the rights of an adopted child
- irregular union
- determining paternity using DNA.

To address this, lawyers at federal level are exploring ways to persuade community leaders to accept minimum standards while respecting their opinions. These consultations will continue, and solutions are hoped for in the coming year.

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 a nd 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 4: *Policy maturity assessment for Ethiopia*
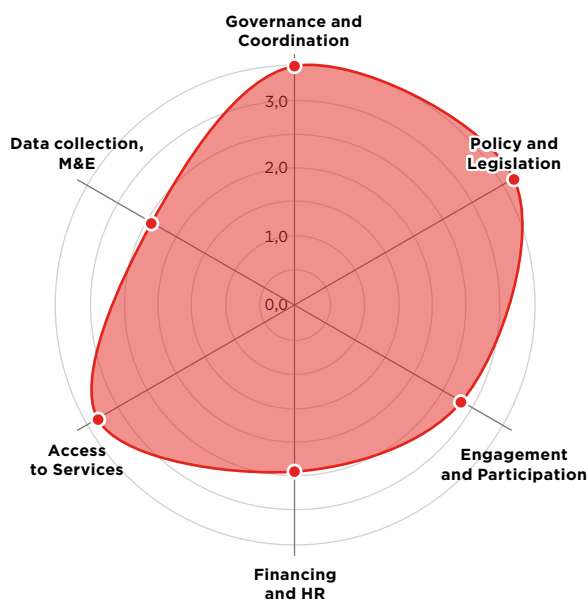
Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Finding disaggregated expenditure data is challenging both at the regional and subnational levels. This is because the Government allocates funding on overall blocks of budget rather than an itemized costing framework. Discussions with the programme and finance staff are under way to better estimate the proportion of budget allocations.

The humanitarian situation resulting from the drought has also shifted/reduced some budgets which had been earmarked to implement the multisectoral gender-transformative plan on ending child marriage. There is therefore a need to periodically track expenditure at federal and subnational levels to influence federal and regional priorities, despite the challenging humanitarian situation in the country.

- Key priorities in 2023 are:
- supporting the midterm review of the National Costed Road Map to End Child Marriage and FGM 2020–2024
- convening stocktaking exercises with key stakeholders, including development partners
- supporting the high-level federal ministerial visit of selected regions and convening budget-based advocacy meetings with the regional government officials.

Generating and applying data and evidence

In 2022, the Global Programme completed a formative assessment that informed the development of the National Out-Of-School Girl Empowerment Manual and the men and boys engagement curriculum and implementation guide. This assessment was carried out in six regions through a qualitative approach, including key informant interviews and focus group discussions. The manuals were validated at different levels, including by key ministries such as the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Education, and translated into five local languages (Somali, Oromo, Afar, Sidama and Amhara). The training of trainers has also been provided to 88 experts at regional and woreda level (61 male and 27 female) under the leadership of Ministry of Women and Social Affairs.

The first-year progress review of the National Costed Road Map to End Child Marriage and FGM was conducted by the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs and UNICEF at the federal level and in selected regions (SNNP and Somali). The review included expenditure tracking, an implementation assessment over the first year and the extent to which the yearly milestones set were met. The review revealed a promising trend in the allocation of funding both by the Government (federal and regional levels)

and non-governmental actors. Yet, the net value in supporting programme implementation had been limited by high inflation, which affected the Ethiopian economy. This has contributed to alerting the members of the National Alliance to End Child marriage and FGM to prioritize budgeting in their advocacy. In addition, programmatic field visits by the federal Minster and State Minister for the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs to selected states (Gambella, Sidama and SNNP regions) are planned to be part of the current rolling workplan with the ministry.

The social and behaviour change baseline survey initiated by UNICEF and UNFPA with John Hopkins University was completed and focuses on tracking the contribution of the programme to changing social and gender norms. The initial findings of the report have revealed that there are significant changes in knowledge and shifts in personal attitudes towards ending child marriage. Preparation for a follow-up midline survey is under way.

According to local government sources, between January and June 2021, compared with the same period in 2022, child marriage increased by an average of 131 per cent across some areas in regions which are worst hit by drought (Somali, Oromia and SNNP). This data, contained in an analysis supported by the Global Programme, has shaped national, regional, and global-level discussions and has been crucial in alerting partners to follow up on the issue; to introduce mitigation measures, raise awareness among key actors, including media and donors, and inform resource mobilization initiatives.

GHANA

end child marriage
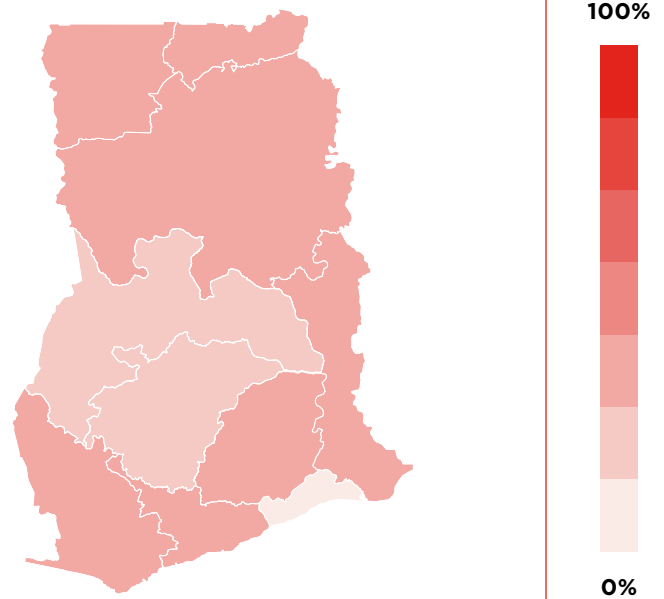A voice. A chance. A future.

COUNTRY PROFILE
2022

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" As religious leaders, we have an important role in protecting children, and I have learned a lot from this workshop to influence my members."

— *Pastor, Ashanti region*

GHANA

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 le gal status of any country or area or the delimitation of any frontiers.

100%

0%

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

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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)

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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.

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⊙ Key highlights in 2022

23,024 **adolescent girls** were reached with **life-skills training** or comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), including **15 girls with disabilities**, in 2022. Some **1,080 boys** were also engaged directly by the programme.

1,081 **adolescent girls**, who are among those most at risk of child marriage, **were provided with support to complete junior high school**, including funds to cover their school tuition, boarding fees and school materials.

590,900 **boys, girls, women and men** were engaged in **dialogues** on the consequences of, and **alternatives to, child marriage**, the **rights** of adolescent girls and **gender equality**.

8,881 **boys and young men** were engaged in **dialogues that address harmful masculinities** and gender norms.

4,216 local actors tradi-tional, religious and community lead-ers participated in **dialogues** and **consensus-building activities** to end child marriage.

Child marriage country context

Child marriage has declined over the last decades in Ghana, from about 40 per cent in the 1980s to 19 per cent in 2017/2018. Although this level is among the lowest in the West and Central Africa region, one in five young women are still married or in union before the age of 18. The prevalence of young women married or in union before the age of 15 has stalled at 5 per cent over the last 10 years, without any visible improvement. Overall, child marriage is more common among those who live in rural areas, in poor households and who have little or no education.

The high prevalence of adolescent pregnancy, mostly unplanned and unintended, remains a serious concern with 18 per cent of women aged 20–24 years having given birth before the age of 18. There is an unmet need for contraception, with 36 per cent of married girls, and 61 per cent of unmarried girls, aged 15–19 years having no access to it. Maternal mortality is one of the leading causes of death for adolescent girls in Ghana; contributing to 7.75 per cent of the maternal deaths of all ages. Early pregnancy is both a cause and a consequence of child marriage in Ghana; 2 in 10 adolescent pregnancies precede marriage.

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	40,302	23,024
Indicator 1121: Number of girls (aged 10–19) supported by the programme to enrol and/or remain in primary or secondary school	1,069	1,081
Indicator 1211: Number of boys and men actively participating in group education/dialogues that address harmful masculinities and gender norms	6,887	8,441
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	185,686	590,900
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	616,304	290,987
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	882	4,216
Indicator 1231: Number of CSOs newly mobilized in support of challenging social norms and promoting gender equality by the Global Programme (cumulative)	13	10
Indicator 2121: Number of primary/secondary/non-formal schools in programme areas providing quality gender-friendly education that meets minimum standards	17	7
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	516	690
Indicator 2211: Number of partnerships (both formal and informal) established to deliver adolescent-responsive social protection, poverty reduction and economic empowerment programmes and services	16	19
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)	2	2
Indicator 3121: Number of subnational plans with evidence informed interventions to address child marriage	35	35
Indicator 3211: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that focus on what works to end child marriage (cumulative)	5	5
Indicator 3212: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that apply a gender analysis (cumulative)	4	5
Indicator 3221: Number of south-to-south cooperation events (conferences, expert visits, peer consultations, study tours, communities of practice) supported	0	2

Providing intensive support to marginalized girls

The Global Programme in Ghana is implemented through the joint UNFPA-UNICEF Promoting Adolescent Safe Spaces (PASS) programme, and other safe spaces initiatives, such as SISTAs Clubs and Orange Girls Networks. These, in partnership with the Government and multiple CSOs, continued to create and expand opportunities to help empower vulnerable adolescent girls. A total of 23,024 adolescent girls between the ages of 10–19 years in 12 regions were reached with structured training to help them make informed decisions on matters affecting them, such as:

- child marriage
- adolescent pregnancies
- sexual and reproductive health
- sexual gender-based violence.

The programme introduced the Sister-Sister safe space sessions into the PASS programme in 2022. These sessions were led by the 2019–2021 cohort of 280 girls aged 19 years and above who graduated from the safe space programme. The graduates are equipped with skills to facilitate peer-to-peer dialogue sessions and they share information on reproductive health and rights in the communities. These young women have become key influencers, mentors and role models for the younger girls enrolled in the programme

and demonstrate increased ownership and leadership of adolescent girls in their own spaces.

Adolescents, parents, community leaders and district stakeholders see the formation of the 'Am-A-Girl' and 'Am-4-Girls' groups and adolescent safe corners, and their associated activities, as very beneficial. An evaluation of the PASS programme in 2022 shows that girls have learned a lot, including:

- developing the confidence to express themselves
- socializing with the opposite sex
- being responsible at home
- understanding their sexuality
- protecting themselves against sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancies
- standing up for their rights.

Nearly 80 per cent of the adolescent girls indicated that they were either able to express their opinions a lot of the time or quite a lot, and 83 per cent indicated their ability to speak up without fear a lot of the time. Most adolescent girls interviewed had easy access to reproductive health services within their communities, while more than 81 per cent had received education on various topics related to reproductive health, including menstruation. While 61 per cent of the girls said they would refuse to be married below the age of 18, even if it were proposed by their parents, nearly a fifth of the girls were confident enough to delay marriage.

719,200 married before age 15

2.6 MILLION married before age 18
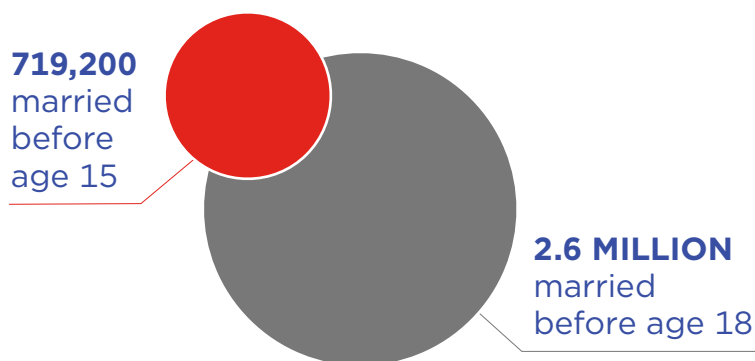
Ghana is home to over **2 million child brides**; **1 in 5** young women were married in childhood.

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

" One day, a non-governmental organization called NORSAAC (Northern Sector Action on Awareness Centre) had a meeting in our community and all the children attended. When Salmu was asked a question and she could not answer, she began to cry. The local NGO staff facilitating the meeting came home with my daughter. Ever since that day, various partners have collaborated to ensure that my daughter enjoys her right to education and to a better future."

— *Alhassan Fuseini, Salmu's father*

The programme has continued to target the most vulnerable adolescent girls and supported them to enrol and remain in school, including Salmu Alhassan – a girl with a hearing impairment. Salmu is among a cohort of 1,000 adolescent girls who continue to receive intensive support to attend and complete junior high school; support funded by the Global Programme in partnership with the Ghana Education Service. In 2022, another 81 of the most marginalized adolescent

girls, including adolescent mothers and those who experienced child marriage, were supported by the programme to enrol in formal and non-formal educational and vocational training institutions.

Most of the adolescent girls among the cohort who receive educational support completed training at the SISTA's clubs or another safe space supported by the Global Programme. Once selected, they went through a comprehensive process to prepare for enrolment in formal education.

" The bursary support supported my learning greatly. Through this support, I had my own textbooks with which I could read, prepare for class and make references at my own convenience. Again, the courtesy for boys and girls book I received has made me confident and helped me to know how I should manage myself among people and in public - I have become a lady indeed!"

— *Feruzah, student at Cathedral Junior High School*

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

The lingering effects of COVID-19, climate change and the Sahel crisis that has spilled over into Ghana have increased the vulnerabilities of adolescent girls and their families. With the influx of migrants from the Sahel region and the anticipated challenges for both host community members and migrant families, adolescent girls in five regions (Greater Accra, Ashanti, Bono-East, Upper-East and Northeast) affected by the Sahel crisis have experienced a lack of opportunities, especially in vocational training. In rural communities there have also been reports of adolescent girls being sexually abused, which is contributing to increases in teenage pregnancies and school dropouts, with some girls fleeing their communities to work in urban areas as marketplace porters ('kayayei').

Continuous engagements through safe spaces for girls and boys have provided an opportunity for adolescents to deepen conversations on matters that affect them and find lasting solutions. For instance, providing platforms for adolescents to express themselves in a non-judgmental environment gives them the confidence to make informed decisions about topics such as their relationships, childbearing and education.

The programme will continue to support the Government in implementing the Safe Schools Initiative, which is aimed at ensuring children and adolescents are protected from sexual violence in and around schools, and at providing gender-responsive pedagogical training for junior high school teachers in science, mathematics, English and social studies.

During a gender-transformative assessment workshop run by the Global Programme, the Government and civil society partners identified actions to make education systems more adolescent girl-friendly and gender-responsive. Data from the Education Information Management System and the District Health Information Management System have indicated that most adolescent girls who received antenatal care at health facilities did not go back to school after having their babies. To address this, it was agreed during the workshop to further strengthen referral pathways, especially between health and education sectors, and to develop interoperability among relevant information management systems.

The programme recognizes the vulnerability of adolescent girls in migrant communities, and will continue to link them to economic opportunities;

increasing their engagement in vocational training, especially for non-traditional skills (such as carpentry and driving). Furthermore, the programme will spend more on providing scholarships and educational bursary packages that include school fees, uniforms and sanitary pads, especially for the most marginalized girls who are pregnant, mothers, married or widowed, enabling them to go back to school or receive vocational training.

Enhancing the family and community environment

> "I had no idea cooking was an interesting task even for a male: I have learned how to build a fire and fry yam during the implementation of the PASS Project. As a young boy, I feel useful to my mother, which makes me proud of myself. Together with my brother I helped my mother early in the morning to build a fire and sell a few pieces of yam before leaving for school. My dream is to become a chef and I intend on making my dream come true."
>
> — *Saeed, 13, student in Nyankpala D/A primary school and participant in the PASS project*

The Global Programme continued to partner with the Government and CSOs to target more communities and individuals with social and behaviour change interventions that address child marriage, adolescent pregnancies and gender inequality. UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) continued to support the use of standard tools, such as the Child Protection Community Facilitation Toolkits and the Child Marriage Advocacy Toolkit, aimed at triggering social and behaviour change. The agencies organized the structured engagements of adolescent boys and men via safe spaces and, in some areas, they complemented this by using community information centres and radio stations to disseminate key messages.

Overall, the programme engaged 590,900 people in 35 districts through community dialogues on a range of issues that promote a safe and protective environment for adolescent girls, including positive attitudes and practices aimed at addressing child marriage. The Global Programme also contributed to the scaling-up of community engagement interventions through the rollout of the Child

Protection Community Facilitation Toolkits, training 352 community facilitators and regional level government officers (156 female and 196 male) in 60 new districts, bringing the total number to 160 districts that support the crucial components of the Integrated Social Service (ISS) programme. The Global Programme, by training the community facilitators, contributed towards the engagement of, and dialogues with, an additional 1,097,378 people through sessions supported through complementary funding.

> **❝** My name is Busah Noah, and I am a student of Mafi Dugame D/A [Junior High School, JHS] in the central Tongu District. I am in JHS 3 and 18 years old. I was one of the beneficiaries of the 2021 adolescent mentorship and empowerment programme that was held in Ho [a city in Ghana]. The programme was very educational and has changed my lifestyle. Before I was selected to be part of the mentorship camp, I did not know that touching girls on their buttocks was bad. My friends and I used to hang out at night and chase after girls in the neighbourhood, because it was a trending behaviour. After the camp, I stopped such behaviour. I took up the challenge to contest for the position as school prefect and won. This experience changed my life. I had to do away with all my friends and walk with new ones to be a good example to my peers. During the 'Social Leaders Future Club' on Fridays, I share with my mates lessons taught at the camp."

The engagement of men and boys is a critical component of the Global Programme and has proven to be effective in promoting the protection of adolescent girls in Ghana. UNICEF, in partnership with NORSAAC, mobilized adolescent boys to form 'I am for Girls Groups'. These are safe spaces to support boys in leading intergenerational dialogues with men in their communities. Addressing harmful and discriminatory social norms against women and girls is also carried out via radio discussions. Men from Model Gendered Households, including the male mentors, were also engaged on combating harmful gender norms and related topics. UNFPA, in partnership with International Needs Ghana (INGH) engaged men and boys through the PASS programme to address harmful masculinities and gender norms

and enhanced their capacity to become Champions of Gender Equality and Advocates against Child Marriage and SGBV. Overall, 3,980 boys and 4,461 men were engaged in gender-transformative programmes that promote healthy relationships, positive masculinities and gender equality.

The programme in Ghana uses traditional and social media channels to scale up messaging on child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls, and gender equality. However, the weekly episodes of the Girlz-Girlz television talk show, which draws big viewing figures, was temporarily suspended in 2022 and rescheduled for 2023 by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection. Instead, the Global Programme used other channels like the Ghanaians Against Child Abuse social media platforms. In 2022, 290,987 individuals were reached by traditional and social media with messages on child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls and gender equality.

The Global Programme further engaged 4,216 traditional and religious actors, leading to them committing to use their platforms to educate their members and followers on child marriage as well as to develop and implement local by-laws to end child marriage and related protection issues in their communities.

> **❝** To tell you the truth, I had no idea I could help my wife take care of the children. [But] my wife and I sat and talked about issues affecting our home. My wife is a seamstress and I help her take care of our last child when she is busy. This has reduced the burden on my wife, and even my son can light a fire for my wife to come and cook for the family."
>
> *— Rahaman is part of the Gender Model Family of the PASS Programme together with his wife Lamnatu*

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Working with adolescent boys and parents/caregivers in addressing child marriage, adolescent pregnancies and other protection issues affecting girls, has yielded results, particularly in addressing the social and gender norms that perpetuate gender inequalities and associated violence and abuse. For example, intergenerational conversations between adolescents and their caregivers were helpful in delving into uncomfortable conversations

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Strengthening systems

Child protection, education, and health systems, including information management were strengthened for effective and efficient delivery of results for adolescent girls through support for the training of service providers and the roll out of national tools that included the Intersectoral Standard Operating Procedures for Child Protection and Family Welfare, Case Management SOPs for Children in Need of Care and Protection, the Child Protection Community Facilitation Toolkits, and the standards and guidelines for engaging young people in health services.

In 2022, UNICEF collaborated with the Ghana Education Service, through the Science Education Division and the Girls' Education Unit, to strengthen the capacities of 181,660 teachers in 10 districts and 60 District Teacher Support Teams' members, including District Science Coordinators, School Improvement Support Officers and other schedule officers who provide monitoring, supervision, coaching and mentoring support to teachers and other school staff in their respective districts.

within households to promote positive parenting and good communication as well as challenging discriminatory gender norms and cultural practices harmful to the development of adolescent girls.

Entrenched cultural beliefs and norms and resistance towards change continue to be a challenge, and changing beliefs and attitudes require constant awareness-raising and education over a prolonged period. Although the engagement of men and boys was prioritized in 2022, the programme lacks specific content and toolkits to guide facilitators on how to navigate such conversations aimed at promoting positive masculinities and changing toxic narratives that perpetuate gender inequality and violence against women and girls. Development of such tools is a priority.

Data-collection on community engagements has been strengthened with the design and roll out of the child protection mobile application toolkit developed by the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies through the integrated social services initiative. However, dedicated time and capacity are needed to support tracking, follow-up and reporting.

The programme realized the importance of continuous engagement with identifiable groups in targeted communities, including traditional and religious groups. This provides support for initiatives which build on community structures to ensure sustainability.

A total of 2,095 decentralized social service workers received ISS training, including virtual orientation, virtual one-week training and in-person coaching sessions, while the capacity of 207 service providers across 10 regions was strengthened for the provision of coordinated SGBV response services as part the roll out of the Minimum Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence.

UNICEF, through the Global Programme, continued to provide technical and financial support to the Ghana Health Service in implementing the 'Safety Net' programme. This reached about 18,425 pregnant girls and adolescent mothers (350 of them aged 10–14 years and 18,075 aged 15–19 years) with gender- and age-responsive prevention and care services, including maternal and newborn health care and services addressing SGBV. Some 49,725 adolescent girls (978 aged 10–14 years and 48,747 aged 15–19) were provided with preventive and response services including reproductive, maternal, newborn and postnatal counselling in four targeted regions. The safety net programme was scaled up to an additional 394 health facilities across 44 districts in the four regions to provide gender-responsive sexual and reproductive health services to adolescents and young people. Some 287 service providers (87 males and 200 females) were trained to deliver adolescent-friendly and youth-friendly health services, including a social safety net, with 330 service providers (164 males and 166 females) being trained on the

safety net electronic register (e-tracker) for effective data capture and utilization. As part of the efforts to improve access to sexual and reproductive health services through advocacy and information-sharing across all four implementing regions,146 adolescents (32 males and 114 females) were trained as champions/peer support persons. Peer review meetings were also organized at the subnational level to review the progress of implementation, and to share lessons learned and best practices.

UNFPA, through the Global Programme, supported the Ghana Health Service to enhance the capacity of service providers to improve the provision of adolescent-friendly and youth-friendly health services. The programme supported the Adolescent Health and Development programme to roll out standards and guidelines for engaging young people in health services, in addition to enhancing the capacity of service providers on e-lessons developed for online facilitators on adolescent contraception, and updating models of the Adolescent Health Manual. The Adolescent Health and Development programme uses a hybrid strategy to train health service providers. A total of 28 service providers were trained as trainers to support online training and 1,507 service providers have registered for the course, out of which 482 have completed it. In addition, the capacity of 24 young people

was enhanced as lay counsellors (to complement the 10 nurses certified as cybercounsellors) to serve as peer facilitators/mentors to provide sexual and reproductive health (SRH) counselling services. A total of 4,074 adolescents (3,133 girls and 941 boys) were provided with adolescent-friendly and gender-responsive health services through the Adolescent Health Development programme.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

To work towards a more cost-efficient training approach, UNICEF also proposed a hybrid training method for the social service workforce, including virtual orientations on Integrated Social Services (ISS) and Social Welfare Information Management Systems. Government counterparts were initially resistant to this approach, which resulted in considerable delays. However, following advocacy and technical meetings, the Government ministries agreed to proceed, as it was found to be more cost-effective with the potential for scale-up.

Inadequate funding in the health sector to support home visits and outreach services by community health nurses has hampered the delivery of services to those who cannot access facilities. More support is required for health care professionals

to increase the reach and scale of community outreach services, in communities and schools, for adolescent girls at risk of child marriage and adolescent pregnancy, including contraceptives.

As part of the Adolescent Health and Development programme, 10 health service providers across the 16 regions of Ghana have been trained and certified by the Ghana Psychological Council to practice as cybercounsellors. These counsellors provide youth-friendly online counselling to adolescents across the country and provide referral services. However, currently, there is an inadequate number of cybercounsellors to meet the growing number of adolescent clients.

Although adolescents are becoming increasingly aware of their right to good quality health services and to demand for these services, there is still a need to address sociocultural barriers to SRH programming and service delivery to adolescent girls. The programme intends to refocus mainstreaming gender issues in service delivery and creating more outreach points to improve access to SRH services.

Strengthening systems' resilience and shock responsiveness is more important than ever, due to the economic deterioration and the Sahel crisis in the region. This can be done by building on the lessons learned from the response to COVID-19. UNICEF developed an internal child protection emergency preparedness plan for the Sahel crisis, to effectively support the Government and relevant partners to improve emergency preparedness.

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Building partnerships

The Global Programme in Ghana continued to partner with state and non-state actors across all sectors to address challenges and risks facing migrant girls in five regions (Greater Accra, Ashanti, Bono-East, Upper-East and Northeast) to equip them with adequate information and support and reduce their vulnerability to teenage pregnancies, SGBV and harmful practices including child marriage. The integrated model uses a multidimensional approach to engage the marginalized girls and enhances their knowledge on SGBV and SRH and to build legal literacy and entrepreneurial skills.

The interventions have greatly transformed the lives of these marginalized adolescent girls, mainly kayayei and adolescent mothers. The programme reached 7,362 girls in 2022; of these 2,232 were trained

in sewing, cosmetics, root and tuber processing, confectionery, leather works and batik tie and dye and have been introduced to cooperatives to run businesses to support their livelihoods. Enterprise Development Centres continued to also be a safe space for adolescent girls to access SRH and SGBV services in addition to livelihood training.

Investment in and support to youth-led, women-led and feminist CSOs

Partnerships are important for advancing gender-transformative programming and, recognizing this, in 2022, the Global Programme assessed the extent to which the CSOs were implementing gender-transformative approaches – based on the partners identified as focusing on promoting girls' and women's rights from the previous year (five in Ghana). The assessment aimed to guide UNFPA and UNICEF on how better to identify and support opportunities to advance gender-transformative approaches within the Global Programme.

CSOs implementing gender sensitive interventions, 40%

CSOs implementing gender responsive interventions, 60%
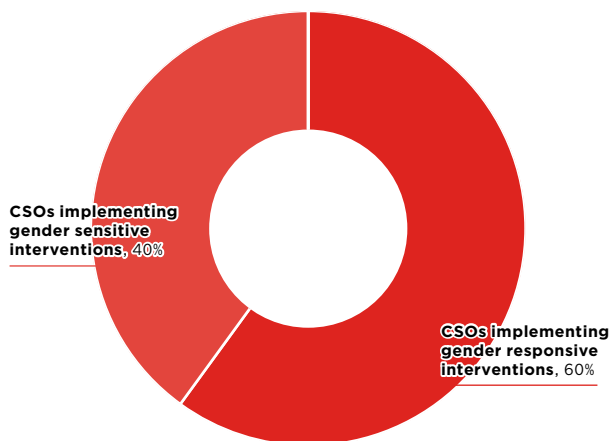
The assessment was conducted by building on information from various online resources, including the CSOs' websites, reviews of available annual reports, analysis of strategy documents, social media pages, descriptions and commentary about the CSOs from external parties (for example funders, coalitions, or networks), and news articles.

The programme in Ghana has a decent spread of gender-responsive organizations, and those that are ranked as gender-sensitive require only minor changes. Gender-responsive organizations adopt a gender-sensitive and rights-based approach in their access throughout their work and have sought to address gender inequalities in their work and within their organizational structures. NORSAAC, whose aim is to mobilize young people to discuss and find ways of addressing sexual and reproductive health issues in schools, has indicated that it has zero tolerance for abuse and exploitation of its staff, partners and associates and commits to preventing circumstances that may negatively affect well-being. A core part of the organization's vision and mission is to create a healthy and empowered society for everyone by working with networks of women, youth, children and excluded groups to strengthen their agency.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Gender-sensitive organizations are struggling at the structural level. For example, women are absent when it comes to strategic decision-making processes. It is important that organizations reflect on their internal

gender dynamics to make a meaningful impact in their surrounding communities. All organizations currently ranked gender-sensitive can likely become gender-transformative through gender training and analysis. Targeted support on policy development and strategic development, as well as some guidance on monitoring and evaluation tools, are recommended. Similarly, workshops on the value of a gender-transformative approach will likely improve the organizations' rankings as a more nuanced understanding of gender-transformative approaches would be infused into their work.

Facilitating supportive laws and policies

In 2022, UNFPA and UNICEF Ghana continued to provide financial, technical and coordination support for ministries, departments and agencies at national and subnational levels with a mandate to implement specific laws and policies. The National Operational, Monitoring and Evaluation Plan has been reviewed, updated for 2023–2024 and validated. The Domestic Violence Secretariat (under the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection), is the Chair of the National Coordination Function on Ending Child Marriage. It has overseen a gender-transformative assessment and a maturity assessment of policies on harmful practices, to make the plan more gender-transformative and ensure the alignment with global standards. The Gender-Transformative Accelerator (GTA) tool workshop was held to strengthen national capacity and identified key actions by the Global Programme, Government and NGOs at national and subnational levels. With these combined efforts, a two-year GTA plan has been developed, including action points, which was incorporated into the National Operational and M&E Plan 2023–2024. One indicator to assess how mature systems are to respond to the needs of adolescent girls has been incorporated into the plan, whose progress will be assessed by the maturity model.

The Global Programme in Ghana supported the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection in organizing stakeholder meetings every six months to track the implementation of the Adolescent Pregnancy Strategy 2018–2022. The meetings highlighted progress in some areas as well as major gaps and challenges that require increased attention due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The meetings also provided a platform for stakeholders to share ideas on successful approaches that can be replicated.

The Global Programme in Ghana supported the quarterly Domestic Violence Management Board meetings. These meetings brought together members to identify and discuss current issues of domestic and sexual and gender-based violence in Ghana, issues pertaining to the Domestic Violence Victim Support Fund and current cases at the Orange Support Centre. These meetings contributed to the release of GHS1.5 million (US$134,000) into the Domestic Violence Fund from the Ministry of Finance. Additionally, a fundraising committee was formed to mobilize additional funds into the Domestic Violence Victim Support Fund.

In 2022, the Global Programme directly supported 35 districts and, with other partners, a total of 160 districts, for the delivery of integrated social services to vulnerable children, adolescents and their families, including adolescent girls at risk of, or affected by, child marriage. Through financial and technical support to the National Development Planning Commission, all 160 districts were supported to integrate SDG target 5.3 and its related indicators into their medium-term development plans which informed the development of their annual action plans. This has put indicators on child marriage at the centre of these districts' annual progress reports. It made it mandatory for these districts to incorporate interventions, such as the ISS programme, to address child marriage in their annual action plans.

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.

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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)*.
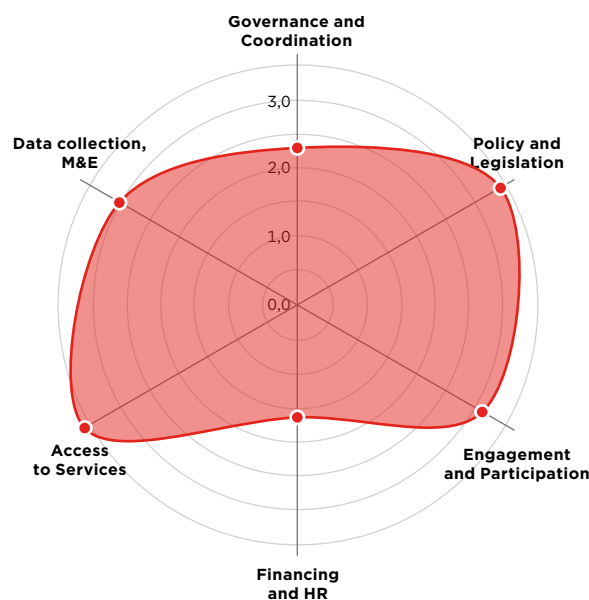
TABLE 2: *Snippet of the policy maturity model*

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 4: *Policy maturity assessment for Ghana*

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

The Ministry of Finance committed to allocating three per cent of its recurrent budget to ending child marriage coordination functions in 2021 – a commitment which has not been allocated in the budget. There is, therefore, need to better understand the current situation regarding the budget allocation of three per cent of its recurrent budget for the National Coordination Function for Ending Child Marriage as well as to identify specific barriers that hinder the actual allocation to the Domestic Violence Secretariat who coordinates the function.

The National Strategic Framework on Ending Child Marriage 2017–2026 included a costing framework for 2017–2018, however, it has never been updated. The framework could be updated

in line with the National Strategic Framework to identify any financial gaps to achieve the overall targets up to 2026.

The Government allocated part of its budget to the Domestic Violence Fund to support survivors of SGBV and child marriage. However, 2022 was the first time the money had been released. Nevertheless, disbursement remains a challenge. Service providers in the field are consulted less on budget issues. Joint advocacy efforts are required to ensure the fund actually benefits the survivors.

Insufficient national capacity, especially for the Domestic Violence Secretariat, remains a challenge when monitoring and tracking the progress of the National Strategic Framework. The Child Marriage Information Portal, managed by the secretariat, can be improved by integrating the dashboard to track and monitor the progress of the framework in line with the existing reporting format in the Operational M&E Plan.

Generating and applying data and evidence

The Global Programme in Ghana invested significantly in increasing national capacity to generate new knowledge and evidence regarding the challenges faced by adolescent girls in Ghana, including child marriage. It was intended to enable evidence-based advocacy for enhanced legal and political response to effectively support those who are at risk of, and affected by, child marriage.

The study on the impacts of COVID-19 on adolescent girls was completed by UNICEF in 2022 and is being edited and designed for publication in 2023. The study's findings highlight the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and school closures on adolescent girls, including heightened risks of child marriage and unintended pregnancy, as well as restricted access to, and utilization of, services such as adolescent sexual and reproductive health services.

UNICEF is conducting a study on the causes of sexual violence in partnership with the University of Edinburgh and the Research, Statistics and Information Management Department under the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection. Preliminary findings have indicated that young women in Ghana who were married under the age of 15 are 9 times more likely to have experienced sexual intimate partner violence (IPV) in the past year, compared with women who were not married that young – the strongest link between child marriage and sexual IPV in countries with comparable data in Africa. The strong link between being married as a child and experiencing sexual IPV during young adulthood also holds true for women who wed between the ages of 15 and 17 years – with women in Ghana being at greatest risk among African countries with comparable data.

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The UNICEF Ghana Child Protection team is conducting a study on social protection and child marriage in collaboration with the UNICEF Ghana Social Policy and Inclusion team, with financial and technical support from the UNICEF West and Central Africa Regional Office. A gender analysis of social and behaviour change programming for ending child marriage is also being conducted by UNFPA and UNICEF in collaboration with the Strategic Technical Assistance for Research (STAR) initiative.

UNFPA has partnered with the University of Cape Coast to conduct a study on cohabitation in the central region where there are a high number of adolescent pregnancies. Cohabitation has existed side by side with the institution of marriage for generations, as it has traditionally been regarded as a preparatory step towards marriage. Anecdotal evidence suggests a rise in cohabitation among students at tertiary institutions, including the University of Cape Coast (UCC), and among minors in communities with a high incidence of adolescent pregnancies (Coastal Regions of Ghana) who are not necessarily cohabiting in preparation for marriage. There is evidence that these relationships can lead to gender-based violence (GBV), child marriage, adolescent pregnancy, a drop in school participation, and mental health problems. There is, however, little known about the social dynamics and depth of cohabitation, or the support required by cohabitants in times of need. UNFPA has supported the university's Centre for Gender Research, Advocacy and Documentation and the College of Humanities and Legal Studies to conduct a study of cohabitation among students and young people from the Global Programme's target communities in central Ghana to inform policy and programming.

Lastly, the programme supported the analysis of the programmatic approaches related to gender-transformative change using the Gender-Transformative Accelerator tool. In addition to analysing the level of ownership of strategies and their contributions to accelerate change, the gender-transformative assessment made it possible to develop a road map to accelerate progress.

Strengthening gender-transformative programming to address harmful practices in Ghana

A gender-transformative accelerator (GTA) workshop was held in September 2022, attended by the Honourable Lariba Zuweira Abudu, Minister

Designate for the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, with the active participation and engagement of technical staff from UNICEF, UNFPA, Government and CSOs. A big part of the workshop was reactivating the activities of the coalition to end child marriage in Ghana and to strengthen programming capacity.

The workshop focused on identifying opportunities for shared action among the coalition members. The GTA process aims to incorporate gender-transformative elements into existing workplans, so the gender advocates and other key stakeholders were asked to identify crucial areas within their existing workplan where gender-transformative approaches can have both an immediate, and potentially amplified, impact. Around 30 Government and NGO partners across sectors and levels participated and discussed how Ghana can further integrate GTA into programming in the three key priority areas:

- adolescent girls' agency, skills and empowerment
- engagement of men and boys
- adolescent girl-responsive service systems.

Participants prioritized three types of actions to move ahead within these areas of focus:

- scale up adolescent girls' skills, agency and empowerment
- address masculinities and engaging boys and men
- policy and structural change through institutional partnerships and systems-strengthening, facilitate more conversations.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

UNFPA and UNICEF, in partnership with the other United Nations agencies and development partners, have been providing technical and financial support to the Ghana Statistical Service to conduct the Demographic Health Survey in 2022. It will help better strategize the programmatic approach to ending child marriage, including for the Global Programme Phase III. However, within the Global Programme, one of the major challenges is the lack of funds to generate data and evidence demonstrating the changes the programme has made.

INDIA

end
child
marriage
A voice. A chance. A future.

COUNTRY PROFILE
2022

Belgium partner in development   Canada   Co-funded by the European Union   Government of the Netherlands   Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation   Norad   UKaid from the British people   ZONTA INTERNATIONAL EMPOWERING WOMEN   UNFPA   unicef for every child
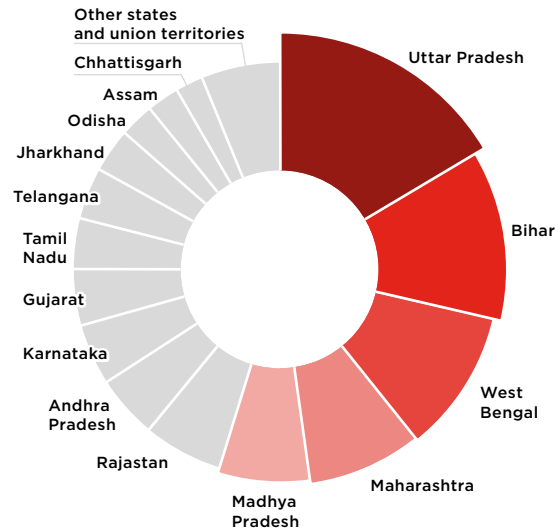
↘ INDIA

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

Five states account for **over half of the girls and women** in India who married in childhood: **Uttar Pradesh**, **Bihar**, **West Bengal**, **Maharashtra** and **Madhya Pradesh**.

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

Other states and union territories
Chhattisgarh
Assam
Odisha
Jharkhand
Telangana
Tamil Nadu
Gujarat
Karnataka
Andhra Pradesh
Rajastan
Madhya Pradesh
Maharashtra
West Bengal
Bihar
Uttar Pradesh

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

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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)

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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.

Key highlights in 2022

Nearly **6 MILLION** **girls** actively participated in **life-skills and comprehensive sexuality education** (CSE) interventions.

More than **84,000 adolescent girls** at risk of child marriage were supported to **enrol and/or remain in school** through the programme's intensive outreach **mobilization of out-of-school adolescents**.

Nearly **80 MILLION** **community members** have been equipped with **information** and galvanized **to act against child marriage** and promote adolescent empowerment.

More than **3.7 MILLION** **boys and men** were engaged in **dialogues** that address harmful masculinities and **promote positive gender norms**.

476 service delivery points were strengthened to provide rights-based **adolescent-friendly health services** (including sexual and repro-ductive health), **1,200 medical officers** were trained to provide adoles-cent-friendly health services and **317 policewomen** were **trained on child rights** and child protection, including information on addressing child marriage.

384 new partnerships (287 formal and 97 informal) were estab-lished to **deliver adolescent-respon-sive social protection**, and poverty reduction and economic **empower-ment programmes** and services.

181 district action plans to end child marriage are approved for implementation in 10 states.

Child marriage country context

Nearly one in four young women (23 per cent) in India were married or in union before their eighteenth birthday. Child marriage is becoming less common, but the country still accounts for one in three of the world's child brides, due to its population size. The prevalence of child marriage varies across states and union territories in India. At least 40 per cent of young women were married before turning 18 in West Bengal, Bihar and Tripura, compared to 1 per cent in Lakshadweep. Girls who live in rural areas or come from poorer households are at greater risk of getting married in childhood, and a higher proportion of child brides are found among those with little or no education.

Overall programme performance

TABLE 1: *Summary of output indicator performance (2022)*

Providing intensive support to marginalized girls

Overall, more than 5.6 million adolescent girls were reached by UNFPA and UNICEF in 2022 with comprehensive programmes on life-skills, gender and child protection. The increase in uptake of life-skills education, compared to previous years, is attributed to the schools reopening after COVID-19 restrictions

Indicator	Target	Result
Indicator 1111: Number of adolescent girls (aged 10–19) who actively participated in life-skills or CSE interventions in programme areas	4,746,395	5,603,377
Indicator 1121: Number of girls (aged 10–19) supported by the programme to enrol and/or remain in primary or secondary school	375,000	84,090
Indicator 1211: Number of boys and men actively participating in group education/ dialogues that address harmful masculinities and gender norms	1,000,000	3,735,249
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	9,993,000	13,320,308
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	28,320,000	79,385,255
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	117,745	776,580
Indicator 1231: Number of CSOs newly mobilized in support of challenging social norms and promoting gender equality by the Global Programme (cumulative)	95	65
Indicator 2121: Number of primary/secondary/non-formal schools in programme areas providing quality gender-friendly education that meets minimum standards	NA	NA
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	460	476
Indicator 2211: Number of partnerships (both formal and informal) established to deliver adolescent-responsive social protection, poverty reduction and economic empowerment programmes and services	66	384
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)	59	58
Indicator 3121: Number of subnational plans with evidence informed interventions to address child marriage	21	20
Indicator 3211: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that focus on what works to end child marriage (cumulative)	21	22
Indicator 3212: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that apply a gender analysis (cumulative)	3	0
Indicator 3221: Number of south-to-south cooperation events (conferences, expert visits, peer consultations, study tours, communities of practice) supported	1	0

were lifted and the multisectoral adolescent empowerment approaches implemented through Government flagship schemes and platforms. These include training, employment-related opportunities and referral mechanisms via youth platforms and forums like Advika Udaan. The programme also helped 84,090 out-of-school adolescent girls to continue their education. However, this is below the set target due to increased school dropouts, especially in hard-to-reach communities where adolescent girls are forced to drop out of school due to lack of transportation and safe routes to school.

The programme in India used contextualized approaches to reach adolescents and their families in hard-to-reach areas and marginalized communities through the use of innovative platforms and methods to offer programmes on life-skills, child protection, and other services. It works with self-help groups, women's organizations, and grass roots groups like Aanganwadi Workers (AWWs), which helped reach these communities, identify adolescents and children at risk, and linked them with social protection schemes. Adolescent empowerment programming has strengthened convergence across sectors and links with schemes resulting in an effective response. UNICEF supported the integration of life-skills into the school curriculum framework in five states, in addition to developing life-skills measurement

tools for the elementary and secondary school levels in Hindi, Gujarati and Assamese languages. UNFPA and UNICEF particularly wanted to reach vulnerable adolescent girls in remote and tribal districts with poor Internet penetration and where teachers and students have no smart phones. Consequently, they supported Odisha State to integrate life-skills into outreach programmes and to contact more girls from remote communities through innovative strategies such as 'call a student' and 'alternate learning platforms'. Short films and multimedia digital packages in local languages were developed and disseminated for wider reach among parents, teachers and community leaders.

UNICEF continued to support 10 state governments to implement a comprehensive school safety programme to provide safe and protective learning environments for adolescent girls. In states like Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh, girls who have been absent for 10 days or more are contacted by the School Education Departments which have identified those who are married, likely to be married or who have migrated and are at risk of child marriage or other forms of exploitation. Schools which were initially resistant to report dropouts are now documenting this information to prevent child marriage as part of the district action plans. In Uttar Pradesh, through attendance monitoring of adolescent girls

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by school management committees and community influencers and counsellors, 27,618 adolescent girls who were either out of school or going irregularly were given support to enrol, or stay, at school.

In Odisha, more than 1 million adolescents across 25 districts have been reached through ADVIKA, a state initiative supported by UNICEF and UNFPA. This provides life-skills training and information on child rights, child marriage, violence against children, gender, sexual and reproductive health, and on how to access the child helpline. Sessions are held every Saturday in more than 72,000 Anganwadi Centres (community-based childcare institutions) across Odisha. UNICEF and UNFPA, in partnership with Yuwaah, also launched the Advika App with the Odisha Government to link adolescents to life-skills and career readiness information. Some 5 million girls at risk of child marriage have also been linked to social protection schemes preventing such marriages and to support their education. The Advika App also helps front-line workers provide targeted life-skills education for adolescents.

UNFPA, in partnership with the Department for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Odisha, also supported 1,150 tribal residential schools across 30 districts to reach 146,498 marginalized adolescent girls, building their knowledge, skills and attitudes for leading healthy lives and addressing vulnerabilities such as child marriage and teenage pregnancy. Principals of all the schools, in addition to nearly 600 officials from districts and smaller administrative units (blocks), were also trained on reviewing the implementation of life-skills education programmes and the availability of life-skills education teaching and learning materials in schools. UNFPA supported the review of a curriculum for special schools, including training 124 heads of special schools of Odisha on the importance of life-skills education for adolescents with disabilities, particularly on issues involving their sexual and reproductive health. UNICEF also provided educational assistance to 60,686 vulnerable adolescent girls in Odisha to enrol, and stay, in school.

In Andhra Pradesh, UNICEF conducted surveys to identify out-of-school adolescent girls in all districts. The most vulnerable were supported to establish weekly peer groups at village level to raise awareness on their rights and to provide life-skills education, protection and empowerment. In total, 150,000 out-of-school adolescent girls were reached with training and services through panchayats (village and small-town councils), women's groups and front-line workers. School-based programmes reached a further 200,000 adolescent girls with gender-

transformative life-skills. The state's School Education Department, as part of the child marriage reduction programme, exempted admission and examination fees for adolescent girls to enrol into open school programmes. The Women and Child Welfare Department women groups and panchayats are supporting adolescent girls with enrolment into second-chance education programmes alongside enrolling younger girls directly into formal education.

In Gujarat, a package on financial and digital literacy was integrated in the cash plus scheme, enhancing the life-skills and knowledge of 254,136 adolescent girls. In Kutch district the re-enrolment and retention of 965 adolescent girls, who had dropped out of school, were supported through collaboration with the Gujarat State Road Transport Corporation, ensuring the girls' safety on the way to and from school.

In Madhya Pradesh, a pool of 313 master trainers on life-skills education was created and six life-skills education comic books were developed with a focus on self-esteem and positive body image. As a result, 357,782 girls' knowledge and skills were enhanced through sessions on child rights and protection risks, gender and life-skills education. The master trainers also trained teachers who then conducted sessions in schools on gender stereotyping, appearance ideals and being a champion, reaching 81,000 girls. In addition, 12,919 out-of-school children were identified and re-enrolled in schools as part of the 'School Chalo Abhiyan' partnership campaign led by the Education Department.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

The lingering effects of COVID-19 continued to disrupt programme implementation. In 2022, UNFPA had planned to initiate life-skills education sessions in special schools supported by the Department of Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities in Odisha. However, reopening schools took much longer than anticipated, and Government approvals to roll out the curriculum were delayed.

UNICEF has developed a contextualized curriculum and interventions for adolescent girls and their families in remote tribal districts in states such as Jharkhand and Odisha. However, lack of Internet access, and poor transport, plus fears for the safety of the girls enroute to schools pose a challenge. Several front-line workers (including Anganwadi workers and teachers) in these remote areas cannot access online materials and therefore lack the necessary skills to interact with adolescents in a

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sensitive and informative manner. Second-chance education programmes are also affected by the increased absenteeism of adolescent girls. Use of volunteers from, and in, the hard-to-reach tribal communities has shown good results of engagement with adolescents and their families. However, these approaches need to be strengthened, using both physical and digital methods, to reach the most marginalized girls. The content of life-skills lessons should not only be age-appropriate and girl-sensitive but should also be supplemented with materials tailored to the specific needs, and sociocultural context of tribal adolescents and adolescents with disabilities.

Government-funded programmes related to adolescents and youth empowerment, such as Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK), Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) and the National Social Service (NSS), are vital in reaching adolescents, but these are often planned and implemented in isolation. A cohesive approach with proportionate funding is necessary. This would require advocacy and support to state governments from the Global Programme.

Women self-help groups and youth groups play a critical role in monitoring their communities for cases of child marriage that have resulted from economic distress because of COVID-19, and after extreme weather events. Financial loan systems and other social protection services, offered through the self-help groups, help to ensure that girls do not drop out of school and college.

The Global Programme and partners will prioritize:

- greater use of approaches which recognize gender identities, disability status and caste

- scaling up strengthened, targeted interventions to better support married girls

- introducing a life-skills education lab allowing adolescents to experience different settings in replicated environments, led and managed by adolescents from tribal and caste areas

- providing technical assistance to state governments to roll out life-skills education for young people with disabilities in government-supported special schools in Odisha

- connecting with the Rajasthan state government to scale up virtual demonstration and learning sites to reach the most vulnerable girls through Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas

- integrating state schemes for adolescent empowerment programmes under the 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' scheme so that they are implemented in all 33 districts across the state

- implementing a robust management information system to track life-skills education programmes in Rajasthan

- developing and implementing a tool to measure the impact of these, including documenting best practices, innovations, baseline findings and case studies for sharing with stakeholders to ensure the system can be scaled up

- strengthening links with women's empowerment initiatives to help girls to transition from school to employment.

Enhancing the family and community environment

UNFPA and UNICEF supported the integration of interventions to end child marriage in the work with panchayats to scale up community engagement and awareness-raising to ensure villages are child-friendly and promote women's rights. More than 3.7 million boys and men took part in dialogues addressing harmful masculinities and promoting positive gender norms. This was almost four times the target due to blended approaches to achieving this, including the use of digital platforms and adolescent clubs. The use of multiple community platforms, including digital platforms, enabled the programme to engage more than 13 million parents, front-line workers,

community and faith-based leaders, adolescents and local governance representatives on ending child marriage and promoting girls' rights. Close to 80 million people were reached through traditional and social media platforms, including television and radio shows, mobile van campaigns, the 'Mere Sapane' (My Dreams) national essay competition, the #EqualRightsEqualValue social media campaign and the International Day of Girl Child campaign. In 2022, a total of 65 women-led and youth-led organizations were mobilized to help challenge social norms and promote gender equality. The programme also mobilized a total of 865 self-help groups (financial intermediary community committees comprising of 12 to 25 local women between the ages of 18 and 50), some through social media outreach.

UNFPA and UNICEF also supported community groups, women-led and youth-led organizations, including feminist organizations and those working with men and boys such as Breakthrough, Point of View, CHSJ and Partners for Law in Development, to engage adolescents and community members in marginalized communities in dialogues and raise their awareness on preventing child marriage and gender-based violence (GBV). UNICEF support for Breakthrough led to the development and roll out of a gender-transformative toolkit for adolescents and communities, designed and contextualized for tribal and marginalized communities in Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand. In Madhya Pradesh, UNFPA led the design and development of a module ('Ujjwal') to engage with boys and girls in schools to promote positive masculinity – it clarifies key concepts and provides practical suggestions to motivate non-discriminatory behaviours and practices at home, in society and at school.

UNFPA and UNICEF enabled diverse voices to contribute to a nuanced strengthening of media and public discourse on child marriage, focusing on causes such as poverty, and related issues of consent, adolescent autonomy. UNICEF's partnerships with the media, such as community radio stations, local newspapers and TV stations, has enabled it to reach millions of people through the production and broadcast of key messages, plays and community engagement programmes. In Madhya Pradesh, UNFPA launched a unique 'Digital Sathi' initiative to help girls become digital storytellers and empower them to use social media to voice their needs and aspirations, while simultaneously ensuring their safety, security and privacy online – so far 80 girls have participated in the initiative.

Lastly, the programme supported the analysis of the programmatic approaches related to gender-transformative change using the GTA tool. In addition to analysing the level of ownership of strategies and their contributions to accelerate change, the gender-transformative assessment made it possible to develop a road map to accelerate progress.

Strengthening gender-transformative harmful practices programming in India

The India programme carried out the GTA over three days with the full engagement of sectoral experts and staff from selected states. Prior to the actual GTA process, the lead focal points from the UNICEF country office participated in two pre-call meetings to clarify the methodology of the tool and expectations; and to discuss themes to be prioritized.

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The workshop focused on identifying opportunities for shared action among coalition members nationally. Because the GTA process is meant to incorporate gender-transformative elements into existing workplans, the gender advocates and other key stakeholders were asked to identify crucial areas within their existing workplan where gender-transformative approaches can have an immediate, and potentially amplified, impact.

Based on the discussion around current strategies and programme content in India using the 'gender equity continuum' and the contextualized theory of change across the socioecological framework, several priority actions emerged. These action areas are broadly categorized under three groups:

- programme approach, content and messaging
- programme strategies and design
- measurement and learning.

Five action priority areas that have greater potential to address and dismantle power and resource hierarchy structures that subjugate girls in most contexts were identified for the gender-transformative process:

- to review (with partners) capacity-building curriculum content, methodologies and measurements for gender-transformative elements (content, methodology and approach)
- strategy and action plan development for integrating work on masculinities and engaging men and boys (programme strategies and design)
- adolescent groups for life-skills and employment opportunities (programme strategies and design)
- carry out a gender analysis of institutional partners working with men and develop a plan for moving them along the continuum to gender-transformative (measurement and learning)
- gender-transformative results framework – Quality assurance and tracking issues, support for measurement strategies (measurement and learning).

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Working on positive masculinities requires technical expertise, is resource intensive and is not easily replicable without initial investments in capacity-building; hence, scaling-up is a challenge.

Sociocultural contexts also influence strategies for engagement with men and boys in different regions. Many stakeholders, especially men, hold deeply entrenched patriarchal beliefs. In addition, working with traditional and faith-based leaders is highly sensitive in nature and requires intensive engagement with organizations that are expert in working with these groups. These influential community leaders are often gatekeepers of traditional norms and it therefore requires consistent engagement to ensure they do not encourage child marriages or restrict the development of adolescent girls.

Mobilizing adolescent boys and men and enabling them to become change-makers is a powerful move towards girls' empowerment. However, platforms and programmes to reach men and boys are not yet adequate to support this. Engaging with boys and men requires continuous activities, monitoring and adaptation due to cultural norms. Also, adopting good quality gender-transformative approaches require intensive and concentrated work with feminist organizations and youth-led organizations.

Competing priorities with Government departments delayed the implementation of capacity-building and the roll out of dedicated modules on positive masculinities. At community level, seasonal labour migration and agricultural work in some states resulted in fewer men participating in activities. School dropouts on account of migration also poses challenges in sustaining engagement with youth leaders.

Social and behaviour change interventions targeting community members should cover the links across different harmful practices including child marriage, sex-selective abortion and GBV to provide more holistic and comprehensive protection for girls. There needs to be a balance between large-scale and community-led interventions. Challenging social norms and influencing the public discourse needs sustained work with communities. The introduction of tools for audience-friendly communication such as storytelling have been seen to be effective in making social and behaviour changes.

The Global Programme and partners will prioritize:

- interventions at community level in priority districts with adolescent girls and boys, families and community members, to address GBV and challenge gender norms

- creating awareness with police of schemes and helpline numbers for adolescents and community members and on 'The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act' (this has already been effective and can be scaled up)

- engaging with collectives among the adivasi (tribal) and dalit (scheduled castes) for self-determined approaches to elimination of child marriage, GBV and harmful practices in Odisha state

- dialogues with faith-based leaders and the participatory development of culturally appropriate information on gender equality and the rights of adolescent girls

- strengthening and leveraging existing structures, led by women and young people, activated under various government programmes and schemes.

Strengthening systems

" I see every day, with my own eyes, how bad the practice of child marriage is. It is still very difficult in districts like Hingoli to go to people and talk about child marriage. I enrolled as soon as I heard the news of an opportunity to conduct sessions in schools. All of us volunteers were trained very well. I joined the parents' session and, while talking to the parents, I realized that many problems that lead to child marriage can be reduced if basic facilities reach the villages."

— Ms. Vaishali Dhage, an accredited social health activist (ASHA) front-line worker and parent session volunteer, Audha Taluka, Hingoli

UNFPA and UNICEF support for girls' welfare encouraged Government-led action and communication on ending child marriage, addressing school dropout and promoting access to gender-friendly services. This has also led to a more cohesive approach between ministries towards delivering truly gender-transformative

services. UNFPA support in providing rights-based adolescent-friendly health services (including sexual and reproductive health), led to the improvement of a total of 476 service delivery points.

UNFPA also supported the training of 1,200 medical officers in the provision of adolescent-friendly health services and information – and this led to the creation of a group of state level master trainers to improve the abilities of district and block level medical officers in providing adolescent-friendly and gender-responsive services. The medical officers were also trained on issues such as mental health, cybersecurity and given a deeper understanding of disabilities. In Rajasthan, UNFPA supported the development and roll out of a comprehensive resource package to conduct Health and Wellness Days in school and community settings. This incorporates 11 themes of the two national flagship programmes (RKSK and SHWP) promoting adolescent health under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The resource pack equips front-line service providers to advocate for adolescents' health and well-being. Around 370,000 adolescents accessed adolescent health services at Ujala Clinics (adolescent-friendly health clinics) in 12 RKSK-targeted districts.

UNICEF supported the Government in the implementation and adaptation of the flagship programme of 'Save the girl child, educate the girl child'. In Maharashtra, 317 women police trainees were trained on child rights and child protection, including child marriage. CHILDLINE representatives of 36 districts were oriented on child marriage and their role in enhancing prevention and response to GBV by UNICEF. Some 195 Child Welfare Committee members were trained on the Juvenile Justice Act and procedures under the Act for children in need of care and protection, including girls whose marriages have been stopped. Further, 1,121 health department workers including ASHA workers, block coordinators, LHVs and medical officers were trained to respond to GBV, including child marriage. This has resulted in initiating outreach programmes with adolescent girls.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

UNICEF and UNFPA have led the support to develop, design and disseminate national guidelines for strengthening national flagship schemes aimed at addressing child marriage and promoting girls' rights, including capacity-building initiatives for service providers at all levels. The advocacy efforts by both agencies have resulted in a state-

wide scale-up of promising initiatives that support girls' empowerment and improves their access to services. However, there are still not enough service providers to deliver adolescent-friendly and gender-responsive services, and there is also a lack of these services for adolescent girls who are pregnant or who already have children.

Implementation of the School Health Programme has been uneven across districts and schools, stemming from a lack of coordination among involved Government departments. Where the programme has been implemented, it has been difficult to track its progress as management information systems are still under development.

UNICEF and UNFPA will prioritize:

- supporting evidence generation at state-level and district-level on the prevailing rates of child marriage to influence Government directives and policies

- development training tools and modules on gender-responsive service provision, including support for the training of service providers

- helping to strengthen the RKSK programme by improving ministries' intra-sectoral and interdepartmental planning on interdepartmental adolescent health, women's empowerment and family planning.

Building partnerships

Different Government departments and agencies, such as the Department of Women and Child Development, the Education Department and the Social Welfare Department at state and district levels have remained crucial partners to the Global Programme. These partnerships have led to the roll out of interventions for the prevention of child marriage and child abuse and for adolescent empowerment. Institutional partnerships with key ministries, such as the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, were of critical importance in laying the foundation for making SDGs local goals, especially Goal 5 (to achieve gender equality and end harmful practices against women and girls, including child, early and forced marriage).

In 2022, 354 new partnerships (287 formal and 97 informal) were established to deliver adolescent-responsive social protection, poverty reduction and economic empowerment programmes and services. Partnerships with CSOs and their networks helped reach adolescents and community members in marginalized communities to raise their awareness issues such as girls' empowerment and child protection, including GBV, child marriage and violence against children. Overall, 5 million girls at risk were identified and linked to social protection schemes for mental health and psychosocial support, and help with education, plus the prevention of child marriage, through partnerships established by the programme.


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In Odisha, UNFPA began a strategic partnership with the Department of Mission Shakti to empower women. This three-year intervention is aimed at using large-scale platforms to reach nearly 600,000 girls with digital and financial literacy training, and to more than 270,000 girls with information on sexual and reproductive rights and addressing harmful practices.

UNFPA's collaboration with youth organizations and platforms such as NYKS, National Cadet Corps and NSS helped develop strategies for youth engagement and strengthened adolescent and youth empowerment. Youth groups have been instrumental in amplifying key messages on breaking gender-based stereotypes, the prevention of violence against girls, and other child protection priorities.

Investment in and support to youth-led, women-led and feminist CSOs

Partnerships are important in advancing gender-transformative programming and the Global Programme, recognizing this, assessed the extent to which the CSOs were implementing gender-transformative approaches. This was based on the partners identified as focusing on promoting girls' and women's rights in 2021 (54 in India). The assessment aimed to help guide UNFPA and UNICEF on how to better identify and support opportunities to advance these gender-transformative approaches.

FIGURE 2: *Assessment of interventions of partner organizations, on the gender equality continuum*
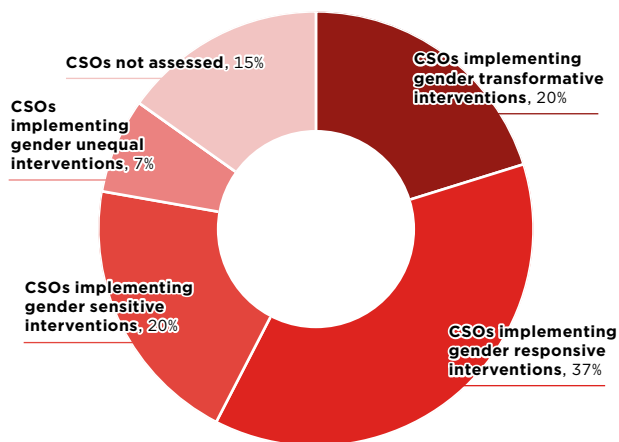
The assessment was conducted by building on information from online resources, including the CSOs' websites, reviews of available annual reports, analysis of strategy documents, social media pages, descriptions and commentary about the CSOs from external parties (for example funders, coalitions, or networks), and news articles.

Although few partner organizations completed the survey, the desk review showed that the CSOs in India are mostly gender-responsive or gender-transformative. Many of the organizations that ranked highly in their approach to gender equality make men and boys partners in initiatives for social justice. Many of the organizations incorporate the empowerment of women and girls into their programming and aim to change power dynamics, norms and institutions, rather than merely focusing on the passive delivery of support services to women and girls. Safetip is a good illustration of a gender-transformative organization seeking to improve safety in urban spaces and enable data-collection. This organization works to ensure that people, women in particular, can make informed choices about their mobility. Its She Rises project is particularly gender-transformative. It acknowledges that patriarchy places the burden of care primarily upon women. This includes the care of vulnerable and excluded groups like children, the elderly and people with disabilities. It is are working towards a framework for gender-transformative change in cities, to ensure that public spaces are responsive, inclusive, safe and equitable. This organization is strong both in terms of structural and substantive efforts to enable gender-transformative results.

Mahila Sarvangeen Utkarsh Manda is another interesting example. Structurally the organization is strong. It has two committees:

- sexual harassment of women in the workplace committee
- the grievance resolution committee.

From a networking perspective, the organization works with different community-based organizations and structures. All its programmes are based on empowering women and young girls and fighting for human rights. One focuses on empowering young women by teaching them negotiation skills to stall early-marriage, among other things.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

The programme's work with self-help groups, women- and youth-led organizations, and grass roots level workers provided opportunities to reach adolescents and families in remote areas and marginalized communities, identifying adolescents and children at risk, and linking them with social protection schemes.

UNICEF and UNFPA mobilized people and resource centres that assist communities in accessing social protection programmes. The links created with self-help groups and federations under the Government missions also ensure sustainability and scalability of the programme. However, lack of financial literacy is a major challenge for people in accessing social protection schemes, since most of scheme benefits are paid through direct bank transfers. Many recipients are reluctant, or do not have the right documentation, to open and manage an account. In some states such as Assam, Bihar, Gujarat and West Bengal, self-help groups for adolescents and women are enhancing their financial literacy and assisting people to open bank accounts. Most social protection schemes for girls are conditional cash transfer schemes linked with education, and access to these schemes is restricted for adolescent girls from vulnerable communities who are unable to attend school.

There were only a handful of CSOs that ranked as gender-blind. In general, their strategic programming does not appear to be informed by a gender analysis, and they do not have, at their core, the mission of advancing the rights of women and girls through a gender-transformative lens. There are no indications that these organizations incorporate the empowerment of women and girls into their programming and target structural change to power dynamics, norms and institutions. They do not speak to the rights of women and children. These organizations fall short both at the structural and substantive level when it comes to gender-transformative change, being unaccountable for gender. Meanwhile, those that are ranked as gender-sensitive will likely only require minor recalibrations, particularly at the structural level to become gender-positive or gender-transformative.

Some of the more progressive CSOs could benefit from a refresher course on gender-transformative approaches, and they could also share positive impact stories in order to assist other organizations with practical suggestions for improvements. Accordingly, it is recommended that a workshop, or series of workshops, be conducted

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in India, focusing on structural changes, as well as support on generating the systemic change from a gender-transformative perspective.

Facilitating supportive laws and policies

In 2022, nine new policies and legal instruments were drafted with the support of UNFPA and UNICEF. The Government proposed a bill to increase the minimum legal age of marriage of girls to 21 years. UNFPA and UNICEF will continue to reiterate the need for comprehensive and multi-pronged approaches to address child marriage that focus on empowerment, and which goes beyond legal amendment. For example, UNFPA provided technical inputs to the draft of the National Youth Policy to advance adolescents' rights and empowerment and to address harmful practices such as child marriage.

In Odisha, through UNICEF advocacy, the state department of law issued a circular to all temple authorities for the mandatory verification of the age of both parties before marriage. Following this, district administrations issued similar circulars which were displayed in more than 1,000 villages in 25 districts. State criteria for declaring villages child-marriage-free were also developed.

In West Bengal, with technical support from UNICEF, the West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights issued two memos for Kolkata and West Bengal police with the request to treat child marriage cases on an urgent basis and for filing of First Information Reports against all adults involved. A district-level training on the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection)

Act 2015, trained 265 participants including CWC members, DCPU staff, and child welfare police officers from local police stations in order to improve their ability to ensure justice for survivors and help them to access legal services. Some 96 village police and civic volunteers were also trained on child protection issues with special emphasis on child marriage and trafficking and their role in reporting, preventing and generating awareness at community level. Capacity of service providers to follow protocols on child marriage prevention and reporting was also enhanced through the training of:

- 30,707 ICDS Supervisors and AWW
- 20,515 ASHA, Anwesha Clinic Counsellors and Block Public Head Nurses
- 3,100 teachers
- 1,397 paralegal volunteers, CWC members, police
- 1967 block and district officials in 12 intervention districts.

In Rajasthan, UNFPA supported the launch of the State Policy for Women in partnership with the Directorate of Women Empowerment (DWE) in 2021. In 2022, UNFPA supported the implementation of the policy by developing a multisectoral integrated action plan outlining strategies, activities and targets relating to health, survival, safety and protection (including child marriage, economic empowerment and the impact of climate change). Comprehensive resource packages (posters and videos) were also developed to raise awareness about harmful practices against women and girls (such as GBV, dowries, child marriage, gender biased sex selection, etc.). UNFPA also supported DWE in designing and implementing flagship programmes such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Chirali (community-based model to address GBV) and Udaan (on menstrual health and hygiene management).

In Assam, UNICEF provided technical support for the development of the Child Protection Policy and an analysis to identify gaps in the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006. In Maharashtra, in response to the Bill that seeks to amend the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, UNICEF provided high-level technical support for the Department of Women and Child Development, including an analysis of NFHS data trends on child marriage and related gender indicators and a review of international and national human rights treaties and standards and facilitating consultations with key gender and human rights experts.

District action plans on ending child marriage or child protection were developed, revised, and implemented by UNICEF in 181 districts in 10 states (increasing from 175 districts in 2021), through multisectoral convergence and consultations. Under the district action plans, District Task Forces were formed or sustained to monitor progress and address limitations and way forward.

In Assam, UNICEF extended technical support to the state action plan on child marriage and district action plans on women and children in 17 districts. At a district level, 368 stakeholders were supported in developing action plans and capacity-building resulting in key interventions and messages on ending child marriage and GBV and in support of adolescent empowerment being incorporated into line departmental exercises and processes, standard project meetings and religious celebrations.

In Bihar, UNICEF provided sustained technical assistance to the Women and Child Development Corporation, Social Welfare Department and other departments for the development of a costed ending child marriage state-wide campaign, along with several other measures to prevent child marriage, including a monitoring framework. Task forces which aim to end child marriage have been formed in all 22 districts. In most districts, they meet four times a year. Some 33 trainings of Task Force members were organized, and 1,028 officials (835 men and 193 women) were trained.

In Madhya Pradesh, under the Adolescent Empowerment Programme (AEP), multisectoral district action plans have been developed on child marriage and violence against children in 16 districts. The AEP also facilitated training for more than 82,000 child protection workers and stakeholders (46 per cent female and 54 per cent male) on:

- child rights
- protection
- gender
- legislation related to children and their application
- alternative care
- family strengthening
- prevention of child labour and rehabilitation of child labourers
- child marriage
- skills on engaging with children
- social and behaviour change communication.

In Maharashtra, multi-departmental district task forces (DTF) were established with the help of the Global Programme in all 12 districts with a high prevalence of child marriage. the task forces cover five key areas:

- women and child development
- education
- health
- rural development
- Panchayati Raj.

District action plans with gender-transformative indicators have been formulated in seven districts and are being drawn up in the remaining five districts. The DTFs have been effective in implementing the district action plans for ending child marriage and establishing a functional system at district level for preventing, and responding to, child marriage. The Child Marriage Eradication Programme 'Saksham' is being implemented in Jalgaon district with the support of Women and Child Development and UNICEF. All Government and non-government stakeholders of the district have been trained and, by creating master trainers among them, awareness is being created at different Government levels and among the general public in urban and rural areas. Some 100 Child Protection Committees were formed in 1,485 villages in Jalgaon and the Chair and members were trained on the issue of child marriage. District child protection units of 24 districts (outside the Global Programme) were further trained and have begun developing district action plans for ending child marriage in their districts with their District Collectors, taking into account geographical and sociocultural factors. In addition, a tab on gender

and child budget has been introduced in the Finance Department's website, BEAMS, capturing budgets for social protection schemes such as Nirbhaya fund and Fast Track Special Courts. It also indicates the number of beneficiaries for such interventions.

In Rajasthan, to further address gender inequities and violence and promote adolescent empowerment, the five-year-perspective plan and annual performance improvement plan (PIP) of the Department of Education were influenced to consolidate a gender-transformative approach in school-based adolescent collectives. As a result, for the first time, components of engaging with boys on positive masculinities were included in state capacity-building programmes.

In West Bengal, 'Guidelines for District Action Plan (DAP) for Ending Child Marriage' were finalized and rolled out state-wide with technical support from UNICEF. The guidelines provide a blueprint of activities to assist each district in assessing the situation of its adolescents, formulating its own plan to end child marriage and promotes collaboration and convergence between different line departments. Direct support was provided towards DAP planning, preparation and reporting in 12 districts. Moreover, DAP monitoring and reporting through a standardized system has also been put in place.

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

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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)*.

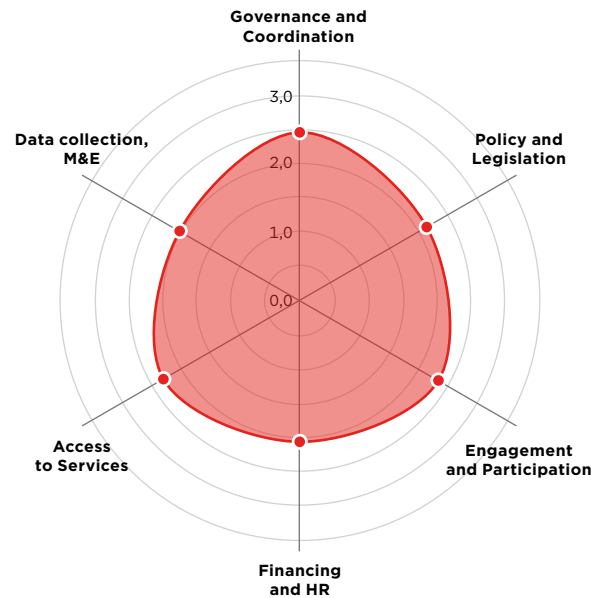**TABLE 2:** *Snippet of the policy maturity model*

Intermediate Outcome	Sub-Domains	Score
Governance and Coordi-nation	**A1**: Political Commitment	✔
	A2: Coordination structures	✔
	A3: National Action Plans	✔
Policy and Legislation	**B.1**: Legislation, policies and implementation mechanisms	✔
Engagement and Partici-pation	**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 a nd 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	—

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 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 India*

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Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

The major challenge at both state and district level, is the limited ability of the various line departments to work together. Collaboration is hampered by frequent changes in bureaucracy, and a lack of continuity in strong leadership to enforce convergence. Other challenges include:

- Law enforcement agencies are reluctant to prioritize child marriage prevention, and elected representatives too often do not want to address the issue for fear of losing political support.

- Subdistrict level child protection structures are informal and weak, and building accountability within them requires time and intensive effort. Increased participation at block and community level is required.

- The inclination to use increasingly punitive measures to address child marriage increases the risk of criminalizing adolescent sexuality.

- Capacity-building needs to be carried out at institutional level to mainstream gender-transformative approaches in interventions and plans on ending child marriage through sustained and systematic commitments and partnerships.

- Grassroot level committees such as village level child protection committees need to be strengthened as they are key to addressing GBV and child marriage. Advocacy with the states should continue to highlight the importance of grassroot committees.

Support will be provided by the Global Programme in the several areas:

- UNFPA and UNICEF will strengthen their engagement in high-level advocacy with national and state actors for the proposed national bill to raise the minimum legal age of marriage for girls.

- UNICEF will advocate with the state governments to review, monitor and amend state and district action plans for ending child marriage and ensure coherence and convergence between all different stakeholders.

- The programme will continue to support Government workers in preventing and responding to child marriage, connecting girls at risk with services and integrating programmes and services for child brides, who are highly marginalized.

- In Madhya Pradesh, UNFPA is in discussion with the State Planning Commission for the development of the State Women's Policy. UNFPA technical support has been requested to also develop a strategy paper and action plan on addressing GBV and for integrating gender in the behaviour change communication framework developed by the Women and Child Development Directorate (WCD) – addressing child marriage through rights-based approaches will be integral to the policy documents proposed to be developed.

- In Odisha, UNICEF and UNFPA will continue to provide technical assistance to the WCD in addressing child marriage, with additional assistance on addressing violence against women through multisectoral coordination (involving the Departments of Health, Home, Mahila and Shishu Desks).

- In Bihar, UNFPA will support research on developing an investment case for ending child marriage in partnership with the A.N. Sinha institute of Social Studies.

- The programme will continue to focus on helping the Government to ensure child marriage interventions are able to reach the most hard-to-reach and marginalized communities.

- The programme will also continue to enhance important structures at district and community level, including DTF and grass roots-level committees for better implementation of district action plans.

MOZAMBIQUE

end child marriage
A voice. A chance. A future.

COUNTRY PROFILE
2022

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" I got pregnant when I was 17. After having a child, I didn't study for two years, because I was in Grade 11 when he married me. When I [lead] my sessions, the girls are able to follow my advice. I'm delighted because, until this day, none of the girls from my sessions have been married."

— Anica, peer mentor

MOZAMBIQUE

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 le gal status of any country or area or the delimitation of any frontiers.

100%

0%

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

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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.

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Key highlights in 2022

5 MILLION **men, women, adolescents and children** were reached through an **integrated package of messages** on essential family practices, with a specific focus on child marriage.

4,500 **vulnerable adolescent girls**, including those out of school, were **trained on life-skills**, entrepreneurship and **gender-transformative sexual and reproductive health** and rights.

More than **16,000** **boys and men** actively participated in group **education that addresses harmful masculinities** and gender norms.

1,113 **adolescent girls** were supported to **continue their education**, including receiving bicycles to get to and from school.

More than **18,000** **individuals** participated in **dialogue sessions** on the consequences of, and alternatives to, child marriage, **the rights of adolescent girls** and gender equality.

480 **child journalists** from 24 districts, trained by the programme, produced more than **150 news reports** and published **30 new videos on child marriage**, girls' empowerment, gender inequality and other issues related to **gender discrimination**.

Child marriage country context

Mozambique has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world and has the second highest rate in the eastern and southern Africa region, with the practice affecting almost one in every two girls. Some 48 per cent of young women in Mozambique were first married or in a union before the age of 18, (14 per cent before the age of 15), compared with a regional average of 38 per cent in southern and eastern Africa.

Child marriage is more prevalent in rural areas where 56 per cent of young women aged 20–24 years were married by the age of 18, compared with 36 per cent in urban areas. As seen elsewhere in the world, the drivers of child marriage in Mozambique include high levels of poverty, gender inequality, poor access to quality education, limited life choices, cultural norms, especially those related to initiation rites, and high levels of teenage pregnancy.

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	56,533	4,500
Indicator 1121: Number of girls (aged 10–19) supported by the programme to enrol and/or remain in primary or secondary school	2,040	1,113
Indicator 1211: Number of boys and men actively participating in group education/dialogues that address harmful masculinities and gender norms	3,200	16,070
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	21,342	18,079
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	3,470,000	5,000,000
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	200	268
Indicator 1231: Number of CSOs newly mobilized in support of challenging social norms and promoting gender equality by the Global Programme (cumulative)	2	1
Indicator 2121: Number of primary/secondary/non-formal schools in programme areas providing quality gender-friendly education that meets minimum standards	100	109
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	46	46
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)	4	3
Indicator 3121: Number of subnational plans with evidence informed interventions to address child marriage	10	10
Indicator 3211: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that focus on what works to end child marriage (cumulative)	6	7
Indicator 3212: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that apply a gender analysis (cumulative)	4	3
Indicator 3221: Number of south-to-south cooperation events (conferences, expert visits, peer consultations, study tours, communities of practice) supported	1	0

Providing intensive support to marginalized girls

The Global Programme in Mozambique is focused on enhancing the knowledge and life-skills of marginalized adolescent girls and young women, particularly concerning their sexual and reproductive health, relationships and self-esteem, through an approach with community-based peer-to-peer mentorship in safe spaces. The programme, through partnerships with the Government and other organizations, has also established links with social protection initiatives to help economically empower adolescent girls.

In 2022, 4,500 marginalized adolescent girls were reached through the mentorship approach with comprehensive programmes on life-skills, and on sexual and reproductive health and rights education. The programme also supported adolescent girls involved in small businesses to form savings and loans groups to strengthen their mutual support. This included working together to borrow equipment or to jointly produce products for sale. Further, the Global Programme, through the school reintegration process, supported 1,113 marginalized adolescent girls to register and return to formal education during 2022. The programme partners helped to dissolve these girls' marriages before the school reintegration process.

The child helpline, Linha Fala Crianca (LFC), supported by the Global Programme, continues to provide vital information and support to adolescent girls, including training for peer mentors on reporting mechanisms for GBV and child marriages cases.

In 2022, the strengthening of LFC resulted in the helpline responding to 170,655 calls o, with a total of 4,843 registered cases, a 47 per cent increase in comparison with 2021. A total of 3,576 cases were referred to different services (such as the police, an attorney office, health centres or social workers), out of which 2,694 have been closed (corresponding to 73.3 per cent). Most cases referred to the police/an attorney office are related to child marriage (42 per cent) or sexual violence (28 per cent). The majority of child marriage cases were reported from Nampula and Zambézia provinces, with Angoche district in Nampula having the most cases of registered child marriage through LFC.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Several factors affected the programme's ability to meet some of the targets set for adolescent girls' empowerment. One challenge is that the process of reintegrating out-of-school children back into formal education in Mozambique takes place during the first semester, at the beginning of the year, and students cannot be enrolled in school once this period has passed. As the programme was unable to register all targeted vulnerable and marginalized adolescent girls during this period, the target could not be met for the year.

In addition, delays in contracting implementing partners and disbursing funds to them due to the start of a new country programme for UNFPA in Mozambique resulted in knock-on delays in implementing activities. In 2023, the programme will focus on accelerating the implementation of activities and scaling up the school reintegration process.

1.6 MILLION married before age 15
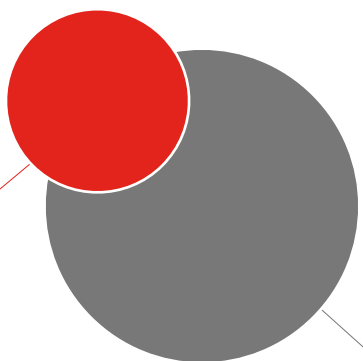
4.7 MILLION married before age 18

Mozambique is home to nearly **34 million child brides**; **1 in 2** 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.*

Enhancing the family and community environment

In Mozambique, a UNICEF study on social norms and behavioural drivers revealed that many respondents lose confidence in their decision to abandon child marriage due to social pressure or due to their daughters' attitudes and decisions.

Respondents lose confidence if:

- some community members talk badly about their families (42 per cent)
- they are called a bad parent (40 per cent)
- they are called less religious (41 per cent)
- they are not supported by their close social circle (42 per cent)
- their daughters display interest in boys (49 per cent)
- their daughter is at risk of getting pregnant (52 per cent)
- the girl fails in school (51 per cent)
- the girl insists that she wants to get married (46 per cent).

The programme in Mozambique, despite its humanitarian and economic crises, has focused on promoting social and gender norms change through community dialogues, communication for behaviour change, social mobilization and engagement of boys and men for promoting positive masculinities. In 2022, the programme trained an additional 240 mentors to facilitate intergenerational dialogues in more communities, and enabling the programme to reach a total of 16,070 boys and young men to promote positive masculinities. The boys and young men attending the mentorship sessions reported that, although they face challenges and pressure from the sociocultural and religious context of their communities, many of them recognize that "violence is not the right path, but dialogue is". Mentoring is contributing to the construction of a network of boys and young men that promotes a family and community culture of dialogue, contributing to the enjoyment of human rights by all, freeing the boys and young men from situations of vulnerability that expose them to increased risks of sexually transmitted infections, depression and suicide. According to findings from the reality check qualitative study conducted in 2022, and testimonies from programme participants, the boys and young men's peer-to-peer mentorship in safe spaces has proven to be

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an effective way of reaching and engaging them as role models in the promotion of gender equality, positive masculinities and bodily autonomy. Those participating have shown an openness to discuss, learn and adapt a new mindset concerning masculinities and traditional male gender roles in society.

The community dialogues set up by the programme in targeted districts in Nampula province reached a total of 18,079 individuals in 2022. These dialogues are aimed at breaking the culture of silence that continues to hamper the reporting and condemnation of violence against children, including child marriage. The Global Programme, through its partnership with Secretaria de Estado at provincial level, was able to engage 268 community leaders in activities aimed at addressing child marriage, violence against children and birth registration. More than 300,000 people were reached with key messages in these areas, which contributed to the increase of reported cases in community meetings.

The behaviour change communication campaign launched a powerful and highly emotional song on child marriage on the International Day of the Girl (11 October 2022).[2] The song 'Quero Voar' (I want to fly) has reached more than 5 million people with its messaging on ending child marriage. Five graffiti paintings were also painted on schools and in crowded public spaces in Rapale district, Nampula city, Nametil village in Mogovolas district, Monapo and Lalaua, containing messages on child marriage, violence against children and positive masculinities. The process was videoed and disseminated through social media, reaching 819,815 people and recording 6,865 engagements with 255 comments through the different UNICEF social media platforms.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

The beginning of the new UNFPA and UNICEF country programmes affected the implementation of programme activities as new partnership agreements had to be established.

A challenge for the programme is that implementing partners and key actors from civil society and community activists reported difficulties in following up on reported cases of child marriage due to several factors, including insufficient human and financial resources. Further, sometimes community members or leaders are reluctant to provide information about the perpetrator(s)

in cases of child marriage, since they may know, or be related to, the husband or parents of the married girl. The new partnership with International Child Development Programme (ICDP) will help overcome these challenges, given that ICDP has an emergency fund that will help support survivors to be linked to services and will also support following up the case management process, from referral to closure of the case (e.g., legal assistance and psychosocial support/reintegration).

The implementing partners noted good synergy between community activists, mentors, community and religious leaders and paralegals concerning the identification and reporting of cases of child marriage in 2022. This is an area which will be further strengthened in 2023, by including the ICDP as a coordinator.

In 2023, the Global Programme will strengthen partnerships with 'matronas' (traditional birth attendants) and traditional leaders at the community level to address initiation rites as a harmful practice and a form of violence against children. There were four other main priorities for 2023:

- Provincial advocacy training sessions on ending child marriage will be replicated, with member organizations of the Coalition for the Elimination of Child Marriages and Government representatives in Nampula province, after positive outcomes being shown in Zambézia in 2022.

- The application of dedicated, tailored tools for community work on masculinities and men by partners trained in 2022 will be monitored to identify results and potential challenges.

- Evidence will be collected at a national level to identify current dominant models of masculinities and opportunities for synergies with other programmes and actors.

- More evidence will be collected on the impact of community dialogues ending child marriage.

Strengthening systems

UNICEF conducted a study on Government and non-government managed shelters for women and girls who are survivors of violence, including child marriage. It found a shortage of qualified staff trained in gender-responsive approaches, high turnover rates and low

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2   UNICEF Moçambique, 'Quero Voar (I Want to Fly)', 11 October 2022, <www.youtube.com/watch?v=IS1hI-xLJTs>.

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capacity levels among existing personnel. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Action and development partners have made great strides in training service providers in recent years, but this has mainly focused on the operational aspects of service delivery, such as using the single registration form ('ficha única'), case management and monitoring, rather than on how to support survivors from a gender-responsive approach and/or a children's rights-based approach. The ministry does not have enough financial, material or human resources to coordinate the response, and there is still low coverage of services for survivors of violence. The latest 2022 Government statistics indicate there were 11,804 cases of violence against women aged 18–59 years old, including domestic violence, rape and other crimes. Within 2022, ministry social services responded only to 2,450 cases of GBV nationally. Furthermore, the Integrated Centre Assistance and shelter provision is concentrated only in certain provinces, which means services are provided in an uneven and sometimes arbitrary manner.

UNICEF is supporting the Government to implement a national standardized and comprehensive, multisectoral and inclusive case management system. A training programme will be rolled out at household level with a special focus on identifying cases of violence against children, child marriage and the providing psychosocial support. The newly established partnership with ICDP provides technical assistance to the health, women and social action district service (SDSMAS). This will give survivors of violence and child marriage psychosocial support and other services, paid for by an emergency fund. In addition, through the child helpline (LFC), a total of 375 female peer mentors (in Nampula and Zambézia) have been trained to raise awareness on how to identify and refer cases of violence and child marriage. UNICEF further supported the strengthening of LFC services by providing technical equipment and training counsellors and case managers on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, and on case management (through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Action e-learning platform).

UNFPA has provided technical and financial support to the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Action for training to improve multisectoral coordination at national, provincial and district levels. This has included paying for regular coordination meetings across sectors. Members of the multisectoral committee and key Government representatives from various sectors were also invited to attend provincial level trainings on Preventing and Combating

Premature Unions (Law 19/2019). These trainings, for paralegals and community activists, were hosted by the Foundation for Community Development (FDC) and the Nucleus of Women's Associations of Zambézia (NAFEZA) and district attorneys. The subjects covered included:

- the mechanism for the integrated care of GBV and child marriage cases

- relevant reporting mechanisms to local authorities

- how to facilitate community social audits on law enforcement.

UNICEF continues to promote gender equality in accessing and continuing education, and in ensuring that children can learn safely. UNICEF has circulated the violence against children (VAC) referral and reporting mechanism for schools, and the VAC operational plan was approved in 2022. Some 19 (10 female) gender and school health focal points from three districts, have been trained to ensure the effective implementation of the operational plan and the smooth functioning of the reporting mechanism, in collaboration with other institutions. Another 52 members of the multisectoral committee and 55 school managers from 55 schools have been trained on the reporting mechanisms in Nampula province (Monapo, Angoche and Rapale districts). Information on the reporting mechanism and child-friendly brochures were distributed to more than 2,100 teachers, gender and health focal points, and to 22,800 students (11,856 girls).

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

UNICEF also assessed the operations of the Reference Groups coordination mechanism led by the Attorney General's Office. High staff turnover has resulted in several members of staff being unclear about their roles. The assessment provided key recommendations to improve this situation, including the need to strengthen the role of the technical working groups which are responsible for tracking cases and providing support for children. Reference groups should balance prevention activities with providing coordination and services.

Limited Government capacity and funds hampered efforts to coordinate the multisectoral mechanism for integrated assistance to girls and women who are survivors of gender-based violence (GBV). The VAC referral mechanism is also a multisectoral approach, which makes implementation and monitoring a challenge, as well as hampering efforts to transform deeply entrenched societal attitudes, norms, stereotypes and gender roles. At Government level, there is also a clear gap between making policy commitments and translating them into programmatic interventions with dedicated resources.

Implementation of the manual for circles of interest in schools remains weak. UNICEF has supported its implementation through the training of facilitators and teachers and recently in the development of a guide for its implementation that includes the areas of gender and climate change, and other life-skills development themes. The CI platform has brought a great impact on the development of life-skills as well as in the prevention of VAC and GBV. A lack of materials has been identified as an obstacle for the creation of circles of interest, so UNICEF plans to create a CI kit in 2023 to overcome this bottleneck and support its implementation. With the support of UNICEF Innocenti, the programme also plans to conduct a qualitative study on the implementation of the CIs, so that recommendations may be drawn on how to strengthen implementation and how to measure the impact on behaviour change and gender-transformative attitudes.

Another UNICEF priority in 2023 will be to develop a school-based mentoring manual and to implement a mentoring programme, to help girls remain in school and transition from primary to secondary school. UNICEF will also support the Ministry of Education and Human Development in translating recommendations from the Safe to Learn initiative into practical actions and suggesting

a framework for monitoring results. UNICEF will also prioritize the replication and scale-up of interventions to address GBV in schools.

Other priorities for 2023 include:

- continuing support for the health, women and social action district service (SDSMAS) through the partnership with the ICDP, and by paying directly for psychosocial support for survivors of child marriage and violence

- adapting standard operating procedures on case management in emergency settings for social workers, based on the experiences collected in Cabo Delgado during 2022

- continuing to support LFC to train all peer mentors and to provide a trend analysis on reported child marriage cases.

Building partnerships

The programme maintained strategic partnerships with key Government institutions to strengthen the provision of services to children, as well as to ensure service provision is sustainable beyond the lifespan of the programme. In particular, positive engagements with the Supreme Court are facilitating the introduction, in 2023, of mobile courts in Zambézia province for dealing with cases of child marriage and VAC. The programme's partnership with the Attorney Office (PGR) continues with the aim of further strengthening the coordination of service provision through reference groups.
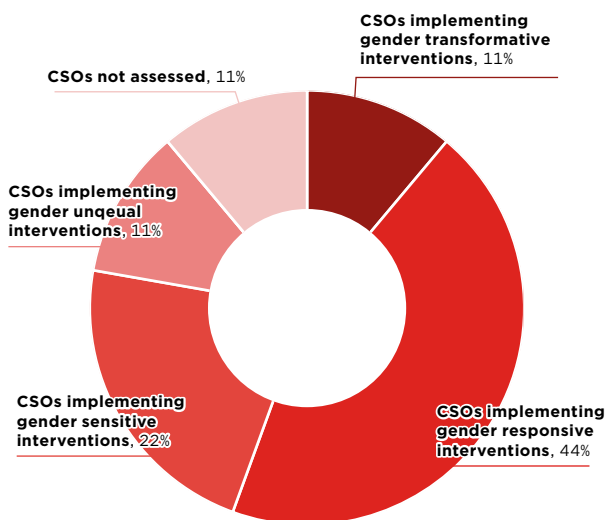
UNFPA, through its partnership with NAFEZA, has provided technical advice and capacity-building support for member organizations of 'Girls not Brides' (CECAP), particularly on advocacy and influence building.

Investment in and support to youth-led, women-led and feminist CSOs

Partnerships are important for advancing gender-transformative programming and, recognizing this, in 2022, the Global Programme assessed the extent to which the CSOs were implementing gender-transformative approaches. The assessment was based on those partners identified as focusing on promoting girls' and women's rights from the previous year (there were nine of these in Mozambique). The assessment aimed to help guide UNFPA

and UNICEF on how better to identify and support opportunities to advance gender-transformative approaches within the Global Programme.

FIGURE 3: *Assessment of interventions of partner organizations in Mozambique, on the gender equality continuum*

CSOs implementing gender transformative interventions, 11%

CSOs not assessed, 11%

CSOs implementing gender unqeual interventions, 11%

CSOs implementing gender sensitive interventions, 22%

CSOs implementing gender responsive interventions, 44%

The assessment was conducted by building on information from various online resources, including the CSOs' websites, reviews of available annual reports, analysis of strategy documents, social media pages, descriptions and commentary about the CSOs from external parties (for example funders, coalitions, or networks), and news articles.

The assessment revealed that more than 50 per cent of CSOs in Mozambique are gender-responsive or gender-transformative. Coalizo, a non-profit group which works to empower girls, in order to reduce the prevalence of child marriage and teenage pregnancy, is an impressive organization. Its theory of change focuses on empowering girls, mobilizing families and communities, providing services and establishing and implementing laws and policies. The organization spends most of its budget on advancing the rights of women and girls. It has confirmed that it has an active process to understand the gender dynamics and consequences of its work and to adapt its work to overcome gender inequalities. Further, it appears to actively monitor its progress to tackle gender equality; changing public opinion and public narratives is a central part of its work. A gender-transformative approach appears to be required for all projects of the organization.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Despite efforts and investments by UNFPA and UNICEF in strengthening the CSO network in Mozambique, CECAP is still quite weak, with difficulties in coordinating the various interventions carried out at provincial level by the different members, including the Government.

Findings from the CSO assessment also indicate that gender equality and inclusion do not appear to be prioritized by all partner CSOs in Mozambique, as there is limited evidence to suggest that women

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or young people are involved in decision-making or management. Further, there are gaps in terms of policies to advance gender equality. There is no strong sense that CSOs actively incorporate the empowerment of women and girls into their programming or target structural change regarding power dynamics, norms and institutions, rather than merely focusing on the passive delivery of support services to women and girls. Support with messaging and communication may assist the CSOs in better expressing their impact and guidance is needed in terms of policy development as well as training or guidance on monitoring and evaluation. A collective workshop with the CSOs on the importance of systemic change and how to infuse gender-transformative thinking into their work could yield positive results.

Facilitating supportive laws and policies

The Global Programme, in partnership with the African Union, commissioned an assessment of the level of integration of national and sectoral policies on ending child marriage in the Government budgets of Chad, Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria and Zimbabwe in 2022. This integration is aimed at enabling programme staff and their government and civil society partners, to better advocate for, influence and develop regional, national

and subnational programmatic actions and budgets to end child marriage. The findings show a weak link between making policies and plans to guide national responses to harmful practices and their full implementation due to limited human, financial and technical resources. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that governments are allocating negligible amounts, of between 0.01-0.08 per cent of their GDPs (and between ≈0.12 per cent and ≈1.3 per cent of central government non-interest expenditure), to programmes addressing child marriage. Specific expenditure on this was only a very small share of relevant ministries' budgets, between ≈0.2 per cent and ≈0.6 per cent. As a share of countries' non-interest budgets, specific allocations to deal with child marriage were between ≈0.01 per cent to ≈0.12 per cent. The study suggests, however, that, while a lot of expenditure programmes and projects may appear relevant on a superficial level, the detail of their design and targeting is what determines their actual relevance. The study could not find conclusive evidence on change in countries' prioritization of child marriage activities at the aggregate level. Where the study was able to assess growth in detailed spending, it was not possible to discern whether changes occurred because of child marriage being a priority, or because of other factors, such as COVID-19.

In Chad and Mozambique, the COVID-19 budget adjustments had positive implications for spending on social security transfers, and for health, education and, to some extent, women affairs' ministry budgets, and less positive implications for spending on strengthening and implementing the legal framework for child marriage. However, here, too, the study was not able to say to what extent child marriage expenditure was affected specifically by these shifts because the study did not have access to detailed budgets or information on the specific use of sector budgets.

Contributions by development partners to child marriage expenditure is significant. The quantitative evidence supports a commonly held view by country respondents that development partner funding for child marriage is in multiples of the countries' own funding (between ≈5 and 2.5 times country spending). The volume of development partner expenditure is also driven by large joint social sector programmes. As for countries' own spending, these programmes present opportunities to re-orient existing outlays to also address child marriage better, alongside sector-specific targets (such as poverty reduction or reduced maternal mortality). Countries' own allocations to child marriage are spent predominantly on personnel and office

costs associated with child marriage activities. Development partners finance the non-overhead costs of activities, including recurring costs. While both sets of inputs are necessary to implement child marriage interventions, the high share of development partner funding raises sustainability challenges for child marriage interventions, as well as coordination and efficiency challenges, as development partner funding is often disbursed to non-state implementers.

Overall, the study concludes that the establishment of strategies to counter child marriage is a significant potential systemic anchor point for integrating child marriage into country budgets, but that strategy governance and capacity weaknesses, coupled with broader budget and expenditure system barriers, hampered the integration of child marriage into country and sector budgets.

Currently, UNICEF is providing technical and financial support to the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Action to develop the new National Plan of Action for Children III (PNAC). The evaluation of the national strategy to eliminate child marriage has also been approved by the Council of Ministers and UNICEF has supported the Government in sharing the results with key stakeholders in Maputo.

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)*.

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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 a nd 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 4: *Policy maturity assessment for Mozambique*
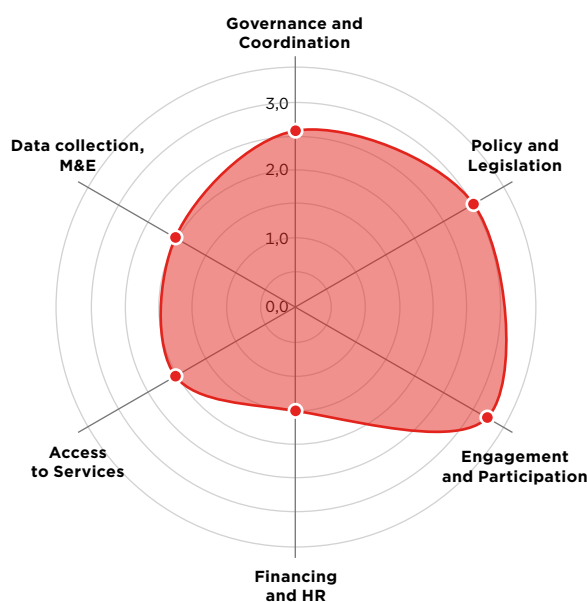
Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

The delay by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Action in approving the child-friendly brochure on the new child marriage law (which took 10 months) delayed, in turn, the implementation of activities dependent on the roll out of the brochure.

Generating and applying data and evidence

UNFPA conducted a third reality check study to understand how COVID-19-related factors have directly or indirectly influenced the vulnerability of girls and young women in Zambézia and Nampula provinces. In particular, the study focused on understanding the secondary effects of COVID-19 and how, or if, these led to an increased rate of teenage pregnancy or child marriage and what is required in order to get the programme back on track to meet the SDG target. Five case studies were produced based on the main report. The results of the study were presented by the consultants in a virtual meeting in October 2022 to the National Youth Partners Group. More than 20 key actors from the development community participated in the meeting, including Government representatives, donors, United Nations agencies and development banks.

The overall programme component evaluated in this study regards male involvement and positive masculinities. The report highlighted the structural challenges that implementing partners encounter in communities when raising awareness and bringing about expected change. Emphasis was given to the lack of adequate infrastructure to conduct mentoring sessions, the lack of employment for young

men, poverty and the high level of consumption of alcohol and other drugs. The study reported that the boys and young men involved in the programme suggested that it should include sessions on economic empowerment and business startup kits also for boys, given the many challenges to find employment which have risen during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The other identified challenge was with the social and gender norms prevalent in the communities. The results note that in families, girls and boys are treated differently. Boys are awarded more privileges than girls. Families invest more in boys, including in their education. However, boys who are not the oldest among the children encounter challenges because they are less likely to be educated and more likely to be encouraged to engage in sex relationships with girls and drop out of school. Their role is to produce grandchildren to look after the family. Despite the challenges, reports from implementing partners show that some changes are beginning to be noticed among the boys involved in the mentoring sessions, who demonstrate understanding and acceptance of the law against early unions, and the adoption of non-violent attitudes and dialogue as the only option for family harmony.

UNFPA supported the National Statistical Institute in the roll out of the 2017 national census and the subsequent production of various thematic studies based on the census during the year. The Child Thematic Study contains key data on child marriage in Mozambique, including contributing factors/causes and trends based on district-level data. UNFPA also supported the production of an accompanying Child Thematic Study Policy Brief and a Child Marriage Census Data Factsheet, along with the dissemination of census data findings through presentations to various audiences, including to the National Youth Partners Group.

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NEPAL

end
child
marriage
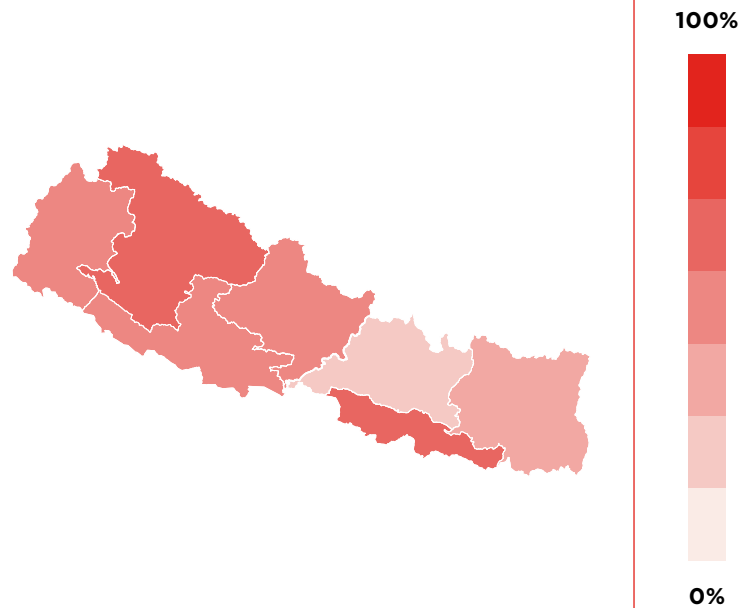A voice. A chance. A future.

COUNTRY PROFILE
2022

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❝ The awareness of small [scale] businesses that I gained from Rupantaran classes assisted me in opening my own tailoring business.”

— *16-year-old from Madhesh Pradesh's Saptari*

NEPAL

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 le gal status of any country or area or the delimitation of any frontiers.

100%

0%

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

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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

There are 4 million child brides in Nepal, 1.2 million of whom were married before the age of 15. In 2019 the prevalence of child marriage among girls stood at 33 per cent, which represents a decline from 58 per cent in 1994. However promising, this progress is not enough to meet the SDG target to end child marriage by 2030. If the progress observed over the past 10 years continues, the prevalence will be 27 per cent by 2030. If the reduction is doubled, the rate will 18 per cent in 2030 and 6 per cent in 2050.

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↘ Key highlights in 2022

More than **57,000 adolescent girls** participated in **life-skills or comprehensive sexuality education** (CSE) in programme areas.

10.2 MILLION individuals (boys, girls, women and men) were reached by **traditional and social media messaging** on child marriage, **the rights of adolescent girls** and gender equality.

More than **48,000 boys, girls, women and men** participated in **group education/dialogue sessions** on the consequences of, and alternatives to, child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls and **gender equality.**

8,339 adolescent girls were supported by the programme to **enrol and/or remain in** primary or secondary **school**.

264 service delivery points in programme areas provided good quality adolescent-responsive health, **child protection or gender-based violence (GBV) services** that meet minimum standards.

Overall programme performance

TABLE 1: *Summary of output indicator performance (2022)*

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	**35,000**	**57,011**
Indicator 1121: Number of girls (aged 10–19) supported by the programme to enrol and/or remain in primary or secondary school	**7,908**	**8,339**
Indicator 1211: Number of boys and men actively participating in group education/ dialogues that address harmful masculinities and gender norms	**11,500**	**11,158**
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	**55,000**	**48,617**
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	**1,708,396**	**10,231,573**
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	**320**	**1,178**
Indicator 1231: Number of CSOs newly mobilized in support of challenging social norms and promoting gender equality by the Global Programme (cumulative)	**3**	**1**
Indicator 2121: Number of primary/secondary/non-formal schools in programme areas providing quality gender-friendly education that meets minimum standards	**150**	**350**
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	**132**	**264**
Indicator 2211: Number of partnerships (both formal and informal) established to deliver adolescent-responsive social protection, poverty reduction and economic empowerment programmes and services	**8**	**13**
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)	**2**	**1**
Indicator 3121: Number of subnational plans with evidence informed interventions to address child marriage	**6**	**9**
Indicator 3211: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that focus on what works to end child marriage (cumulative)	**2**	**1**
Indicator 3212: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that apply a gender analysis (cumulative)	**4**	**3**
Indicator 3221: Number of south-to-south cooperation events (conferences, expert visits, peer consultations, study tours, communities of practice) supported	**1**	**0**

Providing intensive support to marginalized girls

The Global Programme in Nepal has adopted and implemented a strategic approach to leaving no one behind and, indeed, to reach the farthest behind first. The programme primarily targets adolescent girls who face limitations on autonomy, mobility and access to means of communication. Vulnerability assessments were carried out in collaboration with CSOs, community actors and local government to identify children and adolescents at risk of child marriage, as well as those who are already married, in a union or separated. The programme targets marginalized girls not only to meet their individual needs, but also in efforts to create or strengthen an environment that allows the most marginalized girls to be included as leaders and champions of change in their society. Many young girls who attended courses run by Nepal Rupantaran, a CSO which offers them an empowering social and financial skills

package, have been appointed as local leaders/ mentors/champions, making their voices heard through effective advocacy to end child marriage.

UNFPA and UNICEF have continued to use the Rupantaran training and, in total, 11,011 marginalized girls were reached through the in-person group sessions during 2022. The girls participating in the sessions, including the peer leaders, have displayed positive changes in knowledge, skills and attitude. Based on pre-test and post-test results, 92 per cent of peer facilitators reported an increase in knowledge and an enhancement of skills to deliver the gender-transformative Rupantaran life-skills sessions. The number of respondents who reported an understanding of gender-based violence (GBV) increased by 40 per cent, while the number of respondents who reported an understanding of child marriage increased by 14 per cent between the pre- and post-tests.

In 2022, 10 per cent of the Rupantaran participants were surveyed via the KOBO platform, using questions from the Global Programme indicator reference manual to assess the knowledge, skills and attitudes of participating girls and boys, parents and other adult stakeholders. This survey was carried out in addition to the programme's regular pre- and post-testing to assess change. Some 64 per cent of girls aged 15–19, and 24 per cent of 10–14-year-old girls, who participated in the programme reported increased confidence in their ability to negotiate and delay early-marriage, and they feel comfortable speaking without fear.

Similar changes have been observed among other adolescent girls participating in the programme. In a community-based, cross-sectional, case/control

assessment process on the empowerment scale developed by the programme in 2020, participants of the Rupantaran course yielded significantly higher empowerment outcomes than the control group, according to the measurement tool, which uses data from the beginning and end of the social and financial skills sessions. These findings suggest that Rupantaran participants have higher empowerment outcomes than those from similar demographic backgrounds who did not complete the programme.

The programme has influenced life decisions around, for example, education and marriage, allowing the girls to also become change-agents in their communities. Many of the success stories depict significant changes in the lives of the Rupantaran adolescents, such as gaining access to their rights through birth registration and receiving formal education. The programme has had an impact, not only on the lives of adolescents, but also on the lives of families and communities.

> " I am assisting these adolescents in my community in becoming more empowered and successful. My group has 22 teenagers, and I feel more responsible for them. "Rupantaran" has also altered my life."
>
> — *A Rautahat district facilitator in Madhesh Pradesh*

Furthermore, participants have reported an overall change in themselves and have demonstrated strong leadership skills. Some of them, in Sudurpaschim, Karnali, Lumbini and Madhesh provinces, for example, have participated in the Government's planning,

1.2 MILLION married before age 15
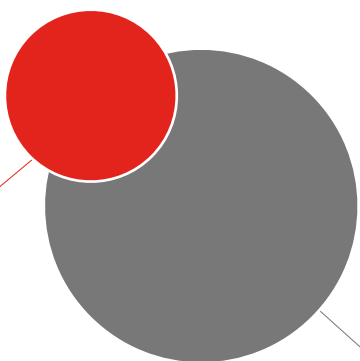
4.1 MILLION married before age 18

Nepal is home to over **4 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.*

budgeting, and monitoring platform and have been successful in ensuring the inclusion of activities with budget allocation for addressing child marriage.

Some of the older girls (aged 15–19 years) find it hard to re-enter formal schooling due to a long gap away, and due to the difficulty in catching up with the curriculum and their peers. In response, economic empowerment activities for girls in the Rupantaran programme are carried out in collaboration with local government and women's cooperatives/women-led organizations. Some 200 girls in Madhesh province are being given cash assistance by local governments to take part in these activities, depending on specific criteria. In another province, girls who have completed Rupantaran social and financial skills-training are linked with a women's cooperative for income and skills development. In 2022, 563 girls received livelihood training and support from women's cooperatives.

In addition, 1,378 out-of-school girls who attended Rupantaran social and financial skills sessions received assistance to facilitate their enrolment/re-enrolment in formal school. Coaching classes, uniform/stationery support, facilitating admission procedures in school, engagement with parents to increase their understanding of the importance of girls' education, and mentorship support were all provided. All the girls who received educational

assistance stayed in school. The implementing partners' outreach workers closely monitor their performance and provide continuous support as needed.

Non-formal girls' access to education (GATE) classes were supported in the same way as in previous years to provide out-of-school girls with literacy and numeracy skills and to facilitate their enrolment in formal school. Some 1,022 girls were enrolled in GATE classes, with two dropping out in the middle, and 95 per cent (968 out of 1022) successfully enrolling/re-enrolling in formal school. The programme continued to provide mentorship to assist the girls completing the GATE classes to remain in school. The mentorship assistance also included coaching classes to help girls catch up to age-appropriate educational levels, and this support reached 5,932 girls who had been mainstreamed into formal schools in 2021.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

The Rupantaran programme has been enormously successful in empowering adolescent girls to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health and rights and about preventing child marriages. However, maintaining contact with these girls and young people outside secondary school

education or Rupantaran classes has proved difficult. One of the programme's key challenges is the need for ongoing engagement with girls, families and communities even after the Rupantaran sessions and other activities are completed, to achieve long-term and sustainable change in the communities. It is not possible to extend the sessions in the same communities while leaving other vulnerable communities without assistance. To address this, the programme has begun experimenting with an exit strategy in some municipalities by developing a handover/programme continuity plan which is carried out with the technical and financial support of local governments. This approach is proving to be quite effective, particularly in terms of making local governments more accountable, and will be promoted in all the targeted municipalities.

Managing the families' expectations, particularly regarding livelihood support from the programme and local governments, is another challenge. The girls are expected to begin earning as soon as they are trained and linked to a women's cooperative. The girls cannot be linked to economic activities without strong mentorship and support; lack of proper guidance is a challenge as they progress in their economic empowerment journey. Partnerships with local governments and holding them accountable is critical to ensuring sustainability and expanding coverage. The programme has been successful in many target municipalities in integrating the child marriage programme into the Government's annual plans and budget through evidence-based advocacy and coordination.

Political intervention in hiring GATE facilitators, political manipulation of bursary assistance eligibility requirements, school retention, and expectations from families for long-term support are some of the difficulties encountered in the work with supporting girls' education. It is crucial to maintain contact with local political leaders and increase their accountability for the programme to reduce the impact of political interference. Additionally, mobilizing political leaders has been shown to be a successful tactic in persuading families to send their daughters to school. Creating a standard operating procedure (SOP) is crucial to eliminate conflicts of interest and other potential harmful impacts from community or political leaders. As an example, in 2022, the Cash Plus Programming SOP for partners was developed.

The COVID-19 pandemic was largely responsible for the global shift towards e-learning and online education and service delivery, including in Nepal. Recognizing the need to diversify learning platforms,

the programme is now converting the Rupantaran social and financial skills-training package into a mobile learning app to meet the growing demand for e-learning materials. The curriculum for Rupantaran will be digitized to achieve

- an efficient path to scale
- a resilient system capable of continuing service delivery in emergency situations
- delivery of the programme with greater long-term cost efficiency.

Enhancing the family and community environment

The programme works with a diverse group of stakeholders, including adolescent and young boys, to improve their knowledge and attitudes so that they can demonstrate more gender-equitable attitudes and become community advocates for girls' rights. Intergenerational dialogues on toxic masculinities, how masculinity influences boys' and men's attitudes and behaviours, and the impact of toxic masculinities on their overall development are held between young boys and adult men. The intergenerational dialogue platform has provided a safe space for 11,158 boys and men to discuss issues that they would otherwise find difficult to share. The programme's interactive tool has further aided in igniting healthy discussions and developing gender-transformative attitudes that promote positive masculinities and gender equality.

Some 48,617 parents and guardians of girls enrolled in Rupantaran have completed three days of parenting education through the Rupantaran adult package. This version has, among other things, helped parents improve their understanding and knowledge of gender, harmful practices, changes during adolescence, parenting skills, consequences of child marriage, GBV and financial literacy. The parenting programme has helped to bridge the gap between parents and children and has become a way for adolescents and parents to learn together. This has helped create a safe and supportive environment for adolescents and their families. Parents who attended the sessions reported positive changes in their interactions with their children. They believe that, after attending the training, they will be able to communicate, interact and listen better to their adolescent children. Prior to the training, they would never involve or ask the children's opinions on any matters concerning their lives. Some of them also mentioned imposing

restrictions and controls, such as not obtaining birth certificates or citizenship, to keep their daughters under their control. They stated that, after the training, they realized the value of education and are comfortable sending their daughters to school; they also realized the importance of providing a safe space for children to express their thoughts and feelings. Similarly, they have recognized the significance of having proper documentation, such as birth registration and citizenship. Pre- and post-test assessments among programme participants revealed increased understanding and gender-equitable attitudes. The pre-test and post-test involves the same set of 12 questions and, on average, a 25 per cent point increment was reported between pre-test and post-test.

Religious leaders are another important group engaged by the programme. Leaders from various faith groups were trained to lead community dialogues on issues such as harmful social norms, gender, child rights and the negative consequences of child marriage. The engagement with religious leaders aims to reduce the prevalence of harmful social norms and practices such as child marriage, which have been ingrained in the traditions of many Nepali communities for generations, through discussion and debate. Religious leaders wield moral authority in their communities and thus play an important role in granting social approval to marriages. More than 1,100 religious leaders, representing various religious groups, were trained using a standard training package.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Despite various efforts, ensuring the participation of fathers and male family members in the Rupantaran parenting training sessions remains a challenge. The strategy of the intergenerational dialogues of having discussion forums for men only is proving to be an effective way of getting them involved. As a result, in 2023, the programme intends to test the same strategy of having a men-only group for the parenting sessions.

A standard tool for orienting religious leaders was also felt necessary and, as a result, an orientation manual was created and adapted from previously created tools. This has ensured the engagement's effectiveness.

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Strengthening systems

Through advocacy and technical assistance, 222 child rights committees were formed, and 219 child welfare officers were appointed, as required by the Act Relating to Children 2018, contributing to strengthening the child protection system (which also covers child marriage). The National Child Rights Council was given financial assistance to adapt and test the child protection information management system for effective case management of vulnerable children and adolescents. This tool has aided the harmonization and consolidation of data on child protection issues, including child marriage, to provide effective and timely services and referrals. In additional, Nepal police's Women, Children, and Senior Citizens Directorate received technical assistance in publishing a yearly analysis of data on violence against women and children, including child marriage. A total of 1,097 justice and security officials have increased their skills and knowledge on justice for children, including data management, gender/child-friendly investigation, prosecution, adjudications and diversion, through orientations and training. Through the community and school outreach programme, 34,689 people

have learned of legal provisions concerning violence against women and children, including child marriage, as well as available services to improve accessibility.

The programme has supported age-appropriate and gender-appropriate health service provision for adolescents, particularly girls, by training health service providers on this, as well as equipping facilities with adolescent-friendly materials, and certifying adolescent-friendly service (AFS) sites. Similarly, six adolescent-friendly information corners have been established in schools near the AFS sites to promote service uptake. Some 84,795 adolescents (42,596 girls and 42,199 boys) were reached through these services in 2022. The activities related to health service provision were supplemented by community-wide awareness-raising initiatives to address gender-related and age-related biases. The training for service providers also covered sexual and reproductive rights, and there has been a shift in their attitudes as a result. Previously, they reported being hesitant to provide contraception to young girls and would ask for their marital status, in violation of the policy. During a joint monitoring visit with the health office and municipal team, 10 AFS sites were pre-certified using quality improvement tools for AFS certification. Even though all sites received scores of more than 80 per cent, the team discovered some gaps. In addition, 65 health service providers from five programme districts received a five-day training on adolescent sexual and reproductive health.

The programme provided technical assistance to the Centre for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD) in developing:

- the complaint response mechanism protocol implementation plan
- visual complaint response mechanism training materials
- a training manual for gender focal points
- monitoring tools for tracking the use of the complaint response mechanism.

Capacity-building activities targeting municipal officials and head teachers were carried out in 100 municipalities across the four Global Programme implementation provinces of Madhesh, Lumbini, Karnali and Sudurpaschim in 2022. They were also trained on gender issues, such as GBV and child marriage, in addition to the complaint response mechanism guidelines. Gender focal points have been appointed in 500 schools, and networks for girls and inclusive education have been established

in these municipalities. The programme has also provided technical support to CEHRD in developing a five-year strategic plan for the federal, provincial and local level networks for inclusive education. Continued advocacy and technical assistance were provided to ensure the appointment of gender focal persons in the 61 municipalities' schools.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Although policy documents call for the establishment of a complaint response mechanism in all public schools, not all local governments have invested equally in training and coordination. As a result, continued advocacy is required with local governments for financial support to achieve this.

Having a safe and confidential platform for children to express their concerns has greatly aided the improvement of the learning environment in schools. Even though the majority of the complaints are about infrastructure improvements, addressing all the concerns can be difficult due to limited resources. In such cases, schools can work with local governments to gain the necessary support. On issues of violence and discrimination, action must be taken right away. In schools where the school management committee and gender focal person are very active, issues are handled immediately and confidentially, highlighting the need for improvements to the function of the school management committees and of the gender focal persons.

Many AFS sites have been difficult to certify and/or strengthen due to a lack of space within existing health facilities. Many health care facilities only have 2–3 rooms, which are mostly already in use. Many health office staff and local government focal persons are not fully sensitized to the importance of the adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights programme, or the role of the certification process in improving the quality and standard of health service delivery. To address this issue, the programme has continued to work closely with health care workers to improve their knowledge, skills and sensitivity, as well as their understanding of the certification process.

AFC service delivery is tailored specifically to the needs of young people. As a result, the competency-based training curriculum must be updated with new knowledge and include visits to model AFHS sites. Self-assessment on this is performed by trained health service staff using the QI and certification tool for adolescent-friendly SRH service.
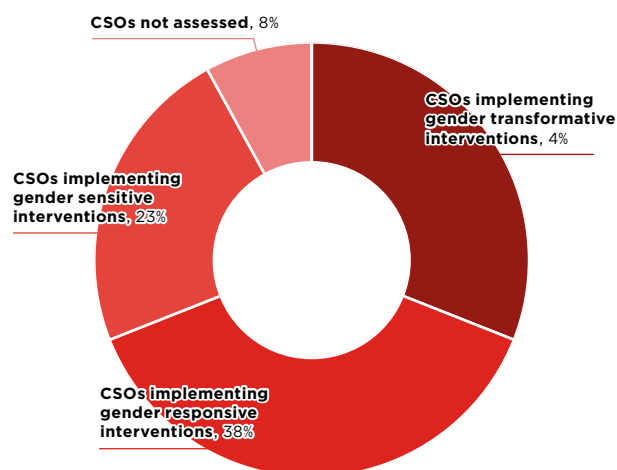
Building partnerships

The programme has successfully galvanized strategic partnerships with Government stakeholders across the three targeted provinces, which have been critical in garnering ownership among Government stakeholders. Building and strengthening partnerships with key stakeholders other than implementing partners, such as youth and adolescent networks, women and other community groups, religious and other opinion leaders, human rights defenders, teachers and other networks, has been a key strategy for intensifying efforts to combat and reduce the risk of child marriage. The partnership has been strengthened/established with the national and district-level network of adolescents/youth, as well as the men's and boys' network, to strengthen the evidence-based gender and social norms transformative approach to combat child marriage in Nepal. In 2022, efforts were made to engage with the private sector, particularly banks, in order to promote financial literacy among girls and to link the girls who graduated from the Rupantaran programme to banking/loan schemes for microenterprise development.

A strategic partnership was formed with women's groups, including cooperatives and youth groups, to raise community awareness. This collaboration was successful in mobilizing combined efforts and advocating for girls' rights. Furthermore, orientation and formal agreements with women's cooperatives were conducted in order to support adolescent girls from marginalized families by providing livelihood support in selected programme locations. Similarly, advocacy events were held in collaboration with youth-led organizations, and formal agreements were established to give girls and boys from marginalized communities a voice to challenge harmful social norms, and to promote gender equality.

Investment in and support to youth-led, women-led and feminist CSOs

Partnerships for advancing gender-transformative programming are important and, recognizing this, in 2022, the Global Programme assessed the extent to which the CSOs were implementing gender-transformative approaches – based on the partners identified as focusing on promoting girls' and women's rights from the previous year (13 in Nepal). The assessment aimed to provide guidance to UNFPA and UNICEF on how to better identify and support opportunities to advance gender-transformative approaches within the Global Programme.

FIGURE 3: *Assessment of interventions of partner organizations, on the gender equality continuum*

CSOs not assessed, 8%

CSOs implementing gender transformative interventions, 4%

CSOs implementing gender sensitive interventions, 23%

CSOs implementing gender responsive interventions, 38%

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Awaaj, an initiative working against GBV, and discrimination against women and children, is yet another example of a gender-transformative CSO in Nepal, as it actively monitors progress to tackle gender inequality. It has identified its weaknesses and has set strategies to reduce them. It appears that its work contributes towards creating an enabling environment through establishing community support mechanisms addressing VAC and women, and it seeks to bring about lasting change through a participatory process involving men and women, children, families, teachers, local leaders, community groups, the Government and local NGOs, and especially survivors of sexual exploitation in all phases of its work.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

In several programme locations, the diverse capacity of women- and youth-led organizations remains a challenge. As a result, the programme has been investing in enhancing its capacity to strengthen strategic partnerships, which are not only beneficial for achieving programme results but are also important in developing strong community-based organizations capable of advocating with and supporting local governments in promoting gender equality.

The programme has been successful in linking adolescent girls who are not in school with local women's cooperatives that promote economic empowerment. Through this involvement, the community-based women's networks' promise for raising awareness and fostering parent and community involvement has been fulfilled. Based on this, engagement with women's groups will be increased in other initiatives in 2023.

Nepal is an example of where CSOs adopt gender-transformative approaches in a context marred by poverty and patriarchy. Given that many of the CSOs rank highly, there may be value in hosting a workshop with all CSOs that enables them to share ideas, lessons, and challenges, and support one another with strategies to implement gender-transformative approaches in their work.

Facilitating supportive laws and policies

Despite the pandemic and the fluid political situation caused by local, provincial and federal elections, Nepal made significant progress towards ending child marriage in 2022. The programme

The assessment was conducted by building on information from various online resources, including the CSOs' websites, reviews of available annual reports, analysis of strategy documents, social media pages, descriptions and commentary about the CSOs from external parties (for example funders, coalitions, or networks), and news articles.

Nepal stood out as a country with very gender-positive and gender-transformative CSOs, many of which actively participated in the assessment process. Roughly two thirds of the CSOs assessed in Nepal were ranked as either gender-positive or gender-transformative. LIFE Nepal, a women and youth-led organization, was notable for its impressive approach towards ensuring commitments to child safety. It works to ensure that all its volunteers, vendors and stakeholders are aware of their core mandate and have a good understanding of child protection. All the staff and volunteers are required to show a commitment to child protection and safeguarding by signing a code of conduct. Notably, LIFE also encourages its vendors to commit to child safeguarding. LIFE set a target of creating a gender-responsive and child protection-friendly environment at the local level. To measure progress against this target, it uses an indicator that collects data on child marriage in the targeted areas on an annual basis by mobilizing girl champions to complete a checklist.

NFCC was ranked highly for its gender-transformative approach at the structural level. NFCC believes it cannot work for gender equality if it is mainly a male organization. Therefore, it has created an environment where women, who feel safe and empowered, are leading and working on issues that affect women.

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continued to have an impact on national and local policies and plans by providing real-time information, evidence and knowledge, as well as advocacy and strategic engagement with Government, policy communities and partners.

The intense advocacy and success of the results of the Rupantaran training for girls, boys and parents, has led to 74 municipalities and two provincial governments allocating resources (in-kind and approximately US$150,000 in cash) to expand the programme's reach and provide additional support to the girls.

Inputs were provided by the programme for the new long-term School Education Sector Plan (SESP, 2022–2030), which succeeded the School Sector Development Programme and is the country's first education sector plan developed in full alignment with the country's recently developed federal structures. The plan includes interventions to ensure recovery from learning loss caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as preventing school dropout. The SESP includes specific activities for preventing child marriage and responding to the needs of married girls. Similarly, inputs are being provided to the development of the Multisectoral Nutrition Plan III, where ending child marriage and empowering girls and communities is featured as an independent outcome within the theory of change. This will ensure increased resource allocation for ending child marriage from sectors other than the women and children ministry, such as health, agriculture and education.

During the year, the federal government issued the Children 2022 regulation, replacing the 1995 regulation, which specifies the services available to children who are survivors of violence, abuse or neglect. Given the importance of this regulation in ensuring child-responsive and gender-responsive service provision, significant technical input was provided.

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)*.

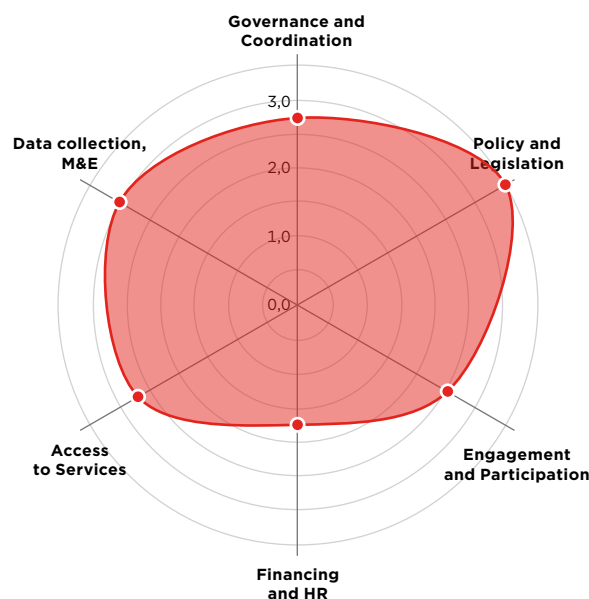**TABLE 2:** *Snippet of the policy maturity model*

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 4: *Policy maturity assessment for Nepal*

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

The legal age for child marriage was the subject of intense debate in the first quarter of 2022 in legislatures at federal and some provincial levels. One female lawmaker supported lowering the age because she believed it needed to be linked with the laws of India, as there are many cross-border weddings taking place. However, after receiving

considerable opposition from women's rights organizations, the legal community and the health community, this proposal quickly lost steam.

Service providers have room to manipulate provisions in accordance with their interests and convictions because of the inconsistent nature of several laws, regulations and legal provisions. Because of this, underprivileged children and adolescents are sometimes denied access to basic services, including social welfare, birth registration, citizenship and economic empowerment. Initiatives to develop the capacity of service providers should concentrate on gender and sexuality as well as the technical and legal aspects of child marriage, in order to change service providers' attitudes and behaviours.

It is quite challenging for local government to lobby the provincial and federal governments for resource allocation and expenditure monitoring without budgeting or costing their action plans for ending child marriage. It is necessary, and will be stressed through combined advocacy and assistance, to have a budgeted multisectoral gender-transformative plan on eliminating child marriage across ministries and departments at subnational levels.

Generating and applying data and evidence

A study was conducted to identify legal implementation gaps in Nepal relating to child marriage. The study findings were shared with relevant stakeholders, including Government agencies, and copies of the report were widely distributed. Case studies depicting changes among girls reached by the programme have been documented and shared across multiple platforms, including social media.

The programme continued to generate evidence through pre-testing and post-testing of girls in the Rupantaran programme, using the 'Power In Nepali Girls' scale and the KOBO survey. Furthermore, adolescents from the programme were trained and mobilized in protection monitoring and incident reporting through a KOBO-based survey, to monitor the situation of children and women and report cases of violence, abuse and exploitation.

A study to understand the sexual and reproductive health and rights status of adolescents and youth in Nepal was initiated in 2022, with a draft report set to be finalized in 2023. The study assessed adolescents' and youth's sexual and reproductive health awareness, perceptions, needs, practices, and participation, including their views on the subjects of GBV and child marriage. A total of 2,436 adolescents and young people aged 10–24 years were recruited from three provinces. The study's key findings show that adolescents and youths in Nepal have a basic understanding and awareness of SRH, but their knowledge is still significantly limited. Menstrual taboos continue to exist for adolescents and youths. The work towards eradicating child marriage is progressive, with several prevention interventions initiated for social norm changes; however, there is still a need for advocating and raising awareness about the consequences of harmful practices due to the persistent dominance of patriarchal mind-sets and a low value of girls.

NIGER

end
child
marriage
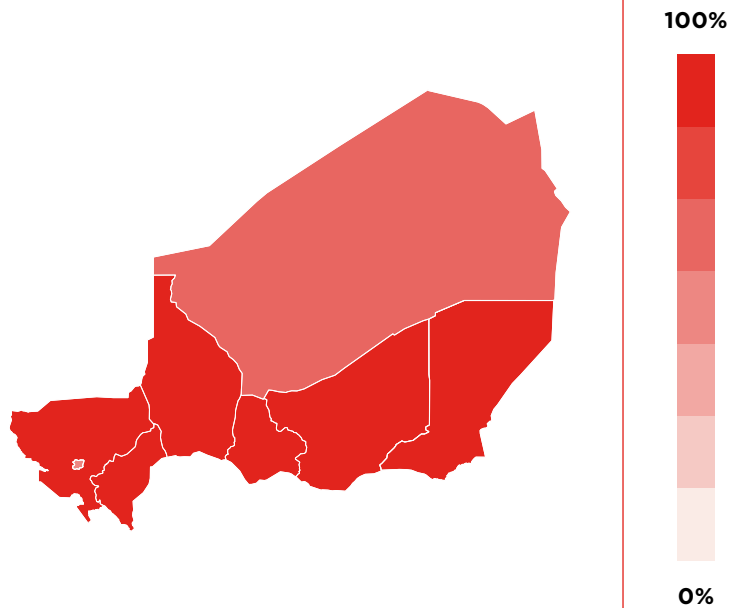A voice. A chance. A future.

COUNTRY PROFILE
2022

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" I feel very useful in the community since I started attending the exchange sessions as a girl correspondent, because I am invited to the meetings and this proves that I am important. Things have really changed since I became a protection correspondent because I feel proud to help my friends and sisters and all the friends respect me and everyone wants to talk with me to enjoy the messages I transmit. This changed many things in my life, such as hygiene and sanitation and especially the danger of child marriage, because often it is we who ask our parents to marry us as soon as we see a friend of the same generation getting married, even if we are studying."

— *Habsatou Djibo, 16, Mai Yodo village, rural commune of Ollélewa, Zinder*

NIGER

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

100%

0%

Note: This map is stylized and not to scale. It does not reflect a position by UNFPA or UNICEF on the le gal 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

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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

There are 5 million child brides in the Niger, 2 million of whom were married before the age of 15. The prevalence of child marriage among girls stands at 76 per cent, the highest in the world by far. There are no signs of progress in eliminating the practice to meet the SDG target to end child marriage by 2030, and hence the projected prevalence will remain the same as today's levels until there are signs of improvement.

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↘ Key highlights in 2022

19,603 **adolescent girls** actively participated in **life-skills or comprehensive sexuality education** (CSE) in programme areas.

3,000 **adolescent girls** were supported by the programme to **enrol and/or remain in** primary or secondary **school**.

15,165 **boys and men** participated in **group education** specifically **addressing harmful masculinities** and gender norms.

94,870 **individuals** (boys, girls, women and men) partici-pated in **dialogue sessions** on conse-quences of, and alternatives to, child marriage, **the rights of adolescent girls and gender equality**.

544 **local actors** (e.g., tradi-tional, religious and community leaders) were **mobilized to participate in dia-logues and consensus-building** to end child marriage.

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	16,000	19,603
Indicator 1121: Number of girls (aged 10–19) supported by the programme to enrol and/or remain in primary or secondary school	3,000	3,000
Indicator 1211: Number of boys and men actively participating in group education/ dialogues that address harmful masculinities and gender norms	16,000	15,165
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	81,320	94,870
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	2,255,000	0
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	291	544
Indicator 1231: Number of CSOs newly mobilized in support of challenging social norms and promoting gender equality by the Global Programme (cumulative)	2	5
Indicator 2121: Number of primary/secondary/non-formal schools in programme areas providing quality gender-friendly education that meets minimum standards	8	0
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	8	10
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	5
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)	1	1
Indicator 3121: Number of subnational plans with evidence informed interventions to address child marriage	2	0
Indicator 3211: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that focus on what works to end child marriage (cumulative)	2	1
Indicator 3212: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that apply a gender analysis (cumulative)	1	1
Indicator 3221: Number of south-to-south cooperation events (conferences, expert visits, peer consultations, study tours, communities of practice) supported	0	1

Providing intensive support to marginalized girls

The Global Programme's activities are aimed at empowering adolescent girls and are carried out by trained mentors in safe spaces. The trainings, for girls aged 10–19, cover life-skills, reproductive health, gender and human rights and financial literacy. In 2022, 19,603 adolescent girls were provided with life-skills training in 125 safe spaces established by the programme in the regions of Tillabéry, Maradi, Tahoua and Zinder.

- 55 per cent of the girls are aged 10–14
- 42 per cent have never been to school
- 37 per cent have completed primary school
- 21 per cent have reached secondary level
- 82 per cent are not married
- 30 per cent of those who had ever been married were in a polygamous household.

Some 348 girls in the programme trained in various income-generating activities, including:

- the manufacture of beauty products (perfume, soaps and creams) and household products (liquid soaps for floors and dishes)
- food processing (peanut oil extraction, manufacture of peanut cake and paste)
- gardening (landscaping and planting of moringa)
- video production.

The 2022 evaluation of the National Strategic Plan to End Child Marriage 2019–2021 revealed it has taught and enabled girls to act individually and collectively to refuse child marriages. Girls are increasingly influencing decisions by seeking the support needed to escape marriage, which is a violation of their rights. The evaluation showed that, among adolescents who attended and completed the seven-month course of life-skills sessions, 4 out of 5 refused to accept or stay in a child marriage.

In 2022, the programme supported the reintegration of 3,000 adolescent girls into formal education and alternative education. To support the continuity of learning for children, UNICEF signed a memorandum of understanding with the Social Change Factory and Search for Common Ground to set up an e-learning platform (http://voixdesjeunes. org). Partnerships have also been formalized with cellular phone companies (Zamani, Airtel and Moov) to support connectivity and distance learning.

## Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Child marriage can be effectively delayed by ensuring adolescent girls stay in education or in other vocational training. However, overall investment in keeping girls in schools or engaged in economic empowerment activities is limited. The programme is establishing innovative partnerships with the private sector to link and refer adolescent girls for support towards economic empowerment and training.

The experience of adolescent girls participating in the 'Community Approach to Child Protection' (PDAC) meetings, enabling them to share their perspectives on human rights and issues affecting them, allows the community to better understand their motivations for change and provides them with the necessary support.

Enhancing the family and community environment

The PDAC mobilizes communities to work with adolescents, religious and traditional leaders, community and women's organizations and schools to address harmful gender norms and prevent child marriage. Communities are required collectively to explore the option of delaying the age of marriage. Such discussions must respect the desire of families to uphold their traditions, while exposing the harm associated with the practice and reinforcing human rights principles. A greater voice should be given to girls themselves while, at the same time, supporting

2.1 MILLION married before age 15
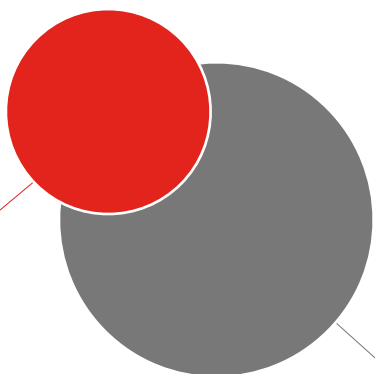
5 MILLION married before age 18

Niger is home to around **5 million child brides**; **3 in 4** 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.*

the strong engagement of men and boys. Families must be convinced that enough people in the community will support – or at least tolerate – a move to delay marriage. In 2022, 15,165 boys and men were engaged in community dialogues to address negative masculinities. Boys were also engaged in interactive role-plays as females to help to deconstruct sexist stereotypes they have inherited.

Findings from the evaluation of the Strategic Plan to End Child Marriage show steady progress in engaging traditional and religious leaders in the elimination of harmful practices, including child marriage. Interviews with these leaders highlight their degree of involvement, ownership and support for interventions that address harmful gender norms. Some of the traditional and religious leaders have taken the initiative by creating positions for women in their courts, including 'magagias' in charge of girls' schooling, child marriage and gender-based violence (GBV) issues. Some leaders have also allocated portions of land to girls and women for agricultural development. Overall, with the mobilization and engagement of these leaders, 94,870 community members participated in dialogues promoting gender-equitable norms, including raising the age of marriage for girls in 2022.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

There is a lack of follow-up of the commitments made during public declarations to end child marriage in communities and villages. The child protection services unit in charge of monitoring and following up public declarations is understaffed and under-resourced. This is also affecting the implementation of village action plans to end child marriage. The programme is supporting the use of the Rapid Pro platform for data-collection in the villages to support the monitoring and follow-up of actions.

The mobilization and involvement of the leaders in a religiously conservative context such as in Niger has proven effective in leveraging their influence and galvanizing broader community support.

Strengthening systems

The programme continued to reinforce community-based child protection mechanisms that are effective in addressing social norms. In 2022, the programme supported the Government in its efforts to eliminate child marriage by establishing 454 new village child protection committees, bringing the total to 2,209.

❝ Before this committee was set up,
I received many complaints from women
victims of domestic violence, girls
about to be given in marriage or cases
of rape. With our awareness-raising
actions and community meetings,
we have almost put an end to these
practices. But that doesn't stop us from
continuing to look after the well-being
of the children and women in the village,
because they are always the vulnerable."

*— Ibro Issoufou, village chief
of Massalata, Tahoua region*

Following the Gender-Transformative Accelerator
tool assessment in 2021, the programme supported
the revision of gender modules for teacher training
to take into account gender-transformative approaches
and to identify and change gender stereotypes
in textbooks. Gender-transformative approaches
have been institutionalized through the integration
of training in the school curriculums for pre-service
teacher training. In addition, awareness-raising tools
on violence in schools, menstrual hygiene management
and GBV have been developed and are ready to be
integrated into the teacher training curriculum.

The signing of the joint decree between the Ministry
of Education and the Ministry of Public Health
has made it possible to strengthen their cooperation,
which will facilitate the management of issues
of sexual and reproductive health of young people.
It is not easy for young people to go to health
facilities to seek advice on changes in their bodies.
The establishment of health clubs and health centres
in schools fills a void, but not for children and young
people who are outside the school system.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

The establishment of school health centres equipped
with essential products and school health clubs
reduces the number of unwanted pregnancies
and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Although
the Government has institutionalized health clubs
in all schools, most do not have adequate supplies
and equipment to help the students. In partnership
with Monde Digne des Enfants, UNICEF supported
the distribution of menstrual hygiene management kits
in schools in Tillabéry, Zinder and Agadez for 28,000
girls in the first year of middle school and the training
of 936 girls and boys leaders, 1,500 parents and 956
teachers on menstrual hygiene management.

Adolescents who are out of school are often unable
to access good quality adolescent-friendly services
due to an absence of social workers. The use
of mobile services is improving access for adolescents
in communities with no service delivery points.

Building partnerships

Since the African Girls Summit, held 16–18 November
2021 in Niamey, the programme has strengthened
a partnership with girl-led and women-led
organizations and artists to sustain the momentum
for girls' rights generated by the summit. In addition,
interventions aimed at empowering girls with
information on their rights, life-skills and support
networks through the Illimin adolescent initiative
and the community-based approach to child
protection, six organizations bringing together
nearly 50 girls and women received support to carry
out advocacy and social mobilization actions
for the elimination of harmful practices, including
child marriage, as well as other forms of GBV.

The young girls and women involved in this movement
are distinguished by wearing turbans instead
of hijabs and other veils when they are active. They
are also very active through social media networks,


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where they lead discussions on various themes related to girls' rights in Niger. One of the girl-led organizations that emerged after the summit was Fada des Filles. In Niger, Fada is traditionally a community space for speech, exchange and decision-making reserved for men and boys. The Fada is also a space of male solidarity. The concept of 'Fada des Filles' was born from the recognition of the need for girls to have appropriate spaces for speech, solidarity and decision-making within communities to contribute to the social transformation of women and girls in Niger. The Fada des Filles is composed of 30 young girls from various professional and academic backgrounds who have benefited from capacity-building allowing them to raise awareness, advocate with all types of stakeholders and play the role of role models for younger girls. They use their time to get in touch with other girls and boys with whom they play the role of elders, share their knowledge and encourage school-going girls (from peri-urban neighbourhoods) to embrace scientific careers.

Girls from peri-urban neighbourhoods in major centres in the Maradi, Tahoua, Tillabéry and Zinder regions are also mobilized through their participation in popular interactive theatre as Young Actresses of Change (JAC). These girls have found a space to express their views on the (non-)realization of their rights and the urgency for their communities to find solutions. The scenes focus on various themes related to the problems experienced by boys and girls in the neighbourhoods. The JAC are young girls and boys aged 12–20 who are out of school, and who are committed, through interactive theatre, to making their contribution to the creation of a more inclusive environment that respects children's rights.

Investment in and support to youth-led, women-led and feminist CSOs

Partnerships for important for advancing gender-transformative programming and, recognizing this, in 2022, the Global Programme assessed the extent to which the CSOs were implementing gender-transformative approaches – based on the partners identified as focusing on promoting girls' and women's rights from the previous year (five in Niger). The assessment aimed to provide guidance to UNFPA and UNICEF on how to better identify and support opportunities to advance gender-transformative approaches within the Global Programme.
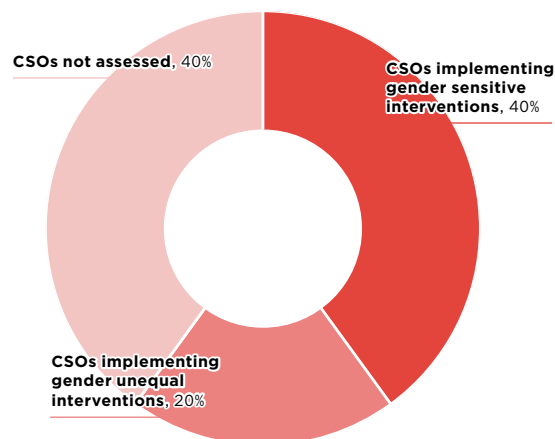
The assessment was conducted by building on information from various online resources, including the CSOs' websites, reviews of available annual reports, analysis of strategy documents, social media pages, descriptions and commentary about the CSOs from external parties (for example funders, coalitions, or networks), and news articles.

CSOs in Niger were not ranked highly in the assessment, though the CSOs do appear to make an effort to include targeted populations in strategic programming.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Although the programme CSOs, to differing degrees, conduct some work relating to gender rights they do not demonstrate a very clear understanding of gender-transformative approaches. Limited resources were available to demonstrate the kinds of work that is done and how the organizations might manifest these approaches. There is room for improvement in terms of systemic change and knowledge generation.

All CSOs ought to undergo training on gender-transformative approaches. This should include guidance on how to conduct gender analyses, support on the development of policies and strategies, and guidance on how to monitor and track impact.

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Facilitating supportive laws and policies

The National Strategic action plan to End Child Marriage 2019–2021 was evaluated during 2022 with the participation of all stakeholders. UNFPA and UNICEF worked together to support the evaluation process. Recommendations have been made and will be used to develop a new plan. In addition, the issue of child marriage has been selected as a major focus of the interventions of the Economic and Social Development Plan 2022–2026, which will facilitate the mobilization of resources for the financing of the new strategic plan.

The year was also marked by the establishment of the National Child Protection Committee in accordance with the 2019 Presidential Decree. The signing of the decree is a condition of the Government's access to World Bank budget support. It establishes child protection committees at all levels – from the village to the national – with the main aim of contributing to the elimination of child marriage,. The World Bank's budget support was accompanied by a fund to support the establishment and operation of 50 communal child protection committees. This support will continue in 2023 with the creation of 150 additional committees, adding to the 454 created in 2022.

The Ministry of Justice set up a national committee in charge of the reform of the Criminal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure whose purpose is to carry out a general review of the substance and form of these two documents to, in particular, integrate all the amendments contained in scattered laws, but also the relevant provisions of the international, regional and subregional legal instruments to which the Niger is a party and propose other useful amendments. Advocacy continued to ensure that the recommendation on criminalizing the practice

of child marriage was taken into account in the amendments. Members of this committee discussed with UNFPA, UNICEF and other technical and financial partners the recommendations from a study on the part of the legislative framework which covers GBV and harmful practices , during a three-day workshop.

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.

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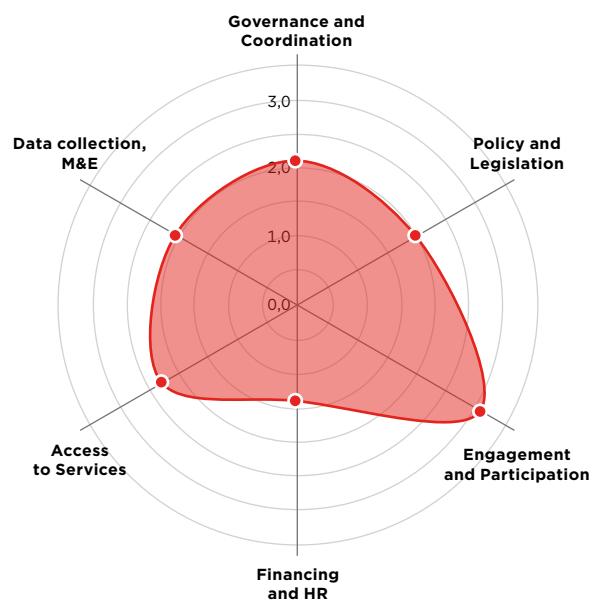**TABLE 2:** *Snippet of the policy maturity model*

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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 4: *Policy maturity assessment for Niger*

SIERRA LEONE

end child marriage
A voice. A chance. A future.
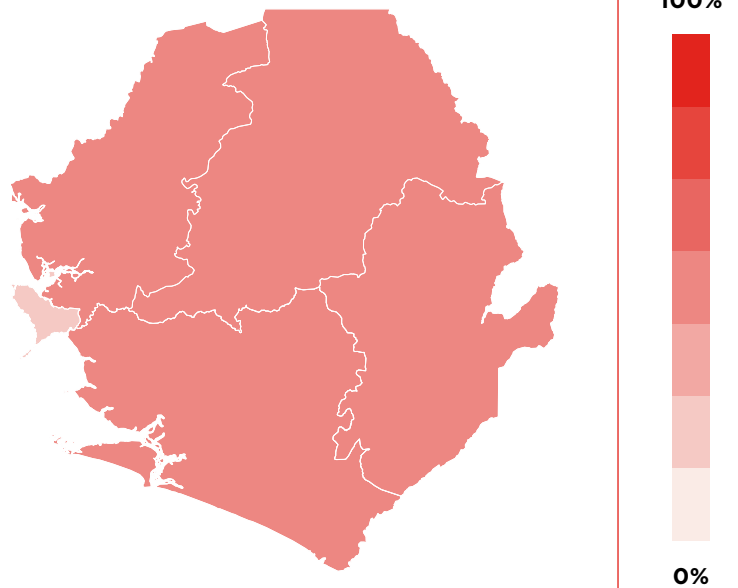
COUNTRY PROFILE
2022

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> " There has been a noticeable change in the attitudes and behaviours of adolescent girls in Bafodia. It feels to me that the sessions run by mentors and volunteers are enhancing the life-skills of these girls."
>
> — *Elizabeth Conteh, community teacher in Bafodia, Koinadugu district*

SIERRA LEONE

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 le gal status of any country or area or the delimitation of any frontiers.

100%

0%

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

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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

There are 922,900 child brides in Sierra Leone, 273,300 of whom were married before the age of 15. The prevalence of child marriage among girls stands at 30 per cent, compared to 51 per cent in 1994. However, the average annual rate of reduction would need to be 30.6 per cent, compared to the observed 4.2 per cent in the last decade, to be able to eliminate the practice by 2030 as set out in the SDGs.

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Key highlights in 2022

18,220 **adolescent girls** actively participated in **life-skills or comprehensive sexuality education** in programme areas.

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

More than
18,600 **boys and men participated in group education** on harmful masculinities, gender equality and on **addressing harmful gender norms**.

Nearly
40,000 **individuals** (boys, girls, women and men) participated in **dialogue sessions** on consequences of and **alternatives to child marriage**, the rights of adolescent girls and gender equality.

1,155 **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	22,000	18,220
Indicator 1121: Number of girls (aged 10–19) supported by the programme to enrol and/or remain in primary or secondary school	500	1,155
Indicator 1211: Number of boys and men actively participating in group education/dialogues that address harmful masculinities and gender norms	10,750	18,662
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	31,750	39,754
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	350,000	3,329,509
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	1,000	1,865
Indicator 1231: Number of CSOs newly mobilized in support of challenging social norms and promoting gender equality by the Global Programme (cumulative)	1	1
Indicator 2121: Number of primary/secondary/non-formal schools in programme areas providing quality gender-friendly education that meets minimum standards	45	44
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	16	16
Indicator 2211: Number of partnerships (both formal and informal) established to deliver adolescent-responsive social protection, poverty reduction and economic empowerment programmes and services	10	0
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)	7	7
Indicator 3121: Number of subnational plans with evidence informed interventions to address child marriage	16	0
Indicator 3211: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that focus on what works to end child marriage (cumulative)	5	3
Indicator 3212: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that apply a gender analysis (cumulative)	5	3
Indicator 3221: Number of south-to-south cooperation events (conferences, expert visits, peer consultations, study tours, communities of practice) supported	0	2

Providing intensive support to marginalized girls

❝ I believe that if I continue to come to the sessions I will not be involved in early-marriage or teenage pregnancy.”

— Adolescent girl in Koinadugu

The Global Programme provided life-skills training through safe spaces to 18,220 adolescent girls across four target districts with the highest prevalence of child marriage and teenage pregnancy. The training focused on marginalized and underserved adolescent girls in hard-to-reach areas, raising their awareness of their rights and responsibilities and building their knowledge and skills as well as enabling them to make informed decisions about their lives. Boys were also targeted with life-skills, including how to support their female peers and be champions of change in their schools and communities.

Tablets were provided in safe spaces in three of the districts to pilot innovative teaching methods and inclusivity. These were successfully used to advance life-skills sessions for adolescent girls. The tablets have allowed the mentors to utilize innovative teaching and learning materials such as recordings of adolescent-friendly lessons. These lessons were developed by the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education with UNFPA support during the COVID-19 pandemic. They feature adolescents speaking about issues in the National Life-Skills Manual, including child marriage and teenage pregnancy. They also include materials such as dramatizations of possible real-life scenarios. This is the first time that adolescents in hard-to-reach areas of Sierra Leone have had access to such materials. The use of the audio material also promotes inclusion within the safe spaces for mentees as well as mentors, for instance those who are not very literate, have visual impairments or dyslexia. Mentors have reported increased attendance and focus during lessons in safe spaces thanks to the tablets as sessions are more interesting and interactive, and safe space mentees have reported better understanding of the content; that they learn more about the topics, and that they focus better during lessons. The mentors and volunteers have been trained on the use and care of the tablets, collecting data using KOBO Toolbox, how to use Gmail and Google drive, and how to use soft copy manuals and audio files to advance life-skills sessions and their own capacity as trainers.

The life-skills interventions have had a positive impact in the lives and the mindset of the girls (and boys) participating in safe spaces.

Through qualitative interviews in November 2022, safe space mentees reported various changes within themselves and in their lives. They reported:

- increased knowledge on their rights and responsibilities
- increased awareness of the risks of teenage pregnancy and early-marriage and that they now can say no to marriage
- increased sense of self-worth and self-respect
- improved hygiene and knowing how to take care of themselves during their menstrual periods
- being more respectable in their communications to different people around them
- being able to think critically and make informed decisions about their lives and futures
- knowing the value of education.

" Child marriage is bad. If I want to go to school but my parents decide to give me to a man that is above me, and I don't like that man, I will not accept and I will say I want to learn. Due to this programme I will be able to say no to it."

— *Adolescent girl in a safe space in Pujehun*

272,300 married before age 15

922,900 married before age 18
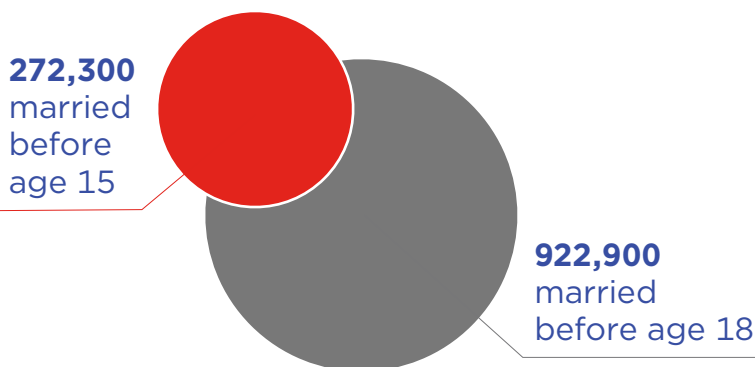
Sierra Leone is home to nearly **932,000 child brides**; **3 in 10** young women were married in childhood.

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

With the encouragement and awareness on the value of education through the safe spaces, as well as educational support to some of the most vulnerable girls, many that had dropped out have now returned to school.

> **❝❝** In the past I only thought about farming, but now I am thinking about going back to school to empower myself."
>
> — *Adolescent girl in a safe space in Koinadugu*

A total of 1,155 girls in safe spaces in Koinadugu, Pujehun and Kambia districts were provided with educational materials to help them enrol or remain in school. The materials consisted of a school bag, copy books, pens, pencils, erasers, ruler, sharpeners and a school uniform. In Koinadugu district, girls also received a pair of shoes and a geometry set. The girls benefiting are aged 10–19 years old, and 50 have disabilities. Most of the girls were in school but at risk of dropping out, while 150 used the support to return to school.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Programme implementation is severely hampered because of the remoteness of some communities, bad roads and the timing of national public exams, preceding the holiday season. Children limit, or entirely stop, frequenting the safe spaces weeks before their exams. In addition, FGM is widespread and adolescent girls are taken away for initiation rites, often resulting in them dropping out of the safe space programme.

Empowerment initiatives in schools are affected by poor attendance due to lack of menstrual hygiene-friendly facilities in schools and a lack of sanitary products for adolescent girls. Furthermore, girls starting menstruation can sometimes be perceived as being ready for marriage and are therefore married off. To address this concern, hygiene and sanitary packs were provided to girls in safe spaces on a quarterly basis, however, due to limited resources, the supplies are not sufficient.

Priorities for the programme in 2023 include:

- streamlining the provision of hygiene and sanitary packs among implementing partners in safe spaces based on global guidelines (adapted to the Sierra Leone context), preferably giving the option of one or more menstrual hygiene management methods

- organizing a more extensive training on menstrual health for mentors and volunteers at safe spaces

- agreeing a parenting curriculum and assessing the feasibility of integrating the programme into a wider range of delivery platforms, including health and early childhood development services and schools, and using existing Government workers to carry this out.

Enhancing the family and community environment

UNFPA supported the operation of a Male Advocacy Peer Educator (MAPE) network. Guided by the National Male Involvement Strategy, the network engages respected men in their communities to promote ending child marriage. MAPEs facilitate community dialogues around issues such as child marriage and teenage pregnancies, and act as role models for other men on positive masculinities. They also increase demand for sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence (GBV) services by discussing referral pathways and the importance of ending harmful practices. In 2022, 88 new MAPEs were recruited and trained. They are working in 44 communities across Kambia, Pujehun and Koinadugu, two in each community. Community dialogues led by MAPES in these communities reached 11,148 community members including chiefs, mammy queens and other traditional and religious leaders, and young people. MAPEs also led monthly radio discussions in the four districts (Koinadugu, Moyamba, Kambia, and Pujehun) on issues of child marriage, GBV and SRH, among other topics, reaching over 3.3 million people.

> **"** The end child marriage project has helped to enhance the relationships between parents, adolescents and local community leaders. We have seen increased synergy regarding issues that affect our adolescent girls. Adolescent girls are assured of the support they require for proper growth."
>
> — *Kadiatu Lamin, Chair, Kaforgo Community, Kasunko Chiefdom Koinadugu District*

The programme supported the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone to conduct community outreach dialogue sessions that reached nearly 40,000 people in 2022. This included intergenerational dialogues between elderly people and 10,221 young people (3,271 girls and 6,950 boys). Topics included:

- the rights of girls and women and the role of different community members in promoting female empowerment
- the role of religion, culture and harmful practices
- negative effects of child marriage, teenage pregnancies and other forms of violence and abuse of girls

- the role of parents in addressing child marriage and violence against girls and women
- Government laws and policies on child marriage, teenage pregnancies and other forms of VAC
- referral pathways for survivors of child abuse, exploitation and child marriage.

> **"** I have time with them in the morning and in the evening. In the morning I give time to dress my children to go to school. I now join them in the evening to study. All of this I thought was the woman's job. I also give time for us to play sometimes."
>
> — *Kondibaya, male caregiver*

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Men and boys are willing to participate in gender-transformative programmes and, when given relevant information and support, to be agents of change, supporting girls and women.

The piloting of the community-based positive parenting programme has demonstrated the benefits of one that is grounded in local culture, provides information and support to parents and caregivers that recognizes their wish to be good parents, and gives practical skills that strengthen family connections.

Most community members, especially when engaged from the onset, approve of adolescents receiving SRH information and services, but there are still people who are against this.

Strengthening systems

UNFPA and UNICEF are working on establishing and rolling out the GBV information management system, GBVIMS+, in Sierra Leone in 2023. There is strong leadership from the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, plus technical support provided by the Global Programme at regional and country level.

UNFPA supported the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) in rolling out comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in schools. CSE learning and teaching materials were developed and validated for levels from Class 1 to junior secondary school grade 3,

and a training manual for in-service teachers was developed. Training of trainers on CSE was conducted, with 14 School Quality Assurance Officers and Supervisors were trained from Koinadugu and Pujehun districts. A national coordinating committee on CSE was also established and launched, led by MBSSE and co-chaired by UNFPA. The members of this, all key stakeholders, then formed working groups to coordinate and support the roll out of CSE in schools.

UNFPA supported the operation of four adolescent-friendly SRH hubs in hard-to-reach areas in Koinadugu district. The hubs are located in underserved areas near safe spaces supported by the programme, to enhance referral pathways. UNFPA also supported seven One Stop Centres for survivors of GBV run by the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs in Koinadugu, Pujehun, Moyamba, Bonthe, Kailahun, Karene, Port Loko and Western Area Urban (Freetown) districts. Additionally, five centres run by the NGO Rainbo Initiative) were supported, in Western Area Urban (Freetown), Kenema, Bombali, Bo and Kono districts. The Rainbo Centres supplied a range of services to 1,576 GBV survivors.

Furthermore, 147 survivors were supported to access legal services. GBV response services were also supplied in the One Stop Centres, to 446 GBV.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

There were several challenges identified in 2022:

- A major concern is that there are insufficient safe homes for GBV survivors – those pursuing justice normally return to their communities, which can compromise them and put them at risk.

- Family support units have limited resources to deal effectively with GBV cases.

- In hard-to-reach areas, transportation and difficult terrains hinders the protection of GBV survivors. For instance, getting them to the hospital as well as to family support units or to legal services is a major challenge.

- Services are free in SRH hubs, however, STD drugs are not available and have to be paid for, which has a bad effect on adolescent girls' sexual health.

Addressing GBV and SRH requires a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach and sustainable action requires continuing coordination between all relevant ministries, departments, agencies and stakeholders. Efforts to increase engagement and involvement at community, state and national levels.

Building partnerships

Investment in and support to youth-led, women-led and feminist CSOs

Partnerships are important for advancing gender-transformative programming and, recognizing this, in 2022, the Global Programme assessed the extent to which the CSOs were implementing gender-transformative approaches – based on the partners identified as focusing on promoting girls' and women's rights from the previous year (five in Sierra Leone). The assessment aimed to provide guidance to UNFPA and UNICEF on how to better identify and support opportunities to advance gender-transformative approaches within the Global Programme.

FIGURE 3: *Assessment of interventions of partner organizations, on the gender equality continuum*
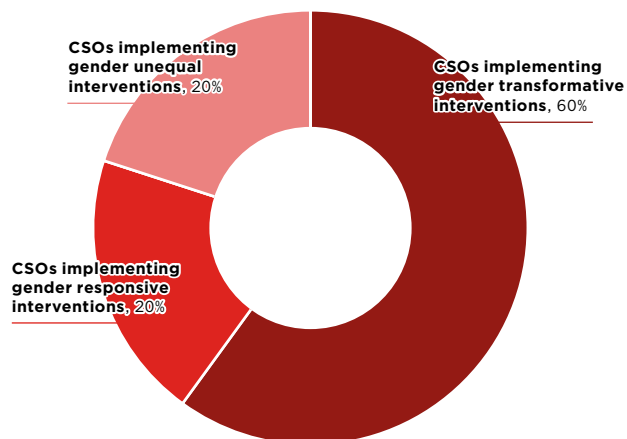
The assessment was conducted by building on information from various online resources, including the CSOs' websites, reviews of available annual reports, analysis of strategy documents, social media pages, descriptions and commentary about the CSOs from external parties (for example funders, coalitions, or networks), and news articles.

The assessment ranked 60 per cent of the Sierra Leone CSOs as gender-transformative and another 20 per cent as gender-positive, which suggests that they are engaging meaningfully with issues relating to gender-transformative change and that there is work leading to systemic positive change. The Prevention First Initiative, which aims to accelerate the prevention of GBV, serves as a good model in terms of strategic thinking and learning and evaluation. Notably, it organizes focus group discussions and surveys before starting any programme, as it believes that this will help people understand their challenges better and, together, they will be better able to suggest suitable solutions. They also provide a forum for feedback during and after their programmes and incorporate suggestions in programmes.

GADNET is another positive example of an organization amplifying the voices of those it works with. It relies on an inclusive approach in confronting negative stereotypes and challenges related to the attainment of gender justice. One of its biggest achievements is the establishment of the Sierra Leone national girls' summit which seeks to empower girls and young women to know their rights and have the confidence to speak on issues that directly, and indirectly, affect them. The young participants are given an opportunity to share recommendations with key stakeholders, which the organization says has had a big effect.

From a structural perspective, Her Future Foundation, which advocates against human rights abuses, GBV and extreme poverty, ranked highly. This was due to its clear mentoring and evaluation approaches, the fact that 75–99 per cent of the leadership identify as women, and it has an equal opportunity policy, a sexual harassment policy and hiring targets. These organizations are commended for adopting a gender-transformative lens to their work.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

The assessment found that the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone objectives are to

- provide a platform for religious communities to share information on their respective traditions, principles and values
- plan and implement collaborative action programmes based on shared moral commitments
- support religious communities in Sierra Leone and galvanize areas of convergence in their respective traditions, moral commitments and promotion of religious rites.

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The advancement of the rights of women and girls does not form part of this organization's mission. It does not appear to consider the strategic programming of the organization through a gender lens. It does not appear to be working on contributing to gender equality or for women's and girls' empowerment or to ending child marriage and other harmful practices.

The assessment suggests that the Global Programme host an engagement with the CSOs assessed as gender-transformative and gender-positive to listen to and learn about the ways in which these organizations are adopting gender-transformative approaches in their work. Valuable lessons can likely be drawn from such engagement and used to support other CSOs in the programme. The assessment also recommends that the Global Programme should consider its work with the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone. As some of the organization's projects align with the Global Programme's transformative agenda, it is worth supporting the organization to reconsider its mission and vision, internal operations and substantive work. A meeting could prove useful to see if the organization is interested in becoming more gender-transformative.

Facilitating supportive laws and policies

The Global Programme supported the National Secretariat for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy and Child Marriage to review the expiring National Strategy for the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancy and Child Marriage strategy (2018–2022). Support was given to develop the terms of reference for and recruitment of a consultant and to overall strategic guidance in undertaking the exercise.

The Global Programme supported consultations with parliamentarians and various stakeholders to validate input to the Child Rights Bill 2022. The Bill recommends the abolition of FGM and corporal punishment; sets the minimum age of marriage to 18 years and repeals outdated child justice laws. A Social Work Bill (2022) that will provide the legal framework for the practice of social work in the country, ensuring that social workers are licensed and adhere to a national code of conduct, is also being developed with support from the Global Programme.

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 4: *Policy maturity assessment for Sierra Leone*
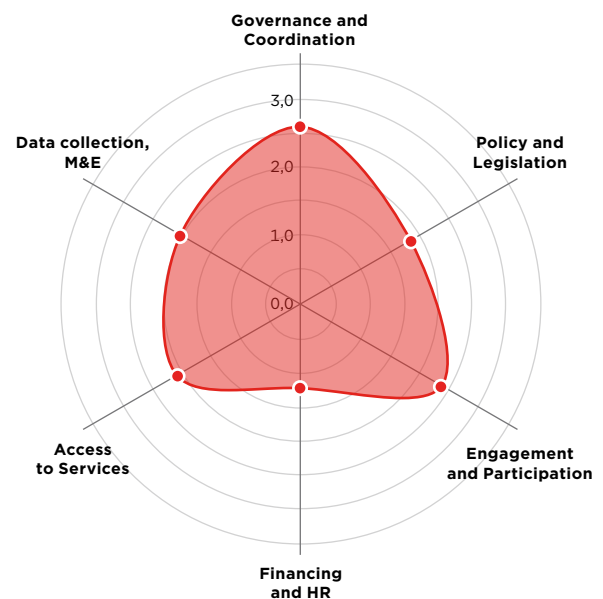
Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Despite the various hierarchical coordination mechanisms maintained by the National Secretariat for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy and Child Marriage, information flow between the various structures and partner management remains a key challenge, in addition to poor coordination of activities particularly at subnational levels.

There are long delays in drafting, reviewing and getting laws and policies adopted, most especially due to a lack of political will for policies that address harmful practices such as FGM. The lack of political will also compounds the poor implementation of laws and policies as the Government does not prioritize funding to interventions that address harmful practices.

The Global Programme and its partners are working towards strengthening collaboration with policymakers and other key stakeholders to advocate for political commitment and investment in addressing harmful practices. In 2023 the Global Programme will prioritize:

- completing the review of the teenage pregnancy and child marriage strategy and revising it/developing a new one

- strengthening the position of the National Secretariat for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy and Child Marriage as the national coordinating body for addressing teenage pregnancy and child marriage

- expanding involvement of front-line workers – of the health and social workforce – in Global Programme activities

- organizing capacity-building workshops for National Secretariat for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy and Child Marriage district focal points

- incorporating other harmful practices into the mandate of the National Secretariat for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy and Child Marriage, such as FGM and violent discipline

- increasing accountability for reporting of child marriage, in a similar way as for sexual violence.

Generating and applying data and evidence

A social and behavioural study conducted by the Global Programme, in collaboration with IPSOS, indicates limited social influence on the marriage

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of daughters under the age of 18. Respondents said they would not feel obliged to marry off their underage daughters, despite believing that some people in their communities did so. Although 1 in 5 respondents reported having seen a girl under 18 getting married in the last year and 36 per cent believing this is happening to some girls in their communities, 96 per cent of respondents said that they would not marry their daughters early. More, respondents show willingness to engage socially with parents who refuse to marry their daughters under 18, and 4 out of 5 respondents would publicly support them, indicating the presence of some social rewards for these parents. The social environment may, therefore, be showing openness to change and even support for ending child marriage, as most respondents perceive they would be seen as good parents by their community if they do not allow their underage children to marry. Some 40 per cent of respondents know someone who decided not to marry their daughter before the age of 18, despite receiving proposals; and 8 out of 10 feel able to influence broader decisions on child marriage.

It appears that gender norms and meta norms around the perception of the child are more pronounced in influencing child marriage than social norms around the practice itself. Programming should ensure a gender-transformative lens, shaping beliefs around a girl's value and ability to contribute to family and community well-being, and aim to correct misperceptions about what a child is. In addition, even though legal norms seem to be weak, it may be beneficial to correct misperceptions around the legal age of marriage.

UGANDA

end child marriage
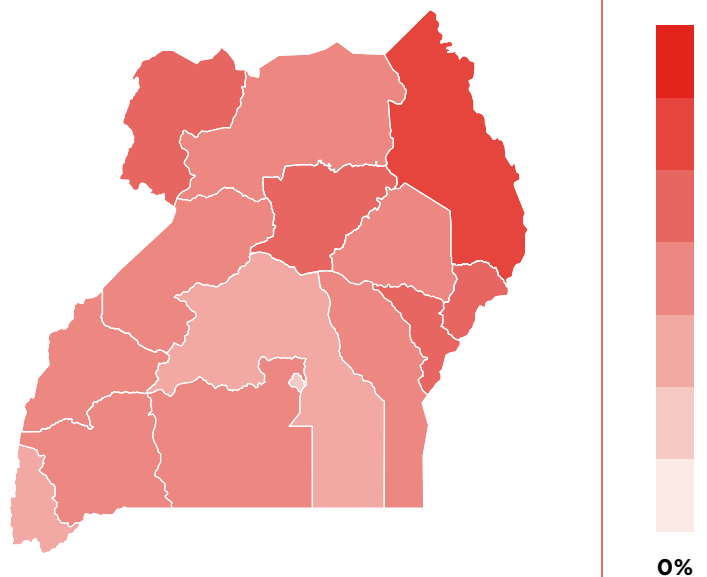A voice. A chance. A future.

COUNTRY PROFILE
2022

" 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

↘ UGANDA

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 le gal status of any country or area or the delimitation of any frontiers.

100%

0%

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.

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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**.

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**.

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.

13,880 **adolescent girls** were supported by the pro-gramme 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.

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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
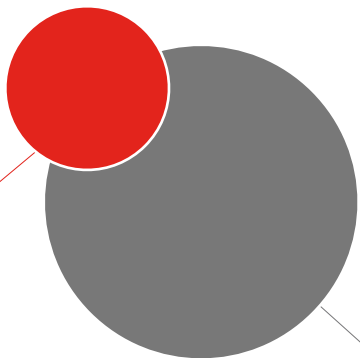
4.9 MILLION married before age 18

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.*

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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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.

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*

> " 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 #EndTeenagePregancies 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

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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 programmed 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, Kyegeggwa, 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

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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

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 a nd 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*
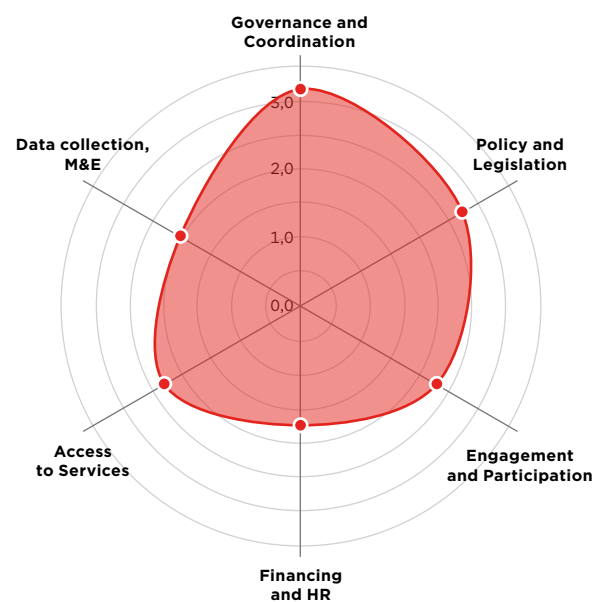
Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

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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YEMEN

end child marriage
A voice. A chance. A future.

COUNTRY PROFILE
2022
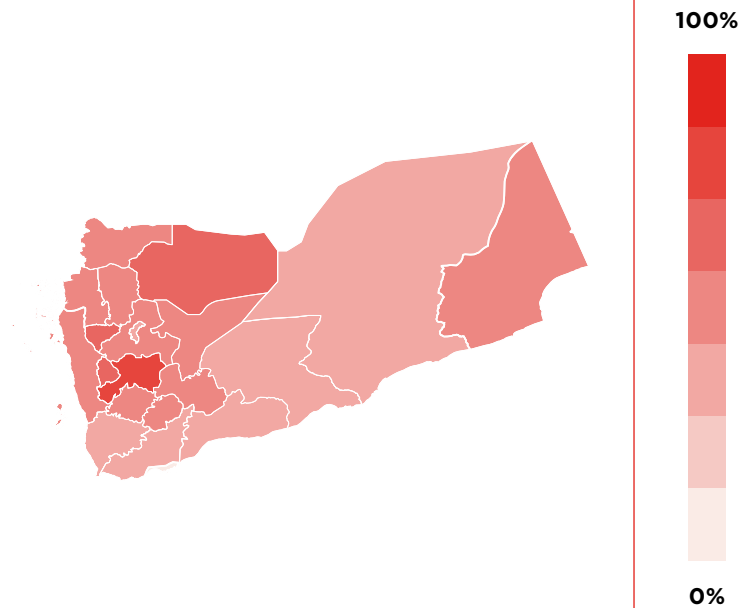
" I think it's unfair that we support the marriage of our children at an early age: we can at least wait till they finish school to enable them to have a better future and support themselves and their families in this difficult time facing our country."

— *Community leader, Hajjah*

↘ YEMEN

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

100%

0%

Note: This map is stylized and not to scale. It does not reflect a position by UNFPA or UNICEF on the le gal 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

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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

There are 4.3 million child brides in Yemen, 1.6 million of whom were married before the age of 15. According to data from the Yemen Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) in 2013, 32 per cent of women aged 20–24 years had been married before turning 18 and 9 per cent before the age of 15. Despite a reduction in child marriage prevalence from 63 per cent in 1988, the speed of progress is not rapid enough to meet the SDG target of eliminating child marriage by 2030. If the observed progress over the past 25 years continues, child marriage prevalence will still be at 21 per cent by 2030; however, if the slightly accelerated observed progress over the past 10 years is doubled, it is estimated that 9 per cent of all girls will still be married in childhood by 2030.

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⊾ Key highlights in 2022

Nearly

30,000 **adolescent girls**
actively participated in **life-skills or CSE** in programme areas.

More than

50,000 **individuals**
(boys, girls, women and men) **participated in group education** or **dialogue sessions** on consequences of and alternatives to child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls and **gender equality**.

Nearly

2,400 **girls** were
supported by the programme to **enrol and/or remain in school**.

More than

8,600 **individuals** (boys,
girls, women and men) were **reached by mass media** (traditional and social media) messaging on child marriage, **the rights of adolescent girls** and gender equality.

The **clinical management of rape** (CMR) protocol was **endorsed by the Ministry of Public Health**.

Despite the very challenging context due to the **ongoing conflict**, the **programme completed** a piece of **formative research** on the drivers of child marriage in Yemen.

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	**4,000**	**29,789**
Indicator 1121: Number of girls (aged 10–19) supported by the programme to enrol and/or remain in primary or secondary school	**500**	**2,393**
Indicator 1211: Number of boys and men actively participating in group education/dialogues that address harmful masculinities and gender norms	**2,700**	
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	**35,564**	**50,429**
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	**37,500**	**8,600**
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	**144**	
Indicator 1231: Number of CSOs newly mobilized in support of challenging social norms and promoting gender equality by the Global Programme (cumulative)	**1**	
Indicator 2121: Number of primary/secondary/non-formal schools in programme areas providing quality gender-friendly education that meets minimum standards	**16**	
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	**47**	
Indicator 2211: Number of partnerships (both formal and informal) established to deliver adolescent-responsive social protection, poverty reduction and economic empowerment programmes and services		
Indicator 3111: Number of policies or legal instruments addressing child marriage drafted, proposed or adopted at national and subnational level with Global Programme support		
Indicator 3121: Number of subnational plans with evidence informed interventions to address child marriage		
Indicator 3211: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that focus on what works to end child marriage	**1**	**1**
Indicator 3212: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that apply a gender analysis	**1**	**1**
Indicator 3221: Number of south-to-south cooperation events (conferences, expert visits, peer consultations, study tours, communities of practice) supported	**1**	**1**

Providing intensive support to marginalized girls

In 2022, the Global Programme in Yemen provided life-skills training, including mental health and psychosocial support, and vocational training to 29,789 vulnerable adolescent girls. Among them, 3,585 were child marriage survivors who were provided with multisectoral services as well as shelter in safe spaces by UNFPA using a survivor-centred approach. Some 291 child marriage survivors were also provided with emergency legal aid, including legal counselling and representation in courts,

through a network of experienced lawyers. UNICEF helped 20,199 adolescent girls with life-skills training and mental health and psychosocial support, through peer-to-peer training and counselling in safe spaces.

> " I was 14, when I married a 60-year-old man. I didn't have a normal childhood like other girls of my age. In my husband's house I was frequently subjected to violence because I refused to obey him, I felt disgusted, I was scared, my mental state deteriorated so badly. I ran away from this hell

and was admitted into the shelter where I felt secure, I received great support starting from psychosocial sessions and ending with assigning a lawyer to help me get a divorce. My condition improved dramatically after psychosocial support sessions, and after receiving my divorce papers. I am finally free and can complete my education like girls of my age".

— Amal a 15-year child marriage survivor- Ibb governorate

Life-skills and awareness-raising sessions, along with literacy programmes, helped promote self-esteem and problem-solving skills among girls and enabled them to interact with others effectively. Group psychosocial support activities in safe spaces for women and girls enabled adolescent girls to form support groups and exchange successful experiences with each other.

" My husband used to beat me and treat me cruelly because of his mental disorder. I lived a hard life full of abuse throughout my marriage; my husband then decided to divorce me due to poverty and deteriorating economic circumstances. I was very sick, and my health condition worsened, I did not have money to seek medical help. However, I feel very fortunate; through an awareness-raising session in the neighbourhood I knew about UNFPA support services they provide to women and girls, and through the case worker (after assessing my needs), I was given cash assistance to go to the hospital, I was also provided with medication and an additional amount of money so I can follow up the treatment plan with the doctor. My health condition has improved a lot, I now joined the literacy class, I was able to socialize with girls my age and learn new skills and even get trained on different handicrafts."

— Reham, a 16-year-old divorced girl, Hajjah Governorate

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1.6 MILLION married before age 15
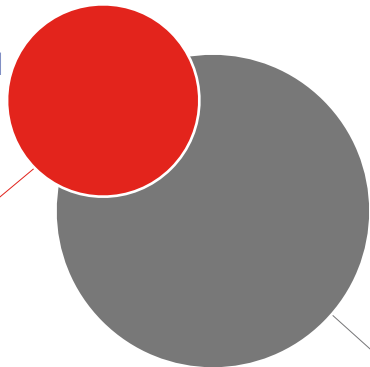
4.3 MILLION married before age 18

Yemen is home to over **4 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.*

Despite the substantial challenges with security and political instability in the country, the Global Programme was able to support 2,393 girls aged 10–19 through UNFPA's 20 non-formal literacy classes in 16 targeted districts using the RELFLECT Methodology (Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques). These classes target child marriage survivors, adolescent girls who have not got the opportunity to go to school, marginalized girls and those affected by the conflict and displacement. As of December 2022, 259 girls had been re integrated into the formal educational system after gaining the necessary skills through the informal literacy classes.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Overall, programming in Yemen has been impacted by the protracted conflict and humanitarian crisis over the last decade. In some districts literacy classes are conducted in schools, but most of these schools are in poor condition and lack the necessary furniture (for example, chairs and tables are broken, and there is no lighting). Adolescent girls living in remote areas face further obstacles such as higher transportation costs that have led many to drop out of the literacy classes.

An holistic approach helped create social acceptance for some of the interventions for adolescent girls, such as raising awareness around menstrual hygiene, and life-skills which, if delivered separately from a general education, would be difficult for targeted communities to accept. UNICEF is prioritizing and mobilizing different sectors to provide multisectoral interventions for adolescent girls to address all their vulnerabilities. The diversity of the services provided by UNFPA's implementing partners also enabled survivors to be referred to various services, in one location and from the same entity, which helped build trust, enhanced confidentiality and ensured the safety of the girls accessing services.

Due to the success of the non-formal literacy programme, the local communities have asked for expansion and have insisted on including young girls and boys that are 20 years old and above. Moving forward, the Global Programme partners will work towards mobilizing alternative funding channels to expand non-formal literacy programmes in additional districts, not targeted under the Global Programme, as well as to provide cash assistance for girls who cannot afford to access safe spaces and non-formal literacy classes.

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Enhancing the family and community environment

The Global Programme is engaging individuals in communities through dialogues facilitated by community committees. These dialogues, which include local governing councils, sheikhs and imams, identify the root causes and consequences of GBV and harmful practices, such as child marriage, and encourage community members to share their views as well as their ideas on how these can be addressed.

In 2022, 50,429 individuals participated in 11 community dialogues organized across six governorates. The Global Programme also supported five interactive plays attended by more than 8,600 men, women, boys and girls – most of them social influencers, decision makers, sheiks and religious leaders within the governorates. Many expressed their support and readiness to stand up against issues such as child marriage, disowning women of their inheritance, and depriving girls of education.

> ❝ I think it's unfair that we support the marriage of our children at an early age, we can at least wait till they finish school to enable them to have a better future and support themselves and their families in this difficult time facing our country.❞
>
> — *Community leader, Hajjah*

As a result of these efforts, 15 advocacy documents have been signed by local authorities that commit to support women's rights such as defining the age for marriage, and combating the denial of inheritance and support girls' education. These documents also stated that the local communities will provide the necessary support and coordination to ensure the smooth implementation of programmes that support women and girls in their governorates.

UNICEF conducted a study in 2021 aimed at collecting quantitative data on the social and behavioural drivers of child marriage in the governorates of Aden, Ibb, Sana'a and Amanat Al Asimah. The results, released in 2022, show the potential for social and behaviour change, identifying both influences and influencers, and assessing respondents' readiness and inclination to end the practice of child marriage. Descriptive

norms appear to be a moderate driver of child marriage in Yemen. Despite the fact that close to three quarters of respondents (72 per cent) report having witnessed a girl getting married under 18 in the last year (100 per cent in the selected districts of Sana'a), and that 42 per cent believe the practice of marrying girls before 18 has increased in their communities in the last year, only 9 per cent are willing to marry a girl under 18, and very few said they have married children (aged 10–17) living inside or outside the home (3.2 per cent). Some 30 per cent of boys have witnessed a marriage under 18 in the last year, and only 14 per cent believed the prevalence of boys' marriages had increased in the last year.

It seems to be common and socially acceptable for parents to refuse to marry a daughter under the age of 18. Half the respondents know of such a refusal, even though the parent had received proposals. Some 59 per cent of respondents said those who refused would be seen as good parents, with 54 per cent saying the parents would be praised for this decision. Most respondents said they would publicly support and engage with those who made the decision not to practice child marriage in many ways: by socializing with them (70 per cent), letting their children play together (69 per cent), considering marrying a male child with their daughter when she is ready (54 per cent). However, they may not be as likely to seek advice about their own daughters' marriage from them (only 37 per cent of caregivers are willing to do so).

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Community mobilization and awareness-raising through community committees is being implemented in six governorates; Hajjah, Ibb and Al-Hudaydah (and in some districts in Amran) in the north and in the south in Aden, Abyan and Lahj. It has been increasingly difficult to work on community awareness in the north due to restrictions by the local authorities. Even in the current programme areas, it is challenging to convene community sessions as community committees and men2men networks are considered sensitive due to the political instability in the country. Authorities do not encourage gatherings for fear that these influential people would trigger a political conspiracy against the de facto Government, or even discuss sensitive topics that would provoke people and call for a demonstration.

However, the active participation of local influencers has enabled the programme to make progress within the communities. Child marriage is a sensitive subject

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and local communities are more willing to accept interventions when it comes through respected/ influential personalities from their own communities.

Strengthening systems

In view of the increased incidence of gender-based violence, UNFPA and the Ministry of Public Health developed the CMR protocol which was endorsed by the Ministry in 2022. GBV stakeholders in the health sector use the CMR guidelines in addressing sexual assault, including rape, alongside the Ministry of Health's own regular operating and referral procedures. The Global Programme's implementing partners have networked with previously trained CMR trainers for any cases that require immediate assistance. UNFPA also supported the training of more than 200 health care providers, gynaecologists and midwives on CMR to enable them to provide immediate medical assistance to survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence. These health care providers were also trained on GBV principles and ethics, to ensure that a survivor's confidentiality is not breached, and that they do not put women and girls at further risk.

UNICEF initiated an advocacy campaign with the Minister of Public Health to ensure married adolescent girls and adolescent mothers are included in the vaccination campaign for children. In addition, meetings were held with the network of midwives and Ministry of Public Health focal points on mother and child health to increase investment in midwives, as key trusted members of the communities, to provide information about the risks of early pregnancy and child marriage.

UNFPA's implementing partners have further networked with major hospitals in targeted governorates and have focal points assigned to provide immediate services to GBV survivors when needed.

> **"** As a result of displacement and ongoing conflict, I was traumatized and was in constant fear. This has affected my life, but thanks to the support I received from UNFPA, my mental state has now improved. I received free medication and a number of psychosocial support sessions. I feel like I am born again, I now have a stable life with my family and I am able to cope with difficult situations."
>
> *— Manal, 16-years-old child marriage survivor, Al-Hudaydah governorate*

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

There is still a lack of commitment from the Government, particularly the Ministry of Public Health, to adopt concrete action to support child marriage interventions. Women and girls have difficulty accessing health care, which is also exacerbated by increased restrictions on their mobility, imposed by social norms and the conflicting parties. The lack of specialized health services in most governorates and the rising costs of fuel also hamper women and girls accessing good quality prevention and care services.

In 2023, the programme priorities will be to:

- strengthen the network with service providers and enhance the provision of service periodicity (especially at health facilities and courts and through lawyers etc.)

- provide continuing training for health focal points to enable them to provide immediate, confidential, health support using a survivor-centred approach

- review reproductive health messages for adolescent girls in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and grass roots CSOs

- focus more on health/ reproductive health awareness-raising activities for adolescent girls in safe spaces and non-formal literacy classes

- liaise/ coordinate with other NGOs and international NGOs working to support women and girls with health assistance in governorates where there are gaps (such as in Amran and Hajjah)

- continue to build the capacities of GBV workers in targeted districts and governorates to enable them to respond to the immediate needs of women and girls

- further enhance legal aid for GBV survivors

- improve the toll-free national hotline, complaint and feedback mechanisms, and ongoing community-level dialogues in targeted communities.

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Building partnerships

Investment in and support to youth-led, women-led and feminist CSOs

Partnerships are important for advancing gender-transformative programming and, recognizing this, in 2022, the Global Programme assessed the extent to which the CSOs were implementing gender-transformative approaches – based on the partners identified as focusing on promoting girls' and women's rights from the previous year (4 in Yemen). The assessment aimed to provide guidance to UNFPA and UNICEF on how to better identify and support opportunities to advance gender-transformative approaches within the Global Programme.

FIGURE 3: *Assessment of interventions of partner organizations, on the gender equality continuum*

CSOs implementing gender responsive interventions, 50%

CSOs not assessed, 50%
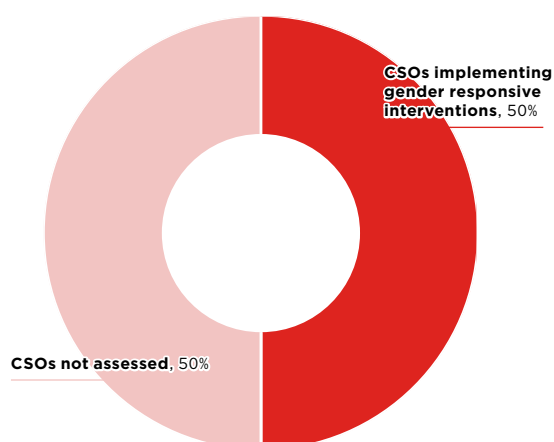
The assessment was conducted by building on information from online resources, including the CSOs' websites, reviews of available annual reports, analysis of strategy documents, social media pages, descriptions and commentary about the CSOs from external parties (for example funders, coalitions, or networks), and news articles. Unfortunately, there was no available information about Al Zahraa and the Children and Youth Protection Organization (CYPO). Therefore, the gaps and challenges relate in part to a lack of information about CSOs and a need for better communication and knowledge generation.

The CSOs assessed were impressive for their gender-positive work, particularly in the context of the conflict and humanitarian crisis. The SOS Foundation was impressive for focusing on gender equality and seeking to encourage gender mainstreaming in Yemen peacebuilding initiatives. It hosted the Next Generation Feminist Leaders Retreat during which it conducted the training for 25 women activists and agents of social change, building their capacity in feminist leadership, mechanisms and approaches to shift and change attitudes, behaviours and social norms that perpetuate gender inequality. The Yemen Women Union ranked highly in terms of its monitoring and learning as it uses a data analysis tool to represent and measure progress and results. When reflecting on positive impact stories, it involves the people they work with in sharing their stories. It appears to be very intentional about connecting and collaborating with other feminist organizations to build their capacity and often assists by providing them with manuals to help their work.

It is recommended that the Global Programme engage with Al Zahraa and CYPO to confirm if they are still operating. If so, an analysis should be conducted to determine how best to support them. There are additional CSOs that the Global Programme may want to consider working with in Yemen, for example, Human Access which, in its impressive humanitarian work, is working on improving livelihood opportunities for women and young people through skills programmes. Deem Yemen is another organization to consider. It appears that UNFPA already has a working relationship with it on projects set to empower women and girls. In the context of crisis, war and a tribal/patriarchal society it is hard to implement gender-transformative approaches, however, these two organizations are working towards gender-transformative change and may be a welcome addition to the Global Programme.

ZAMBIA

end child marriage
A voice. A chance. A future.
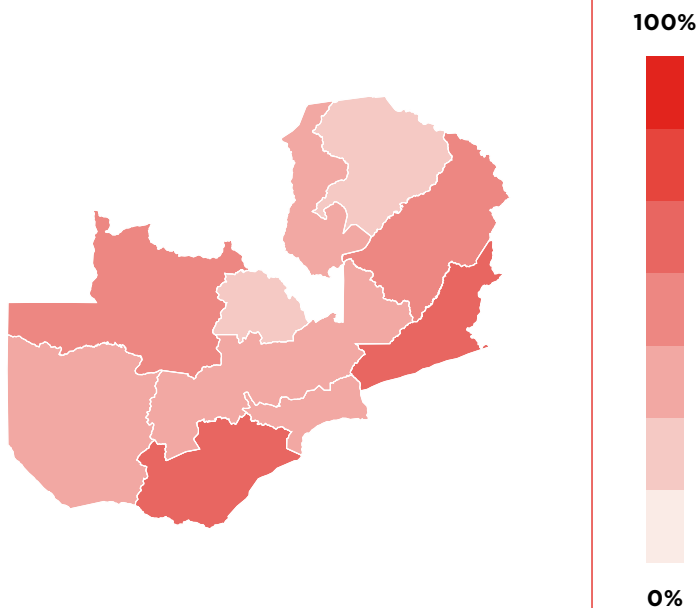
COUNTRY PROFILE
2022

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" Our effort in ending child marriage is to ensure that girls and boys are empowered with life-skills so that they can claim their sexual and reproductive rights and have options to child marriage."

— *Safe space mentor in Katete*

ZAMBIA

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 le gal status of any country or area or the delimitation of any frontiers.

100%

0%

The global context

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Child marriage country context

There are 2 million child brides in Zambia, 429,400 of whom were married before the age of 15. The practice has become less common, with 29 per cent of all young women aged 20–24 married before turning 18, (5 per cent before turning 15) in 2018, compared with 47 per cent and 9 per cent, respectively, in 1993. However, this rate of progress will not be enough to eliminate child marriage by 2030 as set out in the SDGs. If the progress over the past decade continues at the same rate, child marriage prevalence will still be at 22 per cent by 2030, and at 16 per cent even if the rate doubles.

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Key highlights in 2022

95,000 **adolescent girls** participated in **life-skills or CSE** in programme areas.

10,713 **adolescent girls** were supported by the programme to enrol and/or remain in **primary or secondary school**.

More than **1 MILLION** **individuals** (boys, girls, women and men) were **reached by traditional and social media messaging** on child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls and gender equality.

More than **17,000** **individuals** (boys, girls, women and men) **partici-pated in group education or dialogue sessions** on consequences of and **alternatives to child marriage**, **the rights of adolescent girls** and **gender equality**.

The **Children's Code** was enacted. This **prohibits any facilitation of child marriage** as well as any cultural and religious practices that are detrimental to a child's well-being.

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	**18,120**	**94,616**
Indicator 1121: Number of girls (aged 10–19) supported by the programme to enrol and/or remain in primary or secondary school	**6,489**	**10,713**
Indicator 1211: Number of boys and men actively participating in group education/dialogues that address harmful masculinities and gender norms	**15,450**	**17,450**
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	**53,215**	**11,234**
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	**960,000**	**1,032,860**
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	**1,500**	**6,140**
Indicator 1231: Number of CSOs newly mobilized in support of challenging social norms and promoting gender equality by the Global Programme (cumulative)	**12**	**2**
Indicator 2121: Number of primary/secondary/non-formal schools in programme areas providing quality gender-friendly education that meets minimum standards	**50**	**189**
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	**621**	**1,279**
Indicator 2211: Number of partnerships (both formal and informal) established to deliver adolescent-responsive social protection, poverty reduction and economic empowerment programmes and services	**2**	**2**
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)	**5**	**5**
Indicator 3121: Number of subnational plans with evidence informed interventions to address child marriage	**6**	**6**
Indicator 3211: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that focus on what works to end child marriage (cumulative)	**3**	**1**
Indicator 3212: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that apply a gender analysis (cumulative)	**3**	**1**
Indicator 3221: Number of south-to-south cooperation events (conferences, expert visits, peer consultations, study tours, communities of practice) supported	**1**	**8**

Providing intensive support to marginalized girls

In 2022, the Global Programme was expanded from the two pilot districts of Katete and Senanga to include four districts in the western and eastern provinces, namely Lundazi, Chama, Sesheke and Mwandi, with a focus on reaching the most vulnerable and marginalized adolescent girls, boys and their families. The new districts were selected based on data from the Zambia Demographic and Health Survey (ZDHS) 2018, district administrative data on education and health, and traditional village registers. Variables considered included the rate of child marriage and teen pregnancy and transition levels from primary to secondary education. Safe space models were used to deliver the programme to girls and boys. Guidance and counselling teachers were trained to deliver targeted SRH information for adolescent girls and boys at risk of child marriage. Schools' life-skills curriculums were also strengthened, to focus on puberty, HIV prevention, gender equality, sexual and reproductive health, relationships and human rights. The overall goal for both the safe spaces and the interventions providing life-skills in schools

is to empower adolescent girls and boys to enjoy better sexual and reproductive health and to have better health outcomes which, in turn, will contribute to delayed sex and healthy relationships, and to ending teenage pregnancy and child marriage.

As a result, 94,616 adolescent girls at risk of child marriage were engaged through safe spaces with information and referrals on sexual reproductive health rights, life-skills, informal finance education, communication, decision-making, positive social and cultural traditional norms and practices, more than four times the number of girls who were targeted.

> " I have learned how to communicate with my parents and friends, as well how to prevent myself from unwanted pregnancy, before I joined safe spaces, I was not able to share personal information especially about my sexuality. After hearing my friends' experiences, I can ask for advice without the fear of being laughed at and criticized."
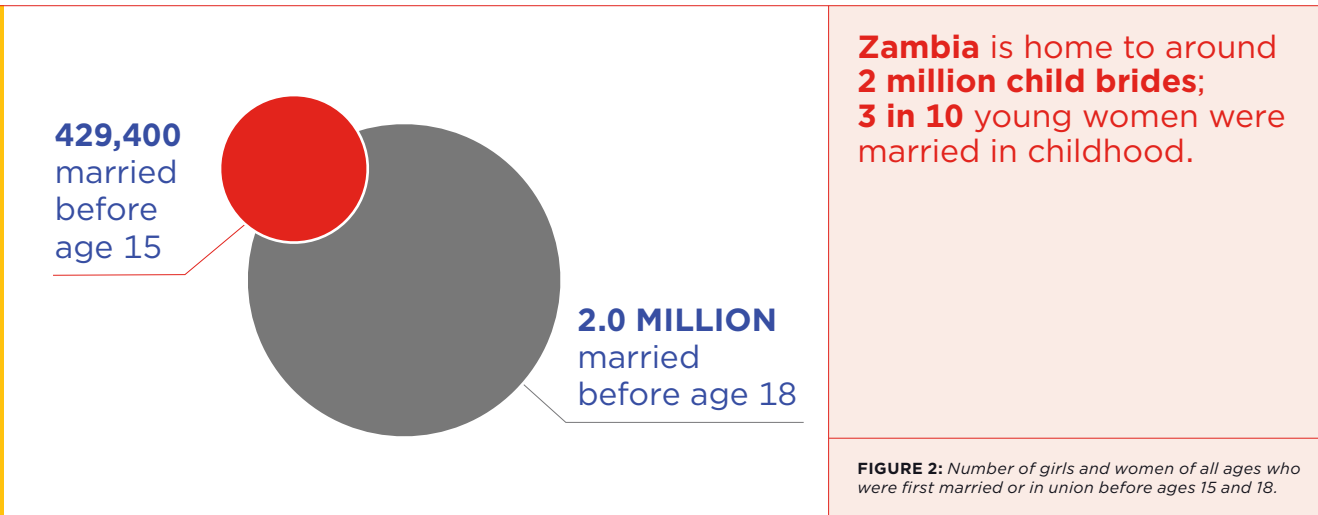>
> — *Dorica Phiri of Katete*

Additionally, 178 guidance and counselling teachers were trained in providing comprehensive sexual education to adolescent girls and boys in schools, and on school-related GBV/child safeguarding. This enabled the teachers to disseminate age-appropriate SRH information to adolescent girls and boys in 189 schools in the six programme target districts. They reached a total of 10,458 girls.

> " SRH not only plays an important role in preventing negative sexual and reproductive health among adolescents, but it also provides a platform to discuss human rights and gender to promote positive and non-violent relationships. Because of adolescent girls and boys participating in the guidance and counselling sessions and SRH through community-based outreach, 200 adolescent girls have avoided getting into child marriage as they report this case to the head teacher."
>
> — *Judith Zimba, District Guidance and Counselling Coordinator for Lundazi district*

A combination of strategies and approaches are used to ensure and accelerate learning for girls, including bursaries, transportation, alternative community education and digital learning. The support for girls' formal and informal education is also supported by community case management for early identification and referral to education for girls who are out of school, safe spaces where CSE is provided, guidance and counselling services, access to career clubs and support for menstrual hygiene management.

Through the programme, 10,713 adolescent girls were enrolled in formal and informal education and helped to stay there. Of these girls, 3,748 in Katete and Senanga transitioned from primary to secondary education. Another 1,279 girls aged 10–19 years were identified through community

429,400 married before age 15

2.0 MILLION married before age 18

Zambia is home to around **2 million child brides**; **3 in 10** 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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case management outreach services as being at risk of child marriage and they were helped to access Government bursaries for educational support, with their families linked to social cash transfers. Recognizing that girls struggle to regularly attend and stay in school if they do not have safe, hygienic sanitation pads and facilities which are essential for menstrual hygiene management, UNICEF supported the making of re-usable pads in 50 schools (25 schools in Senanga and 25 schools in Katete), through which 2,388 re-usable pads were made and distributed to 1,194 adolescent girls. Other activities included training 100 teachers and 500 PTA members on menstrual hygiene management, and 10 schools were equipped with gender-segregated sanitation facilities (five schools in Katete and five schools in Senanga). Menstrual hygiene management interventions also applied a gender-transformative approach by engaging 415 boys in the making of re-usable sanitary pads, and breaking the stigma and taboos around menstruation in the menstrual hygiene management school clubs where one third of the members are boys.

> ❝ The topic I enjoyed from sexual and reproductive health is gender because it teaches us to be equal. Boys and girls can do the same things and I have learned that we must respect each other and that household chores have to be done by girls and boys."
>
> — *Monde Wamulume, 14, student at Maziba Primary School in Senanga*

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Resistance to providing adolescent boys and girls with comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in schools remains a challenge in most of the communities where the programme is being implemented. Safe spaces have not adequately involved community members, families, and parents so that that they can appreciate the importance of safe space and their aim of empowering girls and boys in ending child marriage and teen pregnancy. To mitigate this, the programme continued to use radio programmes to explain the importance of SRH and emphasis is placed on the age appropriateness of the CSE content.

More girls are being enrolled and retained at secondary school level thanks to the free secondary school education policy implemented by the Government during the year, despite the limited number of classrooms and teachers. However, many parents are not able to meet other school requirements such as uniforms, books and shoes, as free education covers only tuition or fees.

In 2023, the programme and partners will streamline the work of community action groups to continue supporting families to access CDF and building their capacity to increase their advocacy role for the allocation of bursary fees for adolescent girls at risk of child marriage so as to support retention into education. The community action groups will also be supported to strengthen family access to economic opportunities under the CDF. The programme will focus on supporting schools to set up child safeguarding measures, including developing guidelines and orienting schools' heads and learners on child safeguarding and safe reporting. The capacity of stakeholders in the four new programme districts from 2022 on data and reporting using the KOBO tool will also be strengthened.

The programme will also prioritize integrating parenting classes for adolescents in schools by building consensus through community dialogues on the importance of addressing child marriage and teen pregnancy, including sexual reproductive health and rights.

Enhancing the family and community environment

> " I think what we have seen is a positive response from the communities, the traditional leaders are involved, like I said they are putting sanctions, they are putting measures, they are educating their communities, they are not allowing what is not acceptable in those communities. For example, in eastern province, most traditional leaders will tell you that when a girl gets pregnant, the father is summoned together with the mother, and now we see parents fighting teen pregnancy themselves by having conversations with their children, so you can see that the communities are mobilizing to report on child marriages because now they understand."
>
> *— Traditional leader*

The programme made progress with increasing the engagement of boys and men in the six programme districts using gender-transformative and social and behaviour change approaches that promote healthy relationships, positive masculinities and gender equality. In 2022, 17,450 boys and men were reached by 154 trained coaches with gender-transformative messages focusing on promoting positive relations and gender equality.

The Coaching Boys into Men (CBIM) initiative used football to educate and raise awareness among adolescent boys and young men aged 10–24 years on issues surrounding sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence. This ensured that they develop into responsible men, especially in becoming non-violent partners and fathers. The CBIM is a 12-week programme to promote positive masculinities through sports, including dialogues on issues such as what it means to be a boy/man, who is a real boy, respecting girls and respecting oneself.

Voices from the Coaching Boys Into Men sessions

One of the session leaders in Katete's Katuila community says: "Football matches help us bring boys from the community together. This gives us an opportunity to talk to boys about how to live in the community. We sensitize the boys on the dangers of child marriages and other GBV-related lessons which we get from the 12 conversation cards that we use. We believe this is an effective way to get the boys' attention and inculcate good morals in them since they are always eager to listen to what the coach says."

This is demonstrated by the experience of Nalumino Nathan. Nathan is in Grade 8 at Namaenya Primary School. He has participated in all the 12 CBIM sessions and notes that "under CBIM, I learned the importance of respecting a girl, as well as the significance and side effects of Internet. Before starting to attend CBIM sessions, I had less respect for girls until my coach spoke to me that both boys

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and girls deserve equal respect. I still see a big number of friends that still do not respect girls. I want to be engaging them so that they too can do like I do."

Another graduate of CBIM, Jonah Lui-Namabunga from Namabunga Secondary School of Lipuwe ward participated in all 12 and said, "Under CBIM, I learned of the respect that I need to accord the females in our communities. I learned that I should not be using insulting language to females. I have learned that I should desist from marrying early."

"My name is Laitani Phiri, I am 39 years old. I come from Kafuma village, a coach in Kasambandola ward, Kambila CWAC. After getting trained in CBIM in 2021 with support from UNICEF, in 2022, I recruited 25 boys aged between 9–14 and 25 boys aged 15–18. Out of the 50 boys, 45 boys successfully graduated in all the 12 sessions. My experience coaching the boys into men was rewarding. From my group, 13 boys went back to school; all are at Kambila primary school. There have been some notable changes in the boys because 10 boys, who are about 17 years old, have delayed marrying, while other changes include respect for female teachers and participating in chores in their homes."

"My name is Petersen Banda, I am 17 years old from Chinziri village. I was recruited into CBIM in 2022. I am in Grade 5 at Kambila Primary school. The group has helped me to stay in school and also to show respect to women and girls. I equally participate in chores at home that are perceived to be female chores. Apart from that, I also educate my friends even though others receive the information with mixed feelings since they think we are peers, while others learn and change their attitude towards women and girls. If I was not attending the sessions, probably by this time I would have stopped school and even have got married."

The Global Programme engaged families, communities, traditional and religious leaders, and other influencers in dialogue and consensus-building on alternatives to child marriage (including education), the rights of adolescent girls, and gender equality. In 2022, open dialogues were organized, involving 11,234 adolescents, parents, and community members (720 boys, 1,650 girls, 6,401 women and 2,463 men) to address negative gender norms which exacerbate child marriage, teenage pregnancy and toxic masculinities.

According to the gender norms survey conducted by Zambia Institute for Policy, Analysis and Research one of the respondents from the focus group

discussion for female community members in Liangati ward, Senanga district, said: "discussions with parents and children on ending child marriage have been taking place in the community. People's perceptions and attitudes towards child marriage have tremendously changed. Most parents are now more willing to keeping their children in school than forcing them into early-marriage."

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Responsibilities for household chores such as cattle herding or farming are keeping boys and young men away from participating in CBIM sessions. Boys' parents have not been made aware of the CBIM interventions that the boys participate in, which most of the time affects the boys' participation as parents consider it as a waste of time or think that their boys are just playing football. As a result, the chores take precedence and boys are not allowed to participate as per the schedule. There is also inadequate follow-up support for the boys that have graduated from the CBIM sessions with other gender-transformative and alternative empowerment programmes to ensure that they transition as they delay marriage and implement the commitment from the knowledge and information acquired during the 12 CBIM sessions.

Strengthening systems

> " I think addressing gender dynamics that perpetuate gender violence will make schools safer and improve the educational experience for all."
>
> — *Doreen Phiri, District Guidance and Counselling Coordinator for Katete District*

The Global Programme continued to strengthen community-based case management and statutory case management to strengthen the child protection system. This is to enable the delivery of coordinated, good quality programmes and services that meet the needs of adolescent girls and their families. In 2022, community case management was scaled up in four districts which had the highest rate of child marriage, teen pregnancy and a low transition from primary to secondary education. There are now six districts implementing case management for ending child marriage. Some 1,244 CWACs (community volunteers) were trained and equipped to deliver community case management interventions.

The programme continued to strengthen formal (primary and secondary) and non-formal schools to provide good quality, gender-responsive education for adolescent girls, including CSE. Some 391 teachers (154 female and 237 male) were trained on giving personal, social, educational and vocational guidance and counselling services with the aim of keeping adolescent girls and boys in school. In turn, the teachers reached a total of 54,410 adolescents (31,988 girls and 23,422 boys) in 189 schools.

> " I feel confident to approach my guidance and counselling teacher whenever I have challenges at school or at home, for example when my parents are giving me too much work so that it affects my learning, I go to my guidance and counselling teacher who then talk to the head teacher, and they call my parent to come and discuss. This is helping a lot for me to remain in school. I like it because the manner the handle these cases without even my parents knowing that I reported the case."
>
> — *Weluzani Phiri X, 16, of Kapoce Day Secondary School*

The programme trained 50 staff in 35 health facilities to conduct school-based outreach services, delivering gender-transformative life-skills and SRH to 40,163 adolescent girls and boys, building their knowledge, skills and awareness on their rights, and connecting them to services.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Health facility outreach activities to schools and communities are being used to increase girls' access to SRH services and information. However, the education system remains against allowing adolescent girls and boys to access family planning services as the education policy does not allow provision of these services in schools. The programme will continue to strengthen referrals from school to health services for accessing age-appropriate family planning services.

Building partnerships

The Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, with support from UNICEF, is implementing a cash plus nutrition pilot scheme. The 1,000 Days Social Cash Transfer (SCT) is targeted at making the SCT programme more sensitive to the nutrition needs of pregnant and breastfeeding women and children under 2 years old. During a period of review, the child protection section worked closely with the social policy and research section (SPnR) on a way of ensuring community care is integrated into the SCT plus programme. The initiative targets vulnerable families in four SCT districts, focusing on the implementation of community case management/community care. This initiative will ensure adolescent girls at risk of teen pregnancy and child marriage are prioritized in the programming through cash and care support to the family. The partnership has resulted in SPnR providing funding to strengthen the ministry's capacity to implement case management for the SCT. This has also resulted in a partnership with the Social Workers Association of Zambia to provide technical support in the SCT 1,000 days pilot districts. It has strengthened the association's capacity to implement a community case management approach, ensuring that vulnerable families are identified and linked to other protection services aside from cash transfers. This community approach complements addressing child malnutrition and families' gender dynamics. The partnership was expected to begin in the first

Xxx

quarter of 2023. This will scale up interventions on addressing child marriage to four more districts through cross-sectoral programming.

Facilitating supportive laws and policies

> " If a person wants to get married, as a headman, I have to see the birth certificate and compare it with the information in my village register to see whether the date of birth is corresponding with the age of the person on the birth certificate and the village register to ensure that the person being married is not a child. If the years are different and the age is below 18, I don't allow that marriage to proceed."
>
> *— Arson Phiri Headman from the Kagoro Community of Katete*

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The Global Programme made steady progress towards supporting the Government to develop policies and legal instruments addressing child marriage. A key achievement was the Children's Code, enacted in August 2022. This has incorporated international and regional human rights standards including, but not limited to, prohibiting any facilitation of child marriage and strengthening the statutory response for children in need of care and protection, including children already married.

Furthermore, efforts were made to strengthen the prevention of, and response to, violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect through the finalization of the national child safeguarding framework and the national child participation framework, as well as aligning the Statutory Case Management Handbook for the Children Code to support social welfare officers to respond to cases of children at risk of significant harm, including guidance notes on addressing cases of VAC and GBV.

The National Volunteer Policy was endorsed by the Cabinet to support community volunteers who play a critical role in implementing child marriage interventions, together with the Social Workers Association of Zambia Law which was adopted by the Parliament in April 2022. Concentrated efforts were made jointly by UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund (UNPFA) to ensure that technical and financial support provided

during the review of the National Gender Policy and its implementation plan reflect Government commitment to address gender inequalities and girl empowerment with a gender-transformative lens.

UNICEF and UNPFA also contributed to a section on ending child marriage in the national gender policy, and in subsequent strategies to prioritize social protection, access to gender-sensitive sexual and reproductive health and rights and education for adolescent girls and boys. UNFPA provided technical and financial support to the Government to finalize and endorse the national advocacy strategy on advancing CSE in Zambia.

The Global Programme made steady progress to scale up from the two pilot districts of Senanga and Katete to the four districts of Lundazi, Chama, Sesheke and Mwandi in the western and eastern provinces. The six districts were supported to develop and implement district-specific multisectoral plans with an integrated package of education, health and social welfare services. Further efforts were made to support the districts to develop agreed indicators to track programme progress and achievement. The Global Programme also developed a KOBO tool to support data entry and to enable the use of district data to improve the quality of interventions.

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.

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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 Zambia*
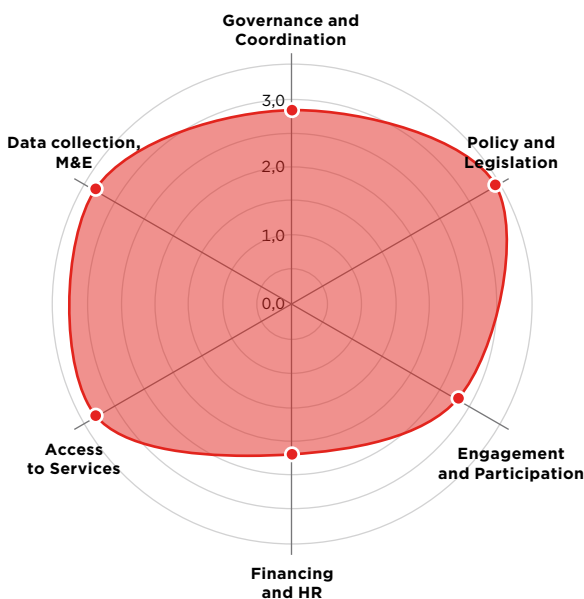
Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

There are no mechanisms for cross-sectoral funding, which poses a challenge for other sectors in obtaining funds from district social welfare offices. This challenge was mitigated by allowing social welfare to coordinate

and disburse the expenditure on behalf of the other sectors, with health and education submitting requests for funding based on activities on the joint workplan.

Generating and applying data and evidence

The Global Programme provided capacity-building and technical support for the Zambia Institute for Policy Analysis and Research (ZIPAR) in order to generate and use evidence on what works to end child marriage. UNICEF and UNFPA helped ZIPAR in the design and implementation of data-collection (questionnaire and instrument design, training and ethics protocols, and fieldwork protocol) and data analysis (including methodology and interpretation of results).

Preliminary analysis revealed several outcomes.

- Community members have responded positively to the interventions, saying that traditional leaders had influenced the removal of harmful practices from traditional ceremonies.
- Traditional leaders continue to play an active role in preventing child marriages and teenage pregnancies, with chiefdoms continuing to implement punitive measures for parents involved in child marriages.
- Girls below the age of 18 that marry, mostly have husbands who are older than 18 (on average, five years older).
- These men were known to the girls prior to the marriage and most girls were consulted and consented to the marriages.
- Community members increasingly support girls' education as they believe it reduces child marriages and teenage pregnancies.
- Community members also believed that a family's future is made more secure by educating a girl, as girls always remember to look after their families.

In addition, districts were supported to reflect on data from health, education and social welfare systems on child marriage and teen pregnancy and to strengthen project-based data systems. Social welfare data systems are still weak and project-based data systems are also in need of ongoing capacity-building support.

end
child
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