

BANGLADESH

end
child
marriage

A voice. A chance. A future.

COUNTRY PROFILE

2022



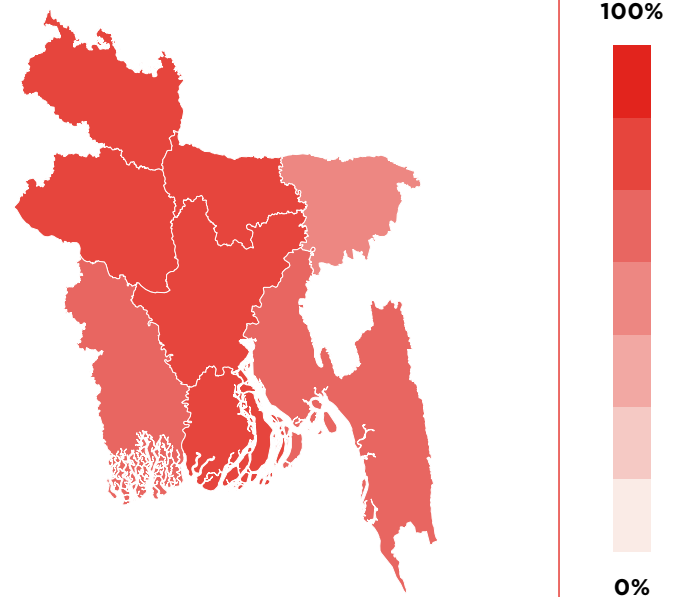
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“ My wife was passionate about studying, but she did not get the chance to continue. After the programme I have realized this, and I try my best to reduce my wife’s workload and let her study again.”

— Babla Mia, 25, Gaibandha

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 legal status of any country or area or the delimitation of any frontiers.

The global context

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

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

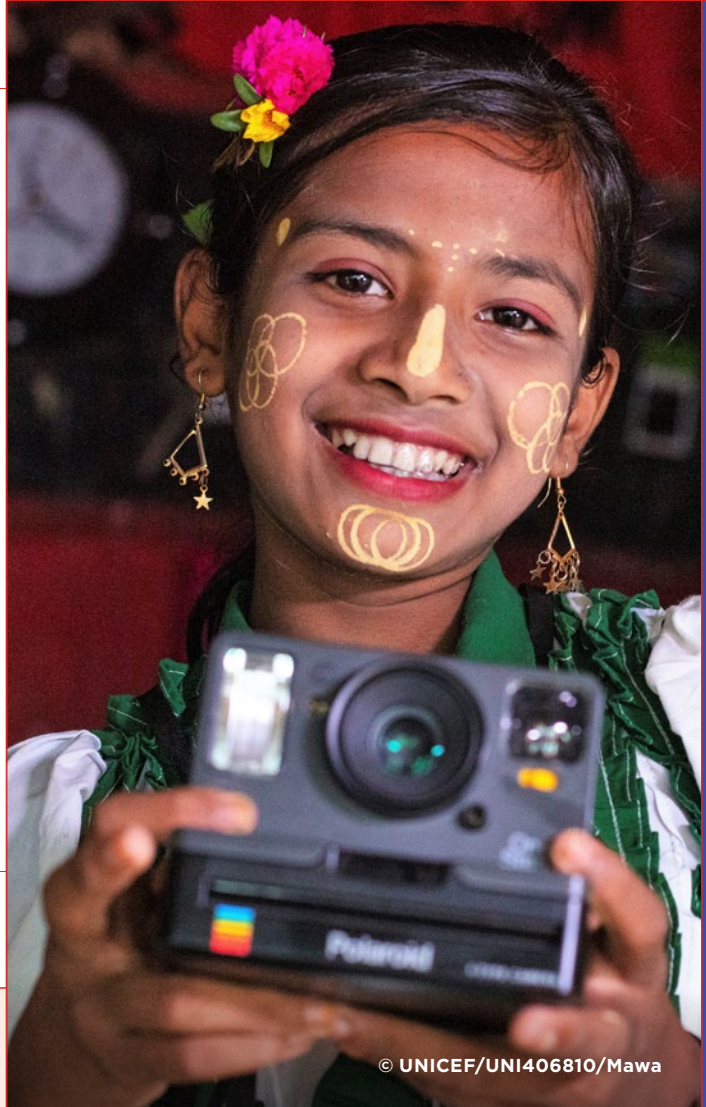
Global advocacy and dialogue

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

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

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

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



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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.

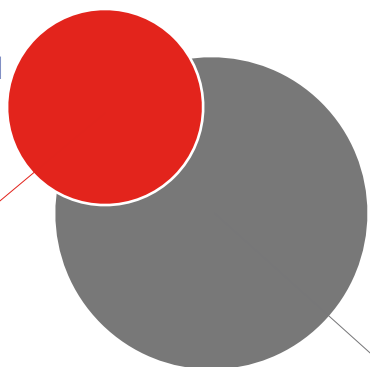
The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) tailored the life-skills education curriculum to meet the needs of married girls, focusing on assertive communication, gender equality and family planning. As a result 9,818 adolescent girls, including 3,355 who were married, received gender-transformative sexual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

“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

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. Alarming, 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.

“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,

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.

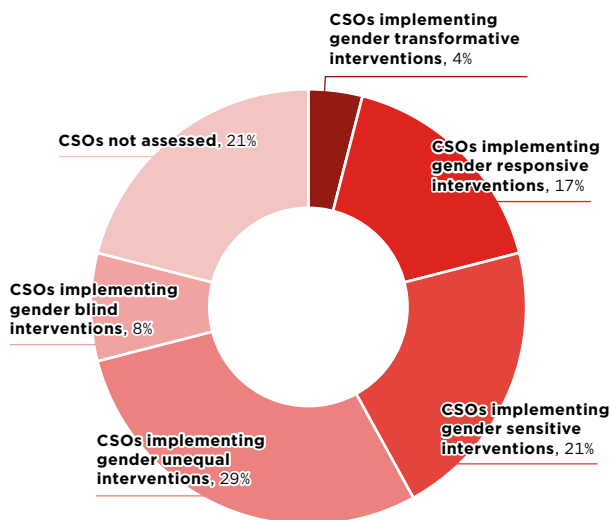
The Global Programme also established links with local organizations that provided referral services to more than 240 adolescent girls from vulnerable families and communities to complete training on income-generating skills including tailoring and hand embroidery.

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

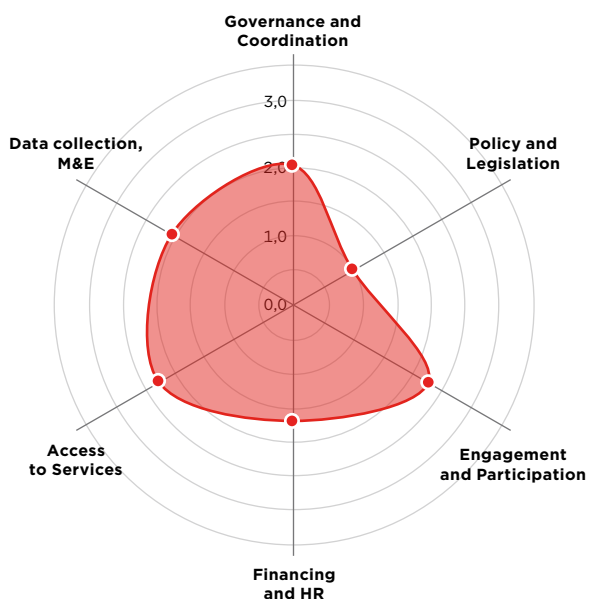
Intermediate Outcome	Sub-Domains	Score
Governance & Coordination	A1: Political Commitment	✓
	A2: Coordination structures	✓
	A3: National Action Plans	✓
Policy and Legislation	B.1: Legislation, policies and implementation mechanisms	✓
Engagement and participation	C1: Independent complaint mechanism exists 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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COUNTRY PROFILE

2022

