

PHASE III

Programme Document
(2024 - 2030)

UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme
to End Child Marriage



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August 2023

Programme Document for Phase III of the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage

Programme title: UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage

Joint programme outcomes: Adolescent girls, including the most marginalized girls, in countries targeted by the Global Programme, fully enjoy their childhood free from the risk of marriage; they experience healthier, safer and more empowered life transitions, including making choices about their education, livelihood, sexuality, relationships and marriage, and sexual reproductive health (including childbearing) as:

- Adolescent girls continue to become more empowered to use their voice, make choices and exercise their agency supported by changes in gender and social norms that fuel the acceptability of child marriage.
- Adolescent girls, their families and communities have access to resources and opportunities, are supported by systems that improve their health, education, and safety and address poverty and economic insecurity as two key drivers of child marriage.
- Government commitment strengthens systems across sectors and levels to provide gender-responsive and multisectoral services, and to implement laws and policies that align with human rights standards.

SDG Goal 5, target 5.3: Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation.

Programme duration: 2024–2030

Anticipated start/end dates: 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2030

Fund management option(s): Pass through

Managing or administrative agent: UNICEF (if/ as applicable)

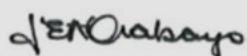
Total estimated budget 2024-2027*:

USD 170,952,982

*Total estimated budget includes both programme costs and indirect support costs

Sources of funded budget:

- United Kingdom: GBP 11.5 million (2024-2025)
- Canada: CAD 35 million (pipeline)



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Programme summary

Title of proposal	UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage
Country and region(s)	Global – in East and Southern Africa: Ethiopia, Mozambique, Uganda and Zambia; in the Middle East and North Africa: Yemen; in West and Central Africa: Burkina Faso, Ghana, Niger and Sierra Leone; and in South Asia: Bangladesh, India and Nepal
Total proposed budget	USD 170,952,982
Programme duration	1 January 2024 – 31 December 2030 (seven years)
Goal	<p>The primary goal of the Global Programme is to contribute significantly to the realization of SDG target 5.3, directly in the 12 Global Programme countries and indirectly in other countries influenced by the Global Programme methodology, technical resources, data, evidence and knowledge. The Global Programme aims to support governments and civil society partners, including women- and youth-led organizations and feminist movements, to accelerate action to end child marriage. At the heart of the theory of change is an adolescent girl-centred approach that aims to empower individual adolescent girls to make decisions about if, when and whom to marry, within a web of support that involves her family, the community (including boys and men), service providers, society and public structures, institutions, systems and services, laws and policies.</p> <p>Grounding this work in a gender-transformative approach, the intended impact of the programme is that adolescent girls, including the most marginalized girls, in countries targeted by the Global Programme, fully enjoy their childhood free from the risk of marriage; they experience healthier, safer and more empowered life transitions, including making choices about their education, livelihood, sexuality, relationships and marriage, and sexual reproductive health (including childbearing).</p>
Relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), UNFPA's and UNICEF's Strategic Plan Outcome Areas	<p>SDG Goal 5, target 5.3: Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation.</p> <p>UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022–2025</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Outcome 3: By 2025, the reduction in gender-based violence and harmful practices has accelerated.→ Output 2 Quality of care and services: By 2025, strengthened capacity of systems, institutions and communities to provide high-quality, comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and services, including supplies, as well as essential services to address gender-based violence and harmful practices.→ Output indicator 2.12 Adolescent and youth-responsive service provision: Proportion of countries with national standards for the provision of sexual and reproductive health services to adolescents aged 10–19 years.

- **Output 3 on Gender and Human Rights:** By 2025, strengthened mechanisms and capacities of actors and institutions to address discriminatory gender and social norms to advance gender equality and women’s decision-making.
- **Output indicator 3.4 Strengthening social movements:** Proportion of countries where a strong social movement/s is advocating for tackling harmful social and gender norms, stereotypes and discriminatory practices that support the achievement of the transformative results.
- **Output indicator 3.5 Promoting positive masculinities:** Proportion of countries with a functional national mechanism to engage men’s and boys’ organizations/networks/ coalitions promoting positive masculinities that actively advocate for achieving the transformative results.
- **Output 6 Adolescents and Youth:** By 2025, strengthened skills and opportunities for adolescents and youth to ensure bodily autonomy, leadership and participation, and to build human capital.
- **Output indicator 6.1 Operationalizing in-school comprehensive sexuality education (CSE):** Number of countries that operationalized in-school CSE following international standards.
- **Output indicator 6.2 Operationalizing out-of-school comprehensive sexuality education (CSE):** Number of countries that operationalized out-of-school CSE following international technical and programme guidance.
- **Output indicator 6.4 Improving the skills of adolescent girls:** Number of marginalized girls, including girls with disabilities and girls affected by other core furthest-behind factors, reached by girl-centred programmes that build their life skills, health, social and economic assets.

UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022-2025

- **Goal area 3:** Every child, including adolescents, is protected from violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and harmful practices.
- **Result area 3.3:** Children, including those affected by humanitarian crises, benefit from the prevention of harmful practices.
- **Output indicator 3.3.2:** Number of people engaged through community platforms in reflective dialogue towards eliminating discriminatory social and gender norms and harmful practices that affect girls and women through UNICEF-supported programmes.
- **Output indicator 3.3.3:** Number of adolescent girls receiving prevention and care interventions to address child marriage through UNICEF-supported programmes.
- **Output indicator 3.3.4:** Number of countries implementing evidence-based, costed and funded action plans or strategies with monitoring and evaluation frameworks to end child marriage.

Geographical focus

Global

Key partners

Regional political structures, governments, civil society organizations and communities and development partners.

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Acronyms

ASRH	adolescent sexual and reproductive health
ASHRH	adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CRANK	Child Marriage Research to Action Network
CSE	comprehensive sexuality education
CSO	civil society organization
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
EU	European Union
FCDO	Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office
FGM	female genital mutilation
GBV	gender-based violence
Global Programme	UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage
GPSU	Global Programme Support Unit
GTA	Gender-Transformative Accelerator
HRBA	human rights-based approach
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IDP	internally displaced person
IFA	impact feasibility assessment
INGO	international non-governmental organization
MERL	monitoring, evaluation, research and learning
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
NGO	non-governmental organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
RCT	randomized controlled trial
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SBC	social and behaviour change
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SGBV	sexual and gender-based violence
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SOGIE	sexual orientation and gender identity and expression
SRH	sexual and reproductive health
SRHR	sexual and reproductive health and rights
STAR	Strategic Technical Assistance for Research
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Group
WHO	World Health Organization

1. Introduction

This document presents the overall approach of the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage during Phase III from 2024 to 2030. The document is both a fundraising tool and a road map for programme development and implementation up to 2030. The document is based on several processes and consultations to reflect on the achievements and experiences during Phase II of the Global Programme and current challenges and opportunities; and to agree on Phase III strategic priorities for programming, advocacy and research, and monitoring, evaluation and learning. The consultations included: a Steering Committee meeting with donor representatives from 6–8 March 2023 in New York; consultations and meetings with partners in all Global Programme countries and regions; and the Global Programme Phase III Design Workshop, 1–5 May 2023 in Johannesburg. This document also includes the latest data on child marriage and a summary of the current evidence on effective approaches to end child marriage and is based on an analysis of what adolescents want for their well-being and the priorities identified by civil society organizations under the ICPD+30 review process.¹



1. For more information, see PMCH, *Join the #1point8 billion campaign*, n.d., <<https://pmnch.who.int/news-and-events/campaigns/adolescents2030>>; Rutgers, *The Hearth of the Matter: Embrace the reality of young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights today*, 2023, <<https://rutgers.international/resources/the-hearth-of-the-matter-embrace-the-reality-of-young-peoples-sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-righths-today/>>.

2. Context

This section sets the scene by looking at the changing global political, environmental, security, economic and social context; the latest data on child marriage and on adolescent pregnancy and motherhood; and the current state of evidence of what works and what does not to prevent child marriage and to support already married adolescent girls.

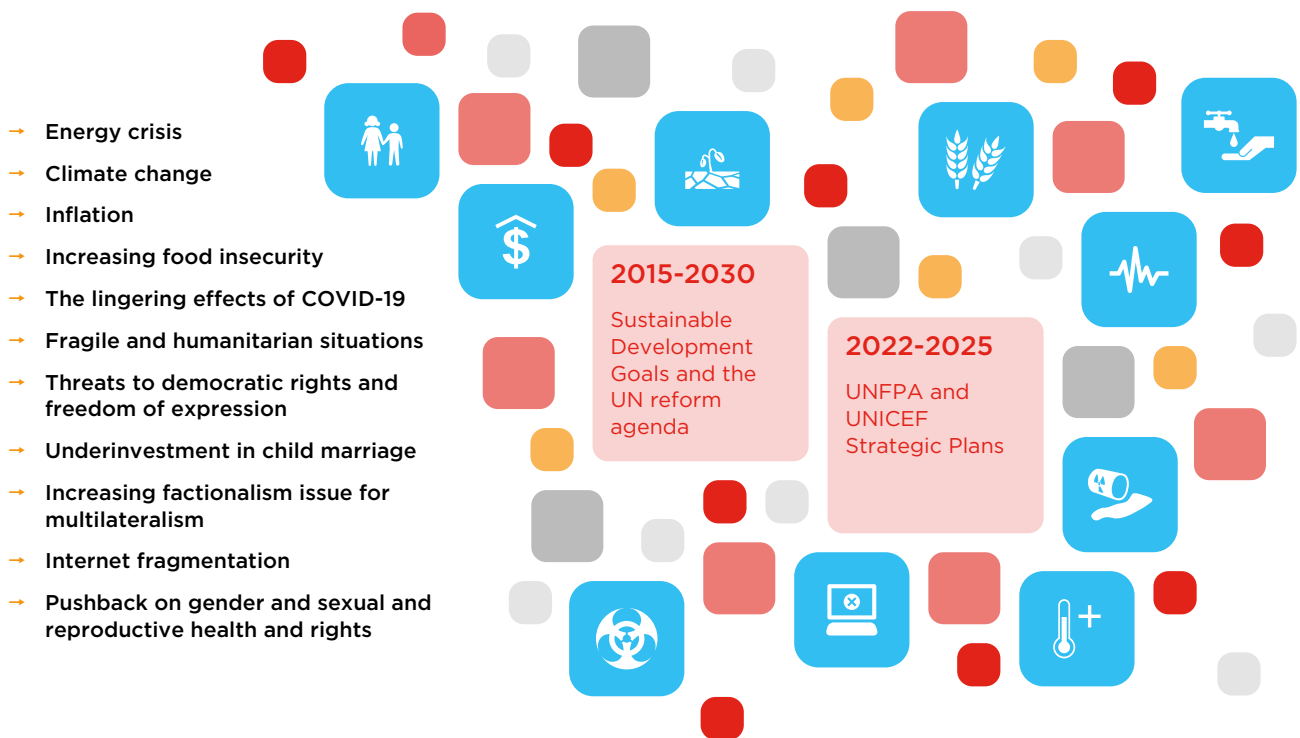
2.1 Three challenges

2.1.1 Polycrisis and megatrends of the twenty-first century

In recent years, the world has been rocked by a series of shocks and stresses: the most severe pandemic in a century; a major war in Europe, engaging nuclear powers; the worst global energy crisis since the 1970s; the fastest global inflation in

the twenty-first century; spiralling food insecurity; a record global debt burden; and increasingly visible effects of climate change, including for example devastating floods in Pakistan and droughts in East Africa.

Figure 1: A world affected by megatrends and polycrisis



The phenomenon has been described as a polycrisis (see Figure 1): the presence of multiple near-simultaneous shocks, with strong interdependencies among them, taking place in an ever-more-integrated world. The Russian invasion of Ukraine sparked a sharp spike in food and energy prices that has roiled global markets and led to rising global hunger. Food and energy have also been the leading components of global inflation, trig-

gering an aggressive rise in interest rates by each of the world's major central banks. Rising interest rates have driven up the value of the dollar against other currencies, hampering lower income countries' access to external financing and raising the burden of existing debts.²

The polycrisis is embedded in global megatrends shaping the twenty-first century and defining the

2. UNICEF, *Prospects for Children in the Polycrisis. A 2023 global outlook*, 2023a, <www.unicef.org/globalinsight/reports/prospects-children-polycrisis-2023-global-outlook>

progress towards sustainable development. In addition to climate change, these include demographic shifts, rapid urbanization, the emergence of digital technologies and rising inequality.

The polycrisis has radically changed the context in which the Global Programme operates. The interplay of conflicts, climate shocks, humanitarian emergencies, and the persisting effects of COVID-19 are putting at risk the gains made in eliminating child marriage: the COVID-19 pandemic cut the estimated number of averted cases of child marriage since 2020 by one quarter; a recent UNICEF analysis calculated that a tenfold increase in conflict-related deaths correlates with a 7 per cent increase in child marriage; and a 10 per cent change in rainfall due to climate change is associated with a 1 per cent increase in the prevalence of child marriage.³

Effects of climate shocks on child marriage

Climate change is a major megatrend and contributing factor to the polycrisis and at the top of the global policy agenda. This section summarizes the emerging evidence of the impact of climate shocks on child marriage.

Climate change and other humanitarian crises threaten the realization of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) by exacerbating child marriage and gender-based violence (GBV).⁴ Many of the areas with the highest rates of child marriage are also those facing the gravest environmental threats from climate change and ecological breakdown. Of the 32 countries globally classified as at extremely high risk of climate change, 29 have a high prevalence of child marriage (over 25 per cent) and of the 61 countries with a high prevalence of child marriage globally, 29 are considered as at extremely high risk of climate change and 19 high or medium-high risk.⁵ Efforts to adapt to climate change must address the link between environmental crises and SRHR, including the link to child marriage and GBV. Similarly, action to tackle child marriage should consider how local and global environmental crises may affect the drivers of child marriage.⁶



Amid such complex crises, the emerging evidence on the effects of climate change on child marriage provides valuable insights and the outlines of a path towards effective programmes to mitigate the effects on adolescent girls. A 2020 quantitative analysis drawing on data from 180 countries used economic, climatic and cultural variables to examine if and how climate change affects child marriage. The analysis concluded that climate change affects child marriage by increasing vulnerabilities and inequalities through a reduction in household incomes, gender discrimination and extreme poverty. According to this analysis, adolescent girls are facing the twin threats of gender inequality and poverty. The study found that climate shocks worsen known drivers of child marriage through the displacement of people from their homes; the loss of assets and opportunities for income generation; the disruption of education; decline in access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services; and the creation of settings in which sexual violence and the fear of sexual violence increase. The combination of these factors is pushing families to marry their daughters off early and threatens the realization of SRHR of adolescent girls.⁷

3. UNICEF, *Is an End to Child Marriage Within Reach? Latest trends and future prospects: May 2023 update*, 2023b, <<https://data.unicef.org/resources/is-an-end-to-child-marriage-within-reach/>>

4. UNFPA, *The Impact of the Climate Crisis on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights*, 2022a, <<https://esaro.unfpa.org/en/publications/impact-climate-crisis-sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-rights>>

5. UNICEF, *The climate crisis is a child rights crisis: Introducing the Children's Climate Risk Index*, 2021a, <<https://data.unicef.org/resources/childrens-climate-risk-index-report/>>

6. Pasten, R., et al., *Not a Dream Wedding: The Hidden Nexus Between Climate Change and Child Marriage*, 2020, <<https://econ.uchile.cl/uploads/publicacion/6e5a4a088041b583694ad85ae25948c4fe9443e8.pdf>>

7. Pasten et al., 2020; Pope, D. H. et al., 'What is the current evidence for the relationship between the climate and environmental crises and child marriage? A scoping review', *Global Public Health*, 2022, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2022.2095655>>.



2.1.2 Pushback against gender equality, democracy and human rights

Right-wing and anti-democratic trends in countries across the world are associated with opposition to gender equality and threats to previous gender equality policy achievements.⁸ This pushback against gender equality globally affects efforts to end child marriage. The promotion of gender-transformative approaches has encountered an increasing pushback against gender equality and the rights and empowerment of girls and women. This includes resistance against legislation to ban child marriage and to raise the age of consent and the emergence of punitive laws aimed at

criminalizing adolescent sexuality;⁹ opposition to the provision of contraceptives and other SRH services to sexually active unmarried adolescent girls or the roll-out of a comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) curriculum in schools, among other things. The opposition to gender equality, bodily autonomy and agency of adolescent girls extends from the legislative and policy level to systems and services, and to the community and family level. Pushback takes many forms and starts with the opposition to language related to sex, gender and human rights.

2.1.3 Slow decline in child marriage

Data show that we are nowhere near ending child marriage. At the current pace, ending child marriage would not be achieved for at least another 300 years, and nine million girls would still be marrying in childhood in the year 2030. Meanwhile, ongoing and overlapping crises create risky conditions for girls through interrupted education and income shocks caused by public health crises, protracted conflicts and natural disasters, or several of these at once. For example, it is estimated that there will be 10 million addi-

tional child brides over the course of this decade due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic alone. Moreover, progress to end child marriage seen globally over the last decade is uneven among regions and has mainly benefited adolescent girls from the richer quintiles, highlighting the need to redouble efforts to reach the poorest, uneducated, rural and most vulnerable girls. Against this backdrop, renewed ambition for acceleration of the Global Programme's results is essential.

8. UN Women, *Democratic backsliding and the backlash against women's rights: Understanding the current challenges for feminist politics*, 2020, <www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/06/discussion-paper-democratic-backsliding-and-the-backlash-against-womens-rights>

9. Partners in Law for Development India, *A case for differentiated legal responses to child, early and forced marriage and unions: Lessons from India for a Global Audience*, 2022, <<https://pldindia.org/advocacy/papers-and-articles/a-case-for-differentiated-legal-responses-to-child-early>>

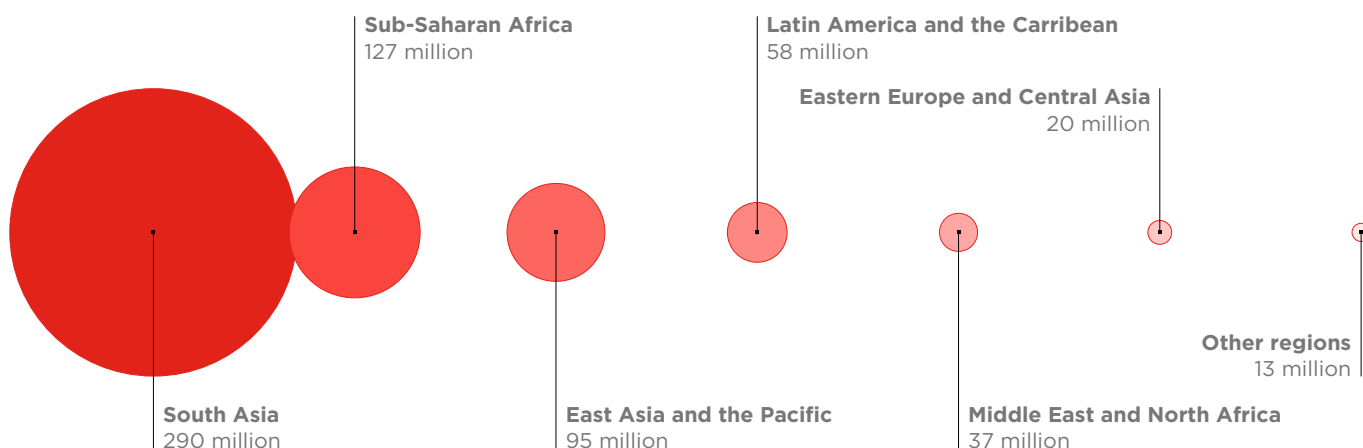
2.2 Recent trends in child marriage and bodily autonomy

2.2.1 Child marriage globally

Worldwide, 640 million girls and women alive today were married in childhood. South Asia accounts for nearly half of the global total number of child brides (45 per cent), followed by sub-Saharan Africa

(20 per cent), East Asia and the Pacific (15 per cent) and Latin America and the Caribbean (9 per cent) (see Figure 2).

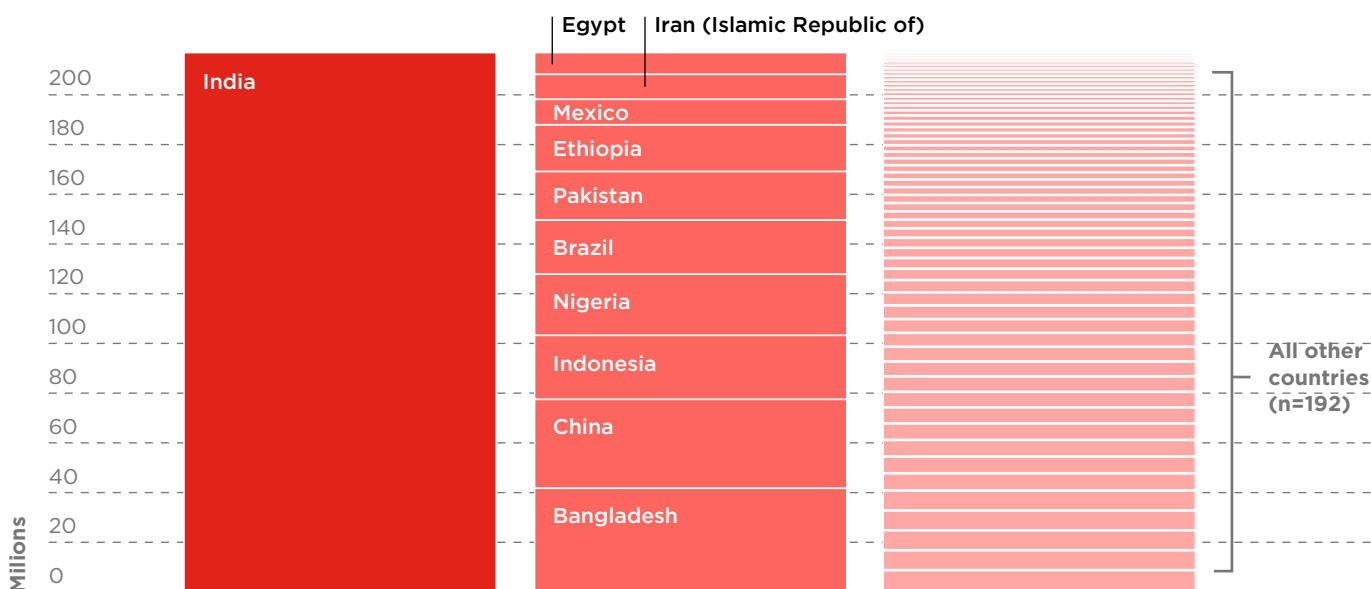
Figure 2: Global distribution of the number of girls and women first married or in union before age 18, by region¹⁰



India alone accounts for one third of the world's child brides. Another third of the world's child brides are concentrated in 10 countries (Bangladesh,

China, Indonesia, Nigeria, Brazil, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Mexico, Iran and Egypt),¹¹ with the final third of child brides distributed over 192 countries (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Number of girls and women first married or in union before age 18, by country¹²



^{10.} Note: Figures do not add up to the total due to rounding. Source: UNICEF, 2023b.

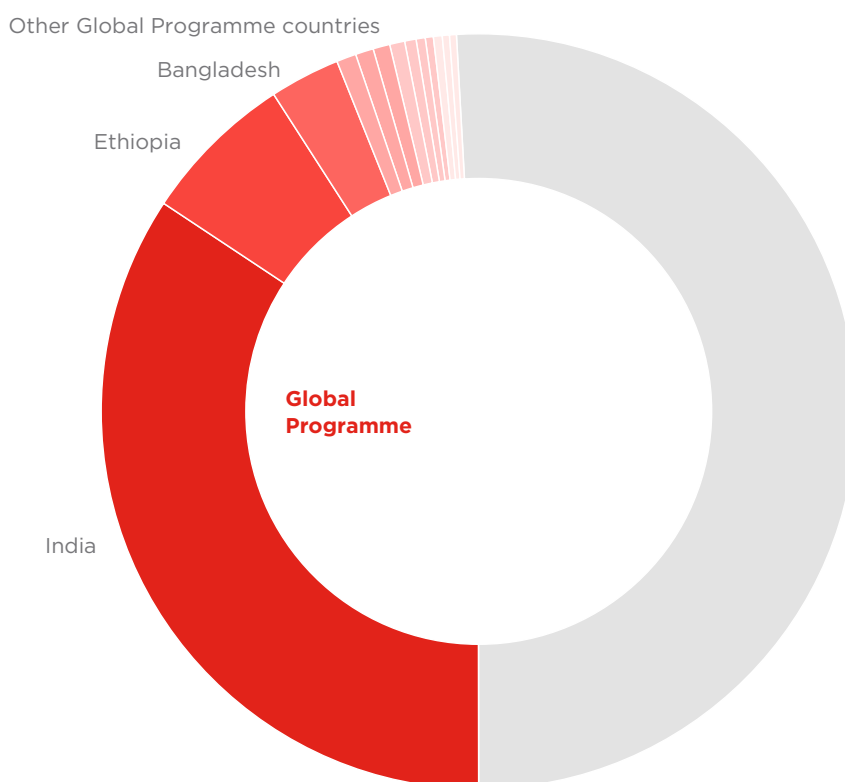
^{11.} This does not include China where the prevalence of child marriage is low, but – due to its population size – a large number of women married before the age of 18. For more information see Fan, S., Qian, Y., & Koski, A., 'Child marriage in mainland China', *Studies in Family Planning*, 53(1), 2022, pp. 23-42.

^{12.} UNICEF, 2023b.

The Global Programme targets 12 countries which are home to almost half of the world's child brides (300 million), including India, Bangladesh and Ethiopia which are among the top 11 highest-burden countries globally (see Figure 4). The target

countries of the Global Programme include countries with a high burden of child brides, those with a high prevalence of child marriage, and those with a combination of the two.

Figure 4: Proportion of child brides, out of the global total, in the countries targeted by the Global Programme¹³



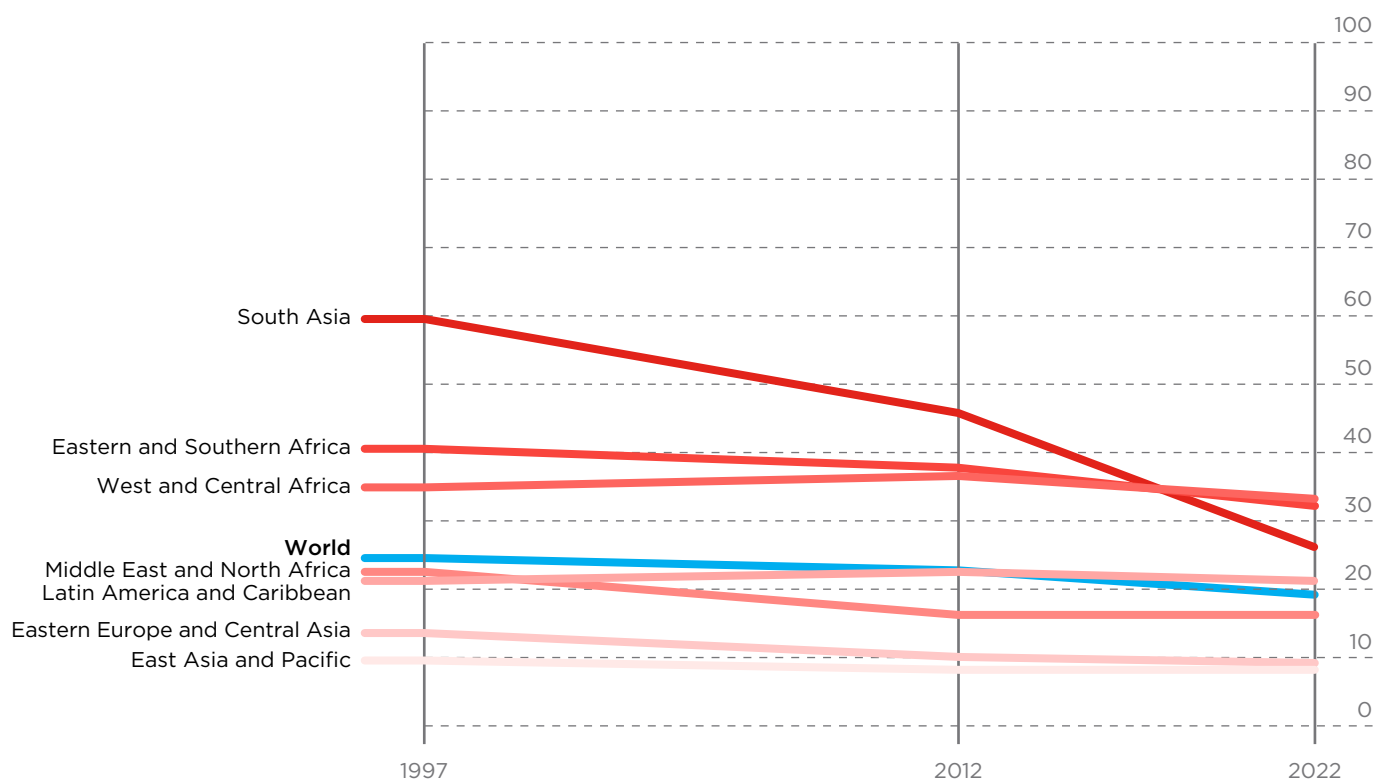
Child marriage is more common in rural areas, among poorer families, and among girls with the least education. Some geographic areas, including the Sahel, are home to especially high levels of child marriage that extend beyond national boundaries. In fragile states, the child marriage prevalence rate is 35 per cent compared to 19 per cent in the world as a whole.¹⁴

One in five girls are still married in childhood and the global prevalence of child marriage has dropped from 23 per cent to 19 per cent in the last 10 years. India has made the biggest contribution to this decline. In much of the world, the decline in child marriage has been very slow over time (see Figure 5), and the regional clusters shown in Figure 5 hide differences between countries where child marriage has declined and those where child marriage rates have stagnated.

¹³. UNICEF global databases, 2023.

¹⁴. According to the Revised Classification of Fragility and Conflict Situations for World Bank Group Engagement, fragile countries are defined as those with one or more of the following: (a) the weakest institutional and policy environment (as measured using a set of 16 criteria grouped into four clusters: economic management, structural policies, policies for social inclusion and equity, and public sector management and institutions), (b) the presence of a UN peacekeeping operation, since this reflects a decision by the international community that a significant investment is needed to maintain peace and stability, or (c) flight across borders of 2,000 or more per 100,000 population, who are internationally regarded as refugees in need of international protection, as this signals a major political or security crisis. Source: UNICEF, *Towards ending child marriage: Global trends and profiles of progress*, 2021b, <<https://data.unicef.org/resources/towards-ending-child-marriage/>>

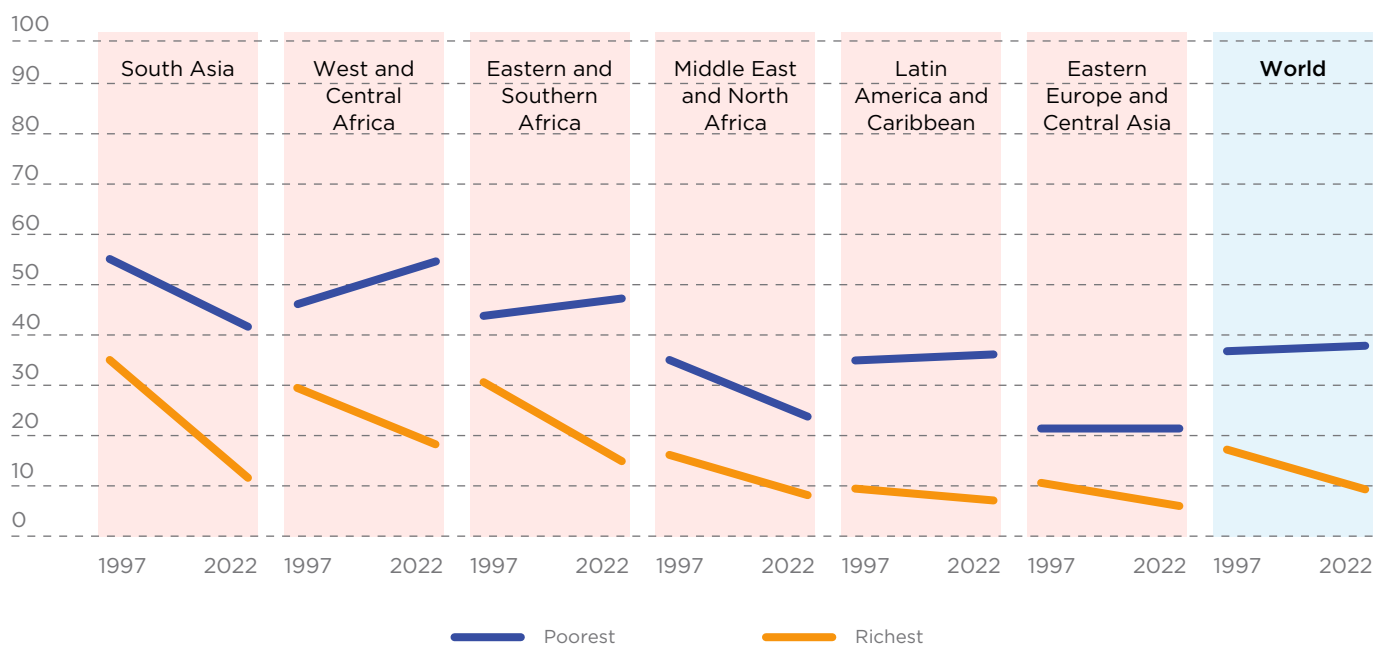
Figure 5: Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by region¹⁵



The overall global decline in child marriage has not benefited all girls equally. Girls from the richest households represent three times as many averted cases of child marriage as girls from the poorest households. In sub-Saharan Africa the gap

between the richest and the poorest quintiles has increased – with child marriage rates among the richest declining, while they are increasing among the poorest quintile (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by region and by wealth quintile¹⁶



15. UNICEF, 2023b.

16. UNICEF, 2023b.

In countries that have achieved the greatest success in reducing child marriage, the trend has often been accompanied by improvements in economic development and poverty reduction; access to employment, particularly employment opportunities for women; and better educational attainment for girls. Lessons from high-achieving countries demonstrate that progress on multiple fronts is necessary to give girls viable alternatives to child marriage. For example, education without employment opportunities can lead to a more educated cohort of girls who still marry in childhood. In the past, a large proportion of child brides had no education. Now, the prevalence rate has declined, but

a larger share of girl brides have secondary education which is partly due to the lack of job opportunities, and partly due to low rates of female labour-market participation in some countries and regions (such as in India, the Middle East, etc.).¹⁷

Progress is possible in many different scenarios – from those with a historically high level of child marriage which can see large-scale reductions, to those with lower prevalence nearing elimination of the practice. Many countries with large declines have not yet achieved marked declines in child marriage among the poorest. Equitable progress is rare.

Table 1: Different examples of progress to end child marriage ¹⁸

Large declines	Nearing elimination	Equitable progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Countries that began with a high prevalence of child marriage → Generally, these countries are not on track to eliminate child marriage by 2030 → Large declines in prevalence in some cases also correspond to large numbers of child marriages averted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Countries closer to the target of eliminating child marriage by 2030 → Smaller absolute declines, both in prevalence and number → Reaching elimination entails reaching the poorest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Unlike the global trend, these countries show progress among the poorest that is at least as strong as progress among the richest – gaps are either staying the same, or shrinking
Examples: Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India and Indonesia	Examples: Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India and Indonesia	Example: Eswatini

Overall global progress would need to be 20 times faster to eliminate child marriage by 2030 (see Figure 7). At the current pace, ending child marriage would not be achieved for at least another 300 years, and nine million girls would still be marrying in childhood in the year 2030. For the regional distribution of this harmful practice, the share of the child marriage burden in sub-Saharan Africa will grow as child marriage rates decline faster in other

regions of the world and demographic growth is increasingly concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa, while the rest of the world continues to age (see Figure 8). Overall, data show that we are nowhere near ending child marriage, and additional challenges lie ahead, as noted, with the prolonged effects of COVID-19, climate change, conflicts and other crises negatively affecting the prevalence of child marriage.

¹⁷. In India, for example, growing household wealth leads to a decline in women working outside of the home. In other words, middle class households are able to afford keeping women out of the workforce, while poorer households do not have that luxury. See ILO (n.d.), *Women's labour force participation in India: Why is it so low?*, <www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new_delhi/documents/genericdocument/wcms_342357.pdf>

¹⁸. UNICEF, 2021b.

Figure 7: Observed and projected percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18¹⁹

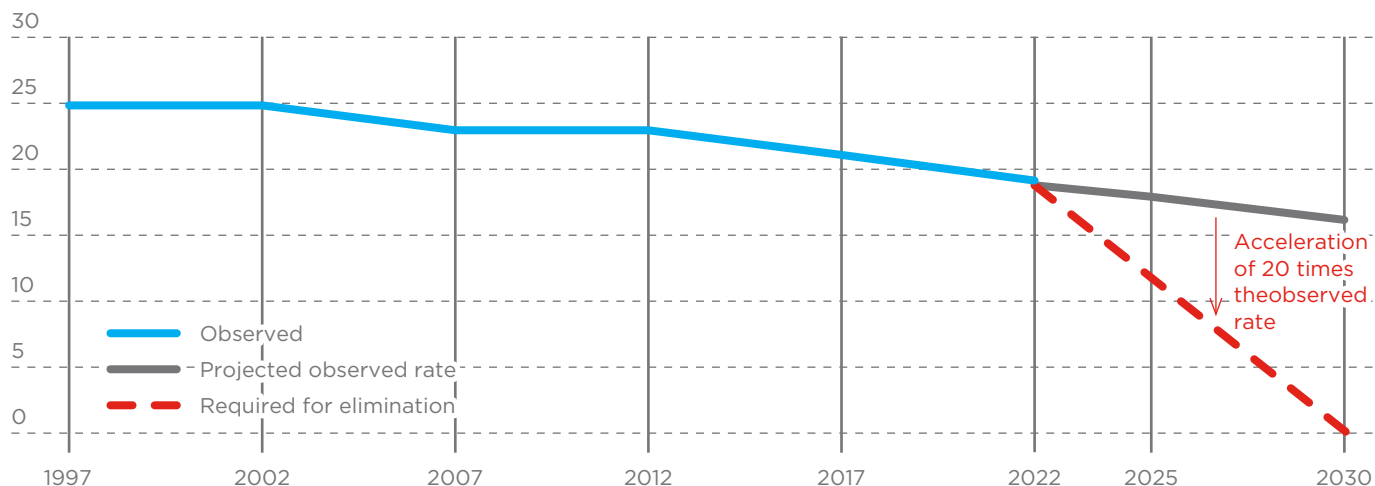
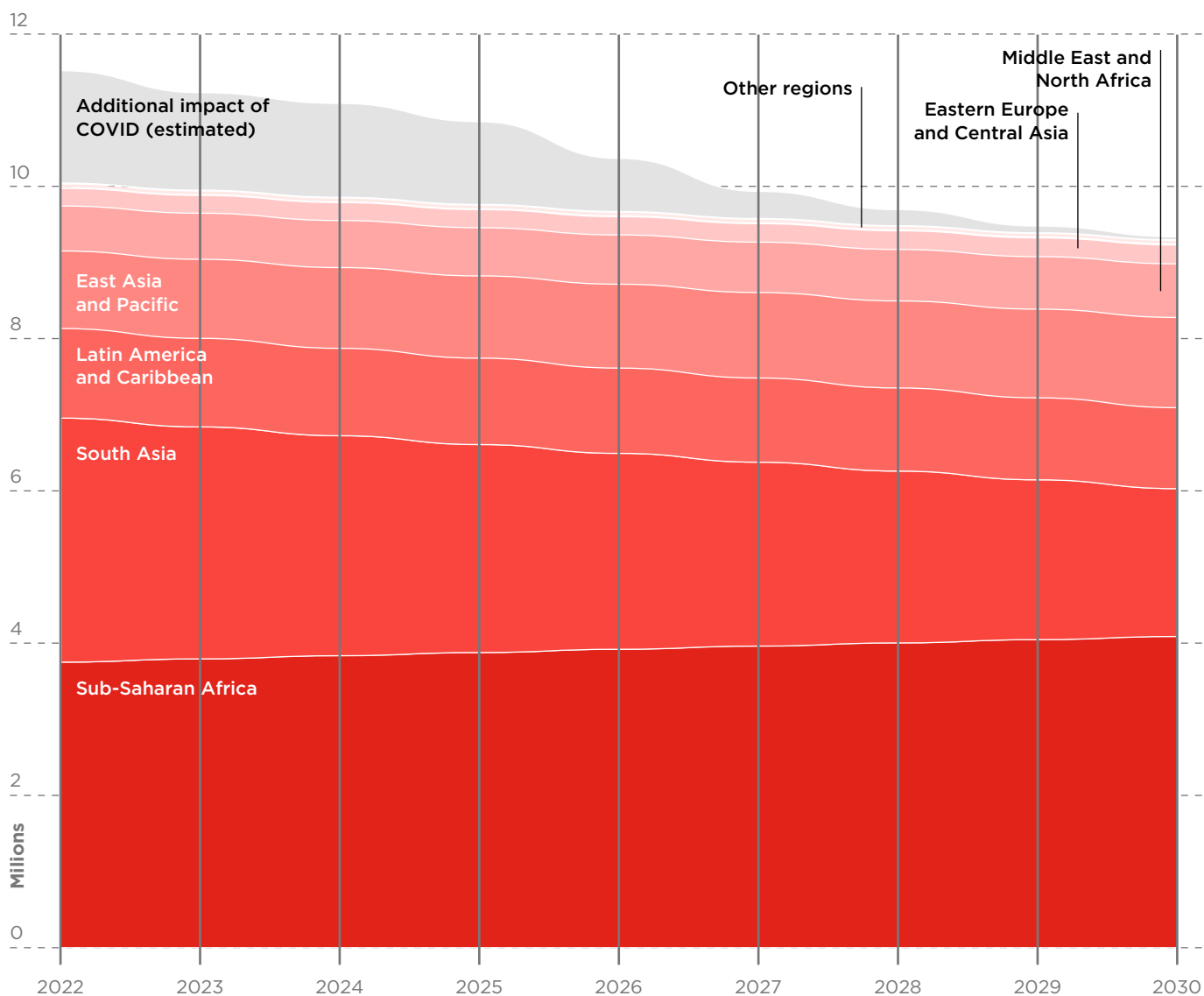


Figure 8: Projected number of girls under age 18 married per year, by region²⁰



19. UNICEF, 2023b.

20. Ibid.

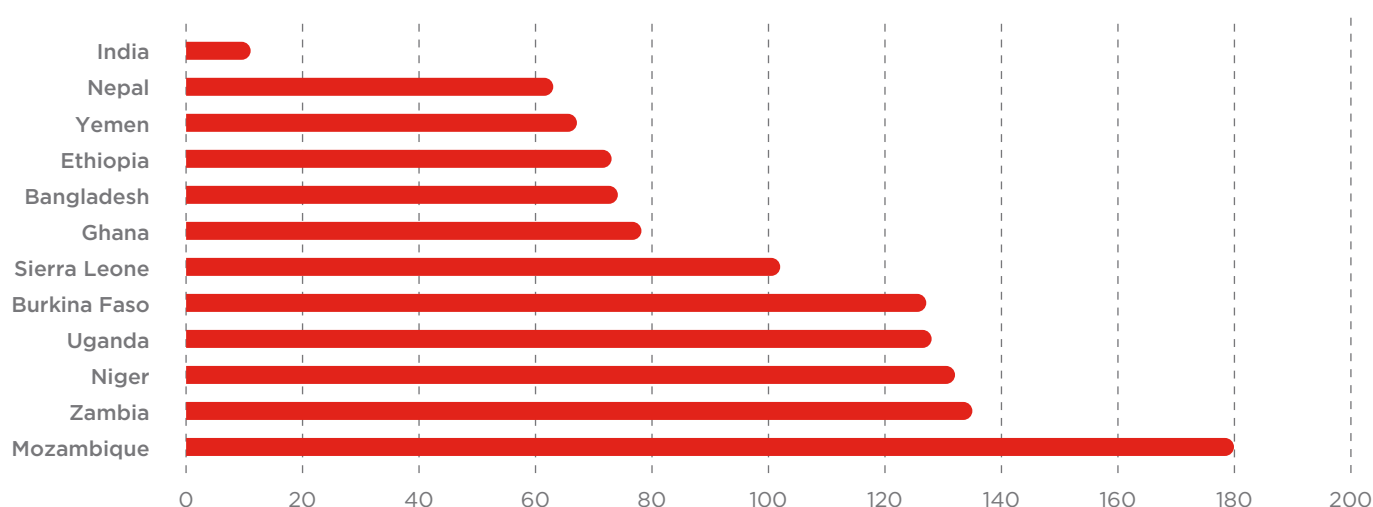
2.2.2 Motherhood in childhood

Adolescent pregnancy is both a driver and consequence of child marriage.²¹ The 2022 UNFPA report on Motherhood in Childhood provides important data that complement the child marriage statistics.²² The report examines trends in adolescent childbearing using techniques that focus on the most vulnerable girls, such as child mothers, girls with repeat adolescent childbearing, and births that occur in dangerously quick succession. In using these new measures, it uncovers the untold story of more than 50 years of adolescent childbearing in the world's low- and middle-income countries.

Each year, adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 years in low- and middle-income countries have an estimated 21 million pregnancies, nearly half of which – 10 million – are unintended. More than a quarter of those 21 million – an estimated 5.7 million – end in abortion, the majority of which occur in unsafe conditions.

Figure 9 shows the adolescent birth rate (per 1,000 girls aged 15–19 years) for the Global Programme countries. Adolescent birth rates are by far the lowest in India and highest in Mozambique.

Figure 9: Adolescent birth rate per 1,000 girls aged 15–19 in Global Programme countries²³



Across the globe, there are encouraging signs of declining levels of motherhood in childhood (17 years and younger) and in adolescence (19 years and younger). Nevertheless, in many ways the pace of decline has been alarmingly slow, often declining by only a few percentage points per decade, and has not kept pace with declines in total fertility.

The new measures reveal that the issue is not just about whether a girl gives birth in adolescence but if, when and how many births she experiences. Adolescent childbearing comprises three fundamental and interconnected fertility processes: (i) the timing of a first adolescent birth, (ii) the spacing between adolescent births and (iii) the quantity or total number of births to each adolescent mother.

This multifaceted process is most immediately shaped by factors such as the age of menarche and sexual debut, the frequency of sexual activity, the patterns of marriage and union formation, and the access to, and use and effectiveness of contraception. The majority of first births to girls aged 17 years and younger, in 54 developing countries with data, occur within marriage or cohabiting unions. More determinants – such as girls' education – are also critical to the process and include gendered social, economic, cognitive and psychological factors at the individual, peer, family and community levels. Additionally, broader norms, values, inequalities, economic forces, and national laws, policies and priorities shape the adolescent fertility landscape.

21. UNFPA, *State of the World Population Report, 2013*, <www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/EN-SWOP2013.pdf>

22. UNFPA, *Motherhood in Childhood: The Untold Story, 2022b*, <www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/MotherhoodInChildhood_report.pdf>

23. UNFPA, *State of the World Population Report, 2023a*, <www.unfpa.org/swp2023>

With a fuller understanding of the timing, spacing and quantity of the adolescent childbearing process – and eventually also of the direct and indirect factors behind them – policy and programming can better frame and target their approaches. Promising interventions to prevent adolescent pregnancy include components of asset building for adolescent girls, support for families and parents, CSE, health service provision, and community and policy engagement. More needs to be done to design,

implement and evaluate programmes that target the youngest starters and girls at risk of rapid and repeat adolescent births.

The Global Programme in Phase III can leverage adolescent pregnancy prevention programmes, strategies and policies to prevent and respond to child marriage as part of a comprehensive package of interventions in alignment with international standards.

2.2.3 Bodily autonomy

The concept of bodily autonomy is critical to understanding the ability of women and girls to exercise their rights and to make decisions and choices

over their bodies and lives. Bodily autonomy is essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).²⁴

Figure 10: Percentage of women aged 15 to 49 years who are married (or in a union), who make their own decisions on their health care, use of contraception, and sexual intercourse with their partners

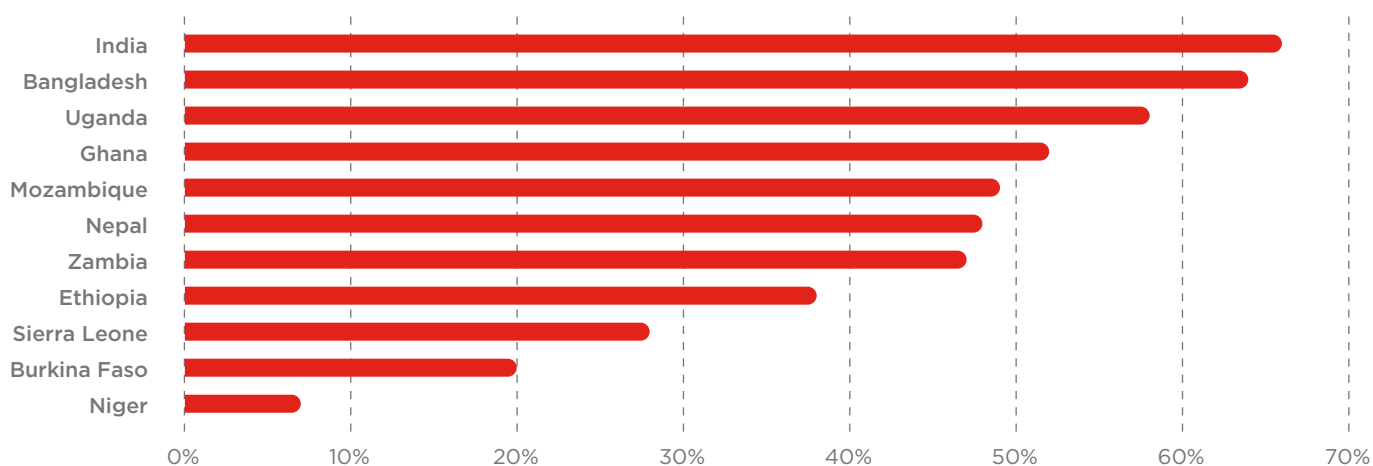


Figure 10 is based on data from UNFPA’s State of World Population 2023 and shows the percentage of married women aged 15 to 49 years who make their own decisions regarding health care, contraception and sexual intercourse. The graph gives an overview of the differences in the decision-making power of married women in different countries. It shows the significant differences in women’s decision-making ability related to SRH in the Global Programme countries. India and Bangladesh had the highest percentage of women who stated that

they made their own decisions regarding the three dimensions of care, contraception and sexual intercourse. The lowest percentages were reported from Niger and Burkina Faso. However, it is important to note that unmarried women and girls are not included in these data. This means the data do not tell us about the SRH decision-making ability of unmarried adolescent girls, especially those who are sexually active and trying to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancy and early childbearing.²⁵

24. UNFPA, *Women’s Ability to Decide: Issue Brief on Indicator 5.6.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals*, 2020a, <www.unfpa.org/resources/womens-ability-to-decide-issue-brief-indicator-561-sustainable-development-goals>

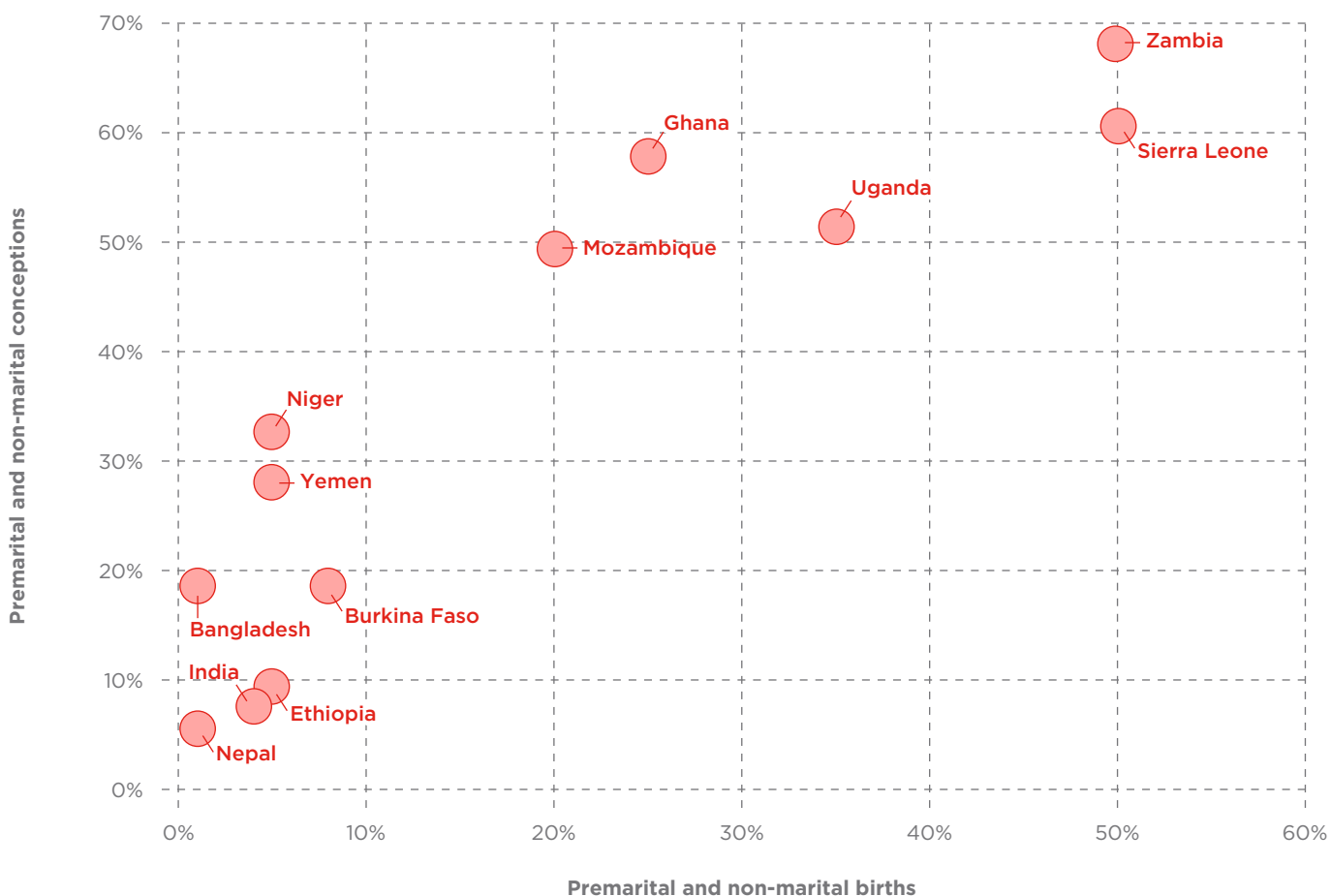
25. UNFPA, 2023a; UNFPA, 2020a.

Another piece of the bodily autonomy puzzle is the distinction between different scenarios related to marriage. The first relates to contexts where marriages are forced or arranged and are accompanied by bride price or dowry payments. In these contexts, premarital sexual relations are often avoided at all costs – including by marrying girls early. In such contexts, the idealized sequence of events starts with an arranged marriage, followed by the bride’s sexual debut, followed by pregnancy and childbirth to prove fertility. ‘Arranged marriage’ contexts are typical in certain countries in South Asia, the Middle East, the Sahel and parts of the Horn of Africa. In the second scenario, adolescent girls have considerable freedom to engage in premarital sexual relations and to self-initiate marriage or union. Sexual debut, pregnancy and (sometimes) childbirth are common before marriage or union. ‘Self-initiated’ contexts are common in much of sub-Saharan Africa (excluding the Sahel and much of the Horn of Africa). Of course,

there are many variations of these two ‘types’ of marriage, as well as differences between the idealized situation in a given context and the lived reality. Nevertheless, the distinction between arranged and self-initiated marriage has important implications for programming.

Figure 11 illustrates the differences between countries with arranged marriage, bride price or dowry and avoidance of premarital sexual relations on the one hand, and countries where premarital sexual relations are condoned and where marriages and unions are frequently self-initiated by adolescents on the other. Countries in South Asia, the Middle East, the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, where premarital and non-marital births and conceptions are relatively rare, are clustered in the lower left corner of the scatter plot. In much of the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, premarital and non-marital conceptions and births are much more common – these countries appear in the upper half of the scatter plot.

Figure 11: Premarital and non-marital conceptions and births among first births by age 18 in Global Programme countries²⁶



26. DHS data, calculations by UNFPA.

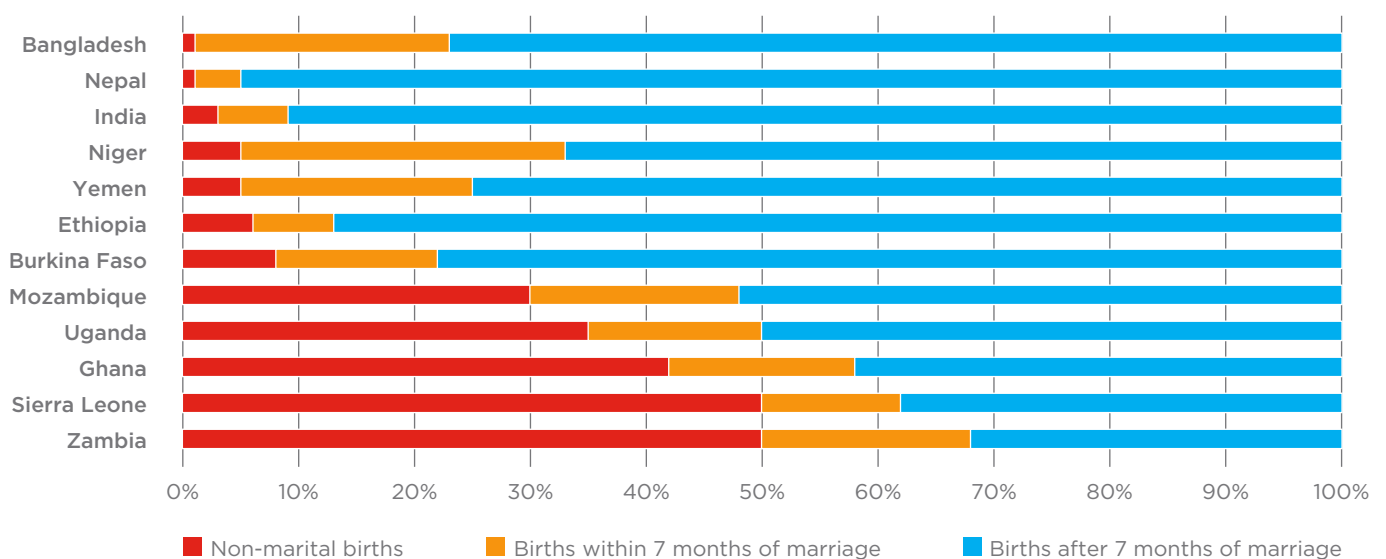


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A recent analysis prepared by UNSDG on child marriage and early childbearing confirms these patterns and shows very low rates of first births before age 18 outside marriage in South Asia, Yemen, Ethiopia and the Sahel, but up to 50 per cent of those births occurring outside of marriage in the

countries in coastal West Africa, Southern Africa and Uganda.²⁷ Interestingly, across countries there is a consistent share of births to girls below age 18 that occur within 7 months of marriage/union formation.

Figure 12: Distribution of the timing of first births to girls below age 18 with respect to marriage, post-2010



²⁷ Molitoris, J. et al., 'Early Childbearing and Child Marriage: An Update', *Studies in Family Planning*, 2023, <<https://doi.org/10.1111/sifp.12243>>

2.3 Synthesis of the evidence on preventing child marriage and improving outcomes for adolescent girls

As the Global Programme enters Phase III, evidence will continue to play a critical role in the design and delivery of its interventions at country level. By relying on empirical data and research, programme implementers and policymakers can identify strategies and interventions that have been proven effective in reducing child marriage

among girls at risk in specific settings. This focus on what works, for whom, when, and where ensures that resources and efforts to address child marriage are directed towards interventions that have a higher likelihood of success for the greatest number of adolescent girls.

2.3.1 State of the evidence on child marriage

The evidence base on child marriage has grown substantially over the past decade, and several systematic reviews have informed understandings of what works to prevent the practice and improve outcomes for girls.²⁸ This section synthesizes these reviews and additional high-quality evaluations to provide greater clarity on the effectiveness of specific interventions to prevent child marriage. A systematic assessment of the global evidence on child marriage by Siddiqi and Greene (2022) across two decades revealed that our understanding of child marriage has advanced significantly, particularly in the following research areas:

- **Prevalence and trends in child marriage**, at global, regional and national levels.
- **Determinants and correlates of child marriage**, including girls' education, family socioeconomic status, economic opportunities, urban/rural residence, age and gender-based power structures, fear/ control/ exploitation of adolescent sexuality, and insecurity.
- **Consequences of child marriage**, including as they relate to SRH, such as adolescent pregnancy and maternal morbidity, violence, social isolation, mental health, and economic costs.²⁹



Still, there are some gaps and areas where increased research attention is needed to inform action to end child marriage. These include:

- More rigorous and long-term research on the **effectiveness of child marriage interventions** through impact evaluations to expand the evidence base on what works.
- Research on the **measurement of social and gender norm change** related to child marriage with the aim of providing greater conceptual clarity, consistent implementation across programming, and more complete and rigorous measurement of norms-change work.
- **Implementation research** to generate lessons on delivering quality, equitable and cost-effecti-

²⁸. Although there is a valuable body of learning from programme documentation and evaluations globally, the focus of this brief is on findings from 'reviews of reviews', i.e., evidence syntheses of studies that have been formally assessed as meeting particular research standards for quality, including: Malhotra & Elnakib, 2021; Mathers, N., *How cash transfers contribute to ending child marriage: review and synthesis of the evidence* Girls Not Brides, 2021, <www.researchgate.net/publication/359972704_How_Cash_Transfers_Can_Contribute_to_Ending_Child_Marriage_Review_and_synthesis_of_the_evidence>; Peterman, A. & Fiala, N., *Rapid review and stocktaking of child marriage interventions research: Impact Feasibility Assessment for the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage*, 2022; Siddiqi, M. & Greene, M., 'Mapping the Field of Child Marriage: Evidence, Gaps, and Future Directions From a Large-Scale Systematic Scoping Review, 2000-2019', *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 70(3), 2022, pp. 9-16; The Child Marriage Research to Action Network (the CRANK), *Evidence review: Child marriage interventions and research from 2020 to 2022*. UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage and Girls Not Brides, 2023.

²⁹. Siddiqi & Greene, 2022; UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, *Global Child Marriage Research Strategy*, 2021a, <www.unicef.org/media/104126/file/Child-marriage-research-strategy-2021.pdf>

ve interventions at scale, such as through multi-sectoral and multi-component programmes.

- An intentional focus on **neglected contexts** facing a large burden of child marriage prevalence and limited evidence. Much of the existing evidence is concentrated in particular countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, yet many countries with high child marriage prevalence and large burdens of married girls have received very little research attention.³⁰ Priority should be placed on data and evidence from these settings, as well as from fragile contexts and humanitarian settings, including those experiencing climate change induced events such as droughts.³¹
- Greater attention to those **adolescent girls that are most at risk of child marriage** or whose experiences are little understood, such as girls with disabilities, girls who are divorced, marri-

ed, separated or widowed, adolescent mothers and younger adolescent girls.

- Research on the effectiveness of efforts to **reduce adolescent pregnancy on rates of child marriage**, particularly in contexts where premarital sexual debut is common, and pregnancy is a known driver of marriage for girls.
- Understanding the programmatic **synergies across services directed towards adolescent girls**, such as SRHR and information, education, GBV prevention and response, protection, economic security and other areas.

While there is a need to further strengthen and enrich the evidence base on interventions to prevent and respond to child marriage, the growing evidence base has confirmed that programmatic efforts can indeed delay marriage and improve outcomes for adolescent girls.



2.3.2 Evidence on different types of interventions

A variety of approaches to preventing child marriage and addressing the needs of married adolescent girls have been employed over the past few decades. Table 2 classifies child marriage interventions based on the size and quality of the evidence

base and documented impact. Interventions are classified into seven broad categories, reflecting common approaches used to address child marriage, while recognizing that some approaches may span more than one category.

30. Siddiqi & Greene, 2022, point out, for example, that the Central African Republic has the second highest prevalence of marriage globally (at 68 per cent) but it ranks 46th in the volume of publications on the subject. Likewise, Chad ranks 3rd in global prevalence (at 67 per cent) but 28th in publication volume; South Sudan ranks 8th (at 52 per cent), and 64th in the number of publications.

31. UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, 2021a.

Table 2: Intervention effectiveness for the prevention of child marriage

Classification and definition ³²	Intervention area
<p>Positive and consistent findings: At least two medium-to-high-quality impact evaluations, using randomized control trials and/or quasi-experimental designs have found statistically significant reductions in child marriage and/or mediating drivers. An intervention is deemed effective by high-quality meta-analyses and systematic reviews of findings from evaluations of multiple interventions.</p>	<p>1. Income and economic strengthening³³</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Cash transfers → Vocational training → Favourable job markets <p>2. Education and lifeskills delivered through schools and/or school-adjacent programmes³⁴</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Cash and in-kind transfers for schooling → Targeted and tailored life skills <p>3. Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)³⁵</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Comprehensive sexuality education³⁶ → Adolescent-responsive SRH services
<p>Promising findings but requires further rigorous evaluation: One high- or medium-quality impact evaluation, using a randomized control trial, or quasi-experimental study, has found statistically significant reductions in child marriage or a pattern of change across multiple mediating drivers and is suggestive of this.</p>	<p>4. Gender and/or social norms change³⁷</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Range of efforts (see below); programme components not easily disaggregated <p>5. Systems-strengthening and multisectoral and multilevel approaches³⁸</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Training to build the capacity of workforce across sectors
<p>Mixed findings and requires further rigorous evaluation: Evidence from different high-quality studies shows conflicting results, e.g., some interventions are found to be effective and some are found to have null results. There is a need for further research investment.interventions.</p>	<p>6. Girl-focused community-based interventions³⁹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Stand-alone safe spaces⁴⁰ to delay marriage and prevent violence against women and girls <p>7. Laws and policies⁴¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Minimum age of marriage laws

³². Classification determinations are adapted from Kerr-Wilson, A. et al., 'A rigorous global evidence review of interventions to prevent violence against women and girls', *What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls Global Programme*, 2020: ii, iii, <www.whatworks.co.za/documents/publications/374-evidence-reviewfweb/file>

³³. Malhotra & Elnakib, 2021; Mathers, 2021.

³⁴. Malhotra & Elnakib, 2021; Mathers, 2021.

³⁵. Santhya, K. G. & Jejeebhoy, S. J., 'Sexual and reproductive health and rights of adolescent girls: Evidence from low- and middle- income countries', *Global Public Health*, 10(2), 2015, pp. 189–221; Bergstrom, K. & Özler, B., *Improving the Well-Being of Adolescent Girls in Developing Countries*. World Bank Development Research Group & Health, Nutrition and Population Global Practice. Policy research working paper 9827, 2021, <<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/d6340e66-f894-5c64-9026-b09ef6a9434a/content>>; Haberland N. & Rogow D., 'Sexuality education: emerging trends in evidence and practice', *J Adolescent Health*, 56, 2015, pp.S15–S21.

³⁶. The example of Guatemala shows how a girl-centred programme working with CSE standards can reduce child marriage. All the studies included went through 6 RCTs, 1 study included RCT as sub study and quasi-experimental studies; Population Council, Knowledge Commons, 'Delivering impact for adolescent girls, emerging findings from Population Council research', 2018, <https://knowledgecommons.popcouncil.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1459&context=departments_sbsr-pgy>

³⁷. Mehra, D. et al., 'Effectiveness of a community based intervention to delay early marriage, early pregnancy and improve school retention among adolescents in India', *BMC Public Health* 18, 2018, 732, <<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-018-5586-3>>

³⁸. Rudgard, W. et al., 'Multiple Impacts of Ethiopia's Health Extension Program on Adolescent Health and Well-Being: A Quasi-Experimental Study', *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 71, 2022, pp. 303–316.

³⁹. Stark, L. et al., 'The Effectiveness of Women and Girls Safe Spaces: A Systematic Review of Evidence to Address Violence Against Women and Girls in Humanitarian Contexts', *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 23(4), 2022, pp. 1249–1261; Malhotra & Elnakib, 2021.

Approaches showing positive and consistent results

Approaches that have shown positive and consistent results in preventing child marriage and improving outcomes for girls fall into three main intervention areas: income and economic strengthening; education; and SRHR.

1. Income and economic strengthening interventions are those that are designed to alleviate poverty and make economic growth more inclusive, such as cash transfers, economic incentives or other forms of social assistance, and vocational training and skills development programmes. A global systematic review of interventions to prevent child marriage identified economic approaches as showing the most definitive pattern of success in preventing child marriage.⁴²

→ A review of 21 studies on the impact of cash transfers on child marriage found that these programmes can alleviate several of the economic and social drivers of child marriage through distinctive pathways, such as improved household economic security and increased access to education.⁴³ When tailored to context and delivered with additional services such as education, health or livelihood interventions (called ‘cash plus’), social protection programmes can also contribute to girls’ health and well-being, to their sense of agency, and to giving them a greater say in the decisions that affect them.⁴⁴ There is a corresponding, strong body of evidence that cash transfers can also decrease violence against women and girls; delay adolescent girls’ sexual debut; and delay adolescent pregnancy.^{45,46}



→ Two studies on favourable job markets for women in India and Bangladesh showed very large positive effects on reducing child marriage.⁴⁷ These successes provide some indication that investment in economic opportunities for girls is important in delaying marriage, but so too may be the visible promise of economic opportunities for girls in early adulthood. Another 2001 cross-sectional comparative impact study of the Better Life Options Program,⁴⁸ which included a range of interventions involving vocational skills training and life skills development, found that the programme had made a significant positive impact on participants’ economic empowerment, self-esteem and confidence, and autonomous decision-making, among other changes.

40. Safe spaces programming often includes a combination of exposure to information, life skills, social networks, play, and in select cases, access to services. Although safe spaces are a common approach to support girls’ empowerment, the evidence highlights that to address child marriage and/or violence against women and girls, more specifically, this intervention is not consistently effective when provided as a stand-alone approach. For example, an impact evaluation of the Adolescent Girls’ Empowerment Programme in Zambia found that the efforts that only target girls themselves are insufficient to improve education and fertility outcomes in the long-term among those who are very vulnerable (Austrian, K. et al., ‘The impact of the Adolescent Girls Empowerment Program (AGEP) on short and long term social, economic, education and fertility outcomes: a cluster randomized controlled trial in Zambia’, *BMC Public Health*, 20(1), 2020, p. 349). That said, safe space programming can serve as an important component of a multi-pronged approach to addressing child marriage and improving outcomes for girls. Ensuring evidence-based design and implementation guidelines are applied to all intervention approaches described in this table, including safe spaces programming, is essential to ensure programmes are set up for success.

41. McGavock, T., ‘Here waits the bride? The effect of Ethiopia’s child marriage law’, *Journal of Development Economics*, 2021, 149; Collin, M. & Talbot, T., ‘Are age of marriage laws enforced? Evidence from developing countries’, *Journal of Development Economics*, 160, 2023.

42. Malhotra & Elnakib, 2021.

43. Mathers, 2021.

44. Ibid.

45. Kerr-Wilson, 2020; Handa, S., Halpern, C., Pettifor, A. & Thirumurthy, H., ‘The Government of Kenya’s Cash Transfer Program Reduces the Risk of Sexual Debut among Young People Age 15-25’, *PLoS One*, 9(1), 2014; Hindin, M., Kalamar, A., Thompson, T. & Upadhyay, U., ‘Interventions to prevent unintended and repeat pregnancy among young people in low and middle income countries: A systematic review of the published and gray literature’, *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 59(3), 2016, pp. S8-S15; Gavrilovic, et al., *Child Marriage and Ethiopia’s Productive Safety Net Program: Analysis of protective pathways in the Amhara region*, 2020, <www.unicef.org/ethiopia/media/6761/file/Final%20Report%20.pdf>

46. Examples of programmes that have decreased the risk of child marriage include: [Zomba Pilot Cash Transfer \(Malawi\)](#); [Productive Safety Nets Program \(Ethiopia\)](#); [Adolescent Girls Initiative \(Kenya\)](#); [Female Secondary School Stipend \(FSSP\) \(Bangladesh\)](#); and [Kanyashree Prakalpa \(India\)](#).

47. Jensen, R., ‘Do labour market opportunities affect young women’s work and family decisions? Experimental evidence from India’, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 127(2), 2012, pp. 753-792; Heath & Mobarak, 2014.

48. The Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), 2001.



→ Vocational training interventions are those that are designed to equip individuals with the skills and knowledge required to perform a specific job or occupation. Evidence on vocational training is promising and requires further research. Most evidence comes from randomized controlled trials (RCTs) in Bangladesh⁴⁹ and Uganda.⁵⁰ Interventions worked by simultaneously providing girls with two types of human capital: vocational skills to enable them to start small-scale income-generating activities and lifeskills to help them to make informed choices about sex, reproduction and marriage. Across these bundled interventions, there were dramatic reductions in child marriage (up to 62 per cent reduction), in adolescent pregnancy, and in the share of girls having sex unwillingly in the communities that received the programme versus those that did not (control).

2. Education and targeted lifeskills interventions are those that are designed to increase access, quality and the perceived value of schooling and training for girls, such as cash and in-kind transfers, targeted lifeskills and capacity development of teachers. Keeping girls in school, particularly at the secondary level, has demonstrated significant and

lasting positive effects for adolescent girls including delaying marriage, sexual debut and pregnancy, improved health behaviours and an improved sense of self-efficacy and agency.

→ **Supporting girls' schooling through cash and in-kind transfers** has the clearest evidence of effectiveness of any evaluated programme to prevent child marriage.⁵¹ In one review, 8 out of 10 medium to high-quality studies have shown positive results; in another, 19 programmes were found to have reduced the risk of child marriage or age at marriage among adolescent girls.⁵² Evidence also shows positive effects on related outcomes, including delay in sexual debut; delay in pregnancy; and reduction in violence against women. These findings are derived from multiple contexts across South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.⁵³

→ **Targeted lifeskills interventions** have been found to be an effective pathway to delaying marriage in a wide-ranging evidence review.⁵⁴ Assessments of interventions that provided lifeskills, livelihoods and gender and rights training for girls have found positive effects.

49. Heath & Mobarak, 2014.

50. Bandiera, O. et al., *Women's empowerment in action: Evidence from a randomized control trial in Africa*. World Bank, 2018, <<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/393e329a-d3c5-54a4-8d93-a21c09ed17f9/content>>

51. Malhotra & Elnakib, 2021

52. Malhotra & Elnakib, 2021; Mathers, 2021.

53. For a detailed overview, see Mathers, 2021.

54. Malhotra & Elnakib, 2021

3. SRHR interventions promote safe and healthy sexual behaviour, such as CSE, health and information services about prevention of pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), GBV and information and access to contraceptive services.⁵⁵

→ **Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE)** in and out of school is a curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality. It aims to equip children and young people with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will empower them to realize their health, well-being and dignity; understand consent, boundaries, and what constitutes a healthy and equitable relationship; develop respectful social and sexual relationships; consider how their choices affect their own well-being and that of others; and understand and ensure the protection of their rights throughout their lives.⁵⁶ CSE is typically delivered through a combination of classroom-based instruction, peer education, community outreach and communications and advocacy in digital spaces. CSE can be effective in preventing child marriage through various pathways, including by delaying sexual debut; decreasing the number of sexual partners; and increasing the use of contraception and family planning.⁵⁷ In many countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, parents and other non-parental adults typically do not provide children with information or guidance on sex, sexuality and related matters and disapprove of many aspects of CSE programmes.⁵⁸ More high-quality, RCT evaluations of CSE programmes are also needed in low- and middle-income countries to test multi-component programmes (those with school and community components). More research is needed for comprehensive and holistic evaluations of CSE outcomes beyond sexual behaviours, e.g. on empowering young people as global citizens or CSE's contributions to preventing GBV and to shed light on contextual and implementation factors and implications.⁵⁹

→ **Adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH) services** encompass a range of health-care, education and support services specifically designed to address the SRH needs of adolescents, typically between the ages of 10 and 19. There is promising evidence from a variety of settings that shows that interventions that are adolescent-responsive and tailored to young people's needs, including access to confidential counselling and high-quality contraceptives, can reduce unintended pregnancy among those seeking services.⁶⁰ Findings across contexts consistently demonstrate that multi-pronged approaches that combine both education and service provision to support ASRH are the most effective in the short and long term.⁶¹ Particularly in contexts where pregnancy is a major driver of child marriage, ASRH interventions reaching sexually active, or soon to be sexually active adolescents have the potential to contribute to beneficial spillover effects.⁶² Additionally, family planning interventions for married couples have proven effective at reducing pregnancies and improving marital happiness; these programmes could also support marital quality and the health and well-being of married girls.⁶³



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55. UNFPA, *Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: An Essential Element of Universal Health Coverage*, 2019a, <www.unfpa.org/featured-publication/sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-rights-essential-element-universal-health>

56. UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women & WHO, 2018.

57. Santhya & Jejeebhoy, 2015.

58. Ibid.

59. UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women & WHO, 2018.

60. Bergstrom, & Özler, 2021; Salam, R. A. et al., 'Improving adolescent sexual and reproductive health: A systematic review of potential interventions', *Journal of adolescent health*, 59(4), 2016, pp. S11-S28.

61. Oringanje, C. et al., 'Interventions for preventing unintended pregnancies among adolescents', *Cochrane Database Syst Rev.*, 2(2), 2016, CD005215. doi: 10.1002/14651858.CD005215.pub3.

62. Bergstrom, & Özler, 2021.

63. Ibid.

Approaches that are promising but require more research

Approaches that have been found to be promising but require more research fall into two additional intervention areas: gender norm change and systems strengthening.

4. Interventions to change gender and social norms encompass a range of efforts to engage with institutions, communities, families and individuals to challenge harmful norms and promote gender equality, such as caregiver discussion groups, community dialogues, male engagement, and media and communication interventions. A significant body of literature points to a strong relationship between social and gender norms and child marriage.⁶⁴ A recent systematic review found that not all the programmes intended to address social and gender norms to end child marriage evaluate or measure social norm outcomes or implement comprehensive approaches, e.g. by engaging men and boys, families, communities, etc. Major challenges for research and evaluations in this field include the lack of shared definitions and terminology, identifying the specific norms to change and the relevant reference groups, the pathways of impact, and how programme effectiveness can be measured. The result is that programme evaluations are limited. The most convincing evidence of

the effectiveness of gender norms programming is found when carefully combined with other approaches, such as economic inclusion, education and vocational training. Given its central role in many programmes to delay child marriage and support the health and well-being of adolescent girls, getting clarity on the effectiveness of gender norms programming is crucial.

5. Systems-strengthening interventions are strategies and actions designed to improve the overall capacity, efficiency and effectiveness of policies, services and procedures across sectors, such as health, education, and protection to achieve better outcomes and impact. Capacity-building, policy and regulatory reforms, and service delivery across sectors including social protection, education, and health are examples of this approach. Systems-strengthening efforts can contribute to improved outcomes for girls' health and well-being.

Approaches showing mixed evidence of effectiveness

Interventions that have mixed evidence of effectiveness fall into two areas: laws and policies, and girl-focused community-based programmes that are implemented across a range of interventions in areas such as education, empowerment and gender norm change. The concentration of studies in this area is more limited.

6. Girl-focused community-based interventions are designed to promote girls' empowerment and support them to develop the skills and confidence to realize their rights, well-being and equal access to education, health care, economic opportunities and decision-making. A focus on girls' empowerment is also a cross-cutting feature of many other programmes designed to prevent child marriage and support adolescent girls' health and development more generally.

Some girl-focused programmes include the provision of safe spaces and life skills training sessions. Safe spaces programming often includes a combination of exposure to information, lifeskills, social networks, play and, in select cases, access to services. Although safe spaces are a common approach to support girls' empowerment, the evidence highlights that to address child marriage, this intervention is not consistently effective when provided as a stand-alone approach and only targets



64. See Malhotra & Elnakib, 2021.



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the girl herself.⁶⁵ Safe space programming can serve as an important component of a multi-pronged approach to addressing child marriage and improving outcomes for girls. Ensuring evidence-based design and implementation guidelines are applied to safe spaces programming is essential to ensure programmes are set up for success.

One systematic review of 22 studies (1997–2016) found that the key interventions through which empowerment programmes operate are girls' schooling and reduced risk of pregnancy and childbearing.⁶⁶ Likewise, a randomized controlled study of Girls Empower in Liberia found that a gender-transformative mentoring and cash transfer intervention to promote adolescent well-being reduced child marriage, teen pregnancy and risky sexual behaviour. When a cash incentive tied to girls' participation in the programme sessions was included and offered to caregivers, these effects were even more positive: 12 months post-programme, girls who participated were found to have a 50 per cent or more reduction in the likelihood of marriage and the number of sexual partners than their peers who did not participate.

Despite these promising findings, select programmes that aim to address child marriage have mixed conclusions on effectiveness, highlighting the need for further investigation into the facilitators and barriers to the effective design and delivery of empowerment programmes through implementation research. A high-quality RCT

of the Kishori Kontha programme in Bangladesh found that 4.5 years after the intervention ended, girls who undertook the six-month empowerment programme, which included safe spaces and peer educators, showed no change in marriage rates.⁶⁷ These findings suggest that girl-focused community-based interventions must adhere to evidence-based practices and international standards, including but not limited to the adequate exposure and intensity, through multi-component interventions across the socio-ecological framework.⁶⁸

7. Interventions focused on laws and policies such as reforms to raise the age of consent to marriage to 18 and associated efforts to ban or criminalize child marriage have achieved mixed results. Analysis has shown that girls in countries where there is an established legal minimum age of marriage, for marriage with parental consent and for the minimum age of sexual consent at 18 years or older are 40 per cent less likely to be married before age 18 than girls in countries where these laws conflict.⁶⁹ A quasi-experimental study in Ethiopia found that the minimum age of marriage law deterred marriage for girls.⁷⁰ However, recent evidence suggests that legislative changes such as these are insufficient⁷¹ in and of themselves to prevent child marriage, and in some cases may drive the practice underground. A study published early in 2023 measured the enforcement of laws against child marriage based on the actual distribution of ages at marriage in household survey data from more than 100 countries and found no evidence of sudden change or gap in the data around the legal age for marriage, which suggests that minimum-age-at-marriage laws alone are not enough to end child marriage.⁷² Child marriage laws and policies should be a part of a comprehensive legal and policy framework that addresses the root causes of child marriage including gender inequality, and cover a range of issues including support for those wishing to leave a marriage; property and inheritance, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV); child labour and abuse; trafficking; access to education, health care and social security; and mandatory birth and marriage registration.⁷³

67. Buchmann, N. et al., *Power vs Money: Alternative Approaches to Reducing Child Marriage in Bangladesh: A Randomized Control Trial*, 2018, <www.povertyactionlab.org/sites/default/files/research-paper/Power-vs-Money-Working-Paper.pdf>

68. Haberland, N. A., McCarthy, K. J. & Brady, M., 'A Systematic Review of Adolescent Girl Program Implementation in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: Evidence Gaps and Insights', *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 63(1), 2018, pp. 18–31.

69. UNICEF, 2021b, p. 28.

70. McGavock, 2021.

71. World Bank, *Child marriage laws and their limitations*, 2017, <<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/334131513322505611/pdf/122074-BRI-2017-10-ending-child-marriage.pdf>>

72. Collin & Talbot, 2023.

73. Girls Not Brides (n.d.). Establish and implement laws and policies, <www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/theory-change/establish-and-implement-laws-and-policies/>

2.3.3 Implications for programming

Different interventions have been found to reduce child marriage across contexts. The largest body of consistent evidence is in relation to adolescent girls' education. Getting adolescent girls in school, especially secondary school, and supporting their learning are key pathways of change that are proven and are scalable. Cash and in-kind transfers to support families to be able to meet their basic needs, achieve economic security and stability, and to afford the direct and opportunity costs of education have shown to be effective in many different settings, as have targeted empowerment interventions such as lifeskills, CSE programmes and SRH services for adolescent girls. Likewise, interventions for favourable job markets and vocational training have demonstrated effectiveness in preventing child marriage and supporting adolescent girls' health and well-being.

There are encouraging signs that programmes to strengthen systems can reduce child marriage by more effectively meeting the needs of adolescent girls. Interventions to change social norms, when contextualized and carefully combined with other

types of interventions, also have the potential to challenge harmful attitudes and behaviours that may drive the practice in different settings. More research and analysis are needed in these areas to provide the insights required to push this work forward, to better understand what makes interventions focused on laws and policies and on girl-focused interventions more effective. Furthermore, building an evidence bridge between interventions that reduce unintended pregnancy and those that prevent child marriage is a critical step towards supporting the well-being of more girls across the globe.

Solutions-oriented research can help us to generate the learning and evidence we require but we need not sit back and wait to act. Now is the time to be strategic and to build on what we know works to prevent and respond to child marriage. Collaboration across sectors is essential to this endeavour, as are rigorous and consistent monitoring and evaluation of programmes to enable continued learning on what works to ensure meaningful and lasting improvements to girls' lives.



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3. Global Programme achievements

This section summarizes the evolution and shifts in the Global Programme since its inception in 2016 and gives an overview of the coverage and achievement of the programme during Phase II.

3.1 Evolution of the Global Programme

During its first phase (2016–2019), the Global Programme laid the ground for a joint UNFPA-UNICEF programme in 12 focus countries and with global and regional advocacy and communication dimensions. The work at country level included the development of national action plans; advocacy and technical support for legislative and policy reform; research and baseline studies on the trends, patterns and drivers of child marriage; support for health, education and child protection services targeting adolescent girls; and a strong focus on lifeskills training for adolescent girls and community engagement to create a more supportive environment for adolescent girls and for efforts to end child marriage.

Phase II (2020–2023) marked important programmatic shifts to accelerate actions to end child marriage by enhancing investments in and support for both unmarried and married adolescent girls; by engaging key actors (including young people as agents of change) in catalysing shifts towards gender-transformative programming which promotes gender-equitable norms, and by integrating a human rights-based approach for ensuring the right to choose when and whom to marry; increasing political support, resources, gender-responsive policies and frameworks; engendering respect for laws, including international humanitarian law; and by improving data and evidence on what works to end child marriage.





Phase III (2024–2030) has the longer-term, gender-transformative goal to make significant progress towards achieving the SDG target 5.3 to eliminate child marriage, with a focus on enabling the most marginalized adolescent girls (including those already married, pregnant or divorced) to live healthier, more empowered and safer lives, including making their own life choices. During Phase III, the Global Programme will broaden the gender-transformative approach by making greater investments in systems and services for adolescent girls, especially in education, ASRH, and gender-responsive social protection; social and behaviour change approaches will be used across all levels of the socio-ecological model to chal-



lenge gender-discriminatory norms and promote gender equality; broadened partnerships with youth- and women-led organizations and feminist movements for gender equality and to amplify the voices and opinions of adolescent girls; develop robust programme approaches that are adapted to the polycrisis and the megatrends; leverage public finance and strengthen government accountability for ending child marriage; and harness innovative technologies to accelerate efforts to end child marriage.

3.2 Programme coverage and achievements

Box 1: Summary of key results since 2016

 <p>21 million girls reached with lifeskills and comprehensive sexuality education</p>	 <p>63 research and evidence products on ending child marriage produced at country level</p>
 <p>1.2 million girls supported to enrol in, return to, and/or remain in school</p>	 <p>8 of the 11 (among the 12 Global Programme targeted countries) costed national action plans to end child marriage are financed by the government, while global advocacy engagements have resulted in 33 countries now having costed national action plans, from 7 in 2018</p>
 <p>58 million community members engaged in dialogues on gender equality and child marriage</p>	
 <p>70,000 prevention and care service delivery points supported to provide quality health, education and protection services for girls</p>	 <p>94 policies and legal instruments addressing child marriage in line with international human rights standards drafted, proposed or adopted with Global Programme support</p>
 <p>455 partnerships established to support social protection and girls' economic empowerment</p>	

In successive reviews by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCDO) of the United Kingdom, the Global Programme consistently scored As (the

highest possible). The FCDO 2020 project completion review stated that:

The Global Programme plays a unique role in the global movement to end child marriage, in that it is the only programme of its scale working to tackle the harmful practice and that it is well aligned to global and regional frameworks and commitments to end child marriage. The [Global Programme] has continued to galvanize global, regional and national attention and momentum on child marriage. At national level it has fostered sustainability through close working with governments and other stakeholders to institutionalize child marriage and adolescent girls' empowerment objectives and approaches including through strengthening policies and systems, developing capacities and leveraging complementary funding.

Meanwhile, the Phase I independent evaluation of the Global Programme emphasized that:

The [Global Programme] responded to growing global momentum to end child marriage and occupies a very important space within the global movement to end child marriage. The programme is well aligned to global and regional frameworks and commitments to end child marriage. The key role that UNFPA and UNICEF have played through the [Global Programme] is an important niche; and both organizations have a strategic role to play in maintaining forward momentum to end child marriage.

3.2.1 Global Programme key achievements and reach

During Phase II (2020–2023), the Global Programme solidified its role in leading the global agenda to end child marriage by 2030. Key achievements include:

- **Promoting gender-transformative programming:** The programme ensured the articulation, operationalization and roll-out of an ambitious approach to gender-transformative change across countries, regions and partners. This approach aimed at addressing the root causes of gender inequality to transform harmful gender roles, norms and power relations.
- **Leaving no one behind:** The programme made major strides to ensure an intersectional approach and to create implementation structures

and monitoring mechanisms to ensure that the most marginalized and most vulnerable adolescent girls are included in interventions to end and respond to child marriage (in particular, but not limited to, adolescent mothers, married girls, girls with disabilities, girls in poverty, girls affected by humanitarian crises or conflicts, and out-of-school girls).

- **Contributing to a gender-equitable family and community environment through gender and social norms programming:** Recognizing that gender and social norms are an important driver of child marriage, the programme invested in strengthening gender and social norms and SBC programming, through capacity development and implementation of evidence-informed



SBC community engagement interventions at scale. Gender and social norms programming and measurement courses and training have been delivered to country offices, government and civil society partners, and a systematic approach to behaviourally informed evidence generation has been implemented to tailor programming according to relevant drivers.

→ **Strengthening the availability and quality of data and evidence:** UNFPA and UNICEF con-

tinued to strengthen and expand the availability and quality of data and evidence on child marriage, adolescent pregnancy and bodily autonomy of women and girls through research, analysis, and numerous publications, including country profiles, data portals and regular updates. The agencies responded quickly to document and analyse the effects of COVID-19 on child marriage and on adolescent girls, and on efforts to adapt multisectoral programming to the pandemic.

Box 2: Examples of high-quality studies informing programming

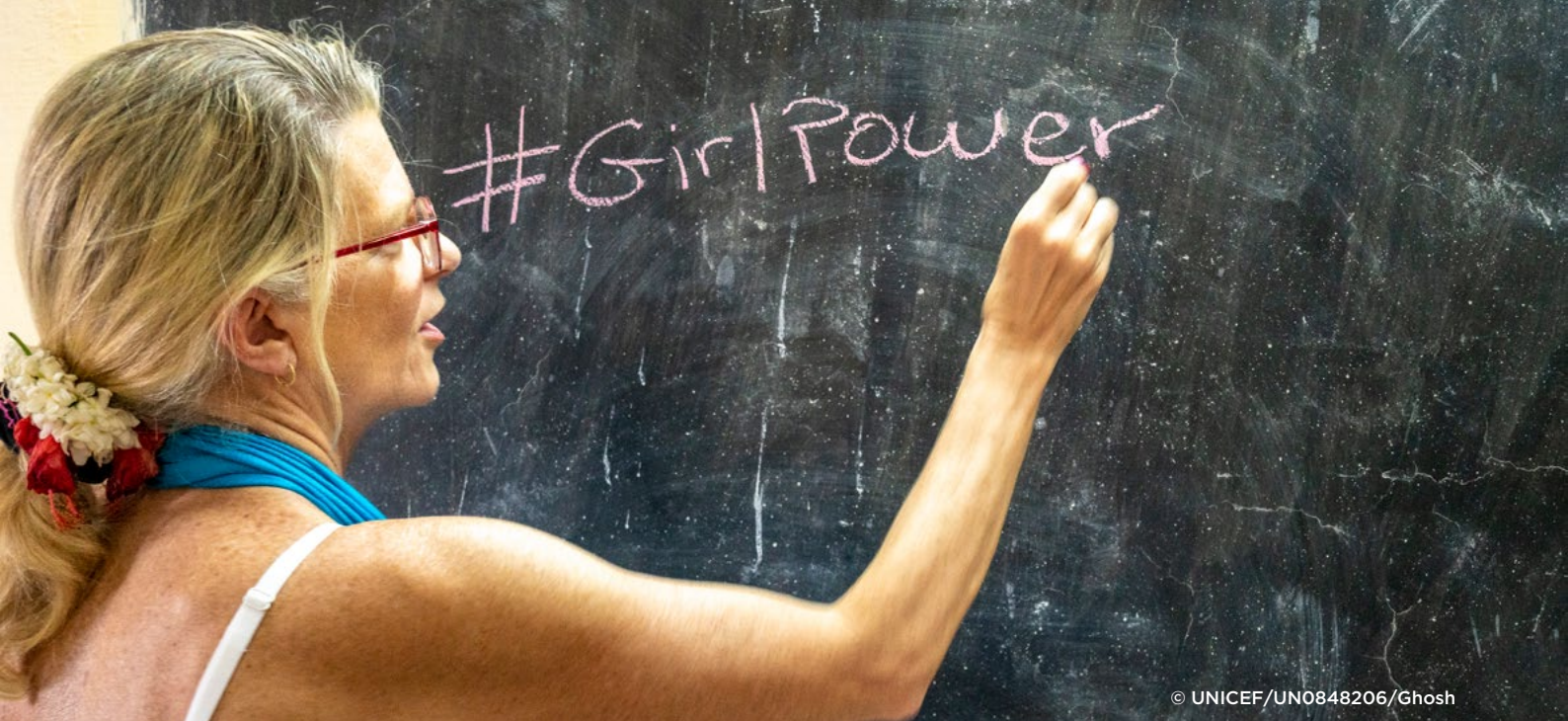
	<p>Two studies conducted under the Global Programme have won awards as either best-of-UNICEF research or for being a key evidence piece to advance gender equality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Child Marriage in Humanitarian Settings in South Asia: Study Results from Bangladesh and Nepal⁷⁴ → Formative research to inform the development of the communication for development (C4D) strategy on child marriage in Mozambique⁷⁵ <p>Further, the Global Programme Phase I evaluation and child marriage studies from West and Central Africa, the Middle East and North Africa and India were all shortlisted for the ‘Gender Solutions’ award, recognizing the impact of gender equality evidence investments.</p> <p>In 2022, the ACT Framework won silver in the best-of-UNICEF research.⁷⁶ Developed under the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation as a package of resources to support social norms change measurement, the framework can be adapted to also look at other harmful</p>	<p>practices driven by social norms, such as child marriage. For example, UNICEF Ethiopia, where the ACT Framework was validated at the time of its development, has now used the framework to conduct a baseline of behavioural drivers for both FGM and child marriage and has incorporated indicators and tools from the framework into different research and programme development efforts, such as the development of a manual for community engagement and for engagement with out-of-school girls to end child marriage.</p> <p>Further, in 2021 the Global Programme published an important report on what works to end child marriage,⁷⁷ which provides a scoping review of the evidence base on child marriage from 2000 to 2019. The report covered 386 articles and concluded that the evidence base on child marriage in the last 20 years has been robust and varied, providing important insights on prevalence and measurement, determinants, correlates and contexts, consequences and interventions. The findings are informing programming worldwide and have contributed to academic debates in the field of child marriage.</p>
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74. UNICEF, *Best of UNICEF Research 2021*, 2022a, <www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/Best-of-UNICEF-Research-2021.pdf>

75. UNICEF, *Gender solutions: Capturing the impact of UNICEF’s gender equality evidence investments (2014-2021)*, 2022b, <www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/Gender-Solutions-Capturing-the-impact-of-UNICEFs-gender-equality-evidence-investments.pdf>

76. UNICEF, *Best of UNICEF Research 2022*, 2023c.

77. UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, *Evolution in the evidence base on child marriage (2000-2019)*, 2021b, <www.unicef.org/documents/evolution-evidence-base-child-marriage-2000-2019>



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- **Coordinating research and building capacity for evidence generation and uptake:** In collaboration with partners and global and regional networks, the Global Programme greatly expanded investments in research and in mechanisms for high-quality evidence generation and application. This included, among others, the Global Programme Research Strategy; the Child Marriage Research to Action Network (the CRANK); the Strategic Technical Assistance for Research (STAR) Initiative to End Harmful Practices; and the Child Marriage Monitoring Mechanism.
- **Synthesizing the evidence of what works to end child marriage:** The Global Programme made significant contributions to the analysis and synthesis of global evidence on effective interventions to prevent and respond to child marriage. As a result, there is now much greater clarity on what works and what does not work to end child marriage worldwide.
- **Expanding knowledge management:** The Global Programme continued to expand the production and dissemination of knowledge products to ensure that available evidence is easy to understand, is being used and reaches the largest possible number of actors involved in efforts to end child marriage around the world.
- **Ensuring effective advocacy and communication:** The Global Programme supported high-level advocacy at global, regional and country levels to ensure that child marriage remains on the public policy agenda and that financial investments are made by donors and country governments to support adolescent girls around the world. At global level, advocacy included regular contributions to the Commission on the Status of Women and to UN General Assembly and Human Rights Council resolutions related to ending child marriage. At regional level, the Global Programme engaged with the African Union (e.g., the African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage) and the League of Arab States, as well as with regional economic commissions (e.g. the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)) and other regional mechanisms such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).
- **Collaborating with other global initiatives:** The Global Programme partnered with Girls Not Brides, the EU-funded Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme and the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation to strengthen complementarities for increased impact.
- **Adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic:** Spurred by the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting lockdowns, the Global Programme invested heavily in adapting programme strategies to continue to reach adolescent girls and communities with empowerment interventions, information and services.

Drawing on standard FCDO formulae, this programme has scored an 'A' [...]. Overall, the programme delivered an ambitious range of multisectoral interventions across the 12 focus countries, generally achieving strong reach under very difficult circumstances during COVID-19, but with selected results impacted by the significant challenges of the pandemic.

- FCDO 2022 annual review⁷⁸

When the pandemic hit, country offices explored ways to implement planned activities by adapting the modes of delivery rather than designing new activities from scratch. Modes of delivery as well as tools and packages were adapted to ensure continuity of programme implementation. Overall, the process of adjusting the Global Programme to COVID-19 restrictions was coherent both internally, within agencies, and externally, with relevant national programmes.

- Independent assessment of the Global Programme adaptations to COVID-19⁷⁹

Several learnings from the adjustments to the pandemic have the potential to shape future programming. This includes i) the use of virtual methods with beneficiaries, allowing larger reach (with some caveats); ii) the need for multi-pronged approaches in programmes aimed at changing gender norms or developing skills; and iii) flexibility in adjusting programming and reallocating budgets.

- Independent assessment of the Global Programme adaptations to COVID-19⁸⁰

→ **Leading a global agenda to end child marriage:**

Child marriage is a global issue, and no region is on track to end the practice by 2030. Therefore, the Global Programme has supported countries and regions beyond the 12 focus countries

with technical assistance and by sharing knowledge products, the latest evidence and technical resources to ensure that progress towards the achievement of the SDG target to end child marriage is accelerated globally.

The programme has a particularly important global role in beginning to demonstrate for the first time an approach that works at scale for adolescent girls, and on influencing and shaping the global approach and direction on reducing child marriage and for strengthening and empowering local civil society organizations working on women's rights.

- FDCO 2018 Annual Review⁸¹

The [Global Programme] has fostered sustainability through advocacy, institutionalization, strengthening systems, developing capacities and mobilizing complementary funding. Community-level interventions were designed in such a way that durable changes can be expected.

- Global Programme Phase I independent evaluation⁸²

⁷⁸. FCDO, 2023.

⁷⁹. UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, *Joint Assessment of Adaptations to the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage in Light of COVID-19*, 2020a, <www.unicef.org/documents/joint-assessment-adaptations-unfpa-unicef-global-programme-end-child-marriage-light-covid>

⁸⁰. Ibid.

⁸¹. FCDO, *Annual review*, 2019, March, <<https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-204496/documents>>

⁸². UNFPA and UNICEF, *Joint evaluation report: UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage*, 2019, <www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/GP-2019-Evaluation.pdf>

→ **Reaching beyond the 12 core countries:** Since its inception, the Global Programme has reached beyond the 12 core programme countries to amplify efforts to end child marriage. Over the years, the production and dissemination of global goods have steadily expanded geo-

graphically and grown in ambition. A total of 113 countries have engaged in the Global Programme's knowledge-sharing activities such as webinars, capacity-building efforts and dissemination of knowledge products.

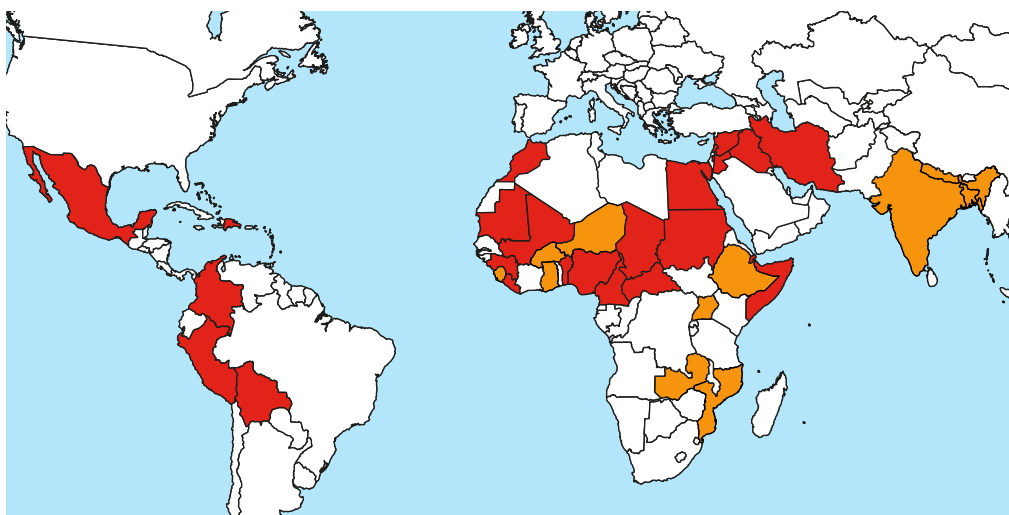
The [Global Programme] has had a catalytic effect within and between countries. The programme has successfully garnered broader stakeholder engagement on child marriage and adolescent girls' rights.

- Global Programme Phase I independent evaluation⁸³

All these investments have been made possible by the strong donor support and increasing funding levels of the Global Programme; and the strong

partnerships that translated into consistently high levels of achievements in Global Programme countries.

Figure 13: The Global Programme at a glance⁸⁴



12 countries with direct programme implementation

28 countries additionally receiving technical support

8 donors supporting the programme⁸⁵

113 countries reached by knowledge-sharing activities

3.2.2 Achievements against outputs and outcomes

This section summarizes the Global Programme's track record and key achievements in the 12

core countries. Table 3 shows targets and results against the Phase II output indicators.

Reporting against outcomes – for example changes in adolescent girls' attitudes to child marriage – has exceeded targets in some areas and indicates that programme interventions are good quality and effective. A field visit that was organised in 2022 to Odisha State in India provided strong validation on the high-quality and impactful nature of the programme, with multisectoral interventions (keeping girls in formal education, improving access to SRHR, increasing girls' confidence and knowledge of their rights, and tackling harmful social norms in the wider community) taking place within the same communities to effectively tackle child marriage.

- FCDO 2022 annual review⁸⁶

⁸³. UNFPA and UNICEF, 2019.

⁸⁴. Data as of end 2022.

⁸⁵. The Global Programme is generously supported by the Governments of Belgium, Canada, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom, the European Union and Zonta International.

⁸⁶. FCDO, Annual review, 2023, <<https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/projects/GB-GOV-1-301058/documents>>

The programme is on track to achieve its outputs, with aggregate tracking showing signs that the [Global Programme] is extending its reach and accelerating its approach in 2018 under most outputs despite significant reductions in funding, largely due to the strategic use of pool funding.

- Global Programme Phase I independent evaluation⁸⁷



⁸⁷. Revised figures to report on what has been reached in 2022 to avoid multiple counting. Mass media campaigns cover the entire population, and the reach is not cumulated across years.

Table 3: Phase II output indicator performance (2020-2022)

Indicator	Target	Result	Per cent achieved
Indicator 1111: Number of adolescent girls (aged 10-19) who actively participated in life skills or comprehensive sexuality education interventions in programme areas	13,527,986	13,004,882	96%
Indicator 1121: Number of girls (aged 10-19) supported by the programme to enrol and/or remain in primary or secondary school	972,713	457,670	47%
Indicator 1211: Number of boys and men actively participating in group education/dialogues that address harmful masculinities and gender norms	2,829,999	11,573,784	409%
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	34,289,195	52,569,918	153%
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 ⁸⁸	163,178,858	289,296,077	177%
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	261,965	1,182,109	451%
Indicator 1231: Number of civil society organizations newly mobilized in support of challenging social norms and promoting gender equality by the Global Programme ⁸⁹	687	374	54%
Indicator 2121: Number of primary/secondary/non-formal schools in programme areas providing quality gender-friendly education that meets minimum standards	2,626	4,648	177%
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	13,005	15,065	116%
Indicator 2211: Number of partnerships (both formal and informal) established to deliver adolescent-responsive social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes and services ⁹⁰	225	556	247%
Indicator 3111: Number of policies or legal instruments addressing child marriage drafted, proposed or adopted at national and subnational level with Global Programme support ⁹¹	211	167	79%
Indicator 3211: Number of [pieces of] generated evidence and knowledge that focus on what works to end child marriage ⁹²	137	98	72%
Indicator 3212: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that apply a gender analysis	121	87	72%
Indicator 3221: Number of South-to-South cooperation (conferences, expert visits, peer consultations, study tours, communities of practice) supported	44	47	107%

⁸⁸. This is reported as cumulative, please consider current 2022 cumulative figures.

⁸⁹. This is reported as cumulative, please consider current 2022 cumulative figures.

⁹⁰. This is reported as cumulative, please consider current 2022 cumulative figures.

⁹¹. This is reported as cumulative, please consider current 2022 cumulative figures.

⁹². This is reported as cumulative, please consider current 2022 cumulative figures.

Result trend analysis

Figure 14 shows the trends in the performance of three key output indicators since the inception of the programme. Intensive support to marginalized adolescent girls increased consistently, except during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021. In 2022, the Global Programme reached almost 6.5 million adolescent girls. Community engagement showed strong growth during the first four years, before

plateauing at around 15 million people reached at the community level per year. Efforts to strengthen systems also demonstrated healthy growth in the early years of the programme before facing a severe setback in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The situation has begun to improve but has still not reached the pre-pandemic number of health, education, social assistance, and protection systems strengthened.

Figure 14: Global Programme trends in output indicator performance

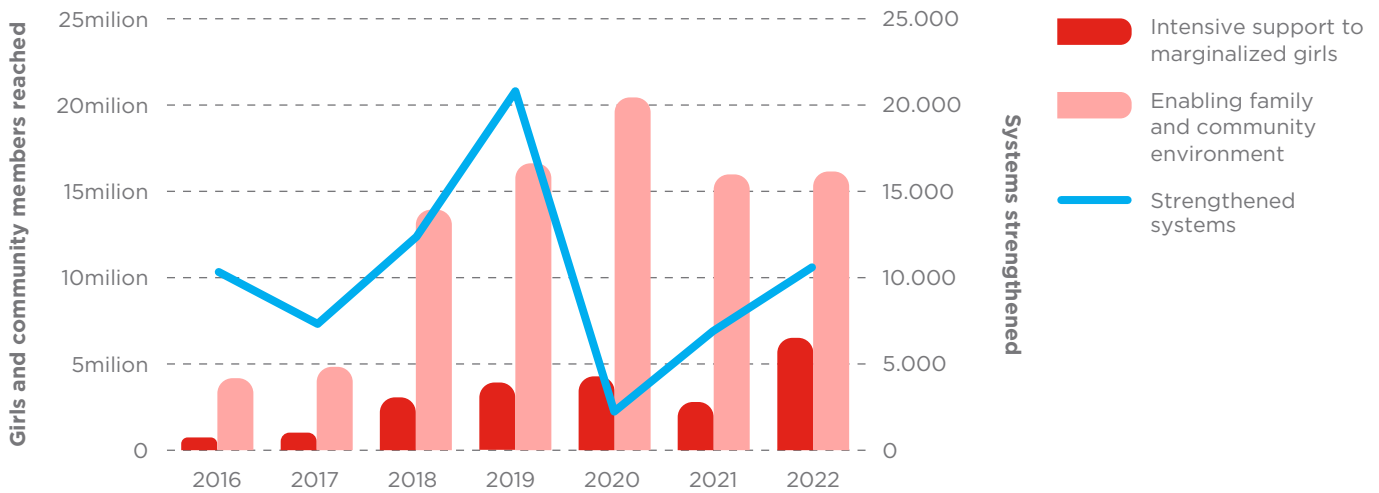
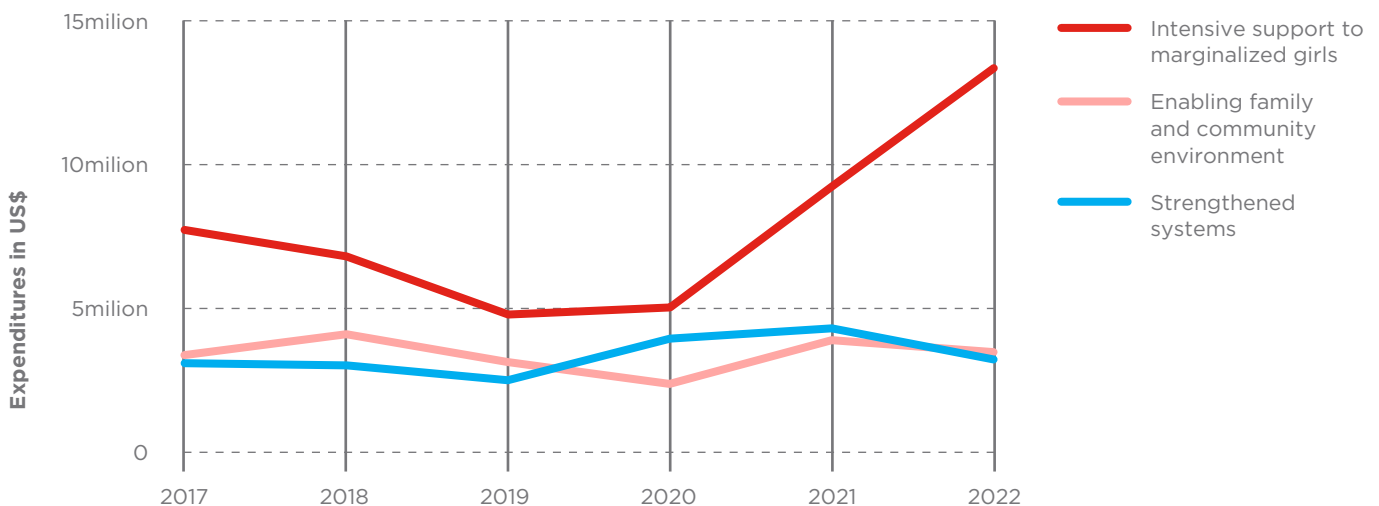


Figure 15 shows the corresponding expenditure figures for outcomes: intensive support to marginalized girls (outcome 1), enabling family and community environment (outcome 2), and strengthened systems (outcome 3). Expenditures for intensive

support to marginalized girls increased sharply since 2020 and reached US\$13.3 million in 2022. Expenditures for strengthening systems and an enabling family and community environment have each remained stable at around US\$3.3 million per annum.

Figure 15: Global Programme expenditures by outcome area

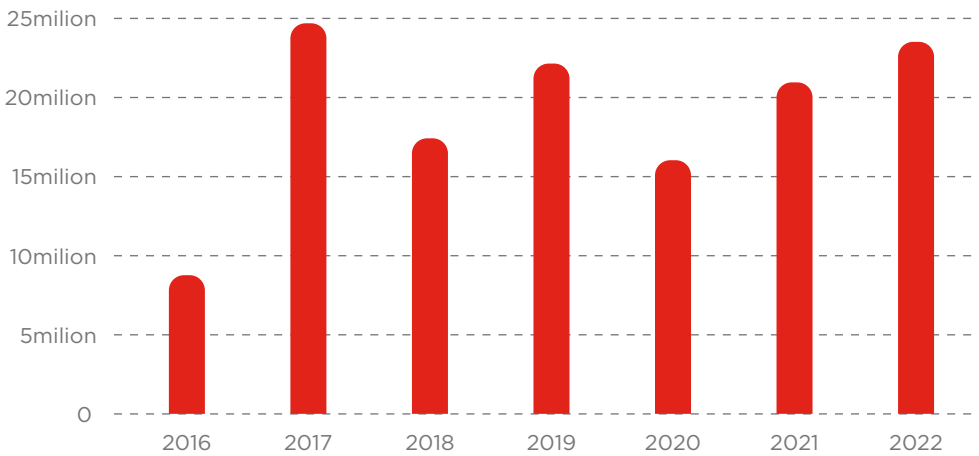


Return on investment and value for money

At an average budget of US\$20 million per year, the Global Programme represents excellent value

for money and offers donors high returns on their investments. Figure 16 presents total programmable expenditures per year.

Figure 16: Total programmable Global Programme expenditure in US\$



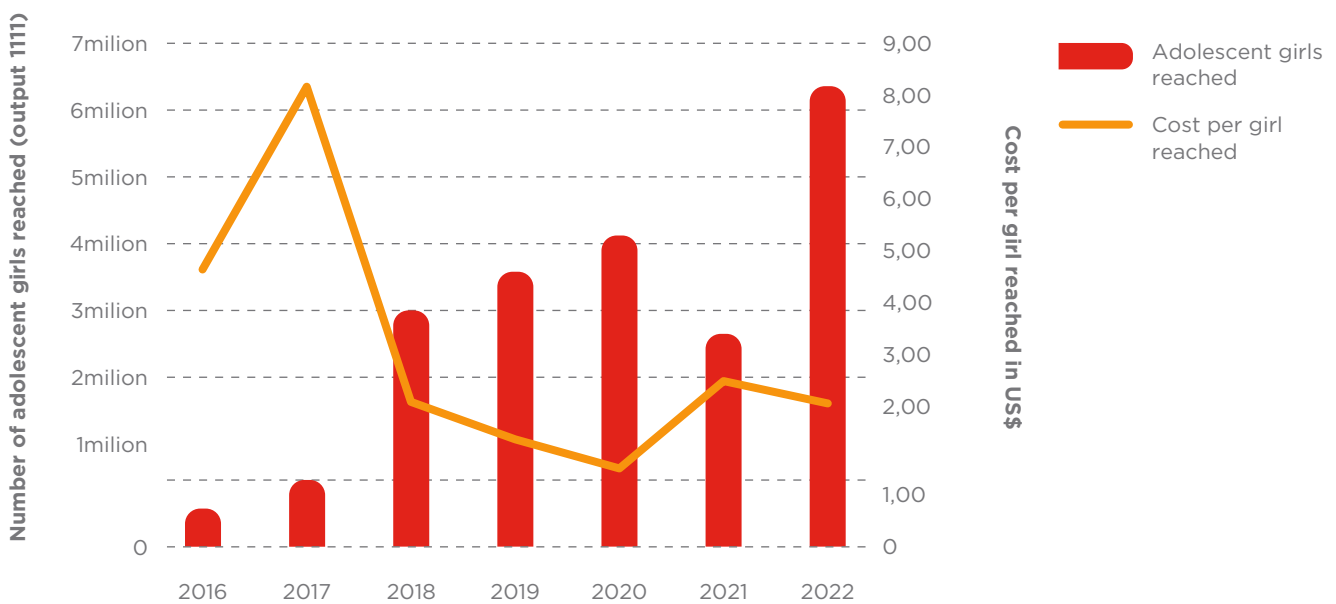
Country offices engaged in the [Global Programme] have done a remarkable job delivering programme results with limited funds drawing on the strategic use of pool funding and leveraging complementary resources.

- Global Programme Phase I independent evaluation⁹³

A look at programme results and expenditures by outcome area over time shows how the cost per reached girl has declined over time. Figure 17 shows

that cost per adolescent girl stabilized after the first two years of programming and now fluctuates between US\$2 and US\$3 per year.

Figure 17: Number of adolescent girls reached and cost per girl reached



93. UNFPA and UNICEF, 2019.

4. Vision for Phase III

With the polycrisis and implications of megatrends, the pushback against gender equality and democracy, and the slow decline in child marriage, the context for the work of the Global Programme is getting more difficult. Today's multi-faceted, complex crises create challenging conditions for girls to gain access to basic services, and protection concerns are high.

However, there is renewed ambition toward 2030 and the Global Programme will remain focused on the most vulnerable adolescent girls and families. In the years leading up to 2030, the Global Programme will boost its global actions to accelerate the decline in child marriage and respond to the combined effects of the polycrisis and the pushback against gender equality on adolescent girls. Phase III of the Global Programme represents a renewed ambition to galvanize actions for accelerated change towards achieving SDG target 5.3: to eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

The vision of the programme is for **adolescent girls**, especially the most marginalized, to fully enjoy their childhood **free from the risk of child marriage**, and experience healthier, safer and more empowered life transitions, including making informed choices about their education, livelihoods, sexuality, relationships, marriage and childbearing.



5. Theory of change

The Global Programme theory of change established in Phase I was reviewed and revised during the Phase II development process. In keeping with good practice, the theory of change has been reviewed as part of the Phase III design process, including in the context of the recent data and evidence generation exercises⁹⁴ (i.e., a systematic assessment of the global evidence on child marriage in 2022⁹⁵ and an evidence synthesis exercise carried out as part of the Phase III design process in early 2023⁹⁶). Following the review, which included discussions with key stakeholders, it was determined that the theory of change remains relevant, appropriate, and responsive to the Global Programme's goal and to the rights and needs of adolescent girls. As a result, only minor changes were made to the theory of change in order to more explicitly highlight the role of adolescents and youth and to further embed the implication of the megatrends of the twenty-first century, including the polycrisis, climate change and humanitarian settings.

The Phase III theory of change remains aligned with recommendations from the Phase I evaluation, as well as with lessons learned through Phase II implementation. It articulates a logic chain with outcomes at two levels. Intermediate outcomes describe the changes in behaviour or practice that are required to see the desired impact. Immediate outcomes describe the changes in knowledge, skills or ability required to see the desired changes in behaviour or practice.

The Phase III theory of change remains focused on gender-transformative approaches and multisectoral and cross-sectoral efforts. The Phase III theory of change also addresses the shift in attitudes and the growing opposition to gender equality, human rights and democracy and child marriage. The theory of change also places an emphasis on partnering with and investing in youth- and women-led and feminist organizations, through movement and coalition building to mitigate the pushback, and partnerships that promote investment in SRHR and CSE and protection services for adolescent girls.

5.1 Theory of change narrative

The theory of change for the Global Programme is articulated as follows:

The primary goal of the Global Programme is to contribute significantly to the realization of SDG target 5.3, directly in the 12 Global Programme countries and indirectly in other countries influenced by the Global Programme methodology, technical resources, data, evidence and knowledge. The Global Programme aims to support governments and civil society partners, including women- and youth-led organizations and feminist movements, to accelerate action to end child marriage. At the heart of the theory of change is an adolescent girl-centred approach that aims to empower individual adolescent girls to make decisions about if, when and whom to marry, within a web of support that involves her family, the community (including boys and men), service providers, society and public structures, institutions, systems and services, laws and policies.

Grounding this work in a **gender-transformative approach**, the intended impact of the programme is that adolescent girls, including the most marginalized girls, in countries targeted by the Global Programme, fully enjoy their childhood free from the risk of marriage; they experience healthier, safer and more empowered life transitions, including making choices about their education, livelihood, sexuality, relationships and marriage, and sexual reproductive health (including childbearing) as:

- Adolescent girls continue to become more empowered to use their voice, make choices and exercise their agency supported by changes in gender and social norms that fuel the acceptability of child marriage.
- Adolescent girls, their families and communities have access to resources and opportunities, are supported by systems that improve their health, education and safety and address poverty

⁹⁴. Note that the evaluation of Phase II of the Global Programme was ongoing, and it was not possible to share results to inform the programme document development.

⁹⁵. Siddiqi & Greene, 2022.

⁹⁶. Publication forthcoming.

and economic insecurity as two key drivers of child marriage.

- Government commitment strengthens systems across sectors and levels to provide gender-responsive and multisectoral services, and to implement laws and policies that align with human rights standards.

To achieve this impact, the theory of change advances **three intermediate outcomes described below.**

Intermediate outcome 1: Adolescent girls at risk of and affected by child marriage are effectively making their own informed decisions and choices regarding marriage, SRH including childbearing, education and livelihoods

Intermediate outcome 1 focuses on empowering adolescent girls. It assumes that for adolescent girls to be able to express themselves and make their own choices, two primary changes (immediate outcomes) are required.

Immediate outcome 1.1 focuses on supporting marginalized adolescent girls⁹⁷ – in both development and humanitarian contexts – with information, lifeskills, assets and support networks so they are able to make effective choices about their lives, understand



their rights and express their opinions. The underlying assumption for this immediate outcome is that:

- *If* adolescent girls (aged 10–19 years) are targeted with education, knowledge, assets, such as financial resources and literacy, and lifeskills building in community- and school-based spaces,
- *then* their health, well-being and learning outcomes will improve and they will be able to better protect themselves by making their own informed decisions and choices regarding marriage, SRH, education and livelihoods.

Knowledge and skills include gender-transformative life skills, CSE, awareness of their rights, information on and access to SRH, vocational training, entrepreneurship and financial literacy, building healthy relationships and gender equality.

However, for empowerment activities to be effective, they must be complemented by action aimed at addressing the harmful social and gender norms that restrict adolescent girls from exercising agency over their own lives, and engagement of boys and men to build positive masculinities and healthy relationships.

Immediate outcome 1.2 therefore focuses on building knowledge and understanding in communities and among parents and caregivers, men and boys, traditional and religious leaders and other gatekeepers about the harmful impacts of child marriage and gender inequality more broadly, and to build intention and commitment to build more equal communities for women, men, girls and boys. It focuses on changing harmful masculinities, attitudes towards girls and women, and gender roles, and building collective efficacy to achieve the ultimate goal of obtaining support and active involvement towards ending child marriage. The underlying assumptions are that:

- *If* communities (parents and caregivers, boys and men, traditional and religious leaders and other gatekeepers) are engaged in activities that promote positive masculinities and build collective efficacy to counter negative and misogynistic behaviours,
- *then* they will be more open to take up and promote these positive behaviours and to engage in more equitable relationships with girls and

⁹⁷. Including girls who are at risk of child marriage, married, divorced or widowed adolescent girls and adolescent girls who are pregnant or already have children.



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women, including by publicly supporting the elimination of child marriage.

And

- *If* mothers, fathers and caretakers, families, men and boys, traditional and religious leaders and other gatekeepers are engaged in gender-transformative dialogues and consensus-building about ending child marriage and become increasingly aware that there are alternative, valued and culturally appropriate life opportunities for adolescent girls beyond marriage (continuing with school, entering the job market, etc.),
- *then* they will recognize the value of adolescent girls beyond marriage and will demonstrate more gender-equitable attitudes and behaviours towards adolescent girls and boys by taking practical actions to end child marriage.

And

- *If* women’s organizations, youth-led groups, civil

society organizations, feminist organizations, coalitions and movements and other key advocates are mobilized as partners and allies and their capacities enhanced through training, technical and financial support, sharing of the latest research, knowledge and evidence products, and

- *if* families are supported with economic incentives to alleviate poverty,
- *then* they will take action to address gender inequality and advocate against norms that fuel child marriage, and families will invest in adolescent girls’ education and well-being.

Intermediate outcome 2: Relevant sectoral systems and institutions effectively respond to the needs of adolescent girls and their families in targeted Global Programme areas

Intermediate outcome 2 recognizes that changes in behaviour through adolescent empowerment and community and family engagement are reinforced and deepened when adolescent girls are

98. UNICEF works in formal and non-formal settings to make sure that adolescent girls: 1) learn foundational skills (e.g. reading, mathematics); 2) learn transferable skills (e.g. self-efficacy, leadership); 3) and have access to flexible programmes, including accelerated learning, to make sure that even those adolescent girls who have never been in school or are still in primary have multiple pathways to transition to and complete secondary education and/or equivalent certification programmes.

supported to learn and develop skills through formal and non-formal education,⁹⁸ including CSE, and when relevant systems (health, education, GBV prevention and response, social protection and child protection) are supported to provide quality services and adolescents are equipped and able to use those services.

Immediate outcome 2.1 therefore focuses on strengthening the ability of the education, health, GBV prevention and response, and social protection and child protection systems – in both development and humanitarian contexts – to provide gender-responsive services to adolescent girls, including leveraging existing programmes offered by the government and civil society organizations to ensure a wider reach of Global Programme interventions. The underlying assumption is that:

- *If* the capacity of education, health, GBV prevention and response, child protection and social protection systems is enhanced to deliver coordinated, gender-responsive quality programmes and services that are responsive to the needs of adolescent girls and their families, including in humanitarian contexts, and
- *if* adolescent girls have access to quality adolescent-friendly and gender-responsive education, SRH, social protection and care services,
- *then* girls experience healthier, safer and more empowered life transitions including making choices about their education, sexuality, relationships (including marriage), livelihoods and SRH (including childbearing).

Immediate outcome 2.2 focuses on building the capacity of governments and other actors – in both development and humanitarian contexts – to map out and leverage existing social protection, economic empowerment and poverty reduction programmes and adapt them to better reach and serve married, separated, divorced or widowed adolescent girls and girls at risk of child marriage and their families. The underlying assumptions is that:

- *If* partnerships are established and built with governments, civil society organizations, including youth- and women-led and feminist movements and coalitions, the private sector and other implementers to leverage and extend social protection, poverty reduction and economic empowerment programmes and services to reach the poorest adolescent girls and their families,



- *then* adolescent girls and families will be supported through gender-responsive social protection (e.g., cash, cash plus, insurance, care policies, health, education opportunities).

In all these scenarios, adolescent girls who are affected by, at risk of or choose child marriage are better able to express agency, voice and choice about whom and when to marry – within a system that offers quality, coordinated services and in an environment where adolescent girls and families have the willingness and ability to choose viable alternatives to marriage.

Intermediate outcome 3: Enhanced legal and political response to prevent child marriage and to support pregnant, married, separated, divorced or widowed adolescent girls and girls at risk of marriage

Countries will be able to protect and promote the rights and well-being of adolescent girls and boys with systems and services that are in line with international standards, contextualized, properly resourced and implemented if they are supported in implementing gender-transformative, costed and funded national action plans, strategies, policies and programmes to end child marriage within and across different ministries. These should be in connection with other relevant national policies and strategies that promote gender equality, and there should be an intersectional approach, including at subnational and decentralized levels.

Immediate outcome 3.1 focuses on supporting governments to convene, coordinate, implement and monitor budgeted national, and subnational multi-

sectoral and multi-stakeholder action plans aimed at ending child marriage. The underlying assumption is that:

- *If* governments are provided with capacity-building and technical support to be able to enact, enforce and uphold comprehensive laws and policies, in line with international human rights standards, aimed at preventing child marriage, and
- *if* governments are provided with capacity-building and technical support to be able to implement a budgeted, multisectoral gender-transformative plan on ending child marriage across ministries and departments at national and subnational levels,
- *then* governments will be able to prevent and respond to child marriage and able to protect and promote the rights and well-being of adolescent girls.

Immediate outcome 3.2 focuses on increasing the capacity of governments and civil society organizations to generate, disseminate and use quality and timely evidence to inform policy, budgets and

programme design, track progress and document lessons.

Eliminating child marriage also requires evidence-based approaches including contextual data on causes and drivers of child marriage and evidence on what works in specific contexts and what works at scale. The underlying assumption is that:

- *If* governments and civil society organizations are provided with capacity-building and technical support to generate quality data and evidence on what works to end child marriage, and
- *if* governments and civil society organizations are encouraged to share and widely use the generated data and evidence on ending child marriage,
- *then* these data and evidence will inform better design and implementation of policies and programmes, facilitate social accountability and make it possible to track progress and document lessons.

The theory of change is supported by **seven cross-cutting strategies**:



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1. Integrate adaptive programming: Employ adaptive programming in development and humanitarian settings, particularly those affected by the polycrisis and megatrends.

2. Create and expand opportunities for the empowerment of adolescent girls: Increase scale and reach of child marriage programmes, especially for the most marginalized, leveraging, coordinating and complementing other government, United Nations and civil society-led initiatives in line with national action plans.

3. Invest in SRHR and CSE: Increase the scale and reach of services that ensure that adolescent girls can realize their rights associated with bodily autonomy and integrity, including deciding whether and when to have children and having a safe and satisfying sex life.

4. Promote a supportive and gender-equal family and community environment: Create dialogue to raise awareness and challenge dominant norms that sustain gender inequalities and their negative consequences for women, men, girls and boys, the economy and society; and build collective efficacy by working with local champions and influencers at all levels, including in households, communities, local institutions (including schools and health centres) and in the government, to address them.

5. Strengthen governance to prevent and respond to child marriage: Foster an enabling legal and policy environment, government leadership, financing and accountability, multisectoral system coordination, inclusive of voices of civil society, youth-led organizations and women's rights organizations, feminist movements and coalitions, researchers, media, traditional and religious leaders and other influencers for effective actions to end child marriage.

6. Enhance sustainability and impact of child marriage programmes: Support evidence-based, contextually relevant and sustainable programmes and strategies at national and local levels.



7. Strengthen global, regional and local coalitions: Leverage additional resources and co-investments on preventing and responding to child marriage and adolescent pregnancy in programme areas.



5.2 Assumptions

The overarching programme assumptions for the Phase III theory of change include that:

- Child marriage is influenced by factors beyond the control and mandates of the United Nations system, including the polycrisis and megatrends.
- Ending child marriage requires a multisectoral approach and geographical convergence.
- Momentum for socioeconomic change is needed to achieve significant progress.
- Ending child marriage requires addressing the root causes of gender inequalities and transforming harmful gender roles, norms and power relations; changing harmful social norms, particularly discriminatory gender norms, at the structural, community, household, and individual levels is an important component of sustainable change.

- Achieving gender-transformative change requires long-term and sustained investments over time to redistribute power and resources for women and girls.
- Affecting sustainable change requires situating the work on ending child marriage within the Humanitarian Programme Cycle and applying humanitarian-development nexus approaches.

The Global Programme will advance changes in gender relationships and structures with the specific goal of reducing, and ultimately eliminating, child marriage. The Programme recognizes that promoting gender equality is a prerequisite to ending child marriage, and that vice versa, ending child marriage is a prerequisite to ensuring gender equality.

5.3 Theory of change diagram

IMPACT	Adolescent girls, including the most marginalized, in countries targeted by the Global Programme fully enjoy their childhood free from the risk of marriage; they experience healthier, safer and more empowered life transitions, including making choices about their education, sexuality, relationships, marriage, and sexual and reproductive health (including childbearing).					
SDG Target	Target 5.3: Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation. Indicator 5.3.1: Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18.					
Intermediate Outcomes	1000 Adolescent girls at risk of and affected by child marriage are effectively making their own informed decisions and choices regarding marriage, sexual and reproductive health (including childbearing), education and livelihoods.		2000 Relevant sectoral systems and institutions effectively respond to the needs of adolescent girls and their families in targeted Global Programme areas.		3000 Enhanced legal and political response to prevent child marriage and to support pregnant, married, separated, divorced or widowed adolescent girls and girls at risk of child marriage.	
Immediate Outcomes	<p>1100 INTENSIVELY SUPPORTING THE MOST MARGINALIZED GIRLS</p> <p>Enhanced knowledge, education and skills, and attitudes of marginalized adolescent girls – in both development and humanitarian contexts – on matters such as their rights, relationships, sexual and reproductive health, and financial literacy.</p>	<p>1200 ENABLING FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>Families, traditional and religious leaders, community members (girls, women, boys and men), community groups, and other influencers – in both development and humanitarian contexts – demonstrate more gender-equitable attitudes and support for girls’ rights.</p>	<p>2100 SYSTEM STRENGTHENING</p> <p>Increased capacity of education, health, gender-based violence prevention and response and child protection systems to deliver coordinated, quality programmes and services that are responsive to the needs of adolescent girls and their families in both development and humanitarian contexts.</p>	<p>2200 ADDRESSING POVERTY DRIVERS</p> <p>Increased capacity of national and subnational social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes and services to respond to the needs of the poorest adolescent girls and their families in both development and humanitarian contexts.</p>	<p>3100 IMPLEMENTING LAWS AND POLICIES</p> <p>Enhanced capacity of governments, local authorities and civil society organizations to coordinate and implement budgeted national, and subnational action plans, policies and systems to end child marriage.</p>	<p>3200 STRENGTHENING AND USING DATA AND EVIDENCE</p> <p>Increased capacity of governments and civil society organizations to generate, disseminate and use quality and timely evidence to inform policy and programme design, track progress and document lessons.</p>
	<p>1110 Underserved/marginalized adolescent girls (aged 10–19) who are at risk of child marriage, married, separated, divorced, or widowed adolescent girls and adolescent girls who are pregnant or already have children, are engaged in gender-transformative life skills and comprehensive sexuality education programmes that build their knowledge, skills, and awareness of their rights, and connect them to services.</p>	<p>1210 Boys and men are engaged in gender-transformative programmes (including comprehensive sexuality education for boys) that promote healthy relationships and positive masculinities and gender equality.</p> <p>1220 Families, traditional and religious leaders, community members (girls, women, boys and men), community groups, and other influencers (e.g., youth, women, and feminist advocates) are engaged in gender-transformative dialogues, advocacy and consensus-building on alternatives to child marriage (including</p>	<p>2110 Formal (primary and secondary) and non-formal schools are supported to provide quality, gender-responsive education for adolescent girls, including comprehensive sexuality education.</p> <p>2120 Health (particularly sexual and reproductive health), gender-based violence prevention and response and child protection systems are supported to implement guidelines, protocols and standards for adolescent- and gender-responsive coordinated, quality services for unmarried, married, separated, divorced and widowed adolescent girls,</p>	<p>2210 Partnerships with governments, civil society organizations, the private sector, social protection networks and other implementers are supported to ensure that social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes and services are adolescent- and gender-responsive and reaching the poorest adolescent girls and their families.</p>	<p>3110 Advocacy, capacity-building, technical support and advocacy are provided to government and civil society organizations to enact, enforce and uphold comprehensive laws and policies, in line with international human rights standards, aimed at preventing child marriage, protecting those at risk and addressing the needs of those affected.</p> <p>3120 Advocacy, capacity-building and technical support are provided to government and civil society organizations to implement a budgeted multisectoral gender-responsive plan on ending</p>	<p>3210 Capacity-building and technical support are provided to government and civil society organizations to generate and use quality data and evidence on ending child marriage.</p> <p>3220 Regional and global coordination and support are provided to facilitate evidence generation and cross-learning on what works to end child marriage across Global Programme countries and with initiatives in other countries worldwide.</p>

Outputs	<p>1120 Adolescent girls are supported to enrol and remain in formal and non-formal education, including through the transition from primary to secondary school.</p>	<p>education), the rights of adolescent girls, and gender equality.</p> <p>1230 Women-led, youth-led, and feminist organizations, networks and coalitions are included and supported to build their capacities, mobilize the voices of the marginalized (particularly girls), challenge harmful gender and social norms, mitigate pushback and setbacks and promote gender equality through advocacy, community mobilization, capacity-building and other efforts.</p>	<p>and adolescent girls who are pregnant or already have children.</p>		<p>child marriage across ministries and departments at subnational levels.</p>	
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Integrate adaptive programming: Employ adaptive programming in development and humanitarian settings, particularly those affected by the polycrisis and megatrends. → Create and expand opportunities for the empowerment of adolescent girls: Increase scale and reach of child marriage programmes especially for the most marginalized, leveraging, coordinating and complementing other government, United Nations and civil society-led initiatives in line with national action plans. → Invest in sexual and reproductive health and rights and comprehensive sexuality education: Increase scale and reach of services that ensure that adolescent girls can realize their rights associated with bodily autonomy and integrity, including deciding whether and when to have children and having a safe and satisfying sex life. → Promote a supportive and gender equal family and community environment: Create dialogue and raise awareness on gender inequalities and their negative consequences, for women, men, girls and boys, the economy and society; work with local champions and influencers at all levels including in households, communities, local institutions (including schools and health centres) and government to address them. → Strengthen governance to prevent and respond to child marriage: Foster an enabling legal and policy environment, government leadership, financing and accountability, multisectoral systems coordination, inclusive of voices of civil society, youth-led organizations and women's rights organizations, researchers, media, traditional and religious leaders and other influencers for effective actions to end child marriage. → Strengthen global, regional and local coalitions: Leverage additional resources and co-investments on preventing and responding to child marriage and adolescent pregnancy in programme areas. → Enhance sustainability and impact of child marriage programmes: Support contextually relevant programmes and strategies at national and local levels. 					
Causes and drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Gender inequality and control of adolescent girls' sexuality; social and gender norms that promote harmful and discriminatory gender stereotypes for girls, women, boys and men. → Manifestations of multidimensional poverty: material deprivation to meet basic needs, social isolation, inequality, exclusion and powerlessness, denial of fulfilment of one's capabilities, physical and psychological well-being. → Lack of economic opportunities, disruption of the economy. → Adolescent pregnancy. → Inaccessible or low-quality services. E.g., health (including sexual and reproductive health), education, social protection, gender-based violence and child protection services. → Poor political enabling environments. Lack of implementation of laws and policies that protect adolescent girls; lack of respect for international humanitarian law. → Polycrisis and megatrends. E.g., conflicts, failing states, economic crises, environmental crises, natural disasters, displacement, pandemics, climate change, demographic shifts, urbanization, etc. 					
<p>PROBLEM: Child marriage and early union (of adolescent girls and boys) persists as a common practice in many societies and is associated with a combination of structural, economic and sociocultural factors and broader gender inequality. Lack of locally acceptable alternative life opportunities pushes adolescent girls and boys into marriage. A total of 640 million girls and women alive today were married as children.</p>						

6. Programme strategy

During Phase III, the Global Programme will respond to the main challenges presented in the context section: the polycrisis (including climate shocks and humanitarian situations) and megatrends; pushback against gender equality; and the slow decline in child marriage. **Business as usual is not an option.** In order to make greater progress towards achieving the SDG target to end child marriage by 2030, the Global Programme has to step up efforts to promote gender-transformative approaches and to challenge the pushback against gender equality; adapt programmes to the challenges of the polycrisis and megatrends; and leverage systems, partnerships and resources to achieve large-scale results.

While the Global Programme will continue to focus on the 12 core countries, lessons from the programme will be used to inform other countries with a high prevalence and high burden of child marriage, and where the political will and commitment to end child marriage is high.⁹⁹ Regional offices have already begun to support the development of strategy notes to inform the strategic directions of policies and programmes in some of these countries.

6.1 Three foundational principles

Achieving the ambitious vision for Phase III requires applying a human rights-based approach and the principle of leaving no one behind to prioritize the most marginalized, including the poorest and most vulnerable girls, pregnant girls and adolescent mothers, already married girls and girls affected by humanitarian situations. This also calls for gender-transformative approaches and the expansion of opportunities for adolescent girls



to enable them to fully enjoy their childhood free from the risk of marriage, and experience healthier, safer and more empowered life transitions, including making choices about their education, sexuality, relationships, marriage, and childbearing, requires ensuring they have bodily autonomy and decision-making power, and have career choices that enable adolescent girls to secure their aspirations.

6.1.1 Ensuring a human rights-based approach

A human rights-based approach will continue to underpin the Global Programme in Phase III. This includes leveraging political opportunities to advance

gender equality and the rights and empowerment of adolescent girls, and to continue to recognize child marriage as a human rights violation.

BOX 3: Global trends due to polycrisis¹⁰⁰

	Threats to democratic rights such as freedom of expression are expected to continue – but social movements, including those led by young people and women, are likely to push back.
	Increasing factionalism will put further stress on multilateralism – but efforts to address children’s and young people’s concerns may offer opportunities to find common ground.
	The Internet will continue to fragment and become less global, resulting in further disparities for children – prompting a greater push for openness, fairness and inclusion.

⁹⁹. This may include, for example: Mexico and Brazil in Latin America; Indonesia and the Philippines in Southeast Asia; Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Mali, Chad and Benin in West and Central Africa; Pakistan and Afghanistan in South Asia; Egypt, Sudan and Somalia in the Middle East and North Africa; Angola, Malawi, Tanzania and Zimbabwe in East and Southern Africa, etc.

¹⁰⁰. UNICEF, 2023a.

The Global Programme continues to embrace a human rights-based approach across all interventions to ensure the fulfilment of human rights to protection, development, education, health (including SRHR) and a life free of violence, in development and humanitarian settings and at country, regional and global levels.

The human rights-based approach to development is a conceptual framework for the process of sustainable development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and principles, and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. Under the

human rights-based approach, the plans, policies and processes of development are anchored in a system of rights and corresponding obligations established by international law, including all civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights, and the right to development. The human rights-based approach requires the **human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination, participation, and accountability** to guide United Nations development cooperation, and focus on capacity development of both duty bearers (i.e., states) to meet their obligations as well as rights holders to claim their rights.¹⁰¹

6.1.2 Leaving no one behind

Amid the polycrisis and megatrends, today's multifaceted, complex crises create difficult conditions for girls to gain access to basic services, and protection concerns are high. Leaving no one behind is a human rights issue and is critical to achieving the SDGs. Being left behind is often the result of deliberate exclusion and discrimination and therefore requires targeted action.¹⁰² Inclusion is key to ending child marriage. Unless we address inequality and exclusion with an intersectional approach, we will not achieve SDG 5. Phase III programming must have leadership that prioritizes those furthest behind; staff, systems and mechanisms with the capacities to reach those left behind; data related to who is being left behind; and funding available to reach those furthest behind.

In Phase III, the Global Programme will broaden and deepen the inclusion of marginalized populations, especially those furthest behind and facing

intersecting forms of exclusion and discrimination: adolescents with disabilities; married girls and adolescent mothers; out-of-school girls, people of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression (SOGIE); IDPs; adolescents from religious and ethnic minorities; girls living in extreme poverty; populations most affected by the polycrisis, etc. In fragile contexts, adolescent girls face compounded childbearing, GBV risks and reduced access to essential services, including adolescent SRHR, putting them at increased risk of unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. Therefore, the Global Programme should continue to advocate for inclusive quality education, including CSE and vocational skills opportunities, child protection and adolescent SRHR services along with engaging with the governments in a systems-strengthening approach to disaster preparedness and resilience building.



101. UNFPA, *Elevating Rights and Choices for All: Guidance Note for Applying a Human Rights Based Approach to Programming*, 2020b, <www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/2020_HRBA_guidance.pdf>

102. UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, *Leaving No One Behind: Technical Note of the Global Programme to End Child Marriage*, 2020b, <www.unfpa.org/resources/leaving-no-one-behind-technical-note-global-programme-end-child-marriage>

	Make the invisible visible: Disaggregate data to extent possible and invest in studies for new data
	Strengthen the voice and participation of and partnerships with those furthest behind
	Address root causes: Discrimination, social norms, stigma, xenophobia, racism, gender inequality, etc.
	Take an intersectional approach
	Foster an enabling national environment: Policies and laws (remove discriminatory laws and enact child marriage laws)
	Institutionalize accountability in systems, regulatory structures and oversight mechanisms to secure a feedback loop that brings to light systemic discrimination and ensures redress for violations
	Engage with international human rights mechanisms , including treaty bodies, Special Procedures and Universal Periodic Review (UPR), to uphold human rights for all and create space for dialogue and partnership
	Make funding available for approaches to leave no one behind
	Mainstreaming and targeted approach: Specific programmes for specific groups with indicators to track progress

6.1.3 Fostering gender-transformative change

Gender-transformative approaches aim to address the root causes of gender inequality and discriminatory gender norms and roles; tackle intersectional forms of exclusion and vulnerability; redistribute power and resources for women and girls; promote gender-equitable norms, roles and behaviours; and empower women and girls to exercise their rights. Gender-transformati-

ve approaches go beyond raising awareness. They challenge gender-discriminatory institutions and systems by supporting governments to put in place laws, policies and systems that promote gender equality, and offer quality services, especially adolescent-friendly SRH services, education, GBV and child protection services, and social protection. Gender-transformative approaches must be inte-

103. UNFPA, *Strategic Plan 2022-2025, 2021a*, <www.unfpa.org/strategic-plan-2022>



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grated into government programmes, policies, budgets, advocacy and communications to leverage large-scale public resources and contribute to an environment that enables transformative change for adolescent girls.

Gender-transformative approaches are central to the Global Programme. Building a shared understanding, operationalizing and achieving gender-transformative change takes time and requires long-term and sustained investments across different levels of the socio-ecological model. During Phase III, the Global Programme will scale up gender-transformative approaches and invest in both system-level and lasting structural change to achieve gender equality. Fostering gender-transformative change requires the Global Programme to go deeper and to:

- Advocate, provide technical support and build capacities of staff, partners and service providers
- Integrate gender-transformative change in government programmes in order to leverage resources at scale
- Ensure gender-transformative approaches are

integrated into multisectoral programming and address intersectional issues and multiple forms of exclusion and discrimination

- Continue to expand the Gender-Transformative Accelerator tool beyond the Global Programme countries
- Increase support for feminist and women-led organizations and movements to redistribute resources and mitigate pushback against gender equality
- Amplify the voices of adolescent girls and young people
- Systematically promote positive masculinities and male engagement for gender equality
- Continue to build the evidence base on what works for gender-transformative change
- Fine-tune quantitative and qualitative measurements of gender-transformative change
- Strengthen organizational leadership and commitment.

6.2 Three focus areas

Building on the past eight years of programming, the Global Programme's Phase III strategy will invest in three mutually reinforcing focus areas that address the three challenges of the polycrisis and megatrends; the pushback against gender equality; and the slow decline in child marriage. These

focus areas promote gender equality; adapt to the polycrisis and megatrends; and accelerate results and leverage partnerships and resources. Combined, the three focus areas aim to accelerate efforts to end child marriage.

6.2.1 Promote gender equality and the empowerment of girls

Since Phase II, the Global Programme has emphasized that programmes have to be broader than preventing child marriage or adolescent pregnancies – irrespective of the context and whether (self-initiated or arranged) child marriage or adolescent pregnancy is the main problem (or the trigger that has far-reaching negative repercussions for adolescent girls). In all contexts, programmes need to have a broader focus on gender equality and adolescent girls' empowerment, from a gender-transformative approach that is tailored to each context.

Overall, SBC approaches will be better contextualized and broadened beyond communication and community-based interventions, and SBC approaches will be applied across all levels of the socio-ecological model. The engagement of boys and men will also be expanded and systematized. The Global Programme will also expand partnerships to mobilize adolescent girls, women and young people as changemakers. This includes greater opportunities to amplify the voices of girls.

Sustain and scale up intensive support interventions for adolescent girls' empowerment

Phase III of the Global Programme will continue to centre on the promotion of agency and empowerment of adolescent girls, through intensive support interventions for the most marginalized adolescent girls and by offering alternative choices to child marriage and childbearing, by implementing two main evidence-based approaches with a particular focus on out-of-school settings or non-formal education: targeted life skills and comprehensive sexuality education (CSE).

Targeted life skills and CSE are delivered as two complementary approaches under the Global Programme, often overlapping in implementation and sometimes separate in school and out-of-school settings. In addition, in several countries, most of the empowerment programmes also use the protective assets-building approach to adolescent girls-centred programming.¹⁰⁴

BOX 5: Empowerment ¹⁰⁵

Empowerment is the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability. This implies having material, social and human resources to make strategic choices, and the ability to exercise agency, participation, voice and negotiation in decision-making, in order to gain achievements or meaningful improvements in life and well-being.

¹⁰⁴. UNFPA, *Empowering Adolescent Girls Through Non-Formal Education*, 2022c, <www.unfpa.org/publications/empowering-adolescent-girls-through-non-formal-education>

¹⁰⁵. UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, *Technical note on adolescent girls' empowerment through life skills in the Global Programme to End Child Marriage*, 2020c, <<https://www.unicef.org/documents/technical-note-adolescent-girls-empowerment-0>>

1. Targeted lifeskills

Lifeskills are defined as “a large group of psychosocial and interpersonal skills that can help people make informed decisions, communicate effectively, and develop coping and self-management skills that may help lead a healthy and productive life.” An approach to transformative lifeskills programmes for adolescent girls includes eight elements embedded into programme design, implementation and community grounding: (1) Clear desired results, (2) Intentional targeting by vulnerability, sex and age, (3) Content that fits girls’ concerns and expands aspirations, (4) Facilitators capable of personal growth, (5) Reflective, participatory, practice-based approach, (6) Intensity and duration sufficient to be transformative, (7) Time for gatekeeper engagement, and (8) Links to community and referral services.¹⁰⁶ Targeted lifeskills programmes can also provide the transferable skills to support adolescent girls’ transition to the labour market as well as providing a space for exploring non-traditional gender roles.¹⁰⁷

2. Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE)

Comprehensive sexuality education in or out of school enables young people to protect and advocate for their health, well-being and dignity by

providing them with a needed toolkit of knowledge, attitudes and skills. It is a precondition for exercising full bodily autonomy, which requires not only the right to make choices about one’s body but also the information to make these choices in a meaningful way. Because these programmes are based on human rights principles, they advance gender equality and the rights and empowerment of adolescent girls.

CSE is an evidence- and international standards-based approach which requires that programmes provide scientifically accurate, incremental, age- and developmentally appropriate, gender-responsive, culturally relevant and transformative information about the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality; providing adolescent girls and boys with the opportunity to explore values, attitudes and social and cultural norms and rights impacting sexual and social relationships; and promoting the acquisition of lifeskills. To be comprehensive, CSE should implement eight key concepts, namely: relationships; values, rights, culture and sexuality; understanding gender; violence and staying safe; skills for health and well-being; the human body and development; sexuality and sexual behaviour; and sexual and reproductive health.¹⁰⁸



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¹⁰⁶. UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, *Technical Note on Life Skills Programmes for Empowering Adolescent Girls*, 2020d, <www.unicef.org/documents/technical-note-life-skills-programmes-empowering-adolescent-girls>

¹⁰⁷. UNICEF, *Global framework on transferable skills*, 2019a, <www.unicef.org/reports/global-framework-transferable-skills>

¹⁰⁸. UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women & WHO, 2018; UNFPA, *International Technical and Programmatic Guidance on Out-of-School Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)*, 2020c, <www.unfpa.org/featured-publication/international-technical-and-programmatic-guidance-out-school-comprehensive>

Contextualize behaviour change across all levels of the socio-ecological model

The systematic review on addressing social norms to end child marriage undertaken in Phase II noted that, while social and behaviour change (SBC) can help shift norms and practices, many of the interventions assessed lacked clarity about what norms-shifting and SBC interventions should consist of. For this reason, Phase II placed emphasis on achieving conceptual clarity around SBC and social norms programming, including the development of a definitions paper,¹⁰⁹ the creation of simple online courses on behavioural drivers and social norms,¹¹⁰ in-person training of country staff and partners on social norms programming and measurement and the creation of behavioural indicators for child marriage.

Building on this work, and on the evidence of what works to end child marriage and promote girls' empowerment, Phase III will strengthen its social and behaviour change component through a systematic approach aimed at designing, delivering and measuring high-quality SBC interventions that complement all other elements of the theory of change for Phase III.

Social and behaviour change is defined as a set of processes, approaches, tools, strategies and tactics that promote positive and measurable changes in people's environments, societies and behaviours.¹¹¹ As such, it is a critical strategy to create an enabling environment and empower girls, boys and communities to bring about individual and collective change. In Phase III, SBC programming will be strengthened through four strategic pillars: (1) Use of behavioural science to diagnose drivers of behaviour and design tailored, contextualized interventions and measurement indicators; (2) Diversification of approaches that go beyond communication; (3) Implementation of SBC across the socio-ecological model for gender transformation; and (4) Training, capacity development and learning.

1. Use of behavioural science to diagnose drivers of behaviour to design tailored, contextualized interventions and measurement indicators

The experiences of the Global Programme have shown that child marriage can be driven by a range



of different factors. In some cases, the practice is driven by poverty, in others it may be driven by the need to protect girls from the stigma of premarital intercourse, in other cases by social and cultural norms, or by teenage pregnancy. Understanding exactly what drives the behaviour will help in designing tailored interventions that target specific drivers and help focus resources and efforts.

The Global Programme will build on the work of Phase II which used the Behavioural Drivers Model¹¹² as a framework to understand and measure behavioural drivers. The Behavioural Drivers Model categorizes factors that influence behaviour in three areas: (1) psychology, which includes drivers that pertain to the individual, such as knowledge, self-efficacy, beliefs and risk perception; (2) sociology, which includes drivers such as social norms, peer pressure and community dynamics; and (3) environment, which includes the communication environment, availability of services, governing entities and structural barriers. In Phase II, questionnaires that help diagnose and quantify drivers across these three dimensions were developed and validated in six countries, providing an understanding of where to focus SBC efforts and a baseline to track progress. In Phase III, these behavioural questionnaires will be streamlined and additional Global Programme countries will be supported to implement them and interpret the findings to shape SBC activities that are relevant to their context. Follow-up questionnaires will be implemented to determine change in specific behavioural indicators and inform programme adjustments as required.

109. UNICEF, *Defining social norms and related concepts*, 2021c, <<https://www.unicef.org/media/111061/file/Social-norms-definitions-2021.pdf>>

110. See <https://agora.unicef.org/course/info.php?id=35046> and <https://agora.unicef.org/course/info.php?id=40035>.

111. UNICEF, *Social and behaviour change guidance*, 2023d, <www.sbcguidance.org/home>

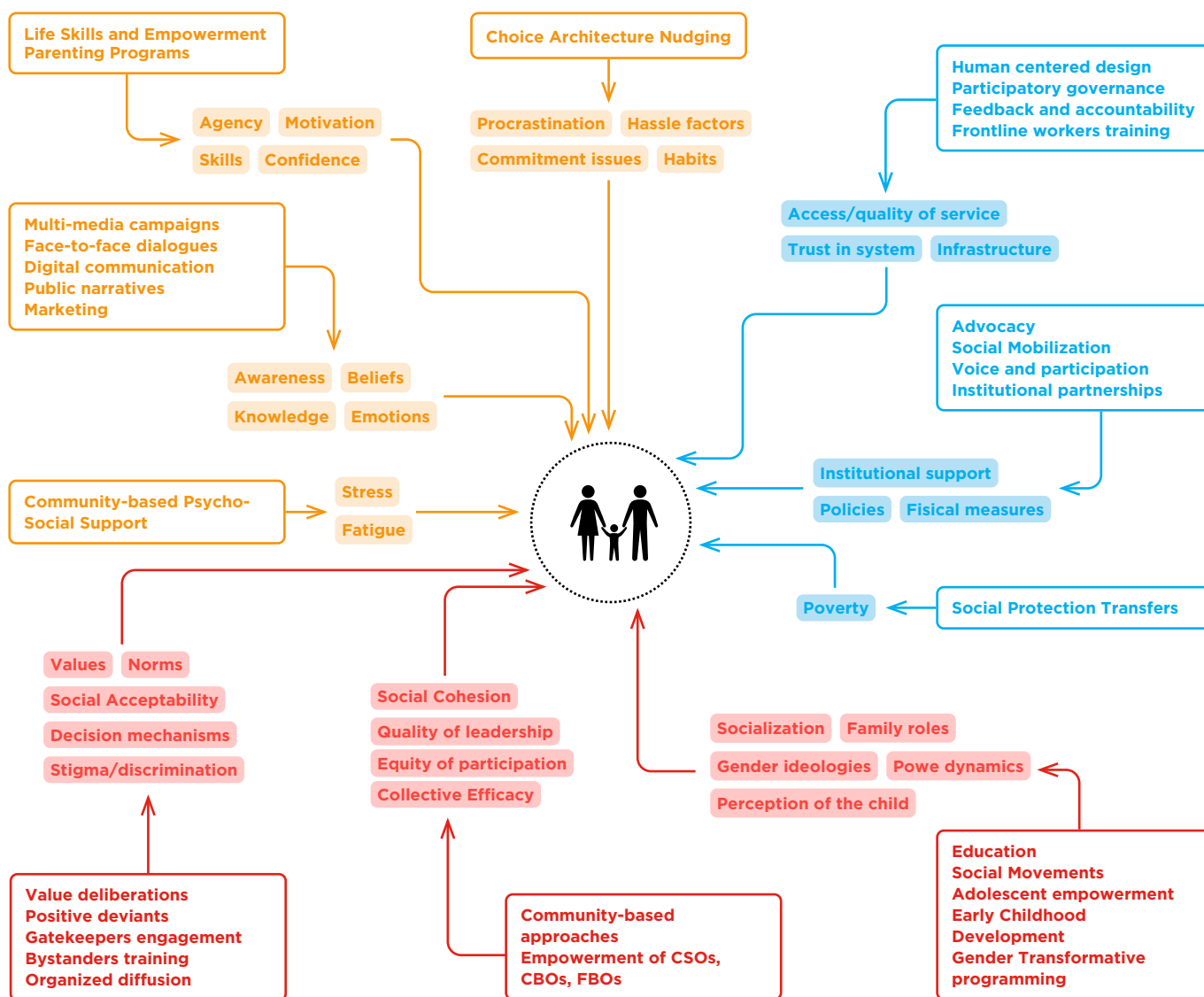
112. UNICEF, *The Behavioural Drivers Model: A Conceptual Framework for Social and Behaviour Change Programming*, 2019b, <www.unicef.org/mena/media/5586/file/The_Behavioural_Drivers_Model_0.pdf%20.pdf>

2. Diversification of SBC approaches that go beyond communication

During Phase II, SBC approaches were mostly communication-based, such as awareness-raising, community dialogue and the use of traditional and social media. While these continue to be important approaches to challenge dominant norms, promote new norms and shift collective beliefs, Phase III will pay particular attention to linking activities with behavioural drivers. This means that the Global Programme will select its activities from a larger SBC toolbox, going beyond communication to target specific drivers. If lack of agency is identified as a key driver, for example, then activities will look at building skills and confidence of girls. If on the other hand communities are not exposed to different ways of doing things (that is, they lack

emerging alternatives), social marketing or positive deviance may be more suitable approaches. Alternatively, if people not speaking up against the practices is considered a driver, then behavioural insights and nudging can be used to encourage people to raise their voice. Figure 18 depicts the many factors that can influence child marriage, categorized along the Behavioural Drivers Model¹¹³ domains of psychology (green), sociology (orange) and environment (blue). Beside each of these drivers, the figure lists the different activities and approaches that are most suitable for influencing those drivers. This model will be used to help countries design activities that address specific needs as identified in the behavioural drivers diagnosis phase and to support them in enhancing their knowledge and use of these different approaches.

Figure 18: Relationship between the main drivers, behavioural interventions and programming approaches



113. Ibid.

3. Implementation of SBC across the socio-ecological model for gender-transformative change

The family and community will remain at the centre of SBC activities, addressing beliefs, values and norms and building collective efficacy. However, considering that the factors that drive child marriage operate across the socio-ecological model, SBC will also use its behavioural diagnosis to assess and influence other dimensions according to contextual needs, such as structural barriers to access service provision, attitudes of service providers, or harmful narratives promoted by the communication environment. Importantly, SBC will continue to promote cross-sectoral collaboration to address gender inequality meta-norms that influence child marriage. Meta-norms are overarching norms that influence multiple behaviours. For example, gender norms influence child marriage, but they also influence FGM, the use of family planning, access to education and the job market and caregiving practices. Similarly, norms around how children are perceived will influence their perceived readiness for marriage and childbearing, their engagement in child labour or the responsibilities they are tasked with in the household. SBC will look to continue building partnerships with other sectors to understand and address these meta-norms that contribute to the perpetuation of child marriage.

4. Training, capacity development and learning

In Phase III, SBC will build on the work started in Phase II to strengthen in-country capacities to design, implement and monitor quality SBC interventions. Tools that are currently being developed,



such as the SBC playbook for a human-centred approach to addressing harmful practices, will support countries to put communities at the centre of their activities. The 'Social Norms Programming and Measurement Training' course will be adapted to different regions in collaboration with academic institutions for institutional capacity strengthening in SBC and to ensure sustainability. Technical support will continue to be provided to countries to contextualize their SBC interventions, and exchange and learning opportunities will be threaded throughout Phase III.

The increased emphasis on identifying and measuring behavioural drivers will make it possible to track changes, assess progress and build evidence of what works. In addition to the quantitative indicators used to diagnose and measure behavioural drivers, SBC will also employ rapid qualitative tools through implementing partners' interactions with communities to understand the different dimensions of change. This will allow the programme to make rapid adjustments as needed and continuously learn from the communities. SBC monitoring will be part of the overall monitoring, evaluation, research and learning (MERL) plan of the Global Programme.

Work with boys and young men to promote positive masculinities

While child marriage predominantly affects adolescent girls, solid evidence has shown that working only with girls is not enough to end the practice. Many boys and young men too face pressures to marry early, or to marry girls who are children, and they play a key role in embodying and reproducing harmful gender norms that drive child marriage. Yet boys and men are not always targeted through robust programmatic interventions beyond awareness-raising.

During Phase III, the Global Programme will develop and implement more robust and systematic work with boys and young men to promote positive masculinities. Recent evidence from UNFPA and Equimundo proposes eight recommendations for the design, funding and implementation of gender-transformative programmes working with boys to address child marriage.¹¹⁴

114. Equimundo, UNFPA & Spotlight Initiative, *Boyhood and Child, Early, and Forced Marriages and Unions. An evidence review*, 2022, <https://www.equimundo.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Equimundo_CEFMU_Report.pdf>; Ruane-McAteer, E. et al., 'Gender-transformative programming with men and boys to improve sexual and reproductive health and rights: A systematic review of intervention studies', *BMJ Global Health*, 5, 2020. doi:10.1136/bmjgh-2020-002997.

- Engage boys and men as a core component of programmes
 - Set up partnerships to work at all levels of the social-ecological model, with particular attention to institutional change
 - Develop and secure support for programmes that privilege deep, long-term, and multilevel work
 - Build a deep understanding of adolescent boys' profiles and tailor programmes to them
 - Address taboos around sexuality
 - Challenge the status quo through gender-transformative staff training and programme design
 - Help build the evidence on boys' and men's engagement
 - Advocate for domestic and international investments to help fill the biggest gaps
- Mobilize adolescent girls, women and young people as changemakers**

Women and young people are critical changemakers for ending child marriage and they must be central to our response as key allies and partners.

- Faith Mwangi-Powell, CEO, Girls Not Brides, at the Global Programme Phase III Design Workshop

Adolescent girls, women and young people are critical changemakers in social movements and can become key allies in efforts to promote the empowerment of girls and end child marriage, in development and humanitarian contexts. The Global Programme is deeply committed to working with young people, listening to their concerns and supporting them to making their voices heard in their communities and at national, regional and global policy forums.

Research conducted over four decades in 70 countries shows that mobilizing independent women's groups is critical to address GBV in address-

ing SRHR, including access to emergency contraception, maternal, newborn and child health and improving access to child immunization especially in countries where only women and girls can access other women, girls and children.^{115,116} The pushback against gender equality makes it imperative to build alliances and coalitions to promote gender equality and to confront those who oppose it. In Phase III, the Global Programme will expand strategic alliances and partnerships with youth- and women-led and feminist organizations, coalitions and movements to support and harness their power as changemakers, in development and humanitarian contexts.

Box 6: How do partnerships with women- and girl-led organizations advance UNICEF's Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action?¹¹⁷

Partnering with women-led and girl-led organizations can:

- Contribute to more actionable gender analyses
- Strengthen the accountability to crisis-affected women and girls
- Provide rapid feedback on how emergency contexts have shifted, and how these shifts may require programmatic adjustments
- Support community outreach and ensure no one is left behind in humanitarian response
- Support disaster preparedness and long-term recovery, given that women- and girl-led organizations work across the humanitarian-development nexus

¹¹⁵ Weldon, S. L. & Htun, M., 'Feminist mobilisation and progressive policy change: Why governments take action to combat violence against women', *Gender & Development*, 21(2), 2013, pp. 231-247. doi:10.1080/13552074.2013.802158

¹¹⁶ IASC Gender Reference Group, *Women's and/or girls' organisations (WGO). What, who, and how - defining women's and/or girls' organisations for humanitarian action*, 2022 (unpublished draft).

¹¹⁷ UNICEF, 2020a.

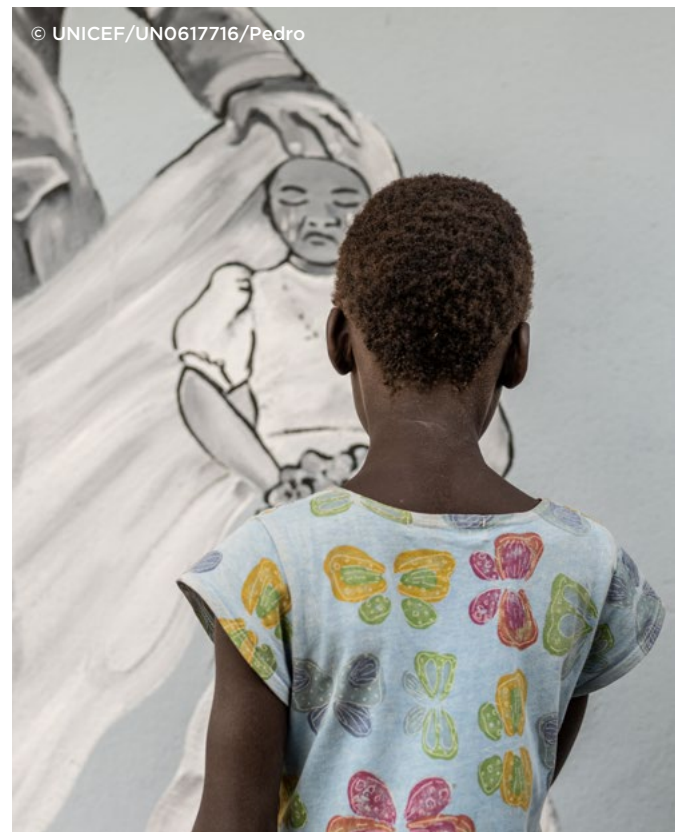
1. Policy commitments

Both UNFPA and UNICEF have made strong commitments to expand partnerships with feminist organizations and networks. The UNICEF Gender Action Plan 2022–2025¹¹⁸ emphasizes the importance of expanding partnerships with feminist organizations and networks led by women and girls in raising their voices as agents of change and partners in programming and advocacy at the local, national, regional and global levels. The Gender Action Plan also commits UNICEF to deliberate on adjustments in internal policies and systems to transform the organization into a more diverse, inclusive and equitable institution. The UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022–2025¹¹⁹ promotes positive masculinities to challenge discriminatory norms; strengthens civil society, feminist, faith-based and grass-roots organizations and activists; and supports feminist movements and assists women’s rights defenders, human rights defenders and young feminist organizations. To this end, UNFPA has issued internal guidelines for working with women-led organizations in development, humanitarian and peacebuilding settings.

2. The importance of investing in and supporting youth- and women-led civil society organizations¹²⁰

While youth- and women-led organizations are strong, creative and adaptive, they are often very poorly resourced. The Global Programme supports and enables youth or women/girl-led organizations to pursue a gender-transformative approach to ending child marriage and preventing unwanted adolescent pregnancies. In 2022, the Global Programme had a total of 276 implementing partners at regional and national level. Of these, 145 were civil society organizations, of which 27 were youth-led and 46 were women’s rights organizations. Through gender-responsive procurement and partnership, the Global Programme disbursed small-scale funds to 22 grass-roots women- and girl-led organizations to promote gender equality and advocate for ending child marriage in their communities.

In 2022, the Global Programme assessed the extent to which 134 civil society partner organizations from 10 countries advance gender-transformative approaches in their programmes and internal systems and structures. 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 found that 20 per cent of the CSOs ranked as gender-transformative, 36 per cent as gender-responsive, and 19 per cent as gender aware or gender-sensitive, while 10 per cent of the CSOs were assessed to be gender blind and 1 per cent gender unequal. The assessment recommended that partner CSOs be systematically incorporated in the roll-out of the GTA tool and that their capacities to implement gender-transformative programming be strengthened. The findings and recommendations from the assessment are being used to design tools and technical support to address most of the structural and systemic challenges identified.¹²¹



¹¹⁸. UNICEF Executive Board, *UNICEF Gender Action Plan 2022–2025*, 2021, <www.unicef.org/executiveboard/media/7046/file/2021-31-Gender_Action_Plan_2022-2025-EN-ODS.pdf>

¹¹⁹. UNFPA, 2021a.

¹²⁰. UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, *Gender assessment of civil society organization partners under the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage*, 2022a, <<https://www.unicef.org/documents/gender-assessment-civil-society-organization-partners>>

¹²¹. UNICEF, *Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action. Action Learning Brief and Checklist. Partnering with women- and girl-led organizations*, 2020a, <www.unicef.org/media/129046/file/UNICEF%20-%20Action%20Brief%20-%20Engaging%20Local%20WGLos.pdf>



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3. Expanding partnerships with youth- and women-led and feminist organizations and networks

In Phase III, the Global Programme is committed to expanding partnerships with youth- and women-led organizations, networks and movements, to support them and strengthen their capacities in research, programming and advocacy to end child marriage and promote gender equality. Some examples of these partnerships include:

- Support partnerships with women’s networks and feminist movements to engage in policy advocacy related to gender-related drivers of child marriage, the age of consent, ASRHR and bodily autonomy of adolescent girls and young women as well as to mitigate the pushback against gender equality, human rights and democracy.
- Strengthen capacities in lobbying and advocacy for SRHR in all settings, including across the development and humanitarian continuum. This will increase the reach and effectiveness of messaging about gender equality, ending child marriage, women’s and girls’ SRHR and bodily autonomy.
- Amplify the voices of adolescent girls left furthest behind by bringing organizations led by adolescent girls and women to national, regional and international policy forums.

- Support girls’ participation in disaster risk reduction assessments and planning, climate change policymaking, environmental impact assessments, and audits. This will help address the additional risks of child marriage during natural disasters and humanitarian crises.¹²²
- Invest in girl- and youth-led organizations and support their inclusion in decision-making and planning to lift structural and systemic barriers and end child marriage and promote the empowerment of adolescent girls.¹²³

Broaden global and regional partnerships for gender equality

In Phase III, the Global Programme will build on the strong foundations laid since 2016 to further expand regional and global partnerships with the global human rights architecture, regional political institutions and Regional Economic Commissions, global CSO networks, and other United Nations agencies, programmes and initiatives. Partnerships will be expanded beyond child marriage to place greater emphasis on ASRHR, bodily autonomy and on challenging the pushback against gender equality. The Global Programme will involve national women-led and youth-led organizations, feminist movements and will network in regional and global advocacy initiatives.

¹²². Girls Not Brides, *Ending child marriage is crucial to gender equality*, 2020, <www.girlsnotbrides.org/documents/953/Ending-child-marriage-is-crucial-to-gender-equality_2020-July.pdf>

¹²³. Ibid.

6.2.2 Adapt to the polycrisis and megatrends

Since the polycrisis and megatrends are playing out in different ways in diverse contexts, the Global Programme will adapt and respond flexibly to the ever-changing circumstances and challenges affecting adolescent girls, child marriage, adolescent pregnancy and gender equality. This may imply, for example: moving interventions to communities displaced by environmental crises or armed conflict; using digital technologies to reach populations in areas made inaccessible by floods or by insecurity; or strengthening community-based structures to ensure the continuity of SBC interventions at the community level. Health, education, social assistance, protection services and pathways to the economic empowerment of women and girls have to be adapted, redesigned and made more resilient to respond to changing demands.¹²⁴ Rapidly changing contexts also require monitoring, evaluation and learning systems that are generating the data and evidence to inform programme adaptations much more rapidly. This means that feedback loops have to be much faster, and monitoring, research and programming have to be integrated to a much greater extent.

While the COVID-19 adaptations provided valuable lessons and the Global Programme has made some investments in conceptualizing and documenting experiences with child marriage programming in emergencies, there is a need for a much more forward-looking approach to child marriage in

complex emergencies. Programming responses have to bridge the gap between humanitarian and development approaches and include a much more strategic and systematic focus on climate change. It is imperative to engage with the humanitarian and climate change communities so that ending child marriage becomes an integral part of all dimensions of humanitarian and climate change programming, including prevention, resilience building, mitigation and response. This is necessary to position the Global Programme more clearly to swiftly respond to multiple, intertwined crises that tend to be addressed through siloed coordination, funding and programming mechanisms.

This section presents some experiences and ideas related to child marriage programming adapted to the polycrisis and megatrends, including climate change. Clearly, much more work is needed for a coherent and fully developed approach to ending child marriage in relation to the polycrisis, megatrends and climate shocks.

Effects of humanitarian crises on child marriage and adolescent girls and implications for programming

Understanding how girls' vulnerabilities are exacerbated in times of crises is critically important. It is clear that climate change and other humanitarian crises threaten the realization of SRHR. Many of the areas with the highest rates of child marriage are also those facing the gravest environmental threats from climate change and ecological breakdown. Efforts to adapt to climate change must address the links between environmental crises and SRHR, including the link to child marriage. Similarly, action to tackle child marriage should consider how local and global environmental crises may affect the drivers of child marriage.¹²⁵

While crises and emergencies are becoming more complex, a key principle of humanitarian interventions is that solutions must be concrete, focused and implementable. Based on the current state of the evidence, crisis-adaptive programmes have to combine prevention, risk reduction, building resilience, mitigation and response and include the components outlined in Table 4.



¹²⁴. Resilient systems require absorptive, adaptive and transformative capacities; for more information see OECD, *Development Co-operation Report 2020: Learning from Crises, Building Resilience*, 2020, <www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/204755cb-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/204755cb-en>

¹²⁵. Pasten et al., 2020.

Table 4: Crisis-adaptive programme solutions

Problems caused by polycrisis and megatrends	Solutions: prevention, resilience building, risk reduction and response
<p>Increase in poverty due to loss of assets and opportunities for income generation. This can lead to negative coping strategies such as child marriage, child labour, transactional sex, etc.</p>	<p>Mitigate the economic effects of the crisis and build resilience by expanding social protection and income support and livelihood diversification programmes</p>
<p>Disruption in service provision, quality and access to services: education, health, protection, etc.</p>	<p>Ensure the continued provision of health, education, social assistance and protection services to populations affected by the crisis</p>
<p>Increase in violence: The creation of settings in which sexual violence and the fear of sexual violence increase</p>	<p>Prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence against girls and women, including child marriage, through targeted gender-transformative programming and a humanitarian-development nexus approach</p>
<p>Displacement of people from their homes can lead to a loss of continuity in SBC promotion and backsliding on positive changes in social norms and behaviours</p>	<p>Ensure continued community engagement through a combination of technological innovations, moving interventions as communities move, and strengthen community structures to continue community dialogues</p>
<p>Democratic backsliding and the backlash against gender equality and human rights leads to pushback, setbacks and lack of prioritization of issues related to GBV, child marriage and SRHR in national, regional and global policy agendas</p>	<p>Partner with and invest in feminist and women- and youth-led organizations to challenge the pushback and ensure that GBV, child marriage, SRHR and related issues are included and prioritized in national disaster management plans</p>

Bridging the humanitarian-development divide

The Global Programme will work to bridge the development-humanitarian divide to ensure that interventions are fit-for-purpose and combine prevention, resilience building, mitigation and response. Too often, humanitarian work focuses on response services at the expense of prevention, while development programmes often lack the narrower focus and flexibility to respond rapidly to a crisis. It has been recognized for some time that the humanitarian-development division is not appropriate for contexts of chronic and complex crises.

For many years, humanitarian and development actors have been working on ways to bridge the gap between humanitarian and development approaches. The latest iteration is the triple nexus and the linkages between the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding sectors. While this approach

has a great deal of merit, it has been challenging to implement in practice and to deliver concrete results. Below are some of the identified challenges with the nexus approach and some initial attempts at finding solutions in relation to the prevention of child marriage in crisis-affected areas.

- **Data generation and sharing:** Government agencies, communities and humanitarian actors often lack the knowledge, information and data on the links between humanitarian emergencies and child marriage. To address this challenge, include child marriage and ASRH in humanitarian assessments and analyses to highlight the situation and to ensure that the prevention of child marriage is adequately considered in Humanitarian Response Plans.
- **Prioritizing:** Interventions to prevent child marriage are not considered to be lifesaving and

are deprioritized in conflict and climate change settings. Governments need to prioritize child marriage as part of their emergency interventions. Use available evidence and data to highlight the severity of effects of humanitarian crises on adolescent girls.

- **Positioning:** Strategically position the prevention of child marriage at the centre of child protection and GBV in emergencies and other allied sectors (nutrition, health, and education). Integrate child marriage prevention and response actions into the Humanitarian Response Plans.
- **Leveraging:** Integrate child marriage in humanitarian clusters: the GBV Area of Responsibility, the protection cluster, for humanitarian cash transfers, education, and ASRH, etc.
- **Partnering:** Establish new partnerships with humanitarian actors in relation to climate change, conflict and child marriage.
- **Capacitating:** Strengthen the technical capacities of humanitarian actors in relation to child marriage and ASRH.
- **Adapting:** Within the Global Programme, several country teams adapted programming during recent crises by focusing more on strengthening community resilience, including recruiting community mentors. These teams are experimenting with programmes that can shift from a development to a humanitarian focus.
- **Messaging:** Integrate key messages on the prevention of child marriage into humanitarian communication to the affected population and to decision makers.
- **Monitoring:** Include child marriage as one of the core indicators of Humanitarian Response Plans. Develop monitoring tools for high-risk areas: geolocation, data collection, documentation of activities, photos, etc.
- **Funding:** There are no additional funds for child marriage programming in conflict and climate change settings. Flexibly use Global Program-

me funding for programming in emergencies. UNFPA and UNICEF headquarters to lobby for additional donors to address child marriage in humanitarian settings (such as through the Central Emergency Response Fund of OCHA and the Peacebuilding Fund).

These challenges and solutions relate primarily to the lack of response mechanisms to child marriage in the humanitarian sector. The solutions focus on how to integrate child marriage into the humanitarian response. More work needs to be done to operationalize the humanitarian-development nexus approach.

The Global Programme will work to bridge the development-humanitarian divide to ensure that interventions are fit for purpose and combine prevention, mitigation and response. There is a need for bold approaches that transcend unhelpful divides, where prevention and response to child marriage and gender equality are integral components of the humanitarian architecture, including prevention and SBC approaches, and where gender-responsive approaches in emergencies are fully developed and operationalized.

Integrating child marriage prevention and response into humanitarian action is an imperative that should be considered as part of a lifesaving response. This includes situating the work on ending child marriage within the Humanitarian Programme Cycle and applying the humanitarian-development nexus approaches. It is possible to harness humanitarian crises as an opportunity to do better



126. Sida Helpdesk on Human Security and Humanitarian Assistance, *Leaving no crisis behind with assistance for the triple nexus: Humanitarian, development and peace funding in crisis contexts*, 2023, <https://devinit.org/documents/1298/SHD261_nexus_financing_data_for_distribution_signed_off_final_v2_5G8xy9F.pdf>; Yunusa, Zainab, 'Climate policies must allow women to control their bodies and their fates', *The New Humanitarian* (2022, April), <www.thenewhumanitarian.org/opinion/2022/04/14/Climate-change-policies-women-control-bodies>; Loy, Irwin, 'What the latest funding data says about the humanitarian system', *The New Humanitarian* (2023, June), <www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2023/06/21/what-latest-funding-data-says-about-humanitarian-system?utm_source=The+New+Humanitarian&utm_campaign=f91a72flae-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2023_06_23&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d842d98289-f91a72flae-75519541>

for girls who are at risk of child marriage or already married. To achieve these results, the Global Programme needs to be integrated into ‘the humanitarian architecture’ and access humanitarian funding streams.¹²⁶

Crises as opportunities for gender-transformative change?

The literature on humanitarian emergencies and gender is overwhelmingly bleak and focuses on

the harmful effects of crises on women and girls. However, humanitarian crises are social and economic disrupters that may offer opportunities for promoting positive changes in norms and behaviours. They may offer chances for greater gender equality, but these changes will not come easily. There is a need to explore ways to make humanitarian responses more gender-responsive, beyond gender mainstreaming, and to identify ways to harness the socially disruptive potential of crises for gender-transformative change.¹²⁷

6.2.3 Accelerate results and leverage partnerships and resources

Phase III will continue to create and expand opportunities for adolescent girls and focus on creating a supportive and gender equal environment, while emphasizing a four-pronged approach for acceleration towards ending child marriage: scaling through systems; strengthening accountability of governments for policies that are gender-equitable and adequately financed; leveraging technological innovations; and building strategic partnerships with youth- and women-led organizations and movements (for the last approach, please refer to Section 6.2.1 on mobilizing adolescent girls, women and young people as changemakers).

In Phase III, the Global Programme will allocate greater resources to strengthen health, education and protection systems for adolescent girls and to reinforce linkages between services and community-level interventions. Investments in gender-responsive social protection will be key for accelerating the decline in child marriage, and investments in SRH services, programmes and systems will also be expanded. Building on past experiences, legislative, policy and budget advocacy will be adapted to each context and the priorities of policy and decision makers, and technological innovations for ending child marriage will be systematized to achieve large-scale results.

Invest in systems and services at scale

1. Catalyse large-scale multisectoral interventions

To accelerate durable declines in child marriage, evidence-based multisectoral interventions to prevent and respond to child marriage have to be scaled up. The Global Programme will play a ca-

talytic role to influence existing systems and services to be more responsive to the distinct needs and strategic interests of adolescent girls. Child protection, education, health, particularly SRH, social protection, economic development and other sectors need to work closely together at country and subnational levels to develop a shared vision and congruent strategies and action plans. Recognizing multidimensional poverty as a significant driver of child marriage, a multisectoral response can leverage existing systems and investments as a vehicle to end child marriage.

The Global Programme has always promoted a multisectoral approach to ending child marriage and empowering adolescent girls. Based on the latest evidence and on years of programme learnings, the Global Programme has refined its approach to programming and has moved from a standard, multisectoral ‘package of interventions’ to more targeted and contextualized approaches with clearly articulated pathways of change. Programme evaluations have helped to refine and further sharpen these targeted programmes and increase both their effectiveness and their efficiency. Taking multisectoral interventions to scale includes stripping away programme components that have not been shown to be effective. Lean and streamlined programmes are easier to scale than the more unwieldy ‘holistic packages.’

2. Principles and components of large-scale interventions

During Phase III, the Global Programme will use lessons from the most successful large-scale and multisectoral programmes and systematically ap-

¹²⁷ Gupta, G. R. et al., ‘Beyond gender mainstreaming: transforming humanitarian action, organizations and culture’, *Journal of International Humanitarian Action*, 8(5), 2023.



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ply them across work in the 12 focus countries. This will require the following actions:

- Obtain an in-depth understanding of the context-specific drivers of child marriage and adolescent pregnancy.
- Ensure gender-transformative approaches are used.
- Improve adolescent girls' access to and quality of services, and ensure services are inclusive, age-responsive and context-specific, especially for SRHR.
- Intentional design with clearly articulated pathways of change.
- Strong monitoring and evaluation with rapid feedback loops to inform programme adaptation.
- Coordination and linkages (e.g., multisectoral platforms to coordinate between different sectors and levels of programming).
- Constantly improve the quality and efficiency of interventions.
- Challenge gender biases of service providers, parents and policymakers.
- Support the institutionalization and sustainability of interventions.

3. Coordination

Since ending child marriage requires multisectoral responses, coordination is key. This includes coordination between different programme components to ensure that adolescent girls reap

the full benefits of investments made at systems and service levels in education, child protection, ASRH, social protection, livelihood opportunities and in strengthening support for adolescent girls at the community level. Linkages between interventions at all levels of the socio-ecological model are needed to create synergies and ensure that the overall effects of investments for adolescent girls are greater than the sum of its parts. Recent reviews of country strategies in sub-Saharan Africa demonstrate the continued need for the coordination of efforts of government agencies, CSOs, INGOs and other international agencies to ensure they are aligned and reinforce each other, rather than duplicate efforts and dissipate resources. Some countries have mechanisms to coordinate the planning, implementation and monitoring of the national action plans to end child marriage and adolescent pregnancies. These coordination mechanisms bring together CSOs and government partners to better organize advocacy and pool resources, but there are still countries where existing coordination mechanisms are not working effectively. The Global Programme will continue to support national and subnational coordination mechanisms of government and civil society for programming and advocacy. The programme can also review existing coordination mechanisms to identify successful models and share learnings with and support countries with underperforming coordination mechanisms.

4. Leverage gender-responsive social protection

Gender-responsive social protection addresses two of the main drivers of child marriage: poverty and gender inequality. Large-scale social protection programmes represent opportunities for leveraging and can contribute to the prevention of child marriage and to supporting the needs of already married girls. Leveraging existing large-scale social protection schemes is one of the most promising ways to scale up results related to the elimination of child marriage. They are also a key tool for strengthening resilience and adaptation to crises. Social protection is flexible and can be adapted to achieve a range of purposes. When well designed and adequately funded, social protection can be one of the most scalable approaches to end child marriage.

During Phase III, the Global Programme aims to:

- Harness the potential of social protection systems, policies and programmes to reduce po-

verty at scale and thereby contribute to ending child marriage and to the economic empowerment of adolescent girls.

- Leverage strong social policy and social protection influence with national and local governments to drive policy shifts related to adolescent girls.
- Use the United Nation’s coordination mandate across the ministries of social protection, education, child protection and health to support adolescent girls.
- Test the integration of context-specific SBC ‘cash plus’ components in social protection

programmes.

- Generate and disseminate evidence on leveraging social protection service delivery and systems to end child marriage.
- Develop guidance for gender-responsive and gender-transformative social protection in humanitarian and non-humanitarian contexts.

Six out of the 12 Global Programme countries currently have the potential to leverage large-scale social protection programmes with proven or promising potential for impact on child marriage and opportunities to test what works for even stronger results (see Table 5).

Table 5: Priority countries for gender-responsive social protection and child marriage

Country	Social protection system	Evidence of proven or promising impact on child marriage or adolescent pregnancy?
Ethiopia	Productive Safety Net Programme	Proven with potential for adaptation for greater impact
Ghana	Integrated Social Service (ISS) initiative and LEAP Cash Transfer programme	Promising with potential for testing what works and why
India	MNREGA and state-specific cash transfers for adolescent girls (e.g., Kanyashree Prakalpa, Ladli Laxmi Yojana, Mukhya Mantri Corona Sahayata Yojana)	Proven with potential for adaptation for greater impact
Mozambique	Cash and Care Programme and Child Grant	Promising with potential for testing what works and why
Nepal	Beti Bachau, Beti Padau (Educate a Girl, Save a Girl)	Proven with potential for adaptation for greater impact
Zambia	Sustainable Women’s Livelihoods and Social Cash Transfer Programme	Promising with potential for testing what works and why

5. Focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights

In Phase III, the Global Programme will place greater emphasis on ASRH services, CSE, delaying pregnancies and access to contraceptives for married and unmarried adolescent girls. This requires better coordination between health, education and protection sectors.

Contextualize adolescent sexual and reproductive health approaches

Adolescents are sexual beings. Like adults, adolescent girls and boys have sexual thoughts, feelings, desires and needs. Adults’ discomfort and biases in acknowledging adolescent sexuality may limit young people’s access to high-quality information and services. Opposition to accepting the

sexual health needs of adolescents often paralyse legal frameworks, policies, programmes and service delivery for ASRRH.¹²⁸

Country strategies must be based on an in-depth analysis and understanding of the different scenarios for adolescent girls. While adolescent girls in some contexts have relatively more freedom to engage in premarital sexual relations, they may also be at risk of adolescent pregnancy and childbearing, forced by poverty to engage in transactional sex and may be exposed to a greater risk of sexual violence, STIs and HIV/AIDS, and unintended pregnancies. While parents may not control their daughters' sexual relationships, they may force their daughters to marry if they get pregnant to preserve the honour of the family.¹²⁹ While adolescent girls may be able to engage in sexual intercourse, they may be deprived of CSE, and access to SRH services, including contraception or comprehensive abortion care.

In contexts where premarital sexual relations are condoned and where more adolescent births occur outside of marriage than inside marriage/union, research and policies must focus on adolescent pregnancy as the main problem, rather than on arranged marriage/union because pregnancy occurs before marriage/union.¹³⁰ Programme interventions have to focus on expanding SRH services and information, education, including CSE, social assistance and protection services and related 'assets' for adolescent girls' agency and empowerment, while concentrating SBC interventions on creating a supportive, enabling environment for adolescent girls. Concretely, this means that parents, caregivers and service providers enable sexually active adolescent girls to protect themselves from unintended pregnancy, that schools are safe and free from GBV and offer CSE, and that adolescent girls have sufficient economic support to avoid transactional sexual relations or exploitation.

Leverage existing systems, services and resources

Recognizing the importance of stepping up efforts related to adolescent sexuality and pregnancy, the Global Programme will leverage existing adoles-

cent pregnancy prevention strategies, guidelines and schemes. In many countries, the health system invests a lot in ASRH, and evidence-based strategies of WHO and UNFPA include the prevention of child marriage. Where relevant, partnerships with agencies working on the prevention of HIV/AIDS will be strengthened, including the promotion of safe sex and the prevention of/ alternatives to transactional sex. ASRH interventions will also support married or divorced girls and adolescent mothers to prevent subsequent pregnancies or related poor reproductive outcomes that can hinder the rights, development and opportunities for adolescent girls.

Leverage public finance and strengthen government accountability

The Global Programme will continue to work closely with national governments to advocate for policy and legislative change and lobby for greater investments related to ending child marriage and preventing adolescent pregnancies.



128. UNFPA (n.d.). *My body, my life, my world: Operational guidance - Module 1 Adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights*, <www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/UNFPA-MBMLMW_MOD1-EN.pdf>

129. Equimundo, 'She goes with me in my boat', 2015, <https://promundo.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/SheGoesWithMeInMyBoat_Web_15Sept2015-postprint.pdf>

130. See, for example, Coinco, E., *A Glimpse into the World of Teenage Pregnancy in Sierra Leone*, UNICEF, 2010, <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/assessments/teenage_pregnancy_report_unicef_final_aug_2010_2.pdf>; Government of Sierra Leone, *Let girls be girls, not mothers! National Strategy for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy (2013-2015)*, 2013, <https://healtheducationresources.unesco.org/sites/default/files/resources/Sierra_Leone_National_Strategy_for_the_Reduction_of_Teenage_Pregnancy.pdf>

1. Evidence-informed approach to leverage public resources to end child marriage

In recent years, most countries with a high burden or high prevalence of child marriage have developed national action plans or strategies to end child marriage. In many cases these action plans were costed, but often the financial commitments did not lead to significant allocations of public funds to end child marriage. Some lessons on leveraging public finance for ending child marriage include:

- The enactment of laws, policies and plans on ending child marriage does not automatically translate into budget allocations.
- Governments have a limited awareness of the socioeconomic consequences of child marriage and of the costs of inaction.
- A blueprint approach to budget advocacy is unlikely to work since it does not respond to the specific interests and preoccupations of a country's government.
- As a cross-cutting challenge, ending child marriage demands a coordinated and multisectoral approach from national governments.
- A high level of political commitment and leadership often enables and incentivizes other stakeholders to support programming to end child marriage.

2. Phase III plans

The Global Programme's policy and budget advocacy during Phase III will be guided by the following evidence-based principles:

Understand the context and support the interests of government

- Develop evidence and knowledge products that a government can use and is interested in. Working closely with national governments and understanding their needs, priorities and working cycles is key to supporting policy and legislative change around child marriage.¹³¹
- Present governments with data and evidence

on the negative economic impact of child marriage on GDP and the many economic, educational and health benefits of delaying marriage and preventing adolescent pregnancies at household, sectoral and national levels.¹³²

- Develop context-specific and time-sensitive approaches to budget and policy advocacy. Costing national plans of action must consider the country's budget cycle and position ending child marriage as an important and lifesaving effort.

Provide technical support

- Strengthen the understanding and technical capabilities of public officials on integrated ending child marriage planning and budgeting for ending child marriage.
- Support governments to integrate cross-sectoral ending child marriage plans into medium-term expenditure frameworks and annual budgets of relevant sectors.
- Support sector ministries to strengthen their programme- or output-based budget approaches to improve the visibility and measurement of ending child marriage expenditures.
- Costing and budgeting work requires close collaboration with experts in public budgeting in UNICEF (social policy section) and UNFPA (health economists).
- Provide dedicated support and build capacities on gender-transformative approaches for subnational government institutions to design and implement evidence-informed subnational action plans.

Conduct evidence-based advocacy

- Continue to work closely with national governments to advocate for evidence-informed policy and legislative change and lobby for greater investments related to ending child marriage and preventing unwanted adolescent pregnancies.
- Advocate for the classification and inclusion of activities to end child marriage as lifesaving measures.

¹³¹. UNICEF (different dates). *Budget briefs*, <www.unicef.org/esa/reports/budget-briefs>

¹³². World Bank, *Economic Impacts of Child Marriage. Ethiopia Country Brief*, 2018, <<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/360871525190466943/pdf/125882-BRI-P151842-PUBLIC-WorldBank-CountryBrief-Ethiopia-WebReady-v8.pdf>>

- Work inter-ministerially on ending child marriage to incentivize other actors to engage on the topic.
- Sustain evidence-informed advocacy and monitoring at district level to translate national action plans into concrete actions for marginalized adolescent girls.

Technological innovations for large-scale results

Building on the proliferation of technological innovations, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Global Programme will invest in a rigorous approach to identify, design, implement and monitor inclusive and safe technological innovations to end child marriage, prevent adolescent pregnancies and promote gender equality.

1. Digital transformation

Digital technologies are profoundly transforming society. They offer unprecedented opportunities, including the potential to accelerate the realization of the SDGs. However, digital technologies are not equally distributed. Moreover, when improperly or maliciously used, they can fuel divisions within and between countries, increase insecurity, undermine human rights, and exacerbate inequality. There is a need to ensure safe and affordable digital access for all.¹³³

UNFPA and UNICEF are harnessing digital technologies to improve programme implementation, streamline operations and processes, and expand service delivery to remote and hard-to-reach communities. Children and adolescents are growing up in a transforming world. Hence, interventions need to help prepare them for the future by providing opportunities for them to develop lifeskills, digital skills, transferable skills, and vocational skills for jobs in the twenty-first century.¹³⁴

2. Digital technologies and child marriage

Technology-based interventions have begun to play an increasingly important role in addressing child marriage and some tech-based interventions have shown successful impacts and have already

been scaled up. The COVID-19 pandemic fast-tracked the shift to digital technologies and increased dependency on technology to access critical information, services and networks. At the same time, this rapid shift created new challenges that require more innovative and impactful solutions.¹³⁵

Both digital and in-person approaches are required to address child marriage and support adolescent girls. There is a clear need to blend the use of digital technologies with in-person engagement. Findings from a 13-country review of technology-based interventions to mitigate child marriage and FGM revealed that the most impactful interventions involve a variety of partnerships across different stakeholders, and that many of these interventions employed a combination of both in-person and digital learning and education tools.

The Global Programme recognizes that closing the gender digital divide is key to ending gender inequalities and that girls and women are disproportionately affected by the gender divide and issues related to digital safety. During Phase II, the Global Programme developed technical guidance on digital and remote approaches for SBC; compiled case studies of tech-based and tech-enabled interventions; and assessed the effectiveness, inclusiveness and sustainability of tech-based interventions.

3. Phase III acceleration of tech-enabled solutions

The Global Programme is investing in a rigorous approach to identify, design, implement at scale and monitor inclusive innovations to end child marriage and to promote the empowerment of adolescent girls. The programme will use a combination of digital and in-person learning and education tools to expand the accessibility and reach of interventions. The programme will promote digital literacy and skills while ensuring the digital safety of adolescent girls.¹³⁶ It will also address the digital divide across genders, location and wealth, including by addressing the norms and behaviours that restrict girls' digital access, and by providing digital literacy.

¹³³. United Nations, 2023.

¹³⁴. UNFPA, 2021a.

¹³⁵. UNFPA, UNICEF and DPA, *Landscape Mapping and Review of Technology-based Interventions to Mitigate Child Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation for 13 countries in Africa and Asia: In-Depth Assessment Report - Mozambique, Sudan, and India*, 2023a.

¹³⁶. UNFPA, *Guidance on the Safe and Ethical Use of Technology to Address Gender-based Violence and Harmful Practices: Implementation Summary*, 2023b, <www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA_SafeEthicalGBVTechGuide_Summary_2023.pdf>

7. Monitoring, evaluation, research and learning

The Global Programme continues to be a critical part of international research, programming and advocacy efforts to end child marriage. It aims to fill a critical niche in building expertise and models for scaling up successful interventions, particularly those that use gender-transformative and gender-responsive approaches. The evidence from the programme has far-reaching implications for the work of many other organizations and departments, beyond the 12 target countries of the Global Programme.

Given the length of the third phase of the Global Programme (2024–2030) and the rapidly changing operating contexts (e.g., due to the polycrisis), **a strong monitoring, evaluation, research and learning (MERL) system supported by a dedicated budget and skilled staff is critical in Phase III.** In order to quickly adjust programming to increase responsiveness, it is essential to integrate adaptive and participatory approaches to MERL throughout all Global Programme activities from inception to culmination. Within this context, the Global Programme has significantly increased its plans to systematically generate and disseminate data and evidence that responds to the theory of change and the Global Programme's research strategy. In order to execute these plans, the Global Programme must allocate appropriate levels of funding to each MERL component.

The MERL framework for Phase III was developed based on available Global Programme documentation, global good practices, and reflections from Global Programme stakeholders. The different components of the MERL framework respond to the focus areas detailed in the section on the programme strategy: to promote gender equality and empowerment of girls; to adapt to the polycrisis and megatrends (crisis-adaptive programming); and to accelerate results and leverage partnerships and resources. The framework aims to be responsive to needs identified within annual reports, stakeholder consultations and workshops, the impact feasibility assessment, and the Phase I Global Programme evaluation.

Box 7: Adaptive learning and engagement

A key feature of the Global Programme Phase III is to be adaptive and flexible in both programming and research. On the research front, Phase III will emphasize an adaptive learning and evaluation approach to respond quickly to new challenges and to ensure that new programmes are effective before roll-out and scale-up. Adaptive learning and evaluation consist of a broad set of tools to address programmatic and policy challenges by conducting research that is systems-aware, flexible and contextualized, systematic, and often rapid. Adaptive learning and evaluation methods are often based on the principles of human-centred design and participatory research, with the idea that those most deeply embedded in a programme have valuable insights about how to evaluate their effectiveness, identify areas of weakness or rigidity, and present solutions that can be tested and iterated upon, ultimately improving processes. Adaptive learning engagements may include network analysis, data visualization, participatory mapping and data collection, real-time monitoring, impact evaluation, rapid evidence cycles and other designs based on the level of uncertainty in programme design, questions raised by stakeholders, emerging programme needs, and contextual crises that arise and require re-thinking. By putting in place adaptive research and committing to a process of learning, the programme can continually improve Phase III efforts to ensure the greatest gains for the most vulnerable and furthest-behind girls.

Phase III monitoring, evaluation, research and learning goals include the following:

- Rigorously document and apply existing evidence of what works to end child marriage to ongoing and planned activities
- Focus on filling in evidence gaps using participatory and inclusive approaches to contribute to the global knowledge base
- Strengthen outcome monitoring and impact assessment of the Global Programme
- Invest in feedback loops based on findings from monitoring data, evaluation and research to inform rapid programme adaptations

- Focus on cross-learning and cross-fertilization to increase synergies between similar programming, leverage past experience and minimize duplication (i.e., reduce research waste)
- Ensure accountability to affected populations
- Capture stories of change to increase stakeholder engagement

The following sections discuss the MERL components of Phase III of the Global Programme. Detailed plans related to monitoring, evaluation, research, knowledge management and learning will be developed to accompany the goals and objectives stated within this chapter.

7.1 Monitoring

Monitoring data is key to understanding what works, what does not work and why. Monitoring activities facilitate adaptive management and can support continuous improvement in the programme. Monitoring progress per the Global Programme results framework in Phase III will not only help track progress and performance, but also allow for programme implementers and managers to recognize areas that may be good candidates for rapid reviews or inclusion in other research or evaluation activities to fully understand the reported data.

In previous phases, output-level data were generated through routine monitoring and shared annually, while outcome-level reporting relied on various surveys and other sources of data that are collected at periodic intervals (e.g., DHS, MICS). Phase III will employ a more participatory approach to monitoring and more frequent generation to ensure that regular reflections on monitoring data contribute to adaptations of monitoring approaches and feed into evaluation and research components of the Global Programme.

7.1.1 Increased investment in monitoring in Phase III

Findings from the 2021 Annual Report¹³⁷ support the need for an increased focus on monitoring, oversight and support to country offices in their

use of evidence, including the importance of using evidence about what works (not what was done) and what evidence is relevant (not out of date).

Figure 19: Priorities for monitoring in Phase III



137. UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, 2022b.



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1. Build staff and partner capacity and provide opportunities for capacity exchange on monitoring techniques

Capacity needs assessment

Previous exercises, including discussions during workshops, reviews and evaluations of the Global Programme, have highlighted the need to carry out a needs assessment of capacity in the Global Programme teams and among partners to identify where critical investments are required. This assessment will allow for more targeted capacity-building and resource allocation during Phase III.

Linked to this exercise, the STAR Initiative will perform a systematic review of available and relevant monitoring products and approaches that can be leveraged to build country-level capacity, increase the quality of monitoring data and ensure utilization of gathered data.

Capacity-building and cross-learning

In coordination with knowledge management focal points, Phase III monitoring staff will host quarterly monitoring meetings which will include capacity-building and capacity exchange sessions for country-level Global Programme staff and partners. This will allow both veteran staff as well as new hires to engage with the monitoring processes, ask questions, and share lessons learned and good practices more deeply. This is also the forum

where findings from the systematic review of monitoring products and approaches will be shared with country-level staff.

2. Clarify roles and responsibilities within monitoring processes and allocate adequate financial and human resources

To accompany the Global Programme Indicator Reference Manual, Phase III will also develop a manual detailing the roles and responsibilities within the monitoring processes. The programme will be sure to allocate adequate financial and human resources for monitoring.

3. Harmonize monitoring systems with other relevant initiatives to create a more unified and coordinated approach and encourage collaboration; optimize the use of resources and streamline reporting (i.e., reduce the reporting burden on Global Programme staff and partners); enhance data quality, consistency and comparability; and help provide a more comprehensive understanding of operating contexts and programming for evidence-informed decision-making

The GPSU together with the STAR Initiative will support countries to undertake reviews of the monitoring landscape as it relates to child marriage. These exercises will provide more comprehensive understandings of operating contexts and yield recommendations for more unified and coordinated approaches that have the opportunity to op-

timize the use of resources, streamline reporting, and enhance data quality, consistency and comparability for evidence-informed decision-making.

4. Fill monitoring data gaps and ensure that data are accessible on the Global Programme Phase III Monitoring Dashboard (internal on SharePoint) and through the Global Programme's web page

Phase II monitoring data are currently available via the Global Programme Phase II Monitoring Dashboard, but this includes incomplete data sets and is housed on the internal Global Programme SharePoint, hosted under the UNICEF intranet. In Phase III, GPSU monitoring staff will work closely with countries to ensure reporting on indicators is completed within the allocated timeline. Capacity-building and cross-learning activities described in point 1, above, will also help to close some monitoring data gaps. Further, Phase III will continue to provide transparency of programme outputs and intermediate and immediate outcomes by sharing monitoring data via Global Programme reporting.

Lastly, Phase III will explore the feasibility of further disaggregated monitoring data to fill evidence gaps (e.g., by disability status or marital status).

5. Identify opportunities for active participation of affected communities in monitoring processes to increase participation, buy-in and accountability

In partnership with knowledge management colleagues and the STAR Initiative, Phase III will identify opportunities for active participation of affected communities in monitoring processes.

6. Increase reporting frequencies on qualitative outcome measures to allow for more adaptive programming

In previous phases, outcome-level reporting relied on data sources collected at various periodic intervals (e.g., DHS, MICS). Phase III prioritizes qualitative, participatory measures to track gender nuances and provide rapid assessments of gender-transformative and gender-responsive interventions across the socio-ecological model. These approaches aim to increase participation, accountability and transparency between service providers, service users and decision makers.

The results framework for Phase III revises the periodicity of some indicators to allow for more frequent monitoring (e.g., through qualitative data-collection activities to capture outcomes).

7. Work closely with evaluation and research colleagues to identify areas for further investigation based on monitoring data

In coordination with GPSU knowledge management colleagues, Phase III monitoring staff will host quarterly monitoring meetings for country-level staff with monitoring responsibilities. These quarterly meetings will give countries the opportunity to share areas for further investigation based on monitoring data with evaluation and research colleagues. Monitoring data can reveal trends that require more investigation to fully understand, and making this link between monitoring staff and research and evaluation staff is critical in Phase III.

8. Adapt monitoring processes based on the learning and evidence generated with evaluation and research colleagues

Phase III will ensure that country staff are aware of the latest evidence generated through evaluation and research activities that relate to how the programme is monitored. The Global Programme will provide technical assistance to countries regarding monitoring system adjustments based on these findings.



7.1.2 Approaches to monitoring in Phase III

Phase III will employ a number of monitoring techniques depending on the local context and available resources (human and financial). These techniques will include feminist and intersectional approaches to ensure that no one is left behind. The Global Programme will work within the coun-

try programme teams and with partners to determine the most appropriate monitoring tools given the operational context. Figure 20 offers some examples of monitoring techniques that may be administered during Phase III as appropriate.

Figure 20: Monitoring techniques

MONITORING TECHNIQUES

Rapid qualitative assessments to help quickly adjust programming based on stakeholder feedback. Including feedback loops to collect and utilize feedback from stakeholders throughout the monitoring process. This includes regular communication and dialogue with programme participants, partners, and other stakeholders to gather insights, address concerns, and adjust programming accordingly.

Process monitoring to help identify bottlenecks, challenges, or deviations from the Global Programme's intended design and provide insights into the quality and effectiveness of programme implementation

Real-time monitoring to provide timely feedback on progress and challenges that can be used for decision-making, problem-solving, and adaptive management (e.g., through U-Report)

Field observation to directly observe implementation of activities

Output monitoring to assess immediate results.

Outcome monitoring to determine the extent to which the Global Programme is achieving its intended outcomes.

Third party monitoring to provide objective, impartial and credible monitoring data, especially in situations where there is limited internal capacity to collect monitoring data

Joint monitoring visits to receive direct feedback from stakeholders and individuals reached by or engaged through the programme, monitor programme results and provide feedback to address any challenges that require attention.

Participatory monitoring to engage affected populations in the monitoring process including 1) **youth/womwn-led and youth/women-centred designs** to ensure that youth/adolescents, especially girls, are not passive subjects of monitoring but active agents in shaping their own lives and futures and 2) **community-based monitoring** to empower communities, enhance accountability and improve the delivery and quality of Global Programme interventions.

7.2 Evaluation

The goal of evaluation in Phase III is threefold: 1) to contribute to global knowledge on what interventions work and how; 2) to act as an accountability mechanism for stakeholders; and 3) to inform future programming and evidence-based decision-making.

Given the complex environments in which the Global Programme works, Phase III will employ a **realist evaluation approach** to understand how and why programming works in specific contexts. Realist evaluation goes beyond simply determining whether programming is effective or not. Instead, it aims to uncover the underlying mechanisms and contextual factors that contribute to the success or failure of a programme. Realist evaluation is rooted in the philosophy of realism, which recognizes that social programmes are not universally effective but work differently in different situations. It seeks to answer questions such as ‘What works, for whom, in what circumstances, and why?’ by examining the underlying mechanisms and contextual factors, realist evaluation provides insights into the causal processes that produce outcomes.

7.2.1 Global evaluation activities in Phase III

The goal of evaluation in Phase III is threefold: 1) to contribute to global knowledge on what interventions work and how; 2) to act as an accountability mechanism for stakeholders; and 3) to inform future programming and evidence-based decision-making.

Considering the duration of Phase III, the evaluation plan incorporates a range of evaluation techniques (see Figure 21). The following evaluation activities will be led by the Independent Evaluation Offices of UNFPA and UNICEF:

→ Stories of change will be collected during the second quarter of each year. These stories will contribute to the annual report that is delivered in the second quarter of each year, will be shared with stakeholders during meetings with donors, implementing partners and other stakeholders, will be highlighted during Global Programme knowledge exchange activities and

Examining the social, cultural, economic and political context in which the programming operates allows programmes to understand how these contextual factors interact with programme mechanisms to produce specific outcomes. This knowledge is crucial for tailoring interventions to different contexts, improving their effectiveness, and exploring possibilities for acceleration and scaling up.

Evaluations in Phase III will employ **participatory and inclusive evaluation approaches** to ensure that affected populations and other stakeholders are active participants within the Global Programme’s evaluation framework. By allowing these stakeholders to actively contribute to the evaluation process, the evaluation will include a more diverse set of insights, allow for capacity-building and capacity exchange and yield robust, relevant and actionable findings and recommendations. Further, when stakeholders are involved as active participants in an evaluation, they are more likely to take ownership of the evaluation findings and promote utilization.

will also contribute to the midterm review and final evaluation.

→ Impact evaluations will be conducted based on recommendations from the impact feasibility assessment (IFA) commissioned by the Evaluation Offices of UNFPA and UNICEF in 2022–2023. A total of four impact evaluations will be conducted and will contribute to programme adaptations as well as the midterm review and final evaluation.¹³⁸

→ Evaluation and research synthesis will inform the midterm review.

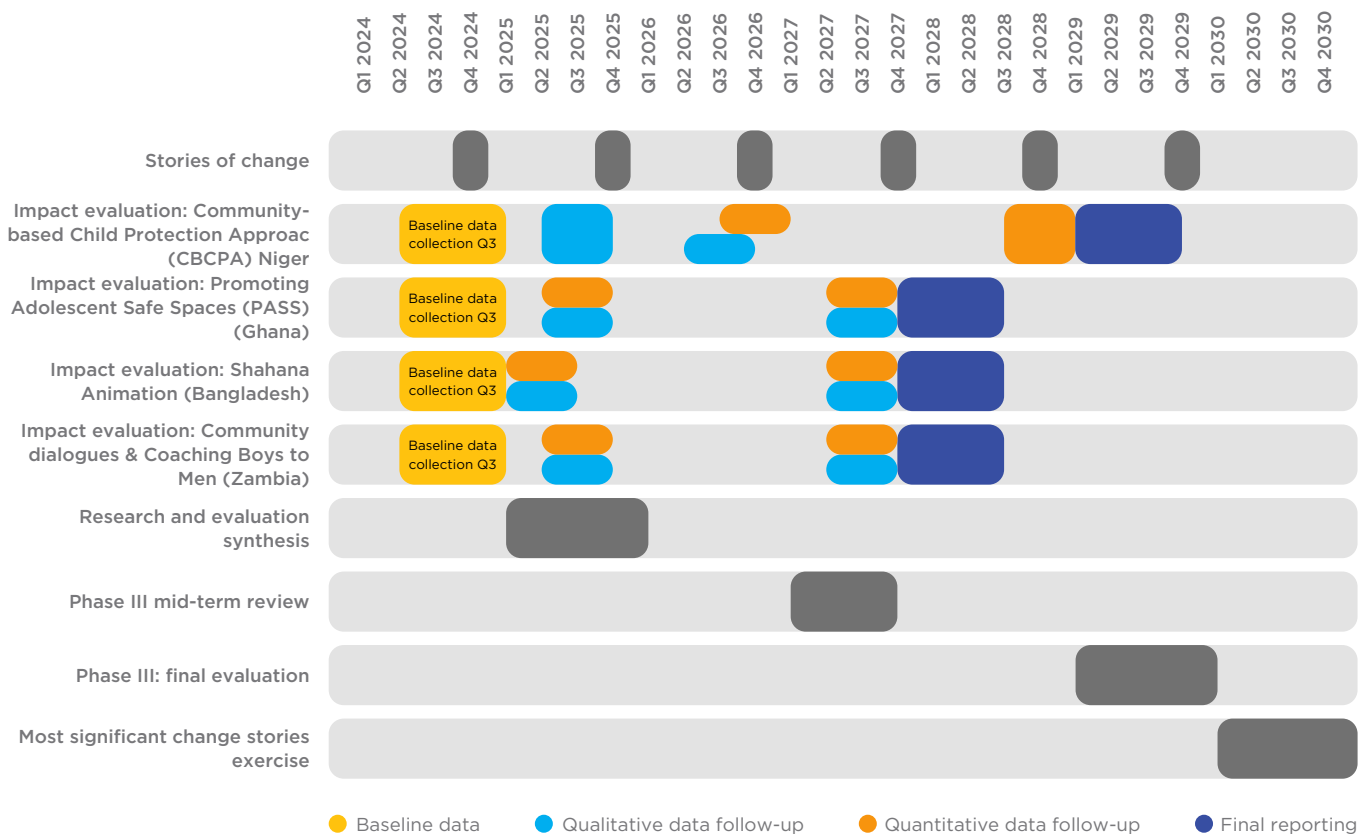
→ Phase III midterm review takes place at the midpoint of the programme (2027) and is informed by the evaluation and research synthesis, four rounds of the stories of change exercise, and baseline and first rounds of follow-up data from the four impact evaluations.

¹³⁸ Note that due to the follow-up timeline for the impact evaluation of the Community-based Child Protection Approach (CBCPA) in Niger, final impact evaluation findings will only be available when the final evaluation is about half completed. This schedule was unavoidable due to the follow-up timeline and the need to conduct the final evaluation prior to 2030 for future programme planning purposes. Note also that national contexts may also impact the feasibility of the impact assessments (e.g., due to the political context in Niger as of mid-2023).

→ Phase III final evaluation takes place prior to the end of the programme in order to inform future programming. The final evaluation is informed by six rounds of the stories of change exercise, the midterm evaluation and final findings from three of the four impact evaluations.

→ Most significant change stories exercise will provide qualitative data regarding the impact of the Global Programme on the lives of affected populations and other stakeholders at the end of the Programme. There is an opportunity for some of the most significant change stories to be featured in the final Phase III report for the Global Programme.

Figure 21: Major evaluation exercises for Phase III



Evaluation activity timing

In addition to evaluation approaches, the timing of evaluation activities is critical for the utility of evaluation findings. An identified weakness in past Global Programme phases was that evaluation activities were timed in a way that did not always allow findings from one evaluation activity to inform another evaluation activity. The evaluation framework for Phase III – to the extent possible – has timed evaluation efforts so that evidence informs future evaluative work and other reporting. The limiting factor in Phase III is the follow-up timelines for the proposed impact assessments, which range from three to four years (ending in late 2029), and the timing of the final evaluation, which largely takes place in 2029 to facilitate futu-

re programme development following the end of Phase III in 2030. While data analysis from the final follow-ups for three of the four impact evaluations will not contribute to the Phase III final evaluation, the findings from these impact evaluations will be useful for the next iteration of a similar global programme to end child marriage following Phase III of the Global Programme.

→ Stories of change: Q4 2024 – Q4 2029

Stories of change will be collected during the fourth quarter of 2024 to 2029 in all 12 countries. These stories will contribute to the annual report as well as serve as a way to engage stakeholders (including governments and donors) on the life-changing effects of Global Programme interventions as



stand-alone publications for knowledge-sharing, advocacy and fundraising. The stories of change will be widely shared with stakeholders including during meetings with donors, implementing partners and other stakeholders, will be highlighted during Global Programme knowledge exchange activities and will also contribute to the midterm review and final evaluation.

→ **Impact evaluations: Q2 2024 – Q4 2029**

The Evaluation Offices of UNFPA and UNICEF commissioned an impact feasibility assessment (IFA) during 2022–2023 to investigate what interventions in the Global Programme are best suited for impact evaluations. Through a rigorous prioritization process that took account of a range of contextual and evaluation feasibility considerations including country contexts, programme conditions, scalability and the replicability of the intervention in different or similar contexts, the IFA recommended four interventions for impact evaluations during Phase III, to take place beginning in 2024 with follow-up activities extending up to

four years after the baseline. The IFA also provided guidance on evaluation designs and estimated budgets for each. The assessment of the IFA team was that the Global Programme interventions are well suited to integrate an impact evaluation component and have many features that can be leveraged to produce rigorous and policy-relevant evidence from impact evaluations.¹³⁹

Incorporating a realist approach during the impact evaluations will enhance the understanding of how and why impacts occurred by exploring the underlying mechanisms and contextual factors. This approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of the programme’s effectiveness and provides insights into the causal processes that lead to specific outcomes.

→ **Research and evaluation synthesis: Q2 2025 – Q4 2025**

The research and evaluation synthesis will provide invaluable insights into the state of knowledge regarding ending child marriage by systematically analysing and synthesizing existing research studies and evaluation findings. The findings from this synthesis will help inform evidence-based decision-making, identify evidence gaps and areas for future investigation and contribute to the global knowledge base.

→ **Midterm review: Q1–Q3 2027**

The midterm review will provide a ‘reality check’ for Phase III of the Global Programme and allow time to reflect on what has been achieved in the first half of the Programme, what challenges exist, and what adaptations should be made to better respond to operating contexts. An in-depth case study approach with a sample of Global Programme countries and a light-touch case study approach for the remaining Global Programme countries will be employed. A realist approach to the evaluation will be applied to identify and to understand how and why interventions produce particular outcomes in specific contexts. This approach will allow evaluators to uncover the underlying mechanisms and contextual conditions that lead to outcomes. Additionally, participatory methodologies such as outcome harvesting would allow for identification of both intended and unintended outcomes that have occurred as a result of the Programme.

¹³⁹ Fiala, N., Peterman, A. & Boender, C., *UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage Impact Feasibility Assessment: Final Report: Stage 4* (unpublished) 2023.

→ **Phase III final evaluation: Q1 2029 – Q1 2030**

The choice to begin the bidding process for the Global Programme Phase III final evaluation in the first quarter of 2029 is strategic because it allows for the evaluation to be completed by first quarter of 2030 and used to inform future programming, including informing the next iteration of a similar global programme to end child marriage following Phase III of the Global Programme.

The final evaluation will employ the same methodology used for the midterm review (i.e., realist approach; in-depth and light-touch case study approach) but should incorporate any lessons learned from challenges encountered during the midterm review.

→ **End of programme most significant change stories: Q3-Q4 2030**

Given that the final evaluation will need to take place prior to 2030 for future programme planning purposes, the end of programme most significant change stories provide an opportunity to amplify stakeholders' voices and highlight stories of significant change resulting from the Global Programme. The detailed lived experiences and personal journeys of Global Programme stakeholders will provide a deeper understanding of the human impact of the programme's efforts.

7.2.2 Other evaluation activities in Phase III

The global evaluation activities led by the Independent Evaluation Offices will be complemented by country-led evaluations. These evaluations will

be identified based on country-level needs, aligned with the Global Programme theory of change and supported by the GPSU.





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7.3 Research

The goal of evaluation in Phase III is threefold: 1) to contribute to global knowledge on what interventions work and how; 2) to act as an accountability mechanism for stakeholders; and 3) to inform future programming and evidence-based decision-making.

Research performs a vital role in determining what works to end child marriage. The Global Programme has successfully established a foundation upon which research may be designed, executed and shared to inform Global Programme activities as well as contributing to the global evidence base:

- The **Child Marriage Research to Action Network** (the CRANK), a partnership between the Global Programme and Girls Not Brides, brings together child marriage researchers, practitioners and policymakers to share and discuss the latest evidence and offers capacity exchange opportunities and resources, such as an online research tracker which details ongoing and upcoming research by CRANK members to help avoid duplication, knowledge-sharing and uptake as well as to identify priority research areas through a democratic and participatory platform between global north and global south researchers and practitioners. In Phase III, CRANK will remain an important platform for knowledge exchange and learning.
- The **Strategic Technical Assistance for Research** (STAR) Initiative to End Harmful Practices, housed at UNICEF Innocenti Global Office of Research and Foresight, supports Global Program-

me countries to undertake research, including helping them to prioritize research questions, design systematic and novel research, execute the research and ultimately disseminate the resulting knowledge to ensure that the global evidence base is strengthened, and lessons are shared across countries and regions. In Phase III, the STAR Initiative will continue to work closely with Global Programme countries and regional offices to support staff development and skill-building in relation to the commissioning and implementation of research and interpretation of subsequent findings. STAR supports the Global Programme through evidence reviews, research design and execution, and more. Looking ahead, STAR will provide capacity-building and technical assistance as required to UNFPA and UNICEF staff and local organizations who are key partners in conducting and implementing research on what works. The STAR Initiative will be a particularly important resource for Global Programme countries and regions during Phase III.

- The **Phase II Research Strategy**, published in 2021 and based on global research priorities, and achievements and gaps in learning in Phase I, provides guidance to countries related to research design including rationalization of their research needs, selection of priority research questions, and selection of appropriate methodologies. In 2023, the Global Programme updated the research plan to ensure that it is based on the latest evidence and responsive to the Phase III context.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰. Please see the Global Programme research plan for further information, publication forthcoming.

7.4 Knowledge management, evidence uptake and learning

7.4.1 Knowledge management across the programme cycle

Knowledge management will remain a priority area with dedicated resources (financial and human) in Phase III, with a renewed focus to **further integrate knowledge management across the programme cycle**.

When knowledge management and other complementary learning components such as monitoring, evaluation and research are performed in silos, obstacles such as duplication in efforts due to limited communication and information-sharing are common. The lack of coordination between knowledge management and monitoring, evaluation and research efforts results in limited knowledge flows and gaps in understanding between country, regional and HQ levels as well as between different partners. By integrating knowledge management into monitoring, evaluation and research

processes, the Global Programme can ensure that the generated knowledge avoids duplication of efforts, builds on existing knowledge, and promotes continuous improvement of our interventions. The integration also ensures that the generated knowledge is effectively captured, synthesized, and communicated to relevant stakeholders in a timely manner. This, in turn, facilitates evidence-based decision-making at various levels – ensuring that existing knowledge, including lessons about what works and what does not work, is used in programme design and policymaking.¹⁴¹

By further integrating knowledge management across the programme cycle, Phase III aims to avoid some common challenges faced when knowledge management is not considered within the broader programme ecosystem (see Figure 22).

Figure 22: Challenges when not investing in knowledge management¹⁴²

- 1 Designing and implementing activities that are not informed by all relevant knowledge and evidence available because knowledge is not being systematically captured, shared, and accessed by staff and partners.
- 2 Repeating mistakes because they are not captured, analysed and shared along with the learning from them.
- 3 Not being able to scale up solutions and innovations from interventions, hence slowing down acceleration towards results, because of the absence of systematic knowledge capture and sharing of emerging good practices within and across offices.
- 4 Losing critical knowledge when staff leave an office or the organization.
- 5 Dedicating resources to knowledge and evidence generation activities that end up not benefiting the programme because we do not make use of the knowledge we generate.

To ensure an integrated approach to knowledge management, it is crucial to plan for it at the beginning of an activity, e.g. through scheduled moments for reflection and a plan for how to capture learnings across the programme cycle and how they will be shared with key stakeholders and

used to inform future programming. For this to happen, dedicated human resources need to be available for knowledge management. Therefore, Phase III will continue to leverage institutional resources within UNFPA and UNICEF, as outlined in, for example, the UNICEF Strategic Plan – where

¹⁴¹. See USAID (n.d.). *Knowledge Management and Monitoring & Evaluation: Proposed Collaboration Activities across the Program Cycle*, <https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00WS4X.pdf>

¹⁴². Adapted from UNICEF, *Global Knowledge Management Medium-term Strategy 2021-2022, putting knowledge to work to achieve rights and results for children*, 2020b.

knowledge management is identified as a change strategy – and the roll-out of the UNICEF global knowledge management strategy, to gain access to human resources and expertise within HQ, ROs and COs to further support and build capacity for knowledge management, to improve our child marriage programming and achieve better results for girls and their families.

Within this integrated approach, Phase III will explore ways to both recognize and reward knowledge-sharing behaviours in order to motivate par-

ticipation and ensure that knowledge management is indeed institutionalized across the programme cycle. This could include celebrating successful knowledge-sharing initiatives through internal or external communications, recognition events or rewarding individuals or teams by sharing success stories to inspire others to share their experiences. Good examples of knowledge-sharing activities and their results are also highlighted in the annual reports of the Global Programme, showcasing the importance of knowledge management.

7.4.2 The Global Programme knowledge management strategy

Phase III of the Global Programme will continue strengthening its knowledge management efforts to increase learning, decrease duplication of evidence-generation efforts, foster sustainability of previous evidence efforts, and ensure use of knowledge. The knowledge management strategy will further ensure that the programme continues to lead the sector in ensuring knowledge generation, dissemination and utilization, and to facilitate linkages between researchers, practitioners

and policymakers across locations – within and beyond the programme’s geographical scope. As with previous phases, regional offices will continue to have a critical role to play in coordinating the generation of knowledge, providing technical guidance and capacity-building to country offices, as well as building knowledge and evidence networks, synthesizing and aggregating evidence, and explaining what the evidence means for interventions on the ground.



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	<p>1. LEAD: Ensure partners globally have access to the latest evidence, including showcasing the impact of the Global Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Technical notes and guidance documents to support programming b. Global and regional webinars to present the latest evidence or programme guidance c. Research digests and publication catalogues, compiling the latest evidence, reports and journal articles in an accessible way d. Global newsletters, sharing case studies, reports, key developments related to child marriage (such as adoption of United Nations resolutions) and meeting and event resources e. Research briefs and syntheses to summarize the state of evidence for a specific country, region or thematic area through the STAR Initiative f. Linkages to external communication activities, showcasing knowledge generation efforts and disseminating key evidence and data through e.g. social media <p>2. LINK: Ensure linkages for effective peer knowledge-sharing between countries and regions and among different partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. South-South field learning visits (including virtual visits) b. Online learning sessions, e.g., connecting researchers to 	<p>practitioners and policymakers through the CRANK research meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. Established network of experts from different locations and affiliations d. Community of practice for specific programme priorities (such as gender-transformative approaches or digital interventions) <p>3. LEARN: Ensure that successes and failures are documented, shared and used for programme design and policymaking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. ‘World café’ exhibitions, online and in-person, showcasing lessons learned and good practices from country teams within the Global Programme and beyond b. Annual reflection on lessons learned by country teams as part of the annual reporting process c. ‘Open clinic’ virtual sessions, providing a space for colleagues to reflect on specific programme components d. Knowledge management trainings, to ensure colleagues have the tools and skills needed for knowledge documentation, dissemination and use (e.g., through UNICEF’s internal knowledge management online courses for practitioners and managers) e. Internal and external knowledge-sharing platforms compiling key programme resources, research and guidance documents
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The STAR Initiative will play an important role in Phase III as it aims to ensure that research efforts are not duplicative and that country offices learn from existing evidence. This approach will encourage the Global Programme to focus on research efforts that will help close evidence gaps and contribute to the global research agenda, as outlined in the research strategy for the programme. Meanwhile, the par-

tnership with Girls Not Brides through the CRANK will continue to support evidence exchange through virtual quarterly research meetings and maintaining the online research tracker which details ongoing and upcoming research by CRANK members, to reduce duplications of knowledge generation efforts. The CRANK is a key platform for research coordination and dissemination beyond the Global Program-



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me, reaching civil society partners through the Girls Not Brides network and aiming to provide space for researchers from the Global South, thereby also con-

tributing to interlinked aims of the Global Programme to support local organizations and movements, including those that are women- and youth-led.

7.4.3 Evidence uptake and learning

Encouraging evidence uptake involves strategies and actions to ensure that research findings, evaluation results, observations from monitoring, and other forms of evidence are effectively used and translated into decision-making, policy formulation, programme design, and practice. Phase III will explore ways to foster a culture of evidence-informed decision-making, for example, through investing in relationships with key decision makers who have the authority and influence to use the evidence; monitoring of and highlighting success stories and case studies that illustrate how evidence has positively influenced decisions, policies and programme interventions; ensuring that messaging and dissemination strategies are tailored to the target audiences; and offering technical assistance, guidance or training to help stakeholders interpret and apply the evidence. These strategies will benefit both Global Programme countries as well as countries beyond the Global Programme

by contributing to the global evidence base.

Phase III will also pay particular attention to its accountability to affected populations¹⁴³ by promoting a culture of learning and improvement based on the feedback and experiences of affected populations; will use feedback and lessons learned to inform programme adaptations and changes; and will continuously seek ways to enhance the relevance, quality and effectiveness of programme interventions. The Global Programme recognizes that effective communication is an ongoing process and should not end with the dissemination of evidence. Sustained engagement, follow-up activities, and ongoing dialogue with affected populations are crucial for building trust, fostering collaboration, and ensuring that the evidence is appropriately used to drive positive change towards ending child marriage.

¹⁴³. Accountability to affected persons refers to the responsibility of organizations, institutions and individuals to be answerable and responsive to the needs, rights and preferences of the people they aim to assist or serve in humanitarian or development contexts. It emphasizes the importance of engaging and involving affected populations in decision-making processes, promoting their participation, and ensuring their voices are heard and acted upon. Accountability to affected populations recognizes their agency, rights, and dignity, and aims to empower them as active participants in their own development or in humanitarian response. It requires ongoing commitment, transparent practices, and a culture of respect and inclusivity within organizations and institutions working with affected populations.

8. Global communication and advocacy

Developing a global communication strategy for Phase III includes creating a movement for sparking public and private political and financial support for continued investments in ending child marriage and supporting girls around the world. The Global Programme needs to speak with one voice, communicating a strong vision and narrative on how it can accelerate investments to end child marriage, and why this is key not just to achieve SDG 5.3, but also several other developmental goals. The strategy focuses on a clear and compelling, multi-country, multichannel campaign that maximizes political and financial support.

Box 9: Playbook for a global communications strategy for Phase III

The Global Programme has developed a playbook to support global, regional and national communications in Phase III. The playbook provides strategic communication and advocacy guidelines, and resources and tools to boost awareness and engagement for the third phase of the Global Programme. The purpose of the global playbook is to guide communication efforts on a global scale. It aims to secure consistent, scalable and efficient communications when referring to and sharing information about the Global Programme across different target audiences, geographies and channels.

The playbook has been designed to equip staff and partners of the Global Programme with strategic guidance, evidence-based approaches, and effective communication techniques. It offers insights into engaging policymakers, government and civil society organizations, sectoral systems, global and regional institutions, key partners and the media. The playbook serves as a comprehensive road map to drive impactful communication and advocacy campaigns, raise awareness, and inspire action in different contexts.

The communications challenge is clear: in the midst of a global polycrisis, the audiences of the Global Programme are busy and preoccupied. They have a broad interest in the SDGs but ending child marriage is not necessarily one of their priorities. Hence, communications in Phase III need to break through the noise and connect with issues different audiences care about.

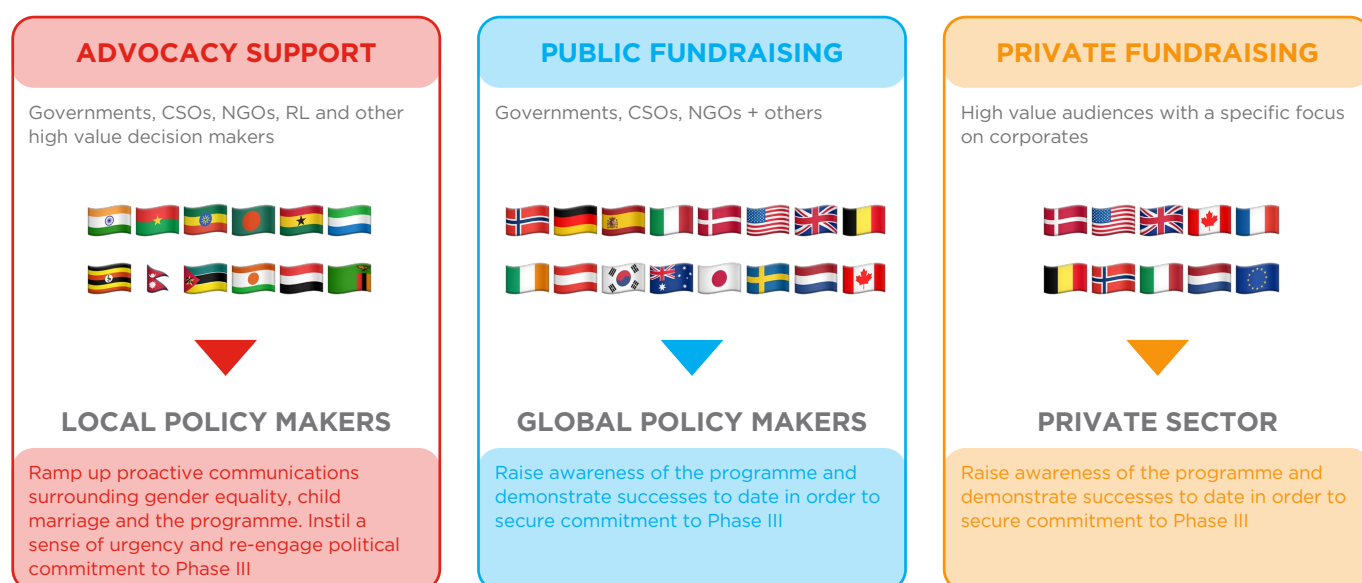
The core message of the Global Programme is simple: **enabling positive choices for girls – accelerating a better future for all**. The Global Programme is designed to create the conditions for girls to lead the life they choose and be more fulfilled. Empowering girls is at the heart of the programme. When girls understand their own power, they become agents of change in their own right. When girls delay marriage and stay in school longer, the positive effects ripple out across families, local communities and economies.

The communications and advocacy campaign aims to position child marriage as a top SDG issue for policymakers to address, and that this is the key moment to act. The campaign will activate different audiences, at the right time, on the right platforms. The campaign will promote one shared ideal that can resonate with all audiences, across different geographies, moments and channels. It will build a unique and memorable voice, based on common beliefs but articulated for different stakeholders.

- **Sense of urgency:** Time is running out, join us to help us achieve our goals. Every year 12 million girls are forced into marriage. We need to move 20 times faster to achieve our goal.
- **Holistic value:** To end child marriage, we need to address the root causes of inequality, but doing this will have a ripple effect across societies. Eight of the SDGs cannot be met without ending child marriage.
- **Sense of hope and excitement:** We have a big ambition and we are pushing forward. Let us end the practice of child marriage altogether by 2030.
- **Results-driven:** We have already done so much. 68 million child marriages have been averted in the past 25 years. Since 2012, the global rate has fallen from 23 to 19 per cent.
- **Evidence-informed:** The latest evidence should drive our advocacy to build trust with stakeholders and to ensure that the most important issues are being addressed with the most up-to-date knowledge.

Despite times of unrest and instability, the Global Programme continues to demonstrate its broader value to society and prove why gender equality is so crucial in the face of today’s polycrisis. Phase III provides an opportunity to demonstrate how much the Global Programme has already achieved, tell success stories, and highlight the programme’s latest qualitative and quantitative achievements. This includes proof points related to how the programme has strengthened systems, enabled laws and policies, addressed poverty drivers, supported marginalized girls and enabled family and community engagement. Most importantly, advocacy will convey a sense of urgency, proving that the world is off-track in delivering on gender equality and time is running out. However, this will be balanced with an explicit sense of hope, optimism, ambition and excitement. This involves an empowering, empathetic, firm and ‘everything is possible’ tone of voice that Global Programme key stakeholders will identify with, will want to own, engage with and proudly share with and across their networks (see Figure 23 for some of our key audiences).

Figure 22: Who are we communicating with? Our key audiences



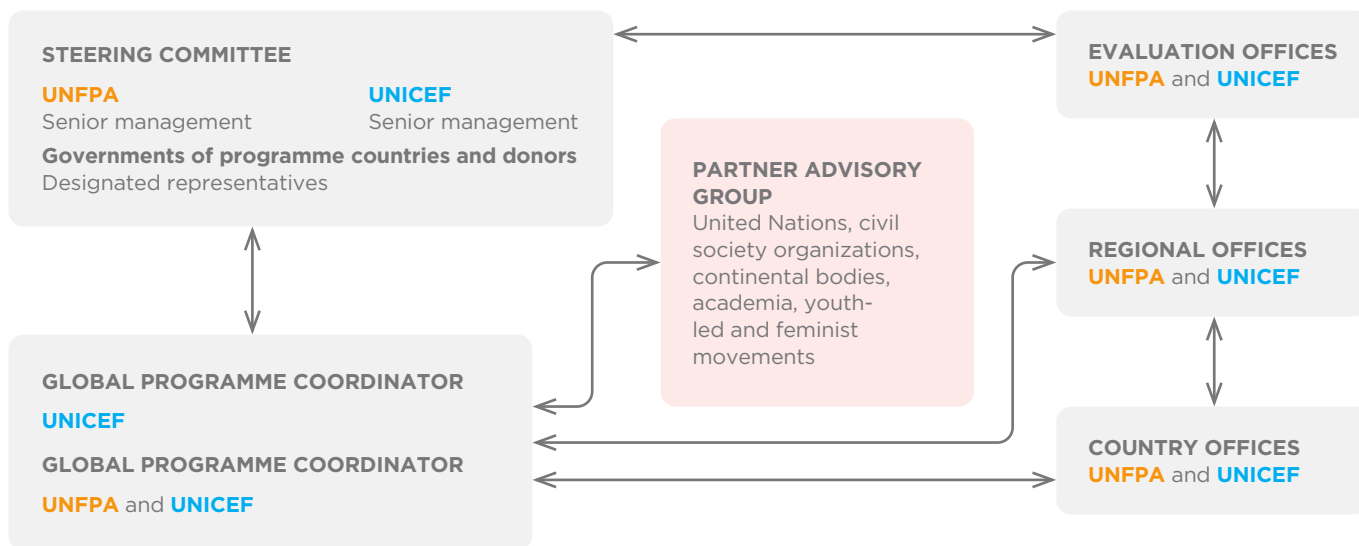
9. Programme governance and management

9.1 Governance structure

The governance structure of the Global Programme consists of multiple interlocking mechanisms to ensure solid programme implementation, finan-

cial and programmatic management and results-based reporting (see Figure 24).

Figure 24: Global Programme management structure



9.1.1 Steering Committee

Within the management framework for the Global Programme, the Steering Committee comprises the agencies that are signatories to the Global Programme, the donors, and at least one representative from the government of a programme country. The Steering Committee provides strategic direction and oversight and has decision-making authority. Each participating United Nations organization has programmatic, financial and reporting responsibility for its part of the Global Programme. In summary, the Steering Committee:

- Is the decision-making authority – the highest body for strategic guidance, fiduciary and management oversight and coordination.
- Facilitates collaboration between participating United Nations organizations and donors for the implementation of the Global Programme.
- Includes senior programme managers of all signatories of the Global Programme Document.
- Reviews and approves Global Programme do-

uments and annual workplans, provides strategic direction and oversight, reviews implementation progress and addresses problems, reviews and approves progress reports and evaluation reports, notes budget revisions/reallocations, audit reports (published in accordance with each participating United Nations organization’s disclosure policy), initiates investigations if needed.

- Meets at least twice a year. One meeting is to be held early in the year to approve annual requests for fund allocation for the year, and the other is to be held midyear to receive a summary of and review the year-end report, visit a programme country for a monitoring and learning mission, and to discuss other pending matters as needed.

Members of the Steering Committee will receive the agenda and documentation for the meetings at least two weeks in advance. Steering Committee meetings will be either online or as a field visit to one of the core programme countries. The

Global Programme Support Unit carries out the Secretariat functions for the Steering Committee, and the meetings are co-chaired by UNFPA and UNICEF.

9.1.2 Partner Advisory Group

The established Partner Advisory Group will be renewed, to firstly advise the Global Programme and secondly serve as a platform for coordination and knowledge-sharing for the sector at large with a variety of actors in the child marriage area. It acts as the technical counterpart to the Steering Committee and gives advice on policies, strategies and advocacy through interactions with the Global Programme Support Unit. The Partner Advisory Group helps to structure the process of consulta-

tions with partners – including civil society, youth-led and women-led constituencies, international non-governmental organizations, other United Nations agencies, foundations, academia and the private sector – and benefit from the strategic, policy and operational advice that these constituencies can offer. Members of the Partner Advisory Group include United Nations agencies, government representatives, regional organizations and civil society organizations.

9.1.3 Global Programme Support Unit

The Global Programme Support Unit consists of staff of UNFPA and UNICEF, under the lead and management of UNICEF as the mandated convening agent, to ensure high-quality planning, implementation and oversight at headquarters, regional and country office levels. The headquarters offices are responsible for overall leadership, while headquarters and regional offices work together on programme guidance, planning, reporting and oversight. UNFPA costs for programme

management and coordination (not part of the UNICEF convening agent budget) are reflected in the workplans of UNFPA headquarters and regional offices. The Global Programme Support Unit is responsible for joint annual planning, review and monitoring of the programme for submission and approval to the Steering Committee. The support unit also leads on strategic and technical programme guidance.



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9.1.4 Regional and country entities

Regional and country offices work closely with the Global Programme Support Unit, following the overall division of labour detailed in Table 6.

Table 6: Division of labour in the Global Programme

Global leadership (Headquarters)	Regional leadership (Regional Office)	Country leadership (Country Office)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Provide strategic direction and guidance to country office programmes → Provide technical guidance, monitoring and evaluation frameworks, research strategies and technical assistance, with regional offices, for country offices → Liaise with key partners, Member States and the executive boards, on communications, resource mobilization and advocacy → Convene the Steering Committee and provide secretariat support → Consolidate workplans and budget allocations → Consolidate monitoring and reporting into annual reports → Establish and lead multi-country, multi-region knowledge management processes that go beyond the 12 countries of the Global Programme → Organize global biennial consultation meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Provide regional strategic direction and guidance and technical support to country office programmes → Joint country monitoring of implementation and results → Contribute to regional processes, support the work of regional bodies → Prepare, with headquarters, technical guidance, monitoring and evaluation frameworks, research strategies, and technical assistance for country offices → Establish multi-country knowledge management processes that go beyond the 12 countries of the Global Programme → Support global and regional network meetings and consultations → Prepare reports on regional progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Liaise with national coordination group on ending child marriage → Coordinate UNFPA-UNICEF joint planning with the government on annual workplans → Establish partnership agreements with implementing partners and direct accountability for resources and results → Set up data-collection systems and monitoring processes → Provide technical assistance to the government and implementing partners → Conduct joint agency missions → Prepare joint reporting to global level → Build local partnerships and advocacy

9.1.5 Progress and utilization reporting

Following United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) guidelines for parallel and pass-through funding modalities, one organization is responsible for consolidated global narrative reporting based on the preparation of joint reports at the country level. UNICEF, the mutual-

ly agreed-on convening agent, has taken the lead role on preparing the consolidated annual global narrative report. UNFPA and UNICEF follow an annual narrative and financial reporting structure for participating offices at country, regional and headquarters levels that is harmonized across offi-

ces and provides information on key areas of progress. UNFPA and UNICEF country and regional offices provide joint annual reports to the Global Programme Support Unit in January of each year.

The annual country and regional reports are in turn synthesized into a global report for submission to the Steering Committee in the second quarter of the year.



9.2 Human resources

Through consultations, the two United Nations agencies have identified existing human resources and capacity areas needed to implement the Global Programme. The structure of the teams working on child marriage varies across offices. However, a cross-sectoral approach and a coordination mechanism among the relevant sectors constitute a common theme. All the relevant UNICEF sectors (adolescent development and participation, child protection, SBC, data and analysis, education, evaluation, gender, social policy, health and HIV) are increasingly linking their specific programmes and work to have a coordinated response to child marriage. UNFPA country and regional offices draw on staff with expertise in ASRH, adolescents and youth, gender and human rights, and population and development, including data and health economics and financing.

UNFPA and UNICEF are strengthening their human resources at country, regional and headquarters levels to expand their work on child marriage and deliver the Global Programme outcomes. With few exceptions, the agencies' human resources working on the programme are being drawn

from existing staff capacity assigned to various programme areas. With the overall strategy being multisectoral, most of the offices' workplans have identified specific strategies that will be carried out by the sections responsible, with a child marriage focal person appointed in the section, and the convening of regular multisectoral planning and progress update meetings to ensure close coordination and collaboration across sections. Experience and competencies on working on child marriage need to be stressed.

Staff positions are determined by country programme and office management plans, and country and regional offices have recruited a limited number of posts directly linked to the programming work on child marriage. Where needed, short-term consultants are brought on board. Having a dedicated staff to manage the Global Programme in each office is important to ensure coordination, synergies, joint planning and implementation. Countries are allowed to allocate up to 15 per cent of their budget to cover human resources (national and international staff).

9.3 Fund management

The Global Programme brings together UNFPA and UNICEF with distinct mandates for enhanced impact at a large scale. The programme is designed to enhance clarity about the roles and responsibilities of each partner, to help to identify complementarities and to minimize the duplication of efforts, and to ensure mutual accountability on the delivery of results. To achieve this, the Global Programme primarily uses a pass-through funding modality, while accommodating parallel contributions based on donor restrictions, following UNSDG guidelines. In this way, UNFPA and UNICEF are jointly working towards a common goal and from a common results framework that is clearly defined, while each organization is accountable for its own results.

UNICEF has taken on the role of administrative agent and convening agent for the Global Programme. According to the UNSDG guidelines, the administrative agent is accountable for:

- Effective and impartial fiduciary management and financial reporting.
- Financial/administrative management: receives donor contributions, disburses funds to participating United Nations organizations based on Steering Committee instructions, and con-

solidates periodic financial reports and a final financial report.

- Day-to-day administration.
- The administrative agent is entitled to a fee of 1 per cent on total contributions.

The convening agent is accountable for:

- Coordination of programmatic activities and narrative reporting.
- Operational and programmatic coordination: coordinates all Global Programme partners, coordinates and compiles annual workplans and narrative reports, coordinates monitoring of annual targets, convenes and reports on Steering Committee meetings, facilitates audits and evaluations, and reports back to the Steering Committee; may be involved in resource mobilization.
- Involvement in day-to-day coordination but does not hold any financial or programmatic accountability.
- The convening agent is entitled to charge coordination costs directly to the Global Programme budget.



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Glossary

The following are some of the terms most relevant to this report. Further definitions are available from UNFPA¹⁴⁴, UNICEF¹⁴⁵ and UN Women¹⁴⁶.

Age-disparate marriage is generally defined by the Demographic and Health Surveys as the difference, in whole years, between the woman's or girl's age and that of her husband. Studies usually categorize the gap into fewer than 5 years, 5–9 years, and 10 years or more. There is more likely to be an age difference when the marriage is arranged and/or forced. There are serious consequences of these age-based power differentials. With older males being the most powerful group in many settings, married girls experience worse outcomes in terms of violence, health, empowerment and so on. Prevalence varies by context. Age-disparate marriage is more common in Africa than in other regions.

Bodily autonomy means the power and agency to make choices over one's body and future, without violence or coercion. This includes when, whether or with whom to have sex, and when, whether or with whom one wants to become pregnant. It means the freedom to get married or go to a doctor whenever one needs to. Yet women and girls – and indeed, all people – face constraints to their bodily autonomy. The consequences to their health, well-being and potential in life can be devastating. Intertwined with bodily autonomy is the right to bodily integrity, where people can live free from physical acts to which they do not consent. The lack of bodily autonomy is one of the root causes of gender inequality and this can hinder the progress in SRHR.¹⁴⁷

Child marriage is the marriage of a girl or boy before the age of 18 years and refers to both formal marriages and informal unions. Formal marriage could be under civil law and/or religious law, and customary laws and practices. An informal union is one in which a couple live together for some time, intending to have a lasting relationship, but do not have a formal civil or religious ceremony. United Nations resolutions refer to the term “child, early and forced marriage”. This creates the impression that these terms are distinct. In fact, they are often overlapping.

Digital technologies are electronic tools, systems, devices and resources that generate, store or process data. Digital technologies are continually evolving and expanding. They include the Internet and mobile technologies; digital networks, content, services and applications; old and new systems of media, communication and information; connected devices and environments; virtual and augmented reality; artificial intelligence, including machine learning; robotics; automated systems and data analytics; and biometrics and biotechnology.¹⁴⁸ The functioning of digital technologies is enabled by digital infrastructure (e.g., undersea, underground and above-ground cables; tower sites; data centres; satellites; the invisible spectrum used for wireless communication). The infrastructure is essential – it is the backbone for connectivity.

Discrimination against women is defined as “Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on the basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other

144. UNFPA, Measuring prevalence of violence against women: Key terminology, 2016, <<https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/kNOwVAWdata%20Key%20Terminology.pdf>>

145. UNICEF, *Gender Equality Glossary of Terms and Concepts*, 2017, <www.unicef.org/rosa/media/1761/file/Gender%20glossary%20of%20terms%20and%20concepts%20.pdf>

146. UN Women, *Gender Equality Glossary*, 2023, <www.tinyurl.com/y3mk9yzg>

147. UNFPA, *State of the World Population Report*, 2021b, <www.unfpa.org/sowp-2021/autonomy>

148. <www.unicef.org/executiveboard/media/7046/file/2021-31-Gender_Action_Plan_2022-2025-EN-ODS.pdf>

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field.”¹⁴⁹ Discrimination can stem from both law and practice. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women recognizes and addresses both forms of discrimination, whether contained in laws, policies, procedures or practices.

Early marriage: The terms ‘child marriage’ and ‘early marriage’ largely refer to the same thing: marriages in which one or both spouses are under 18 years old. The term ‘early marriage’ is often used when it is a marriage before the legal minimum age of marriage in a country. It is also sometimes used, however, to describe marriages in which one or both spouses are 18 years or older, but with a compromised ability to grant consent. For example, the marriage of a 19-year-old who is not physically or emotionally mature, or who does not have sufficient information about her choices, would be considered an early marriage.

Forced marriage: A forced marriage is one in which one or both spouses do not give full, free, informed prior consent, regardless of age. Forced marriage can also refer to a union in which one or both spouses are unable to end or leave the marriage. Because in most countries children are not considered able to give legal consent, sometimes all child marriages are considered forced marriages. However, there are many instances of two adolescents under the age of 18 marrying each other voluntarily.

Gender aware: A gender aware approach is one that identifies gender differences, issues and inequalities and including them in strategies and actions. Gender awareness is now regarded as insufficient and should be replaced by gender responsiveness, which shows a commitment to action, rather than just sentiments or awareness.

Gender equality: Equality between women and men refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women’s and men’s rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are considered, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women’s issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development.

Gender equity: This refers to the process of being fair to men and women, boys and girls, and importantly the equality of outcomes and results. Gender equity may involve the use of temporary special measures to compensate for historical or systemic bias or discrimination. It refers to differential treatment that is fair and positively addresses a bias or disadvantage that is due to gender roles or norms or differences between the sexes. Equity ensures that women and men and girls and boys have an equal chance, not only at the starting point, but also when reaching the finishing line. It is about the fair and just treatment of both sexes that takes into account the different needs of the men and women, cultural barriers and (past) discrimination of the specific group.

Gender norms: These are ideas about how men and women should be and act. We internalize and learn these ‘rules’ early in life. This sets up a life cycle of gender socialization and stereotyping. Gender norms are the standards and expectations to which gender identity generally conforms, within a range that defines a particular society, culture and community at that point in time. Gender norms are social norms that relate specifically to gender differences. A gender norms approach offers an opportunity to repair the absent lens of social norms theory. This absence ignores the role of power in social relations, underestimates the importance of child socialization, ignores how roles related to gender become incorporated into institutions, and ignores how gender roles are produced and reproduced through daily interactions.

¹⁴⁹ United Nations, Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 1979, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1981/09/19810903%2005-18%20AM/Ch_IV_8p.pdf>

Gender responsiveness is an attitude that acknowledges and considers women's and men's specific needs. It means taking action to correct gender bias and discrimination to ensure gender equality and equity. Gender responsiveness entails consistent and systematic attention to the differences between men and women to address structural constraints to gender equality.

Gender roles refer to social and behavioural norms that, within a specific culture, are widely considered to be socially appropriate for individuals of a specific sex. These often determine the traditional responsibilities and tasks assigned to men, women, boys and girls. Gender-specific roles are often conditioned by household structure, access to resources, specific impacts of the global economy, conflict or disaster, and other locally relevant factors such as ecological conditions. Like gender itself, gender roles can evolve over time, in particular through the empowerment of women and the transformation of masculinities.

Gender stereotyping: A gender stereotype is a generalized view or preconception about attributes or characteristics, or the roles that are or ought to be held by, or performed by, women and men. A gender stereotype is harmful when it limits women's and men's capacity to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and/or make choices about their lives.¹⁵⁰

Gender-based violence (GBV) is violence (see definition below) based on socially ascribed gender differences and power relations between females and males. The nature and extent of specific types of GBV vary across cultures, countries and regions. Examples include sexual violence, including sexual exploitation and abuse, and forced prostitution; domestic violence; trafficking; so-called honour killings; and widow inheritance (a widow being passed on to a relative of the deceased husband, for example).

Gender-responsive budgeting is the analysis of the impact of actual government expenditure and revenue on women and girls, compared with that on men and boys. It neither requires separate budgets for women nor aims to solely increase spending on women-specific programmes. Instead, it helps governments to decide how policies need to be adjusted, and where resources need to be reallocated to address poverty and gender inequalities.

Gender-responsive education is inclusive education that ensures equal access to learning opportunities for girls, boys, women and men, addresses gender-based barriers and the intersection of different forms of discrimination, takes affirmative steps to reduce gender gaps and disparities in the management of the learning process, provides children with a learner-friendly environment that addresses their diverse learning needs, and results in the progressive achievement of gender equality in educational outcomes.

Gender-transformative programming aims to ensure sustained changes in gender-discriminatory norms at the individual, relational and institutional levels. It aims to promote gender equality – the shared control of resources and decision-making – and girls' and women's empowerment, and to make both central to a programme or intervention. Gender-transformative approaches actively examine, question and change rigid gender norms and imbalances of power. They aspire to tackle the root causes of gender inequality and reshape unequal power relations.

Intersectionality is an analytical framework for identifying how different identities experience power and privilege differently based on intersecting forms of oppressions – for example, intersections of race and gender, or of sexuality and nation. Child marriage is an intersectional issue. It is important to recognize that child marriage is rooted in intersecting inequalities that girls and boys are subjected to on the basis of sex, gender and age and other factors such as urban/rural residence and economic status. This is further compounded in many contexts by other factors, including economic inequality.¹⁵¹

150. OHCHR (n.d.). *Gender stereotyping*, <www.ohchr.org/en/women/gender-stereotyping>

151. Columbia Law School, Kimberlé Crenshaw on Intersectionality, *More than Two Decades Later*, 2017, <www.law.columbia.edu/news/archive/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality-more-two-decades-later>

Masculinities: Adopting a gender perspective – or way of analysing the impact of gender on people’s opportunities, social roles and interactions – allows us to see that there is pressure on men and boys to perform and conform to specific roles and gender relations. The term ‘masculinity’ thus refers to the social meaning of manhood, which is constructed and defined socially, historically and politically, rather than being biologically driven. There are many socially constructed definitions for being a man and these can change over time and from place to place. The term relates to perceived notions and ideals about how men are expected to behave in a given setting. Masculinities are not just about men; women perform and produce the meaning and practices of ‘masculine’ as well.

Megatrends: These are trends that have an effect on a global scale, such as climate change, demographic shifts such as ageing, migration and urbanization, and the emergence of digital technologies and inequalities.¹⁵²

Polycrisis: The term ‘polycrisis’ refers to the simultaneous occurrence of several catastrophic events; the presence of multiple near-simultaneous shocks, with strong interdependencies among them, taking place in an ever-more-integrated world.

Self-initiated marriage is when both spouses choose to marry each other. Self-initiated marriage is sometimes used to escape abusive circumstances or forced marriage. It also provides a way for young people to be sexually active in contexts where sex is accepted only within the socially sanctioned institution of marriage, or to ‘legitimize’ a pregnancy. Marriage is also a way for adolescents to declare independence (linked to adolescent brain development and the desire for peer affiliation and independence) by establishing a separate family unit and/or household.

Social norms: Social norms are the perceived, informal rules that define appropriate and acceptable action within a given group, community or culture. They exist when people practise a behaviour because they believe others like them or in their community practise it or because they believe that those who matter to them expect them to practise that behaviour. Gender norms are social norms that relate specifically to gender differences.

Technology: Any materials, techniques or systems that specifically pertain to or are related to information and communication technologies (ICTs) or digital spaces and technologies that aim to change the disempowered state of girls and women, in order to directly or indirectly mitigate child marriage.¹⁵³

Technology-driven interventions: Policies, programmes, and initiatives that use technological materials or services as the core components – to empower girls and women to directly tackle and mitigate child marriage.

Technology-enabled interventions: Policies, programmes, and initiatives that use technological materials or services in some part – to empower girls and women to directly tackle and mitigate child marriage. In other words, technology-enabled interventions use the materials or services, but not as the main tools or focus.

Violence: There are different kinds of violence, including, but not limited to, physical, verbal, sexual, psychological and socioeconomic violence.

Digital violence refers to actions or words that inflict harm; with digital violence, this harm is perpetrated through the misuse of digital technologies and tools such as computers, smartphones, and other connected devices.

¹⁵². United Nations, *Report of the UN Economist Network for the UN 75th anniversary: shaping the trends of our time*, 2020, <<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3884187?ln=en>>

¹⁵³. UNICEF, UNFPA and DPA, 2023.

Economic violence is both a cause and an effect of dominant gender power relations in societies. Some of the most typical forms of socioeconomic violence include taking away the victim's earnings, not allowing the person to have a separate income (forced 'housewife' status, working in the family business without a salary), or making the person unfit for work through targeted physical abuse. In the public sphere, socioeconomic violence can include denial of access to education or (equally) paid work (mainly to women), denial of access to services, exclusion from certain jobs, denial of the enjoyment and exercise of civil, cultural, social or political rights.

Physical violence is an act attempting or resulting in pain and/or physical injury. It includes beating, burning, kicking, punching, biting, maiming, the use of objects or weapons, and tearing out hair. At its most extreme, gender-based physical violence may lead to femicide, the gender-based killing of a woman. Some classifications also include trafficking and slavery in the category of physical violence, and the young women and men involved end up becoming victims of further violence as a result of their enslavement.

Psychological violence can include, for example, threatening behaviours that do not necessarily involve physical violence or even verbal abuse. It can include actions that refer to former acts of violence, or purposeful ignorance and neglect. Psychological violence may also be perpetrated through isolation or confinement, by withholding information, giving disinformation, and so on. Coercive control is a form of psychological violence over time that isolates the victim from getting support and takes away their independence by controlling their everyday lives, including through socioeconomic violence.

Sexual violence includes many actions that are equally hurtful to every victim and are used similarly in the public and private spheres. Examples include rape (sexual violence that includes some form of penetration of the victim's body) – including marital rape – and attempted rape. Other types of forced sexual activity include being forced to watch somebody engaging in a sexual act, forcing somebody to engage in a sexual act in front of others, forced unsafe sex, sexual harassment, and, in the case of women, abuse related to reproduction (forced pregnancy, forced abortion, forced sterilization).

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV): An act of violence perpetrated by one or more individuals that is committed, assisted, aggravated and amplified in part or fully by the use of information and communication technologies or digital media, against a person on the basis of their gender.¹⁵⁴

Verbal violence or abuse can include put-downs in private or in front of others, ridiculing, the use of swear-words that are especially uncomfortable for the victim, threatening other forms of violence against the victim or against somebody or something dear to them. Verbal abuse can be related to the background of the victim, insulting or threatening her religion, culture, language, sexual identity or traditions.

154. UNFPA, 2021c.

Risk matrix (as of August 2023)

Risk	Probability	Impact	Mitigation
National contextual risks			
<p>1. Political will of Member States, including commitment to legal and legislative change and financial investments, is lacking, thereby hampering positive change.</p>	Low	Medium	<p>The Global Programme has strategically selected countries where some amount of momentum exists to end child marriage. Strong working relationships with the authorities and national ministries exist and will be maintained to build a sense of common purpose and enhance national ownership of the process. The Global Programme will amplify civil society voices, including alliances and external funds, which tend to enhance government accountability (e.g., joint advocacy efforts through civil society organization networks such as Girls not Brides). The Global Programme will also continue to: 1) work with regional economic communities such as the African Union (AU), the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for enhanced 'influence' at country level and 2) engage with regional and national government entities through mechanisms such as the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women and the United Nations General Assembly for high-level advocacy.</p>
<p>2. Changes in the political context in countries, such as changes in leadership and shifts in national priorities (away from ending child marriage) or other security situations affect continuation and sustainability of ongoing positive change processes.</p>	Low to Medium	Medium	<p>Country programmes are designed to implement strategic plans, in consultation with national governments and in alignment with national priorities. Both UNFPA and UNICEF have longstanding relationships with the legislative and executive arms of Member States which permits a high degree of continuity in work, with slight changes in direction as needed to align with any new priorities. The multisectoral nature of the Global Programme permits continuity and sustainability of action through the most promising lead ministries in any given context. Country commitments enshrined in international declarations and conventions are also utilized as the basis for sustaining action. The Global Programme will continue its engagement with regional economic communities such as the AU, SADC and ECOWAS for enhanced 'influence' at country level. Further, the Global Programme will implement evidence-informed advocacy with targeted sectors in all Global Programme countries except Yemen.</p> <p>When strategic direction, performance management and delivery on results can no longer proceed as envisioned, agencies undertake a programme criticality exercise that scales back programming to the achievable minimum. To the extent possible, programme activities in unaffected regions will continue. Programme managers and leadership at the regional and headquarters levels will closely monitor the situation and implementation rate so that decisions can be made swiftly. Technical support will be increased to help countries redefine their deliverables and re-programme funds as needed to still meet the objectives of the programme. Funds will be reallocated to other programme countries if needed in consultation with the Steering Committee.</p>
<p>3. Humanitarian crises (e.g., virus outbreaks, natural disasters, conflicts, polycrisis) hamper or completely restrict implementation.</p>	Medium	High	<p>Headquarters, regional and country offices of both UNFPA and UNICEF prioritize preparedness, and temporarily shift to emergency response in affected regions and countries - which tends to usually include children and adolescents at risk of or affected child marriage. In consultation with the Global Programme Steering Committee, to the extent possible, programme activities will continue, and ending child marriage activities will be revisited to take into consideration the restrictions and protection measures (both individual and collective). UNFPA and UNICEF continuously monitor the emergency situation in the Global Programme countries (e.g., through sitreps).</p> <p>One potential solution is to increase investment in social protection programmes, such as cash transfers and food assistance, which can help alleviate the immediate economic impacts on families. These programmes can also help to build resilience and reduce vulnerabilities. The establishment of learning recovery programmes will help tackle the learning losses and prevent children from falling further behind.</p> <p>Ultimately, a coordinated and collective effort is needed to protect the rights and well-being of children and adolescents. This includes</p>

not only providing immediate assistance but also addressing the underlying causes of the polycrisis and building resilience for the future. This cannot be achieved without a more coordinated and collective effort from international organizations and governments to help mitigate the effects of the polycrisis and protect children's futures.

Coordination, capacity & delivery risks

<p>4. Inadequate coordination between UNFPA and UNICEF.</p>	<p>Low</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>The Global Programme works within a formalized programme structure that both facilitates and mandates various coordination systems including through the Administrative Agent function and the Steering Committee. The Global Programme enhances coordination between UNFPA and UNICEF through one Global Programme Coordinator, joint communication and joint projects in similar geographic areas.</p>
<p>5. Inadequate coordination between development partners working on ending child marriage results in duplication of efforts.</p>	<p>Low to Medium</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Working jointly with multiple donors through the Global Programme is already demonstrably mitigating this risk. In addition, Phase III will ensure programmatic resources are complementary to each other and reach areas of greatest need. At country level, UNFPA and UNICEF are coordinating with governments to ensure that their ending child marriage strategy is aligned with national priorities, and supporting a unification of civil society efforts, in order to avoid duplication.</p> <p>Further, the governance structure of the Global Programme (such as the Steering Committee and the Partner Advisory Group) provides a forum for coordination between development partners, civil society organizations and governments. Active participation of the Global Programme in networks such as Girls not Brides and through engagement and support for the implementation of the Spotlight Initiative to Eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls help to mitigate duplication risks. The Child Marriage Research to Action Network (CRANK), established in partnership with Girls Not Brides, strengthens knowledge sharing and capacity of partners, including connecting African researchers and practitioners to global dialogue.</p>
<p>6. Inadequate capacity of government partners, civil society or UNFPA/ UNICEF staff lowers effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, etc.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>The Global Programme has a strong monitoring and evaluation framework with intermediate and immediate outcomes, including an independent evaluation in close cooperation with the independent Offices of Evaluation of both agencies. Programme baselines and regular monitoring established to track progress of Phase II implementation. An outcome evaluation will be carried out that will outline the degree to which results could be attributed to the Global Programme. In addition, the programme continues to generate data and evidence that will stand alone, but also critically inform the outcome evaluation of the Global Programme. Put together, these elements will be able to track the programme's effectiveness at the intermediate and immediate outcome as well as output levels which will provide useful benchmarks for assessing progress.</p> <p>The Phase III MERL plan includes a capacity needs assessment of the Global Programme teams and partners to identify where critical investments are required. This assessment will allow for more targeted capacity building and resource allocation during Phase III. In coordination with knowledge management focal points, Phase III monitoring staff will host quarterly monitoring meetings which will include capacity building and capacity exchange sessions for country-level Global Programme staff and partners. This will allow both veteran staff as well as new hires to engage with the monitoring processes, ask questions, and share lessons learned and good practices more deeply. This is also the forum where findings from the systematic review of monitoring products and approaches will be shared with country-level staff.</p> <p>Capacity tends to vary across countries and financial support dedicated to boosting capacity will be adjusted accordingly. Technical support across the programme (from headquarters, and regional offices, between countries, and from external technical partners) will also be allocated as per capacity and needs. Where needed, external consultants and partners will be brought on board to bridge the capacity gaps. UNFPA and UNICEF will undertake continuous programmatic assessments to ascertain suitability of implementing partners to ensure they are working with the best partners who are suitably positioned to achieve results and have the mandate and competitive advantage on the ground. Other mitigation efforts include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Office of Evaluation conducts a self-assessment to strengthen accountability by providing the Global Programme

			<p>with timely evidence on the status of implementation of adapted strategies during a crisis, such as COVID-19.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> GPSU and regional offices focus on provision of technical support to enhance country capacity through sharing information, tools and technical guidelines on knowledge management platforms; webinars; communities of practices (e.g., UNICEF Yammer); emails; monthly newsletter; country visits; annual consultations; and engagement of consultants. Country offices provide support and training of implementing partners on financial management, implementation of the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT) and reporting. Country offices facilitate quarterly and annual reviews of implementation including monitoring of budget and south-south exchanges.
7. The programme does not reach the most at risk/vulnerable girls and women.	Low to Medium	Low	In designing the Global Programme, UNICEF applied a Monitoring Results for Equity System (MoRES) approach, to deliver equity-focused planning, programming and monitoring. This tool supports monitoring programmes and policies to ensure that an equity approach to reach the most marginalized children is evidence-based and in support of planned impact. UNFPA uses population data to conduct age, gender, and geographically disaggregated analysis to estimate prevalence and burden of child marriage. At the core of both these approaches are the identification and targeting of the most vulnerable, holding service providers accountable and creating better access for the most disadvantaged communities including girls at risk of and affected by child marriage.
8. Risk of cultural sensitivity of the topic, or of conservative backlash from within the communities.	Low	Low to Medium	Agencies are implementing in a culturally sensitive manner at the country level. It is crucial that the Global Programme is not perceived as imparting a particular agenda or ideological framework that is not in the best interests of the community. Hence, careful consideration will be given to how issues are conceptualized and framed in any given country and subnational context with adherence to basic do-no-harm guidelines. Community leaders, parents and guardians will be involved from the start as per ethics protocols and cultural considerations. UNFPA and UNICEF have strong backgrounds in community-level work and are already successfully managing programmes to end child marriage in many countries, demonstrating that it is indeed possible to avoid any reputational risks to the agencies or development partners.
9. Pushback against gender equality: women and girls experience resistance and obstacles against gender equality at all levels of the socio-ecological model. The pushback against gender equality risks undermining the hard-won gains in gender equality.	High	Medium	<p>Forming alliances with organizations, donors and governments that support gender equality is a key strategy for mitigation. This includes coordination and harmonization of strategies and understanding and unpacking the concerted efforts of those who undermine gender equality.</p> <p>Promoting gender equality across the socio-ecological model allows the Global Programme to target areas where progress can be achieved. This may be girls' education, access to ASRH services, social protection or vocational training in contexts where legislative change on the age of child marriage has stalled, or where deeply entrenched discriminatory gender norms are slow to change at the community level. Responding flexibly to openings for gender equality that emerge allows the Global Programme to seize opportunities.</p>
10. Risk of human rights violations of government partners, civil society or UNFPA/UNICEF staff either directly, or through action (or omissions) or through business relationships or supply chain.	Low	Medium	<p>The Global Programme works within the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. The Global Programme uses the human rights-based approach to child marriage programming at regional, national and global level. Additionally: UNICEF is implementing the procedures for a child safeguarding framework in all countries. The framework is supported with the 2016 Child Safeguarding Policy.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> UNICEF is implementing the framework for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) in all countries that covers some issues that the Child Safeguarding framework is not covering. Consistent with the UNDG's guidelines for Common Country Assessment and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (previously UNDAF), all UNFPA and UNICEF country offices undertake independent, impartial and collective assessment and analysis of a country situation to examine progress, gaps, opportunities and bottlenecks as regards to human rights principles (equality and non-discrimination, participation, accountability) to guide planning and implementation of UN development activities.

11. Slow decline on child marriage: the decline in child marriage is much too slow to achieve the SDG target 5.3 of ending child marriage by 2030	High	Medium	Building on the existing evidence of what works to end child marriage, the Global Programme is concentrating resources on strategies that have the highest chances of achieving the greatest impact on the wellbeing and empowerment of adolescent girls. This also means reducing resources and support for interventions that have not shown sufficiently rapid progress in the decline of child marriage.
Financial & fiduciary risks			
12. The Global Programme does not attract enough funding to deliver results at scale due to changes in partner priorities or other reasons.	Medium	Medium to High	The option of working jointly with other donors through the Global Programme will go a long way to mitigate this risk. In addition, Phase III will ensure programmatic resources are complementary and reach areas of greatest need. Strategic relationships with donors fostered through regular meetings to review country situations and programme progress help to mitigate this risk. Relationships with UNFPA and UNICEF National Committees sustained through visits, teleconferences and regular country updates also help to mitigate this risk. Further, Phase III of the Global Programme Phase III includes an in-depth and dynamic communications strategy which includes an advocacy calendar to enhance visibility of the Global Programme as well as a resource mobilization strategy (led by the GPSU) to identify and meet partners to raise resources.
13. Risk that funds are not used for the intended purposes; do not achieve value for money; and/or are not properly accounted for.	Medium	Medium to High	<p>UNFPA and UNICEF policies on fraud and procurement are publicly available and strictly applied. Within the Global Programme framework, the Steering Committee is the highest body for strategic guidance, fiduciary and management oversight and coordination. The Administrative Agent is accountable for effective and impartial fiduciary management. Outside the direct Global Programme framework is the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Fiduciary Management Oversight Group, which serves as the first point of contact in headquarters for fiduciary matters. It oversees the implementation of the fiduciary aspects of the UNDG policies on joint funding mechanisms and discusses any required departures from the standard Memorandum of Understanding, Letters of Agreements and Steering Committee Terms of Reference.</p> <p>UNICEF has developed a detailed anti-fraud strategy addressing fraud at all levels and has designated the Deputy Representative, Operations and Regional Chiefs of Operations as focal points at the country and regional offices, respectively. Fraud risk Management efforts are ongoing including reporting cases as and when they are brought to light. As part of these efforts and to enhance awareness, Staff have been trained on the anti-fraud strategy in addition to the online mandatory fraud awareness training. Similar online training was also developed through the UN interagency collaboration and translated into various key languages. Programme countries continuously apply assurance activities through external audit firms to support undertaking of spot checks, audits and micro-assessments. Further, UNFPA's and UNICEF's anti-fraud and whistleblower protection policies shared with partners, consultants and contractors as appropriate.</p> <p>Every allegation of fraud is fully investigated, and if substantiated, the donor is informed, efforts put in motion for loss recovery, and any implicated implementing partner barred from future engagement with UNICEF. These efforts, including the rigorous risk management through HACT processes enhance fraud awareness in UNICEF funded projects and are expected to reduce incidents of fraudulent activities through prevention, deterrence and detection. The rigorous anti-fraud measures mentioned above target all fraud cases reported in all projects. UNICEF reports annually to the Executive Board on all fraud and corruption cases; see this link for the full 2020 report: 2021-ABL3-OIAI_annual_report-EN-ODS.pdf (unicef.org)</p> <p>UNICEF has a whistle-blower protection policy which is internal and not publicly available. UNICEF's Ethics Office, responsible for administering the policy, and UNICEF's Office of Internal Audit and Investigations, responsible for investigating complaints of retaliation, both report publicly to UNICEF's Executive Board. The Policy and contact details of the Ethics Office are prominently posted in several locations on UNICEF's intranet, and the Ethics Office regularly engages in outreach.</p> <p>UNFPA and UNICEF also explore alternative solutions to direct cash-transfer to partners to avoid fraud or misuse to the extent possible.</p>

Result Framework

Phase III results statements	#	Key Indicators	Disaggregation levels	Periodicity (year)	Means of Verification
SDG Target 5.3: Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation	5301	Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 18	Age; Geographic location; Education; Wealth quintile	3-5 years	DHS; MICS; Household survey
	5302	Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 15	Age; Geographic location; Education; Wealth quintile	3-5 years	DHS; MICS; Household survey
INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME 1000: Adolescent girls at risk of and affected by child marriage are effectively making their own informed decisions and choices regarding marriage, sexual and reproductive health (including childbearing), education and livelihoods.	1001	Proportion of girls aged 15-19 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care	Age; Marital status; Education; Disability; Wealth quintile	2-3 years	DHS; MICS; Household survey
	1002	Proportion of respondents who think that children should have the final say in deciding when to get married	Age; Gender; Marital status; Education; Wealth quintile	2-3 years	Household survey
	1003	Proportion of respondents who feel confident in their ability to choose not to marry their daughter before they turn 18 despite the social pressure	Age; Gender; Marital status; Education; Wealth quintile	2-3 years	Household survey
	1004	Proportion of girls and boys aged 15-19 who consider a husband to be justified in hitting or beating his wife for at least one of the specified reasons, i.e., if his wife burns the food, argues with him, goes out without telling him, neglects the child	Age; Gender; Marital status; Education; Wealth quintile	3-5 years	DHS; MICS; Household survey
	1005	Adolescent birth rate	Age; Marital status; Education; Disability; Wealth quintile		DHS/MICS, household survey
	1006	Restricted civil liberties for women (citizenship rights, political voice, freedom of movement, access to justice)		Annual	SIGI, document review, survey
Immediate Outcome 1100: Enhanced knowledge, education and skills, and attitudes of marginalized adolescent girls - in both development and humanitarian contexts - on matters such as their rights, relationships, sexual and reproductive health, and financial literacy.	1101	Proportion of girls (10-24) who have comprehensive sexual and reproductive health knowledge	Age; Geographic location; Education; Disability; Wealth quintile	2-3 years	DHS, survey of girls
	1102	Proportion of girls who express increased sense of self-efficacy; who feel confident in their ability to negotiate and delay early marriage; who feel comfortable speaking without fear	Age; Geographic location; Education; Disability; Wealth quintile	Annual	Household survey
	1103	Proportion of adolescent girls of lower-secondary school age that are out of school	Age; Geographic location; Disability; Wealth quintile	Annual	Administrative data; Household survey

Output 1110: Underserved/marginalized adolescent girls (aged 10-19) who are at risk of child marriage, married, separated, divorced, and widowed adolescent girls and adolescent girls who are pregnant or already have children, are engaged in gender-transformative life skills and comprehensive sexuality education programmes that build their knowledge, skills, and awareness of their rights, and connect them to services.	1111	Number (and proportion) of adolescent girls (aged 10-19) who actively participated in life skills or CSE interventions in programme areas	Age; Geographic location; Education; Disability; Funding source	Annual	Programme/ NGO records and relevant administrative data
Output 1120: Underserved/marginalized adolescent girls supported to enrol and remain in formal and non-formal education, including through the transition from primary to secondary school.	1121	Number (and proportion) of girls (10-19) supported by the programme to enroll and/or remain in primary or secondary school	Age; Geographic location; Education; Disability; Wealth quintile; Funding source	Annual	Programme records
Immediate Outcome 1200: Families, traditional and religious leaders, community members (girls, women, boys and men), community groups, and other influencers - in both development and humanitarian contexts - demonstrate more gender-equitable attitudes and support for girls' rights.	1201	Proportion of respondents who believe that all/most individuals in their community are marrying children before 18	Age; Gender; Marital status; Education; Wealth quintile	2-3 years	Household survey
	1202	Proportion of adult respondents who can identify sanctions (punishments) and benefits (rewards) associated with child marriage abandonment	Age; Gender; Marital status; Education; Wealth quintile	2-3 years	DHS; MICS; Household survey
	1203	Proportion of respondents (community, traditional and religious leaders) who are willing to introduce sanctions if someone does not practice child marriage	Age; Gender; Marital status; Education	2-3 years	Survey among community, traditional and religious leaders
	1204	Proportion of respondents who think that marrying their daughter/female household members before 18 is the best option	Age; Gender; Marital status; Education; Wealth quintile	2-3 years	Household survey
Output 1210: Boys and men are engaged in gender-transformative programmes (including comprehensive sexuality education for boys) that promote healthy relationships and positive masculinities and gender equality.	1211	Number (and proportion) of boys and men actively participating in group education/dialogues that address harmful masculinities and gender norms	Age; Geographic location	Annual	Programme records
Output 1220: Families, traditional and religious leaders, community members (girls, women, boys and men), community groups, and other influencers (e.g., youth, women, and feminist advocates) are engaged in gender-transformative dialogues, advocacy and consensus-building on alternatives to child marriage (including education), the rights of adolescent girls, and gender equality.	1221	Number (and proportion) 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	Age; Gender; Geographic location	Annual	Programme records
	1222	Number (and proportion) 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	Age; Gender; Funding source	Annual	Programme records
	1223	Number (and proportion) of local actors (e.g. traditional, religious and community leaders) with meaningful participation in dialogues and consensus-building on alternatives to end child marriage (including education)	Gender; Geographic location	Annual	Programme records

Output 1230: Women-led, youth-led, and feminist organizations, networks and coalitions are included and supported to build their capacities, mobilize the voices of the marginalized (particularly girls), challenge harmful gender and social norms, mitigate pushback and setbacks and promote gender equality through advocacy, community mobilization, capacity building and other efforts.	1231	Number (and proportion) of women-led and youth-led, feminist organizations, networks and coalitions of CSOs mobilized by the Global Programme in support of challenging social norms, mitigate the pushback and setbacks and promoting gender equality through advocacy, community mobilisation and capacity building efforts	Type of organization Status of partnership (new, ongoing (i.e., previously existing), expired)	Annual	Programme records
INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME 2000: Relevant sectoral systems and institutions effectively respond to the needs of adolescent girls and their families in targeted Global Programme areas.	2001	Proportion of girls and young women of reproductive age (aged 15-19 years) who have their family planning need met with a modern contraceptive method	Age; Geographic location; Education; Wealth quintile	3-5 years	DHS/MICS, household survey
	2002	Girls' transition rate from primary to lower-secondary school	Age; Geographic location; Education; Disability	3-5 years	DHS/MICS, household survey
Immediate Outcome 2100: Increased capacity of education, health, gender-based violence prevention and response and child protection to deliver coordinated, quality programmes and services that are responsive to the needs of adolescent girls and their families in both development and humanitarian contexts.	2101	Proportion of adolescent girls of lower-secondary school age who stayed away from school during the past month and past 12 months because they felt unsafe at, or on the way to/from school or online	Age; Geographic location	2-3 years	Education data
	2102	Number (and proportion) of girls and boys in programme areas who accessed prevention and protection services from health, GBV and child protection service delivery points	Age; Gender; Geographic location; Education; Type of service	2-3 years	Programme records, survey of girls
Output 2110: Formal (primary and secondary) and non-formal schools supported to provide quality, gender-responsive education for adolescent girls, including comprehensive sexuality education.	2111	Number (and proportion) of primary/secondary/non-formal schools in programme areas assessed that are providing quality gender-responsive education (including CSE) that meet minimum standards	Geographic location; Education level; Funding source	Annual	School survey, supervision records
Output 2120: Health (particularly sexual and reproductive health), gender-based violence prevention and response and child protection systems supported to implement guidelines, protocols and standards for adolescent-friendly and gender-responsive coordinated, quality services for unmarried, married, separated, divorced and widowed adolescent girls, adolescent girls who are pregnant or already have children.	2121	Number (and proportion) of service delivery points in programme areas assessed that are providing quality adolescent-responsive services (health, child protection/GBV) that meet minimum standards	Geographic location; Funding source	Annual	Site surveys, supervision records
Immediate Outcome 2200: Increased capacity of national and sub-national social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes and services to respond to the needs of the poorest adolescent girls and their families in both development and humanitarian contexts.	2201	Number (and proportion) of poorest adolescent girls (10-19) benefiting from social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes	Age; Geographic location; Education; Wealth quintile	2-3 years	Programme records
Output 2210: Partnerships with governments, civil society organizations, social protection networks and other implementers supported to ensure that social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes and services are adolescent- and gender-responsive and reaching the poorest adolescent girls and their families.	2211	Number (and proportion) of partnerships (both formal and informal) to deliver adolescent- and gender-responsive social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes and services that reach the poorest adolescent girls and their families	Partnership agreement (formal or informal) Status of partnership (new, ongoing (i.e., previously existing), expired)	Annual	Programme records

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME 3000: Enhanced legal and political response to prevent child marriage and to support pregnant, married, separated, divorced or widowed adolescent girls and girls at risk of child marriage.	3001	Policy effort index, as measured by the national accountability towards ending child marriage on seven dimensions (governance & coordination; policy & legislation; engagement & participation; financing & HR; access to services; data collection M&E)		Annual	Policy assessment checklist
Immediate Outcome 3100: Enhanced capacity of governments, local authorities and civil society organizations to coordinate and implement budgeted national, and sub-national action plans, policies and systems to end child marriage	3101	Number (and proportion) of budgeted sub-national plans <u>implemented</u> with evidence-informed interventions to address child marriage	Sub-national level	Annual	Sub-national policy document reviews, surveys
Output 3110: Advocacy, capacity building, technical support provided to government and civil society organizations to enact, enforce and uphold comprehensive laws and policies, in line with international human rights standards, aimed at preventing child marriage, protecting those at risk and addressing the needs of those affected.	3111	Number of policies or legal instruments addressing child marriage drafted, proposed, or adopted at national and sub-national level with Global Programme support.	Funding source	Annual	Annual reviews of policies and laws
Output 3120: Advocacy, capacity building and technical support provided to government and civil society organizations to implement a budgeted multisectoral gender-responsive plan on ending child marriage across ministries and departments at sub-national levels.	3121	Number (and proportion) of sub-national plans with evidence-informed interventions to address child marriage		Annual	Sub-national policy document reviews
	3122	Number of policy and budget analysis documents developed and disseminated to inform budgeted multisectoral gender-responsive planning to address child marriage		Annual	Document reviews
Immediate Outcome 3200: Increased capacity of governments and civil society organizations to generate, disseminate and use quality and timely evidence to inform policy and programme design, track progress and document lessons	3201	Number (and proportion) of evidence and knowledge addressing child marriage which have been used in policy decisions, programme design, advocacy and accountability	Funding source	Annual	Programme records and policy documents
Output 3220: Regional and global coordination and support provided to facilitate evidence generation and cross-learning on what works to end child marriage across Global Programme countries and with initiatives in other countries worldwide.	3221	Number (and proportion) of regional- and global- level evidence products generated and cross learning activities on what works to end child marriage (technical assistance, conferences, expert visits, peer consultation, study tours, communities of practice) supported	Funding source	Annual	Programme records and policy documents

4000: Global Programme effectiveness and efficiency (Enablers)

Enabler 4100: Efficient and effective management of partnerships and resources enables achievement of results	4101	Number (and proportion) of programme goods and services procured through long-term agreements (LTAs)		Annual	Headquarters, Regional and Country Offices
	4102	Number (and proportion) of programme partnership agreements signed with local NGOs		Annual	Country Offices
	4103	Ratio of overhead costs to programme expenditure		Annual	Headquarters, Regional and Country Offices
	4104	Budget implementation rate		Annual	Headquarters, Regional and Country Offices

	4105	Number (and proportion) of joint activities implemented with effective coordination between agencies		Annual	Country offices
	4106	Number (and proportion) of localities with joint programme action		Annual	Country offices
	4107	Number (and proportion) of direct programme localities with child marriage prevalence in the 50th percentile and above of the country average		Annual	Country offices
Enabler 4200: Country offices and implementing partners have strengthened capacities to support implementation of interventions to end child marriage	4201	Number (and proportion) of technical assistance (missions, workshops, calls) rated as satisfactory by the country offices		Annual	Country offices
	4202	Number (and proportion) of technical assistance requests (missions, workshops, calls) fulfilled by Headquarters and Region Office		Annual	Headquarters and Regional offices
Enabler 4300: Programme mobilizes resources in support of child marriage interventions	4301	New revenue (\$,000) mobilized broken down by:		Annual	Headquarters, Region and Country offices, National Committees
		a. Single-agency		Annual	
		b. Joint-agencies		Annual	



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