

SIERRA LEONE

end
child
marriage

A voice. A chance. A future.

COUNTRY PROFILE

2022



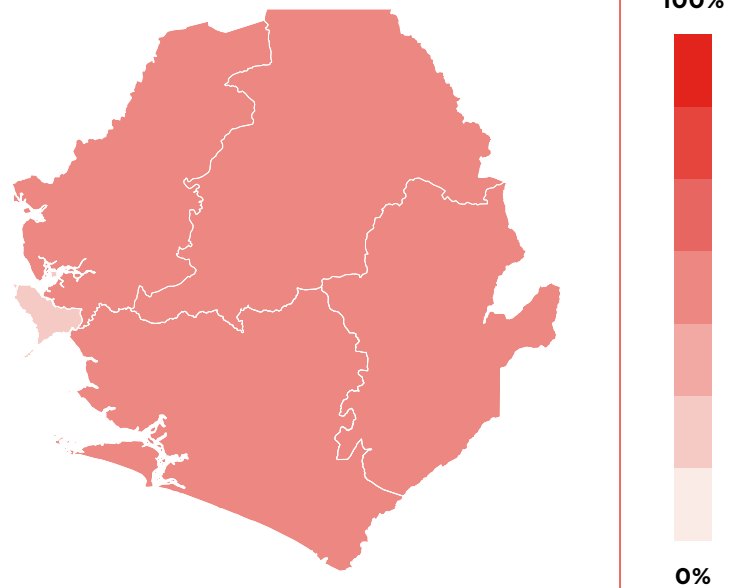
© UNICEF/UNI229285/Tremeau

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

The global context

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

Ending child marriage is a global priority:

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

Global advocacy and dialogue

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

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

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

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

Child marriage country context

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.



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.

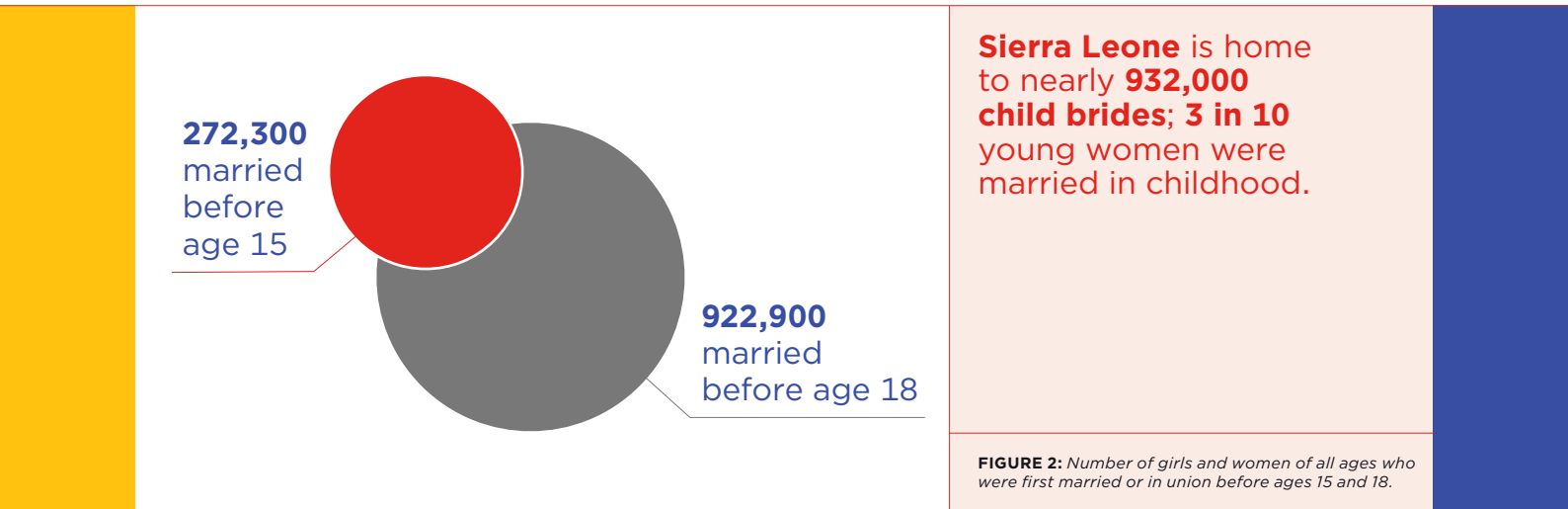
Tablets were provided in safe spaces in three of the districts to pilot innovative teaching methods and inclusivity. These were successfully used to advance life-skills sessions for adolescent girls. The tablets have allowed the mentors to utilize innovative teaching and learning materials such as recordings 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





© UNICEF/UNI229264/Tremeau

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,



© UNICEF/UN067472/Phelps

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.

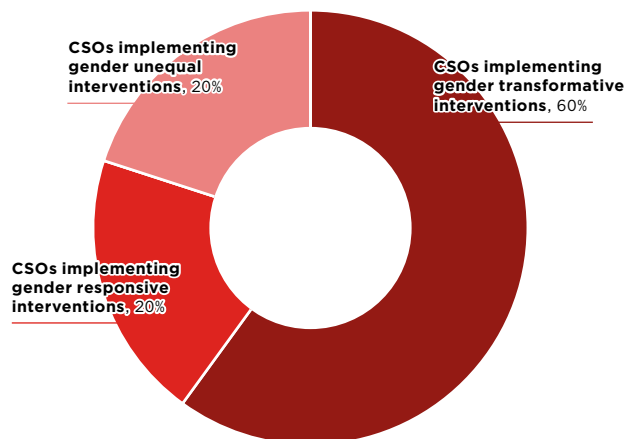
Addressing GBV and SRH requires a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach and sustainable action requires continuing coordination between all relevant ministries, departments, agencies and stakeholders. Efforts to increase engagement and involvement at community, state and national levels.

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.

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

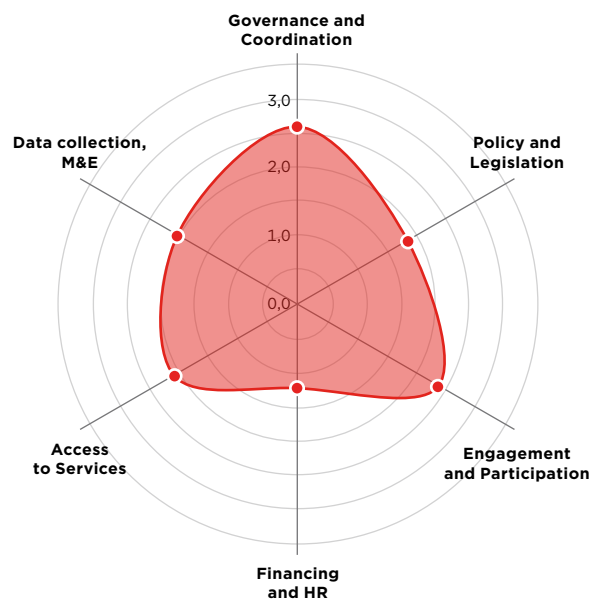
Intermediate Outcome	Sub-Domains	Score
Governance and Coordination	A1: Political Commitment	✓
	A2: Coordination structures	✓
	A3: National Action Plans	✓
Policy and Legislation	B.1: Legislation, policies and implementation mechanisms	✓
Engagement and Participation	C1: Independent complaint mechanism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



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.

end child marriage

A voice. A chance. A future.

COUNTRY PROFILE

2022

