

Report

What works to tackle child marriage in Ethiopia

A review of good practice

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Abbreviations

AA	Action Aid
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANPCANN	African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect
BIAAG	Because I Am a Girl
BoE	Bureau of Education
BoWCA	Bureau of Women, Child and Youth Affairs
CC	Community Conversation
CM	Child marriage
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DFID	Department for International Development
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
EDHS	Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
ETB	Ethiopian birr
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (also FGM)
GPP	Girl Power Program
HAPCO	Federal HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Office
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HTP	Harmful Traditional Practice
ICRW	International Centre for Research on Women
IDI	In-Depth Interview
KI	Key Informant
KII	Key Informant Interview
MoWCA	Ministry of Women, Child and Youth Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
SAAAs	Social Action and Analyses groups
SNNP	Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
TESFA	Towards Improved Economic and Sexual Reproductive Health Outcomes for Adolescent Girls
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
WCYA	Women, Children and Youth Affairs
WDA	Women's Development Army
WWG	Women's Watch Group

Glossary of key terms

Birr: Ethiopian currency

Butta: Marriage by abduction.

Haftu: Derogatory name given to unmarried girls over the age of 18-25 in Oromia.

Idir: An informal social and financial group that helps members save for various life events, including funerals

Injera: Traditional Ethiopian flat bread made of teff flour.

Jala-deemuu: Similar to waliin deemuu. Understood as marriage through elopement in Oromia.

Kebele: An Amharic term referring to local governmental administrative unit at grass-root level and is found below the woreda.

Khat/chat: Flowering plant native to Horn of Africa. Chewed as a stimulant.

Madrasa: Islamic school

Nika: A formal, binding contract practiced in Muslim communities that outlines the responsibilities of the bride and groom.

Quran: Islam's holy book (Koran)

Sunna: Milder type of FGM/C where the tip of the clitoris is cut. People in Somali, Oromia and Afar are changing from practicing infibulation to this form.

Woreda: Level of government between the kebele and the zone—also known as district.

Zone: An administrative division found immediately below the region. It is usually responsible for coordination of the activities of the woreda and the regional executive.

Key messages

- An array of child marriage programming from diverse entry points is emerging in Ethiopia which collectively provide important lessons for future programming
- Key features of successful programming include tailoring programmes to their local environment, targeting community and religious leaders; educating parents through existing government interventions; supporting girls' clubs and involving men and boys to promote alternative masculine norms and behaviours.
- Facilitating cross-sectoral cooperation, securing local ownership and helping communities to develop reporting chains for at risk girls are also key.
- Where such programming addresses key structural drivers of child marriage, including broader social norms that reinforce gender inequality, limited accessible secondary education and economic poverty, transformative effects are more likely.

1 Introduction

1.1 Report aims and key research questions

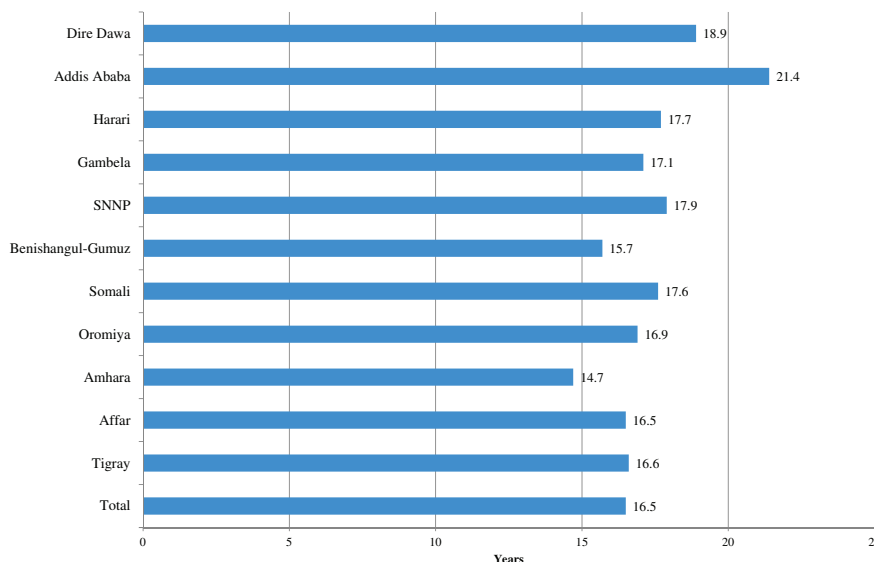
With an eye towards evidence-informed programming to eliminate child marriage in Ethiopia, this good practices study was commissioned by UNICEF Ethiopia and the National Alliance to End Child Marriage and FGM/C by 2025 to identify existent Ethiopian programming which is reducing child marriage and to assess impact pathways, scalability, community outreach and other positive forces for change. Child marriage programming is comparatively new, only gaining traction in the mid-1990s, primarily located in South Asia (Bangladesh and India), mostly small-scale and only rarely rigorously evaluated. As a result, very little is known about what works on the broader-scale and in the longer-term to prevent child marriage (Malhotra et al., 2011). Of the 23 programmes identified by the most thorough recent review, only two¹ were located in Ethiopia—and neither reached more than 5,000 girls (ibid.). Furthermore, while that review concluded that there was evidence of positive programme impact, particularly

through empowering girls and educating communities and especially in regard to behavioural rather than attitudinal change, it also acknowledged that disentangling impacts and impact pathways was difficult² (ibid.). With that conclusion in mind, this research, which required work in seven Ethiopian languages³ across five regional states, is focused on programmes solely within Ethiopia and aims to promote more systematic lesson learning in the context of greater international investment in child marriage reduction.

1.2 Programme modalities

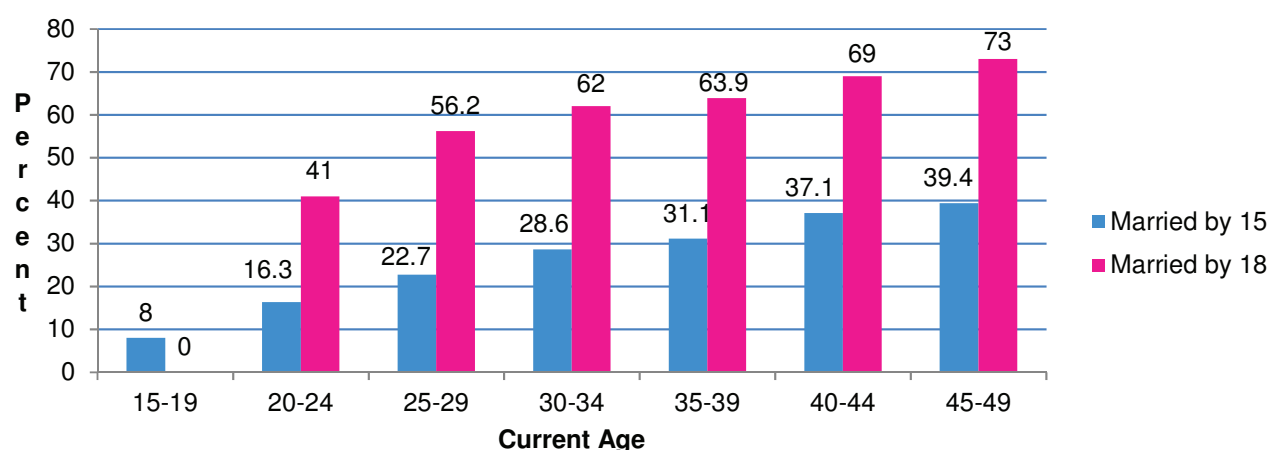
ICRW’s meta-analysis of 23 previously evaluated child marriage programmes found that most employ five main strategies—usually in combination with one another and only rarely with child marriage prevention as a primary goal (Malhotra et al., 2011).

Figure 1: Median age at first marriage, by region, for women aged 25-49 (CSA and ICF International, 2012)



- 1 The two programmes that were located in Ethiopia were Berhane Hewan and the Early Marriage Evaluation Study. The former was categorized as having resulted in no change in attitudes and knowledge and mixed change in behavior. The latter was categorized as mixed change in attitudes and knowledge and no change in behavior. See Presler-Marshall, Jones and Lyytikainen (2015) for more details.
- 2 The review also noted that clear routes to scale-up were challenging since it was the longer-term, carefully designed programmes (such as Berhane Hewan) that showed the greatest impact and the shorter-term, simpler programmes—such as school-based classes—that were easier to take to scale.
- 3 Our work required translation in to Amharic, Tigrenya, Somali, Afar, Oromiffa/Afaan Oromoo, Sidama/Sidmigna, Nuer, and Anywa/Anuak.

Figure 2: Percent of women married by age 15 and by age 18 (CSA and ICF International, 2012)



Specifically, modalities were identified as:

1. Empowering girls with information, skills and support networks so that they know their options, can better advocate for themselves and have better access to the livelihood options that help their families and communities see them as fit for more than marriage (18 of 23 programmes).
2. Educating and mobilising the parents and community members who ultimately make most decisions regarding child marriage (13 of 23 programmes).
3. Enhancing the accessibility and quality of formal schooling for girls, which helps not only locate girls as children, and thus not in the market for marriage, but also equips them with information, skills, support networks, etc. (9 of 23 programmes).
4. Offering economic support and incentives for girls and their families so that families are not pushed into child marriage by poverty and see value to their daughters other than marriage (8 of 23 programmes).
5. Fostering an enabling legal and policy framework (4 of 23 programmes).

1.3 Child marriage in Ethiopia

As discussed in an accompanying review of the literature (see Presler-Marshall et al., 2015), the past decade in particular has seen accelerating progress towards the abandonment of child marriage in Ethiopia. Nonetheless, Ethiopia remains one of many in the developing world where child marriage is still widely practised. According to the 2011 Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey (EDHS), which provides the most recent regional and national-level data available, the median age at which

Ethiopian women marry is 16.5 years, and 40% of all women in their early 20s were married before they turned 18 (CSA and ICF International, 2012). Men of the same age, on the other hand, were very unlikely to marry as children. Indeed, women are more likely to be married by the age of 18 than men are by the age of 25 (CSA and ICF International, 2012).

According to the EDHS, girls who are urban, educated and well off tend to marry significantly later than their peers who are uneducated, rural and poor (CSA and ICF International, 2012). For example, women with no education married at a median age of 15.9 years – compared with nearly two years later for those with a primary education (17.5 years) and nearly seven years later for those with a secondary education (22.8 years). Similarly, women who live in urban areas married at a median age of 18.1 years, compared with 16.3 years for rural women. Geographically, as Figure 1 shows, the lowest median age at first marriage, 14.7 years, can be found in the Amhara region and the highest, 21.4 years, can be found in Addis Ababa.

Aggregate statistics, however, because they fail to account for the variation between older women and their younger peers, hide Ethiopia's recent progress towards eliminating child marriage, which appears to be accelerating considerably. According to the 2011 DHS, on a national level only 8% of the youngest group of women (those aged 15-19) were married before their 15th birthdays (see Figure 2). On the other hand, nearly 40% of the oldest group (those aged 45-49) were married by age 15. Similarly, while over 40% of women aged 20-24 were married before adulthood, this figure represents significant progress given that nearly three-quarters of women aged 45-49 were married as children.⁴

⁴ The percentage of girls aged 15-19 who were married by age 18 is not reportable because most girls in that age range have not yet turned 18.

While the EDHS represents the most recent comprehensive data available about the patterns of and trends in child marriage in Ethiopia, it does not allow for sufficient disaggregation. It does not, for example, allow for the examination of the zonal- and woreda-level statistics that are crucial to targeted programming designed to reach girls most at risk of child marriage. It also does not tease apart the marriages of young children from those of young adolescents. Finally, because most its indicators are reported for all women of reproductive age, without any breakdown by age, the EDHS effectively hides many of the emergent differences between cohorts.

To remedy these issues we combined a ground-breaking analysis of the 2007 national census with in-depth qualitative research. The former highlighted extreme intra-regional variation and allowed us to identify “hotspots” for child marriage, which is critical in order to accurately target prevention-oriented programming. The latter permitted exploration of the diversity of patterning in--and drivers of--child marriage, which, combined with an understanding of existent protective factors, is necessary in order to tailor programme design. Our hotspots work identified the following broad messages:

1.3.1 Broad messages regarding patterning

- *It is important to distinguish between the types of child marriage:* for example, while Amharan girls and parents do not distinguish semantically between ceremonial marriage and ‘real’ marriage, the risks of the former, given that it does not involve cohabitation and is nearly always accompanied by divorce, are negligible compared to the risks of the latter.
- *Progress towards eliminating child marriage appears most advanced in Amhara* – with fewer girls marrying as children and those who do marry as children marrying in middle adolescence⁵.
- *In other regions, most notably Oromia and Gambela, there is evidence that child marriage is actually increasing* – in part because better nutrition is causing girls to enter puberty earlier—in an environment where puberty is taken as a landmark that girls are “old enough” for marriage-- and in part because girls are ‘choosing’ to marry age mates they meet in school.
- *Polygamous marriage and marriage by abduction are increasingly rare* – but not yet eliminated.

1.3.2 Broad messages for drivers

- *Social norms – reinforced by religious values and supported by religious leaders – that insist on girls’ virginity* and stigmatise girls and their families if they are ‘impure’ or ‘too old’ are the largest driver of child marriage across study sites.
- *Adolescent decision-making is a double-edged sword:* in some sites, particularly in Amhara, it is allowing girls to choose education over marriage; in other sites it is encouraging girls to marry their ‘first love’ – especially, as in Oromia and Somali, where girls’ access to contraception is limited or prohibited.
- *Economic poverty does not emerge as a primary driver of child marriage in any of the hotspot sites;* where economic themes are mentioned it is nearly always in the context of consolidating wealth and demonstrating social status. (Poverty does, however, contribute to many girls leaving school – and in particular prevents their transition to secondary school.)
- *Reciprocating neighbours, relatives and friends* by hosting lavish wedding ceremonies remains a powerful driver of child marriage in Amhara and Tigray.
- *Commitment to girls’ education, while improving, remains low* overall, with girls unlikely to even finish primary school in many sites and discouraged from achieving academic success by heavy domestic workloads in others.
- *In many cases girls marry simply because they lack alternatives;* where secondary schools and local employment opportunities are not available, child marriage becomes the default option because it is perceived as the only one.

1.3.3 Broad messages for protective factors

- In some sites, notably in Amhara, but also to an extent in Tigray, *child marriage is not necessarily associated with cohabitation or early sexual debut.*
- In some sites, again most notably in Amhara but also in Tigray, *improving access to contraception* is helping some unmarried girls delay marriage and most married girls delay pregnancy. However, in other regions (especially Afar, Gambela, Oromia and Somali), even where contraception is physically accessible, it is largely deemed to be socially unacceptable (even for married women).

5 Dixon-Muller (2008), reviewing a variety of legal and international standards, as well as data on physiological and cognitive readiness, suggests differentiating between early adolescence, ages 10-11 and 12-14, middle adolescence, aged 15-17 and late adolescence, ages 18-19. She concludes that early adolescents are never ready for marriage, middle adolescents are sometimes ready for marriage and older adolescents are probably “old enough”. However, while extremely useful in terms of understanding the risks that child marriage entails, these categories do not neatly map onto the Ethiopian experience, which includes infant marriage. They also do not account for variations in the way marital responsibilities, including work-loads and sex, line up, or fail to line up, with age at marriage.

-
- While in some sites, where social norms are very strong, families are choosing to combine education and marriage, on the *whole child marriage is declining where commitment to girls' education is growing*.
 - In some cases, commitment to girls' education is driven by families' desire to prepare their daughters for paid employment; in other cases, it is driven by the *higher bride-price* commanded by educated girls.
 - *Schooling is contributing to the reduction of child marriage* because it expands girls' options, provides them with a venue to learn about the risks of and alternatives to child marriage and offers them a safe venue for reporting marriages.
 - *Girls' clubs*, especially when implemented with dedicated leaders and focused on both imparting information and growing girls' confidence, can help girls resist marriage and focus on their broader futures.
 - *Positive female role models* are critical to helping girls and parents understand why they should invest in education.

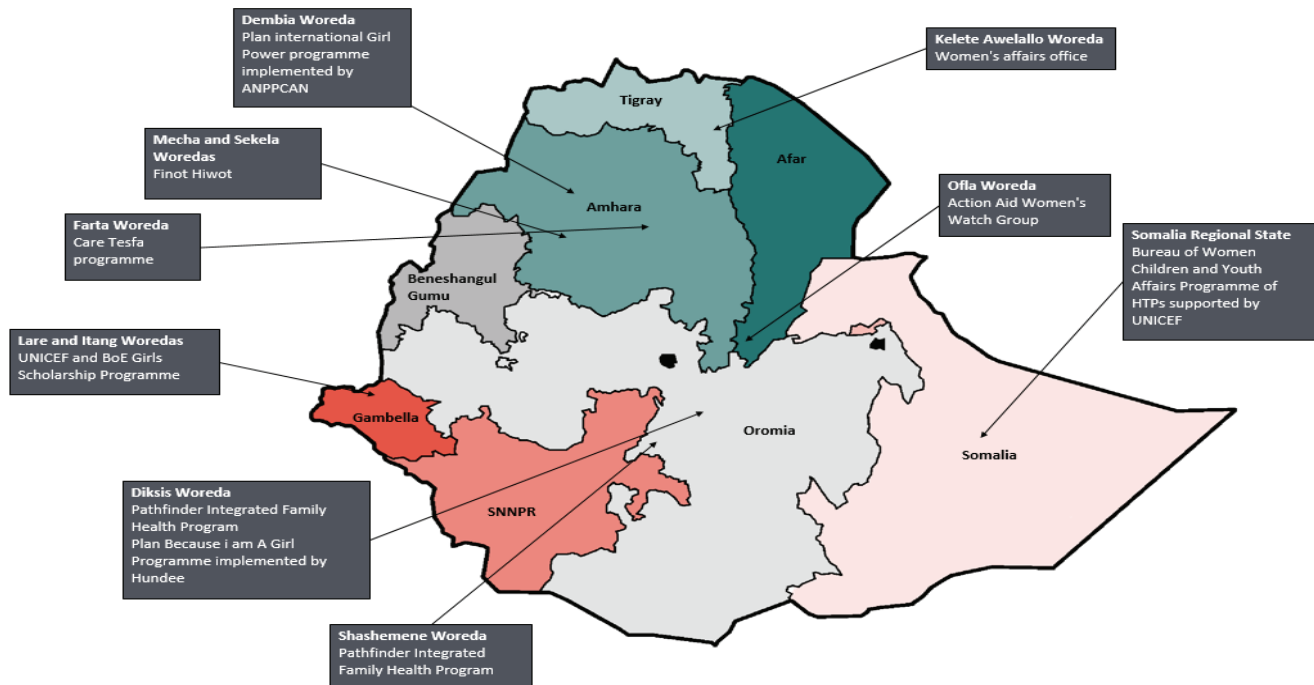
1.4 Report Structure

We turn first to our methodology, explaining how we chose our good-practice examples and the nature of our qualitative fieldwork. We then, to help the reader contextualise the differences between programmes, present an overview of our findings in terms of programme goals, modalities and strengths and weaknesses. Finally, we move on to detailed explorations of each of our good practice examples.

The discussion of each individual site begins with key messages highlighting the main findings and then presents a brief overview of programme objectives and previous evaluation. We then move on to our primary research, starting with an introduction to the woreda and focus kebele and a short exploration of community context in terms of drivers and protective factors for child marriage. We then move on to presenting programme outcomes, reasons for programme effectiveness and challenges faced. We conclude with ways forward. Where possible we illustrate our analysis with case studies of adolescent girls and champions of change, as well as quotes from a broad range of stakeholders.

2 Methods

Figure 3: Good practice programme sites



We began our good-practices review by mapping as many existent programmes as possible, by region—ultimately identifying 54 programmes in 7 regions. Attempting to balance our selections on the basis of both geography and sectoral/programmatic entry point, we chose in consultation with UNICEF and the National Alliance steering group, seven programmes in five regions for our qualitative analysis (see Figure 3).

Having identified programmes, teams of social scientists from Social Affairs Consultancy and Addis Ababa University – and the team lead and a research fellow from ODI – undertook field research in late 2014 and the first quarter of 2015. Using a variety of qualitative techniques, and working with nearly 600 adolescents, parents and key informants from five regional states, the teams explored in the various sites the ways in which programming in contributing to reductions in child marriage and improving girls' lives (see Annex 3 for complete research instruments.)

For example, community mappings helped us capture the broader background of different communities and to understand how they differ from one another economically and socio-culturally, necessary in order to locate programme impacts. Focus group discussions with adolescent girls, adolescent boys, mothers and fathers enabled us to explore community-level views and customs surrounding gender norms and child marriage and whether and how programming is altering them. In-depth

interviews allowed us to explore how programmes had changed—or not changed—the lives of beneficiaries. Intergenerational trios, which involved in-depth interviews with adolescents, parents and grandparents from the same family, facilitated an understanding of how customs and beliefs are evolving over time. Key informant interviews, with kebele and with kebele and woreda officials, health extension workers, teachers and religious leaders, permitted an understanding of how local institutions are shaping child marriage and how programming is impacting local institutions. (See Table 1 for a summary of interviews by type.)

It should be noted that while child marriage is recognised—both internationally and by national law—as any marriage that involves a partner under the age of 18, the term “child marriage” does not work well in conversation with most Ethiopians. Given that girls were, and in some rare cases continue to be, married as infants and toddlers, the term “child marriage” for most of our respondents implied the marriage of a pre-pubertal child. Accordingly, in the process of our interviews, we made sure to clarify that we were talking about marriage under the legal age of 18 years. Quotes included from the research reflect this terminology and in no way are meant to imply that the marriage of older adolescents is anything other than child marriage.

At the analysis stage, transcripts were first transcribed from local languages into the English language by a team working in Ethiopia, and then coded by a team organised by ODI. Coding and analysis used MaxQDA, a qualitative data software package used for large-scale qualitative

studies, and a framework that was structured around the various instruments, paying particular attention to the themes mentioned above. (See Appendix 2 for the MaxQDA coding scheme.)

Table 1: Summary of interviews by type

Research instrument	Number of interviews (interviewees)
Community timeline	9
Key informant interviews at regional, district and kebele levels	123
Focus group discussions with adolescent girls	24
Focus group discussions with adolescent boys	10
Focus group discussions with mothers	11
Focus group discussions with fathers	17
Intergenerational trios with adolescents, parents and grandparents	49
In-depth interviews with married and unmarried adolescent boys and girls	55
Total	298

3 Key lessons

The programmes we chose for evaluation are varied (see Table 2 below for a summary of findings by programme). Some are aimed directly at child marriage—others are not. Some use SRH as an entry point—others provide economic or educational support to families. Some primarily target girls themselves—others focus on religious and traditional leaders. Some are well backed by efforts to enforce the law regarding child marriage and others are working in areas with no enforcement whatsoever. Of the good practices programmes we selected for evaluation, only a handful can be genuinely described as “best practices”. Most have features worthy of emulation, but leave considerable scope for improvement. That said, programme features that are working across sites tend to have several things in common. They:

- *are tailored to their environment and promote local ownership from inception*
- *target community and religious leaders*
- *educate parents through existing government interventions*
- *support girls’ clubs to promote change within girls*
- *involve men and boys to raise awareness and in some cases promote alternative masculine norms and behaviours*
- *recognise the central importance of education in preventing child marriage*
- *provide economic support to the poorest to promote school retention help communities develop reporting chains that serve as safety nets*
- *facilitate cross-sectoral cooperation*

First, the most successful programmes are **tailored to their environment to promote local ownership**. They are based on a solid understanding of local drivers and take account of community norms and entry points. Care’s programming in Farta (TESFA plus add-ons), for example, began by approaching the local community to ask how to best tailor messages. Priests told us that training manuals were altered on the basis of those early conversations, which fostered ownership from the beginning. Indeed, CARE’s approach of listening to the community and letting them “learn through its own structures” was identified by our respondents as critical. It not only led to demand for TESFA that nearly overwhelmed CARE’s capacity, but totally precluded the meeting fatigue that respondents told us was common for other types of meetings. Entry points in Kiltawallalo, on the other hand, were strikingly different. In that woreda, officials have bundled child marriage messages with a larger set of goals aimed at improving maternal health and girls’ education—because those

messages resonate best with the local population. Our respondents told us that as the kebele has moved towards zero maternal mortality and away from subsistence agriculture, child marriage has been eliminated as an anathema to progress.

When we are called for a meeting we go there not for fear of punishment but because we need to. We do not have a salary. The education in the meeting is beneficial beyond salary. Early marriage has been eliminated because we have learnt and become knowledgeable.
(Mother from Kiltawallalo)

Part of careful tailoring, best-practices programmes most often **explicitly target the community and religious leaders** who often help support and reinforce local norms. Because those leaders can encourage rapid change when on board, and resist when not, programmes that begin by helping them understand the risks of child marriage and the advantages of adult marriage tend to be more successful than those who do not, especially when community efforts are paired with programming aimed at the broader religious hierarchy. Action Aid’s Women’s Watch Groups, for example, each include about twenty low-income women—and seven community elders, who lend the groups legitimacy they would not otherwise have. Given that the Watch Groups are teaching about difficult topics including not just child marriage but gender equality more generally, this legitimacy has been key to community uptake. CARE’s TESFA’s Social Action and Analysis groups and HUNDEE’s community conferences both take this approach as well. TESFA’s groups included both Priests and parents who had violated the child marriage law and were especially powerful because, after training, those who had worked the hardest to uphold social norms became those who worked the hardest to dismantle them. A counter-example, is the UNICEF-supported work on HTPs by the Somali Bureau of Women’s Affairs which while it made strong inroads into shifting norms and behaviour on FGM (although admittedly towards sunna (a less invasive practice) than total abandonment, in part due to support by local religious leaders, shifts vis-à-vis child marriage have been much more limited given that the Supreme Islamic Council is itself not in agreement with 18 as the age of marriage. Similarly, Finote Hiwot’s awareness-raising around legal age of marriage has had limited effectiveness

in addressing religious leaders' beliefs who only consider marriage under the age of 15 as "early".

The community trusts and accepts issues which are disseminated by elders and religious leaders.
(KI Farta)

While acknowledging the risk of meeting fatigue, the most successful programmes **tend to target parents through existing government interventions**, including health extension workers and the Women's Development Groups/ Development Army. This ensures not only broad dissemination of messages, but also fosters local ownership by promoting local girls and women as examples. Key is that while local groups enjoy good access to community members and are more sustainable than external interventions, their core curricula can be so broad that child marriage messages can get lost unless targeted programming helps them focus. Respondents in Ofla for example, felt that Action Aid's Women's Watch Groups worked well with local one-to-five groups and ensured that messages aimed at child marriage and girls' education were not lost in the welter of other lessons aimed at sanitation, ventilation and vaccination. Similarly, in Farta, TESFA programming was rolled out at about the same time that one-to-five groups were taking off—and was able to ensure that the groups became venues for regularly teaching mothers about the risks of child marriage and the legal ramifications of violation.

Girls' clubs can be "the most promising" promoters of change—especially when they provide leaders with both training and content appropriate to local realities. They can help girls develop confidence and voice, which enables them to negotiate with their parents for education instead of marriage, teach them about the law, provide them with social support and introduce them to broader futures—which can be critical in those areas where girls are increasingly "choosing" child marriage of their own accord. In Deksis, for example, HUNDEE is working with girls' clubs to train the leaders of student one to five groups about the gender specific threats that girls face (abduction, child marriage, FGM/C, etc.), their rights and how to help them advocate for themselves. They then take this information to other students in the club and the school. This training has helped the girls' club step up tutorial support, to begin to compensate for girls' lack of homework time and serve as a front-line for reporting planned child marriages and tracking student truancy. In Dembia, ANPPCAN has also used this cascading approach—training trainers, teachers and students, to better support girls and girls' clubs with information about gender equality and reproductive. ANPPCAN has also supported girls' clubs to help girls manage menstruation

(with information and supplies) so that they are not forced to miss schools several days each month.

The inclusion of boys and men is another core component of successful programming because where they lead the fight against child marriage and for women's equality, messages tend to enjoy broader, faster uptake. In communities where mothers are especially likely to prefer child marriage, seeing it as the best way to ensure their daughters' futures, fathers can help girls stay in school. In communities where girls are harassed and abducted, school boys can become allies and protectors—and unafraid reporters of illegal child marriages. In families where girls are not allowed time off chores for homework, brothers can become advocates and co-workers. HUNDEE works towards these possibilities by training girls and boys and women and men separately at first—giving them the space to hear messages from their own perspectives. Similarly, Action Aid and ANPPCAN include boys in their girls' clubs and CARE's TESFA deliberately targeted married girls' husbands for messages about gender equality.

The most successful programmes embed child marriage messages in a broader **focus on gender roles and inequality**. They not only help communities understand why child marriage is harmful, they help girls and women understand that they have rights, including to an education and to refuse a marriage they do not want, husbands understand why they should bake *injera*, mind children, and refrain from beating their wives, parents understand why they should allocate household chores equally between their sons and daughters and brothers understand that they must support their sisters. By focusing directly on gender equality, CARE's TESFA, for example, produced effects that were both profound and unexpected. Through showing husbands that by shouldering more of the daily chores and including their wives in financial decision-making their marriages would be stronger, the programme transformed the marriages of most married girls in Farta—opening space for them to take on the previously unimagined role of saving their younger sisters and friends from child marriage. Gender equality is also at the heart of messaging in Kilegeawlalo, where officials have worked hard to help the community see that by prioritising the needs of girls and women progress towards modernisation can be faster, and in Ofla, where Action Aid's boys' awareness clubs are supporting adolescents to write and perform community dramas about the importance of sharing household labour.

Good practice programmes also **recognise the central importance of education** in preventing child marriage and growing strong women and work to keep girls in school—and invested in education—as long as possible. Some programmes prioritise enrolling girls and carefully tracking their enrolment (Kilegeawlalo and HUNDEE). Others incentivise girls' education by providing them with the uniforms and school supplies (HUNDEE, Finote Hiwot, and UNICEF/BoE in Gambela) which allow them

to successfully negotiate with their parents. Still others provide girls with either tutorial support (Action Aid and Kilteawlalo), to help them pass exams, or help them manage menstruation (ANPPCAN, Finote Hiwot and CARE), which allows them to maintain regular attendance after the onset of menses.

Where poverty plays a role in encouraging child marriage, **economic support for the poorest** can play an important role in reducing incidence. For instance, HUNDEE and Action Aid have both focused on helping poor women better their economic situations as a way of creating openings for awareness-raising about child marriage and girls' education. In Deksis, HUNDEE is supporting women to organise savings groups as a way to improve household financial stability and encourage children's regular school attendance. In Ofla, Action Aid's goals are broader. By helping the community's poorest women transform their lives—also through savings groups—they have turned them into role models who enjoy enough respect to successfully deliver challenging messages related to gender equality. Key is that programmes aim economic support at the poorest. In the case of Finote Hiwot, for example, targeting was weak and parents often used loans for purchasing livestock—which resulted in higher demands for children's labour that disrupted their school attendance. The programme also paid little attention to the reality that it is increasingly the wealthiest girls—whose families own the most land—who are at the greatest risk of child marriage.

Recognising that awareness-raising directed at gender norms takes time, the most successful programmes also help communities **develop reporting chains** that serve as safety nets to prevent child marriage on a case-by-case basis. Often requiring anonymity in order to protect reporters, and in some communities dependent on the

existence of safe-spaces where girls escaping marriage can be temporarily housed, in most kebeles these chains are particularly well developed in schools. In Ofla, however, Women's Watch Groups serve as reporting venues—and are, according to our respondents, fail-safe because where their persuasive efforts fail, officials are willing to step in with the law. In Finote Hiwot, in some kebeles the community conversation facilitating group also served as an important reporting venue for girls at risk of forced marriage, but this was not consistent across the sites that we visited.

Finally, regardless of programming modalities, **cross-sectoral government commitment to both awareness-raising and enforcement is crucial** to eliminating child marriage—and must begin with regional level laws that harmonise with the national constitution and prohibit child marriage⁶. Accordingly, the most successful programmes not only work cooperatively with local leaders, but foster their commitment to elimination and help them build strong links between sectors and levels. Regular face-to-face meetings that allow kebele- and woreda-level officers to discuss progress—and failure-- play an important role in identifying and sharing the best-practices that promote success. In Kilteawlalo, for example, activities related to child marriage and other HTPs are led by a steering committee composed of representatives from nine different organisations (including justice, education, health and the Women's Association) that meet at least once a month. The single-data registry which grew out of this close cooperation allows officials in charge of issuing marriage certificates access to girls' birth certificates and educational records to verify their age and has attracted regional- and national-level notice and resulted a stream of visitors who *'want to see what we are doing'*

6 Somali and Afar have not yet adopted revised family law that outlaws child marriage.



School girl in in North East Oromia, David Walker 2015

Table 2: Summary of key findings by programme

Programme and main objective	CM outcomes seen in our assessment	Reasons for effectiveness	Programme challenges
Care's TESFA was aimed at improving the lives of married girls through community awareness-raising and SRH education (Farta)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Led to hundreds of cancelled marriages – Raised average age of marriage in community – Forced marriage nearly abandoned – Changing broader gender relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Fostered local ownership – Built inter-sectoral co-operation – Targeted girls and their gatekeepers—including men and community and religious leaders – Curriculum emphasised gender relations and power – Strengthened reporting chains – Strengthened girls' clubs – Worked closely with 1 to 5 groups – Central office provided good support to community volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Initial hostility towards implementers – Short time frame – Not well supported by legal enforcement
Plan/ANPPCAN's Girl Power Programme supports girls' clubs and local leaders to protect girls (Dembia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Raising age of marriage in community – Improved awareness about the risks of child marriage—esp. for girls in clubs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Strengthened reporting chains – Girls' clubs strengthening girls' voices – Included boys in programming – Trained local staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Messages are too diffuse and presented too often with too little coordination resulting in significant meeting fatigue – Community elders fighting back – Parents hiding and lying about child marriages – Legal enforcement nearly absent – Insufficient focus on gender inequality
Finote Hiwot (Mecha and Sekela)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Improved awareness of negative effects of child marriage among community members – Increased rates of girls' school retention – Created an environment where there was willingness in some communities to try to cancel child marriages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Included both men and women in the community conversations – Combined different combinations of interventions to assess impact of various programming modalities on child marriage abandonment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Poorly targeted beneficiaries by sometimes providing economic support to non-poor families and not sufficiently reaching the most impoverished girls . – School material support was inadequate to last the entire year. – School clubs were not supported by programme in any content-related work – Site visits were hindered due to budget and geographical constraints – Evidence base not well integrated into programme operationalisation
Action Aid's Women's Watch Groups are aimed at reducing violence against women and combine economic empowerment with awareness-raising (Ofla)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Child marriage virtually eliminated – Forced marriage virtually eliminated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Fosters inter-sectoral co-operation – Fosters local ownership – Safety net for girls – Messages focus on broader gender equality – Targets boys and men – Targets community and religious elders – Using economic empowerment to grow women's voice – Working closely with 1 to 5 groups – Strengthened girls' clubs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Heavy time commitment for women in groups—though this was not perceived as a burden

Programme and main objective	CM outcomes seen in our assessment	Reasons for effectiveness	Programme challenges
Tigrayan Women Affairs Office is working to improve gender equality and eliminate child marriage and other HTPs (Kiltelawalo)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Child marriage has been eliminated – Forced marriage has been eliminated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Incredible commitment from and co-operation between local leaders from all sectors – Incredible commitment from all local women's groups – Focus on broader gender issues – Targets the entire community – Continual monitoring of girls' education and marital status – Local ownership – Combines awareness-raising with legal enforcement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Religious leaders are not yet 100% on board
BoE/UNICEF's Girls' Scholarships are improving girls' access to school by providing school materials and financial support (Itang and Lare)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Girl beneficiaries have high educational aspirations that are reducing their likelihood of child marriage – Scholarship funds are allowing families to prioritise education over marriage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Material and financial support is keeping girls in school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Very small number of beneficiaries – Targeting often misses the poorest – Funds dispersed irregularly – Not linked to community-level programming
Plan/HUNDEE's BIAAG combines economic empowerment activities for women with community awareness-raising (Diksis)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Increased awareness about child marriage – Child marriage is decreasing – Marriage by abduction greatly reduced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Fosters local ownership through community conversations – Targets local and religious leaders – Works with government offices and structures – Works with girls' clubs – Helps poor women contribute to family income to keep children in school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Meeting fatigue for community members – Government officials heavily burdened – No child marriage focus in health sector – Increasing number of madrasas reinforcing gender norms – Not sufficiently targeting boys and men – Legal enforcement weak
BoWCYA/UNICEF HTP Programme (Somali)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Increased awareness about harmful traditional practices and the health and educational toll on girls' lives – FGM (infibulation) has been significantly reduced but replaced by sunna practice (a less invasive type of FGM) rather than totally abandoned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Works with traditional and religious leaders – Works through community dialogue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Very little impact on norms around child marriage – Has secured no buy-in from religious leaders around 18 as the nationally legal age of marriage – Has secured no buy-in so that the Somali regional government ratifies the national law

4 Policy and programming recommendations

Our good practices review identified a number of key entry points for programmes aimed at reducing child marriage. Because programming in Ethiopia is most often highly reliant on government channels to deliver content, we have separated our recommendations into those aimed at specifically at NGO programming and those aimed at the broader government structures that support and implement that programming.

4.1 Programme-level recommendations

4.1.1 Data

- Programmes need to collect—and use—baseline data in order to inform programming and to ascertain impact. For example, it is important to ascertain how many girls might wish to join a girls' club, to ensure that the club is adequately resourced and some girls are not turned away.
- Because multi-stranded programmes make it difficult to tease out which modalities are leading to change and how programming should best be sequenced, systematic design and regular data collection are important to evaluation. CARE's TESFA is to be commended on this front.
- Because transformatory pilot programmes (such as CARE's TESFA) can be dropped over concerns about longer-term cost-effectiveness, it is important to track costing information from inception—calculating not only the relatively higher costs involved in a pilot but probable costs for scale-up.
- Because scale-up can be more dependent on will than funding, it is important for programme implementers to identify and grow local champions early on.

4.1.2 Tailoring

- Because local protective factors vary considerably, it is important to design programming around community values. For example, messages tying child marriage to fistula and maternal mortality are well received in some areas and totally disregarded in others.
- Because local officials and providers are often over-worked and under-compensated, programmes should be tailored around what they need in order to

maintain concerted, cooperative focus. For example, transportation to far-flung kebeles emerged as a significant issue for many woreda level staff.

- Because in some areas child marriage is seen as in girls' best interest, programming needs to directly address parents' explicit and implicit concerns—regardless of whether they centre on girls' sexual purity or their longer-term economic security.
- Because girls' empowerment is a double-edged sword, programmes need to take account of the fact that in some areas girls are choosing—against their parents' wishes—to marry as children. Programming needs to be directed at girls, to help them understand the advantages of schooling over marriage, and at parents, to help them understand how to handle adolescent will.

4.1.3 Strategies

- Because it is most often community and religious leaders who support the continuity of child marriage, it is usually important to begin awareness-raising with them. However, given that local religious leaders are unlikely to support change until the broader religious hierarchy does, it is important to balance top-down and bottom-up efforts.
- Because it is very common for parents, and even girls, to believe that 'child' marriage is different from adolescent marriage, attention needs to be directed at helping communities understand that girls and boys are children until they are 18.
- Because boys and men have more voice and power than girls and women, it is important to empower them with information about child marriage – and introduce them to notions of positive masculinity so they can support girls to remain unmarried throughout childhood. Action Aid's and CARE's programming could be used as examples.
- Because child marriage is held in place by broader gender inequality, programmes need to tackle the concept of gender and underlying power relations head-on.
- Because girls' clubs exist in most schools, and have shown that they have transformatory potential, programmes should ensure that clubs are adequately resourced and supported with content and training.
- Because the girls most at risk for child marriage are already out of school, programmes should either

support community-based girls' clubs or support school-based clubs to include out-of-school girls.

- Because menstruation can interrupt girls' schooling on a monthly basis, schools and girls' clubs should be supported to build separate toilets and help girls learn to make sanitary supplies.
- Because the Women's Development Army and its nested one-to-five groups facilitate constant, ground-level penetration, programmes should support them to focus on gender issues including child marriage. This will require capacity strengthening—including both training and opportunities for sharing best practices—as well as careful monitoring and long-term follow-up.
- Consideration should be given to fostering ties between the Women's Development Army and girls' clubs in order build not just reporting chains, but webs—such as Action Aid has built with its Women's Watch Groups.
- Because women who are able to exit poverty through their own hard work are more likely to be heard by their fellow villagers, providing financial support to groups of committed women can help them become stronger messengers.
- Because known faces tell powerful stories, helping girls and women who have been injured by child marriage to make their stories known in their communities can be a powerful way to effect change.
- Because school material support can significantly improve school enrolment and reduce dropouts (Finote Hiwot and UNICEF/BOE in Gambela), budgeting of programmes that include such incentives should be carefully monitored and well targeted.

4.2 Government-level recommendations

4.2.1 Data

- Because the incidence and patterning of child marriage is rapidly—and unevenly—changing across Ethiopia, there is an urgent need for better data. Care must be taken to ensure that it is disaggregated by location and cohort and captures not merely the number of child marriages cancelled, but the number of girls actually married.
- Because officials in many woredas reported that they are unable to ascertain girls' ages with “age-checks” that rely solely on girls' secondary-sexual characteristics, there is a need for birth registration and consistent school records that will enable independent verification of age. Kiltawalo's single-registry could be used as a model.
- Because the longer-term impacts of programming can be markedly different than shorter-term impacts, the Bureau of Women Affairs needs to be resourced both in terms of human capacity and finances in order to track outcomes over time.

4.2.2 Enforcement

- Regions which have not yet passed laws which are in line with the national constitution—and prohibit child marriage-- should be supported to do so.
- Because whistle-blowing can be a dangerous affair, communities need anonymous ways for girls and villagers to report planned marriages.
- Because strict enforcement of the law can engender hostility, kebele level officials need regular woreda level support to cancel marriages and issue fines. Transportation is a critical component of this support.
- Because uneven enforcement can engender mistrust and set programming back considerably, kebele officials who break the law, or help their relatives break the law, should be sanctioned.

4.2.3 Tailoring

- Because cross-sectoral working plans that are built on local realities help officials better aim messaging and supportive services, kebeles and woredas should be assisted to develop committees focused on the elimination of child marriage and other HTPs. Kiltawalo's steering committee could be used as a model as it appears to be functioning more effectively than many of the HTP eradication committees found in other kebeles.
- In areas where madrasa-based education is becoming more common, efforts need to be made to ensure that girls attending such schools have access to information about their legal rights, about sexual and reproductive health rights and services, and about the risks of child marriage.

4.2.4 Supportive strategies

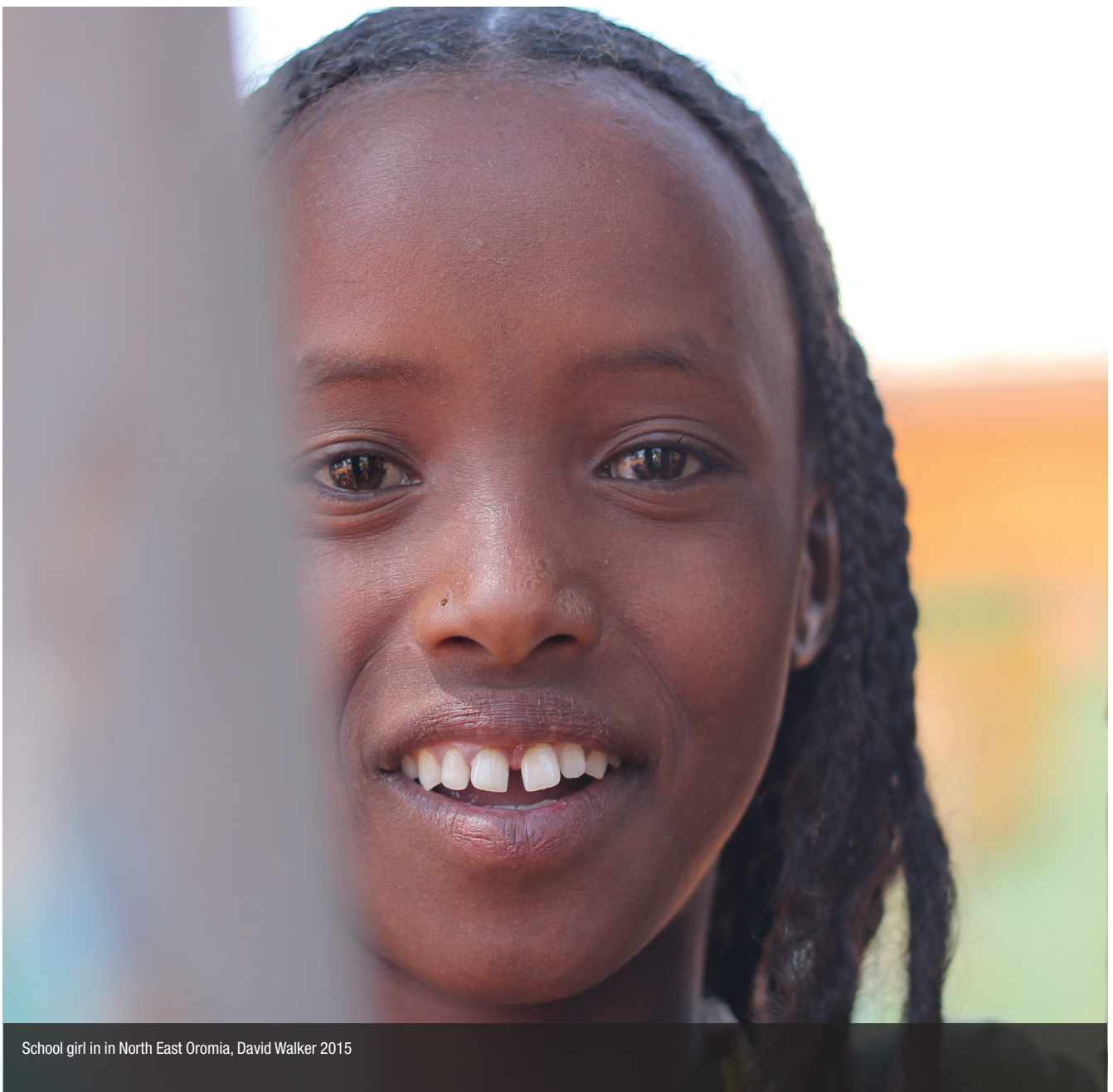
- Because success requires not only commitment, but time—officials and providers leading the fight against child marriage should be appropriately compensated for their work.
- Because role models are powerful, educationally successful girls—and their parents—should be publicly recognised as a way of lending official credence to their accomplishments and beginning to shift the prestige currently accorded by marriage to education.
- Because on average girls who are in school are less likely to marry as children, broad programming aimed at encouraging girls' school attendance and academic success is a necessary first step. The government should invest in attendance drives to encourage on-time enrolment, tutorial supports for girls and messaging aimed at equalising girls' and boys' domestic workloads.
- Because many girls marry as soon as they complete 8th grade, the real and opportunity costs associated with secondary school need to be minimised. The government

should consider investing in both scholarships for girls and dormitories.

- Because high youth unemployment drives down parents' interest in supporting girls' education rather than child marriage, out-of-school girls need to be supported to become economically independent.
- Because grade 10 failure remains high, affirmative action policies should be considered for girls in order to

provide them with support for vocational training and future employment.

- Because in some areas it is pregnancy—and not sex or marriage—that effectively ends girls' educations, it is important to ensure that all girls, unmarried and married, have physical and social access to contraceptives.



School girl in North East Oromia, David Walker 2015

5 Tigrayan government intervention

5.1 Key findings

Programme approach and modalities

- In Kiltawlalo, the fight against child marriage has been a community affair. Kebele and woreda level officials have worked closely and tirelessly with one another—as well as with many religious leaders.
- Keeping girls in school is central to the woreda’s fight against child marriage. Girls are offered girls’ clubs and tutorial support and provided stipends when needed.
- Community conversations and the Women’s Development Army are directly addressing gender equality with the broader community.
- In Kiltawlalo, messages emphasising the health risks of child marriage have been powerful, especially because they have been paired with stories of local women who suffered from fistula.

Lessons from Kiltawlalo woreda

- Tight coordination between the sectors and levels of government, coupled with unflinching enforcement of the law, is sufficient to eradicate child marriage—especially when awareness-raising efforts are simultaneously directed at girls and their adult gatekeepers and are kept up well after behavioural change is established.
- Community conversations that focus on specifically on child marriage and more generally on gender equality have helped make the Women’s Development Groups, and their nested one-to-five groups, into very effective tools for teaching about—and preventing—child marriage.
- Messages aimed at eliminating child marriage have been bundled with other maternal health messages and any practice that increases mortality, from child marriage to home birth, is strictly prohibited.
- Helping the community to identify and acknowledge individual women who were harmed by child marriage—and providing medical treatment to victims—has put faces on pain.

Entry points for future programming

- Girls need local access to secondary school if more are to continue their educations past 8th grade.
- Both adolescents and parents feel that the most critical need is for local employment—as lack of options both encourages migration, which is dangerous, and discourages families’ investment in education.

5.1.1 Programme objectives and modalities

Anti-child marriage programming in Kiltawlalo is run by the woreda government. Key informants (KIs) indicate that government commitment has been high for about 15 years – and at this point has integrated messages into health, education and development platforms. The Offices of Justice, Education and Women, Children and Youth Affairs (WCYA) work closely with one another and their kebele level counterparts, and abandonment in many kebeles, including Abreha Atsebeha, is complete.

Respondents from Abreha Atsebeha agree with this synopsis. From their perspective, the elimination of child marriage, which has been ‘rapid’ and ‘extreme’, is closely connected with a wide array of other development objectives including girls’ education, sanitation, and facility delivery. They reported that awareness about all the objectives is raised through multiple community channels on an ongoing basis. These channels, including Women’s Development Groups and their nested one-to-five groups, health extension workers, school curricula, girls’ clubs, community meetings and justice officials, overlap and reinforce one another and have resulted in the rejection of child marriage, which some locals now describe as a ‘backward’ and ‘disgusting’ idea.

Activities related to both child marriage and girls’ education in Abreha Atsebeha kebele and Kiltawlalo woreda are led by steering committees (one for each level) that include representatives from nine organisations: ‘the police, Women Affairs, the Women’s Association, the Women’s League, health, agriculture, water resources, public organisation, and propaganda’ (KI Health Extension). The committees meet at least once a month

to 'fight harmful traditional attitudes and practices in a planned and organised manner' (KI Office of WCYA).

In Abreha Atsebeha, educating girls is a key modality for reducing child marriage. This, explained the kebele administrator, is because 'if females are enrolled in schooling, they have full information about early marriage and other harmful traditional practices from teachers and classmates'. Messages at school are delivered via several routes. The science curriculum, for example, includes both 'female genital circumcision and early marriage' (KI Education Office). Girls' clubs are also 'very strong', providing girls with information about puberty, supporting them in menstruation, teaching them about the harmful effects of child marriage and serving as a key reporting venue for planned marriages.

The broader community of Abreha Atsebeha has also been saturated with messaging about the impacts of child marriage. Community conversations, which date to 2010 but became more organised in 2012, are held monthly in each of the kebele's three villages. In December and January, when marriages are most common, the conversation focuses specifically on child marriage (KI Health Extension). Led by the health extension worker, these conversations have been critical, according to the kebele administrator, in making the community 'sensitive to the equal rights of women and support for girls'. Women's Development Groups (WDGs), and their nested one-to-five groups, also spread messages about girls' education and child marriage. Working in small circles of women, and meeting at least once a week, leaders go door to door to make sure that all girls are enrolled and maintain good attendance. They also keep their eyes and ears open for anomalies, such as 'grinding much flour', that may herald a planned marriage (KI Justice Office). Parent-Teacher Committees and religious leaders also work to make sure that the entire community supports education over marriage. 'Every Sunday,' explained one woman in a WDG, 'the clergy teaches that early marriage is harmful', and unlike in some other localities they are also leading by example.

While anti-child-marriage messages in Abreha Atsebeha communicate the links between early marriage and threats to girls' mental health and educational and economic outcomes, the most salient messages appear to be centred on the health risks of early pregnancy, specifically fistula and maternal mortality. Parents in our focus group discussions (FGDs) indicted that these health messages are very carefully targeted to their intended audiences. A mother, for example, said, 'They told us that these girls, who would have given birth to children who could have been rich, been leaders or been experts, will remain limited to only one child due to early marriage problems.' She concluded, 'Therefore,

'we fear a lot'. A father, on the other hand, spoke not of lost grandchildren but of an analogy to caring for livestock. He explained, 'Oxen sterilised at early age and oxen sterilised later are not quite the same. The later one is by far more beautiful and is strong and fatter. The same thing happens in girls. If girls get married at the age of 20 their body will not be hurt. Rather they will look beautiful.'

Child marriage programming in Abreha Atsebeha is embedded in a broader attempt to reduce gender inequality. The KI from the kebele's Women's Association explained that they provide regular teaching that 'females should not be limited to domestic chores'. She continued, 'we talk to parents about how females should engage in education equally without any priority for males'. This, said the kebele administrator, 'strengthens the culture of gender equality'. Uptake appears good. Respondents were clear that 'Women now know their rights. They know way of their life. They cannot be oppressed like in the past' (FGD with mothers of adolescent girls).

Gender programming Abreha Atsebeha and Kiltawalo is, in turn, embedded in a portfolio of awareness-raising initiatives designed to catapult the kebele, the woreda and the region into the 21st century. As a KI at Office of WCYA explained, 'We know the responsibility of this generation is to create a middle-income society or community by ending poverty.' Focusing on girls and women, reported the Abreha Atsebeha school director, is how the community intends to meet that goal. He said, 'If you talk with women, everything is possible. But if you talk with the man it is rarely possible because he is often not found in his house. Women are stakeholders in development. They are beneficiaries of every technology introduced by the government.' The kebele administrator elaborated, 'Educated women are empowered and they participate in all things very well. They value education and they educate their kids. They participate in leadership. They themselves show cleanliness at home and they tell others to do so. They give birth in health centres and they tell others the importance of giving birth in health institutions'.

Awareness-raising messages in Abreha Atsebeha are accompanied by a plethora of direct interventions aimed at making sure that girls have what they need to stay in school and are never married too early or against their will. For example, they are provided with tutorial sessions every Sunday to make sure that they are on track to pass the 8th and 10th grade exams, which will allow them to stay in school, and direct financial support is provided to any girl who needs it (KI Justice). The kebele administrator explained, 'If they don't have some economic means, or are very poor, we support them and they get animals so they are able send their girl children to school.'

Programme basics

Programme name: NA (intervention is run by the woreda government)

Programme approach: multifaceted – coordinated by a steering committee composed of officials from nine government offices and primarily relying on the following government channels to raise awareness:

- Women’s Development Groups
- Girls’ clubs
- Health Extension Workers
- School curricula

Dates: Woreda officials began working to eliminate child marriage about 15 years ago, with more concerted efforts made for the last 6-7 years

Implementing agency: Woreda and kebele level governments

Funding agency: Woreda level government

Geographical coverage: Kiltawlalo woreda

Number of beneficiaries: per the 2007 census, the woreda population was about 100,000

Evaluation: None known

5.1.2 Primary research findings

We now turn to a discussion of the findings from our primary research. In order to contextualise these findings, a basic community profile at woreda and kebele levels is presented in Box 1.

Local drivers of child marriage

Child marriage in Abreha Atsebeha appears to have been abandoned. Despite intensive questioning, our respondents made only a handful of brief mentions of still-existing drivers of child marriage, and even they were embedded in a broader narrative of how the practice has been abandoned.

- A 14-year-old girl said that some girls come home from high school to discover that their parents have arranged their engagements while they are gone. She reported that such girls universally refuse the marriage, even though their parents have incurred costs.
- Two mothers of adolescent girls admitted that they would very much like to have grandchildren and would therefore prefer that their daughters marry young, rather than in their mid-20s, as is becoming more common. They noted, however, that ‘young’ in this context was still over the age of 18.
- A father of an adolescent girl said that some priests still believe that 18 is too old for marriage; a KI from the Health Extension Programme explained that priests are worried that girls will no longer be virgins by then. The father admitted that priests would never say such a

thing in public, because the community is very clear that such thinking is not allowed, and a priest commented that girls simply refuse to marry deacons and priests.

Local factors protecting children from early marriage

There are a variety of local factors that have encouraged people in Abreha Atsebeha to abandon child marriage. Strong leadership at both the woreda and kebele level has been critical, as has the unflinching commitment of health extension workers and WDG leaders. A local culture of education, fostered by the kebele’s proximity to urban employment, has also supported the elimination of early and forced marriage.

Local leaders are powerful protectors. Abreha

If you are serious and work hard at the grass-roots level there is nothing you can’t change.
(KI Justice)

Atsebeha’s administrator, who has held his post for more than a quarter of a century, has been a driving force behind the kebele’s success. He is ‘committed and has very significant influence in the area’, according to a KI at the Office of WCYA. Indeed, she believes that the reason that girls ‘there are confident and they are strong’ is because ‘he

Box 1: Community overview

Abreha Atsebeha is an agricultural kebele in the Kilteawlalo woreda of Tigray. Its nearly 5,500 residents are food secure – often producing a surplus —and are almost entirely Orthodox Christian. The kebele has good access to roads and is located only 15 kilometres from the woreda capital, Wukro, and only 60 kilometres from the regional capital, Mekelle. This proximity to urban centres has helped facilitate a rapid transformation in commitment to education, as local paid employment is available. Abreha Atsebeha has two school that go through 8th grade (with approximately 1200 students) and has achieved gender parity at all age levels. Very few kebele children drop out of school (only three last year) and nearly all students continue on to the high school, which is located in Wukro.

Kilteawlalo woreda has a population of just over 125,000 and is almost entirely Orthodox Christian. It has good transportation links to other areas and a comparatively unusual school enrolment profile. Specifically, there are approximately 13,500 students enrolled in first-cycle primary school and 12,700 in secondary-cycle primary school—the latter being very high given second-cycle attrition. There are also over 3,000 children enrolled in grades 9 through 11.

Table 3: Percentage of girls married, by age, by residence (Source: 2007 census)

	Kilteawlalo	Eastern Tigray	Tigray
Girls 10-14	6.3 %	5 %	6.9 %
Girls 15-17	16.8 %	9 %	18.3 %

As can be seen above, as recently as 2007 Kilteawlalo had child marriage rates significantly in excess of zonal averages, though lower than regional averages. Incredible progress has been made since then, however, at both kebele and woreda levels. Indeed, Abreha Atsebeha was recently recognised as a model community and awarded a 100,000 birr prize by the government ‘for appreciable achievement on making early marriage status zero in our kebele’ (kebele-level key informant). Due in large part to its committed and forward-thinking leaders, noted a key informant at the Office of WCYA, the kebele ‘is a model in everything. It is a model in development. It is leading in education and in economy. The women and young girls are advanced and they are widely participating in economic activities.’

supports them specifically’. He is not alone in his efforts. ‘In other woredas, you may find staff spending too much time waiting for cars and complaining if there are no cars,’ explained a Justice KI, ‘Here they go on foot immediately if there are no cars.’ The KI at the Office of WCYA agreed that local staff are committed and indefatigable. She said, ‘there is no way they would become tired or implement the activities weakly’.

Kebele and woreda officials understand their power and responsibility to effect change. In addition to the recognition recently provided to Abreha Atsebeha for its abandonment of child marriage, the woreda regularly hosts visitors from the regional and federal level who ‘want to see what we are doing’ (KI Justice). They have recently established a single registry, which allows them to track all ‘births, deaths, marriages, and divorces in churches, administrations and justice offices at local levels’ (KI Justice). ‘In the whole of Tigray, it is here that the best work has been done,’ explained a justice official. Indeed, so certain are local leaders that strong leadership is the backbone of change, that one said, it ‘is the weak political

commitment of kebele administrators that would not be able to change attitudes of the community.’

Local women, through the Women’s Association and WDGs, also protect girls from child marriage. While ‘meeting fatigue’ may be an issue in other kebeles, in Abreha Atsebeha the KI at the Women’s Association says that the kebele’s women ‘are very enthusiastic for the meeting days in order to solve problems, because most social issues are discussed during the meeting’. In addition to their regular meetings, which focus on topics ranging from child marriage to hand washing to cook-stove ventilation, WDGs also make sure that all children over the age of four are enrolled in school, keep tabs on girls who are absent and, by coordinating with teachers, track whether girls are adequately attending weekend tutorial sessions (FGD with WDG, KI Office of Education, KI school director). Armed with mobile phones, leaders of the groups ‘call immediately when they have challenges,’ according to the Justice KI.

Local commitment to education also protects girls from early marriage. ‘Here in Abreha Atsebeha, in all families, everyone is studying, everyone is talking about

People saw the educated girls now becoming leaders, earning good salaries, and living improved ways of life. They have seen and believed and they have changed their attitudes to girl child education. Now they allow girls to continue their education instead of pushing them to marry underage.

(KI Justice)

studies, so it is like a culture,’ explained the kebele administrator. Indeed, added the Justice KI, ‘Now even the parents are trying to study at least writing and reading.’ A clear understanding that education improves economic outcomes is driving educational uptake. The coordinator for a WDG, herself illiterate, explained: ‘If she is educated she has a skill; if she doesn’t have a skill she will starve’. Because parents perceive that their own ‘miseries’ are directly related to the fact that their fathers did not send them to school (FGD fathers), they are willing to work very hard to provide for their children to stay in school as long as possible. One 45-year-old mother of nine explained that she and her husband were old, weak and deteriorating because they had ‘favoured [their] children’ by putting them through school through unrelentingly heavy agricultural work (IGT Mother 1).

With their eyes focused on non-agricultural employment, adolescents and young adults in Abreha Atsebeha are also committed to education and economic independence. All of our young respondents wanted to finish their schooling, up through university if they could pass the requisite exams, and find stable jobs before they committed to marriage. One 19-year-old girl explained, ‘I will decide about my marriage; parents used to choose partners for their children in the distant past. Now parents understand the situation at this time that I need to complete my education and that I need to have a well-organised economic life. Otherwise, if I don’t have any source of income, what I am going to eat? I know this fact and they also understand’ (IGT daughter 1). Indeed, several mothers lamented that they were unable to convince their daughters to marry after high school. Their daughters, they said, ‘do not like’ marriage and ‘want to continue education and only get married at the age of 25 when they complete their education and get jobs’ (FGD mothers).

Improved uptake of education has been important to the elimination of early marriage in Abreha Atsebeha in practical ways as well. While in the past it was difficult to know how old girls were, now, since all attend school, there is ‘no more confusion’ as educational records can be used for age verification (KI Development Army Coordinator).

5.1.5 Programme outcomes

Reducing child marriage

There was a general consensus among study respondents that child marriage has been totally eliminated in Abreha Atsebeha. Indeed, the kebele administrator definitively stated that ‘all farmers in our kebele believe that early marriage is a disgusting practice and they are not interested in marrying females before they become physically and mentally mature’. Adolescents agreed and added that because child marriage has been eliminated for at least five or six years, they do not have any peers who married as children. The stories they know are primarily hearsay and always from other kebeles.

Forced marriage has also been eliminated in the kebele. The school director explained that ‘Some girls come before Women’s Affairs and argue that despite being the right age for marriage, they don’t want to get married’. Their marriages are then canceled, because, added a priest, ‘no one will force girls’ in Abreha Atsebeha to marry.

Woreda officials indicated that child marriage is also nearly eliminated in the woreda’s other kebeles. ‘We are not saying it has been a hundred percent abolished, but overall the practice has been nearly eliminated,’ explained the Justice KI. Asked to estimate the incidence, he added, ‘Perhaps, one out of hundred may still be there’.

While the primary driver of elimination has been awareness raising (discussed below), the woreda also has a committee which verifies girls’ ages and intent. No weddings are permitted until the committee has been satisfied – which, in rare cases that seem to date primarily from some time ago, has involved sending girls to the hospital in Mekelle to have their ages verified. Formed eight or nine years ago, the committee was put in place because ‘people were not honest in telling us the correct age of females’ (KI Office of WCYA). They ‘used to cheat to marry a 16-year-old girl by adding two or three years and using false witnesses,’ explained a health extension worker.

Raising community awareness

The reason that child marriage has been abolished in the kebele (and nearly so in the woreda) is growing levels of awareness, according to mothers in an FGD. ‘In Abreha Atsebeha, early marriage has been abolished because in every meeting we had, they have never forgotten about raising the issue of preventing early marriage.’ Health extension workers agree that this is the case. One said, ‘We did not stop discussing it even when we knew it did not exist in the specific area.’

One mother in a FGD told us that she was married at the age of seven to a deacon, whose family promised her own parents that he would not touch her until she was matured. But he did.

They said *'sex makes her grow fast.'*
'As a result of it', she explained, *'I have seen many problems. I was sent to health centers for medication.'*

Interestingly, when she ran away from her husband, and fled back to her own parents' house, her in-laws accused *her* parents of having violated the marriage law. Her father was fined.

As noted above, emphasising the health risks of early marriage has been a key tactic. Local health extension workers have identified women with fistula by asking their fellow villagers which women 'never come to meetings'. After ensuring that affected women are provided with medical care in Mekelle, health extension workers have used their stories to build support for eliminating child marriage. A worker explained: 'If you teach the people the impact of early marriage in relation to life and medical problems such as fistula, and if you give examples of women who suffered a lot and were sent to Mekelle for medical purposes – women who can no longer give birth as a result of fistula – and if you teach them fistula is a disease where a woman cannot control her urine and shit, the people accept it carefully,' a worker explained. Indeed,

In the past, we used to fight during the month of January to prevent early marriage. Last year we made preparations by establishing a committee, from members of student parliament drawn from each class. Then we gave them an assignment to find out girls who are either engaged or get married. But we couldn't find anyone.

(School director)

the Justice KI noted that 'even the religious leaders now are helpful and they support our campaign because they understand the health and other problems that can be caused by underage marriage'.

Awareness about the importance of education has also contributed to the abandonment of child marriage. Families – grandparents and parents and children – prefer to invest as thoroughly as possible in schooling not only to reduce future economic vulnerability but also to improve girls' standing in the community. 'Education,' explained a mother, 'makes them free from poverty'. 'An educated girl can be engaged in petty trade', she explained, 'she can borrow from micro finance, she is able to convey better ideas than the uneducated one in public meetings and she can serve on the social court or in different positions' (FGD WDG). A grandfather agreed that 'Those who are strong and attend to their education and get a job and then get married have a better life'.

Respondents in Abreha Atsebeha are also well aware that adult women are far more likely to see the advantages

Box 2: Choosing one's own path

Family formation in Abreha Atsebeha is markedly different than it was a generation ago, as is reflected through the lives and aspirations of its young people.

Kibrom is an 18-year-old man living with his parents, helping them harvest their crops. He left school last year, after completing 10th grade, because he failed his exams. He hopes that soon his parents will help him start his own business.

He explained that in the past, girls used to marry 'from ten to fifteen...and your parents were the ones who engaged you to the girl and you could not choose or say no'. Parents arranged marriage not on the basis of age or education but on wealth and family purity. He said, 'if her family are clean or pure, they used to tell the boy, "they have a lot of land and you are the one who will inherit it"'. He continued, 'the boy would be accepting and it was obligatory for him to accept whoever the parents brought him'.

Things are different now, though. Kibrom says that he will choose his own wife, because 'if you don't choose by yourself, you may have problems later in your marriage.' He added that if the woman he chooses does not like him, then 'she will refuse'. He explained that he will not marry until he is 'above twenty eight years old', at which time he hopes to be financially secure, and he will choose a wife no younger than twenty, because 'if they are young your marriage may not be successful and it can be nullified by the law'.

It is important to Kibrom that his future wife have finished at least 10th grade, because educated girls make better wives, better mothers and better workers. Indeed, he sees education as key to the betterment of 'all of society'. It is not important to Kibrom that his future wife has land, cows or wealth, since 'one should build and own his own business'.

Kibrom has two older sisters. One, age 25, owns her own hairdressing salon. The other, age 20, is studying at the agricultural college. Neither is married.

of marriage, because they ‘accept it from the heart’ (see Box 2). A Health Extension worker, for example, pointed out that girls often hate their husbands, because sex is painful. This, in turn, often leads men to beat their young wives, ‘which causes another problem’. Young wives are also more likely to ‘practice old and backward things and that is not good,’ added an 18-year-old boy.

Growing awareness about women’s rights has also contributed to the elimination of child marriage. Girls and women are increasingly empowered to make their opinions known. In Abreha Atsebeha, they are also heard, which has led mothers to ‘feel regret for not being born in our kids’ time’ (FGD). A 76-year-old grandfather believes that the changes have been remarkable. He said, ‘Today, girls miss out on nothing. A girl’s right is respected. Of course there was oppression of women in the past. A woman gives birth and should be respected. She shouldn’t be trodden on like shoes by her husband.’ He continued, ‘In the past, if a peasant wanted to sell an ox [a common family asset] in the market, he wouldn’t consult with his wife. But today a woman’s rights are respected. Today, after an ox is sold, we decide together how much budget should be allocated for the kids’ rent (for boarding during high school), notebooks and shoes.’

In the past, girls were forced to marry a husband at an early age just to give birth to babies. Girls were running, escaping, jumping over high fences to escape marriage. They hated marriage and disliked husbands. They were not mature enough to appreciate marriage. Many problems were created. If they don’t have sexual feelings how can she approach this man?

(IGT Grandfather)

Hidden practices

In contrast to most of the other sites visited as part of this broader national mapping exercise, there are no hidden marriages in Abreha Atsebeha. Child marriage has been completely abandoned. Indeed, when our respondents mentioned the occasional secret marriage in other kebeles in Kiltawalo – and the harsh punishment it had invoked – they believed that the perpetrators had effectively *asked* to be punished by ignoring what they knew to be both legal and right. As a mother explained, ‘These families were educated about the law before the marriage took place, so it is their refusal that caused them to be punished.’

Better coordinated services for girls

As noted above, gender is at the heart of Abreha Atsebeha’s development policy. While the kebele understands that ‘strictly all children must go to school’, officials also believe that ‘education is more important for girls than for boys’ (KI kebele administrator). This is because ‘males do not

share their knowledge’ (KI Health Extension), whereas an educated girl creates an educated family and ‘brings change in terms of family planning, in feeding style, in hygiene and in all matters’ (KI Office of WCYA).

Other than education, most of the services mentioned by our respondents were aimed primarily at women, rather than girls, and were directly related to their needs for SRH care. For example, home birth is now strictly illegal in Abreha Atsebeha, as are traditional birth attendants. All pregnant women are monitored closely by WDGs, who make sure that they receive antenatal care and are delivered, as their time draws near, to a health clinic for delivery. ‘Traditional’ ambulances, which consist of hand-carried stretchers, are used for rural women.

Escaping early marriage

Because child marriage has been abandoned in Abreha Atsebeha, there is no need for any ‘escape routes’ for girls facing early marriage in the community. The girls we interviewed seemed almost confused about why we would ask them about how to escape a planned marriage – not surprising given that most of them do not personally know a married girl.

While there are no girls in Abreha Atsebeha who need help to escape child marriage, across Kiltawalo some remain – official numbers put the figure at 15 last year. Fortunately, they have many escape routes. Girls’ clubs, teachers, parent-teacher committees, WDGs and health extension workers are all in the frontline of girls’ protection. Any hint of a planned marriage results in reporting, persuasion and cancellation. The Justice KI explained, ‘From another kebele we had three girls who told us that they were being pushed into marriage and we brought them here and they stayed with us. After a lot of arguments and attempts to reach an understanding with their parents, they are now studying.’ A health extension worker added that while their parents complained about wasting the food and drink already prepared’, officials replied that ‘it is backward to have an underage girl married just for the sake of not wasting food and drink’.

5.1.6 Why has the programme been so effective?

Awareness-raising, fostered by the provision of continual and cooperatively delivered education from a variety of stakeholders, was seen by all respondents to be key to Abreha Atsebeha’s abandonment of child marriage. As the kebele administrator noted, ‘If a community is approached in a participatory way, if you listen to them and if you are genuine, and if you collaborate with them they listen to you and they accept and implement all programmes because they own it’. Our research suggests that his assessment is accurate.

From adolescents’ perspective, the idea of child marriage appears to feel like it belongs to the distant past. They know their mothers and grandmothers married as children – and they know that their mothers and grandmothers had many problems because of it – but the idea that *they*

could be married early or against their will is entirely foreign to them. Focused on securing their independent economic futures, they are aware of the channels being used to disseminate messages and they are very aware of the messages themselves, but they largely seem to feel that the ‘backwards’ customs being targeted by those messages are as unimaginable as the pre-internet world might be to a teen growing up in Addis Ababa.

The kebele administrator attributes this cultural shift to formal education because it provides a venue to make sure that all children, but especially girls, are taught about child marriage and other harmful traditional practices, ensuring that ‘if any early marriage issues are raised at home, girls refuse it’. When asked what he would advise other kebeles to do to end child marriage, he replied, in ‘order to end early marriage all females should be enrolled in schooling. If they enrolled in schooling they will become aware about the consequences and effects of early marriage.’ He added that ‘the secret of successful achievement in females’ school participation in Abreha Atsebeha kebele is not having to look after cattle’ – accomplished by banning the use of child herders. He noted that in a neighbouring kebele, where the schooling system is ‘somewhat weak’, girls are often still kept at home, herding. Because of this they have limited contact with outsiders and no information about child marriage and ‘when they were asked to get married at an early age they simply accepted it’.

The KI at the Education Office concurred that girls’ formal education had been vital. He emphasised that ‘the key ingredient is education to all’ and that ‘informal education provided to society’ was also required. Mothers supported his view. They noted that, ‘In the past, when we were called to a meeting we used to say we had to do our domestic activities. We used to refuse to go.’ Indeed, they added, ‘Even if we went to the meeting it was for fear of punishment’ (FGD mothers). Now, explained a mother, after repeated exposure on all fronts, ‘when we are called for a meeting we go there not for fear of punishment but because we need to. We do not have a salary. The education in the meeting is beneficial beyond salary. Early marriage has been eliminated because we have learnt and become knowledgeable.’

The key is we have to have a coordinated effort at all governance levels, at all sectors.
(Kebele administrator)

The co-operative and iterative nature of the government’s community education scheme was perceived by all to be vital to the progress being made in regard to child marriage, girls’ education, women’s health and gender equality. Kebele officials are working with those from the woreda, and actors from all sectors know that their work is both crucial and unable to stand alone without

the support of other actors in other sectors. As the KI at the woreda education office explained, ‘You cannot clap with one hand. You have to work in an integrated way’. Community members’ involvement in awareness-raising has also supported programme effectiveness, with the education provided by religious leaders and WDGs seen as key to the growth of bottom-up ownership.

To make sure that all actors’ information is accurate and messages are aligned, regular and thorough training is offered at both the kebele and woreda levels. Some of the training is provided directly by the government. The Justice KI, for example, noted that with financial support from World Vision, the woreda calls representatives from all 19 kebeles to the ‘woreda centre and we give training to raise awareness’. The training, he continued, targets all ‘stakeholders such as religious leaders, student parliament members, and women’s affairs from local levels’. He added, ‘we create awareness, especially for girl students from school.’ Other training is provided by NGOs. For example, IFHP and UNICEF provide training to health extension workers and WDGs about fistula and its relationship to child marriage and adolescent pregnancy (KI Health Extension). Similarly, UNICEF and World Vision coordinate to make sure that girls’ club leaders and members are provided with information on child marriage

In the past, we used to fight during the month of January to prevent early marriage. Last year we made preparations by establishing a committee, from members of student parliament drawn from each class. Then we gave them an assignment to find out girls who are either engaged or get married. But we couldn’t find anyone.

(School director)

and girls’ rights (KI Education Office). Furthermore, the Dutch NGO SNV provides training to schools and girls related to menstruation (KI school director).

Regular monitoring and evaluation has also been important to Abreha Atsebeha’s success. Students and WDGs monitor girls and families for any signs of wedding preparations. WDGs and teachers monitor girls’ school attendance and performance on a daily basis (FGD WDG). The kebele level steering committee meets every other week (KI Health Extension) and the woreda level committee meets every month ‘to monitor the status of gender in all sectors’ (KI Office of WCYA). Attention is paid to which WDGs are especially successful and which are struggling and efforts are made to ensure that good practices are widely shared (KI Office of WCYA). As the Justice KI noted, ‘We report everything.’

While at this point, according to the KI at the Health Centre, ‘it’s the community’s awareness and willingness

6 ActionAid: Combating Violence Against Women and Harmful Traditional Practices

6.1 Key messages

Programme approach and modalities

- ActionAid programming is aimed at reducing violence against women, including child marriage and other harmful traditional practices, by helping women achieve economic and social empowerment.
- ActionAid’s skillful combination of awareness-raising and economic empowerment has improved uptake of messages on child marriage because it has transformed women’s position in the community.
- ActionAid supported Women’s Watch Groups and Boys’ Awareness Clubs are serving as the “frontline” in terms of reporting planned marriages. Adolescents know that they can report a marriage to the Watch at any time and that members will work with kebele officials to have it cancelled.
- ActionAid’s focus on broader gender equality—and its inclusion of adolescent boys and religious leaders to deliver those messages—is resonating with the community. ActionAid’s skillful combination of awareness-raising and economic empowerment has improved uptake of messages because it has transformed women’s position in the community.

Lessons from Ofla woreda

- Government officials in Ofla and across Tigray took ActionAid’s approach to scale immediately after it was shown to be effective.
- Government officials have encouraged the Women’s Development Groups, and their nested one-to-five groups, to work closely with Women’s Watch Groups to ensure that all local women have the opportunity to learn about gendered issues ranging from child marriage to the

equal distribution of household labour in a participatory way that encourages uptake and local ownership.

- Officials in Ofla take legal implementation very seriously, offering a reward to girls for rejecting and reporting child and forced marriage and allowing no marriage to move forward until the Marriage Approval Committee is satisfied that it meets legal requirements.

Entry points for future programming

- Because developing and supporting new programming typically requires more resources than supporting existing programming, ActionAid should consider extending the support it offers to girls’ clubs, so that they are more uniformly resourced to help girls learn about practical matters such as menstruation and marriage—as well as support the development of girls’ confidence and voice.

6.1.1 Programme objectives and modalities

ActionAid’s theory of change emphasizes both individual- and collective-level action and is based on the pillars of empowerment, solidarity and working with multiple stakeholders to achieve social transformation. In the Ofla woreda of the Tigray region, ActionAid is working on climate resilient sustainable agriculture and the social and economic empowerment of women in order to eliminate violence against women—including child marriage. Taking a ‘twin-track’ approach – pairing programming on social issues with support for income-generation – ActionAid is empowering women by helping them organise, liaise with local students and community authorities, and generate incomes that not only help them and their families escape poverty but also increase community support for their work (ActionAid, 2015) see Figure 4.

ActionAid supported Women’s Watch Groups meet each week in all 23 kebeles of the woreda (20 rural, 3 urban) and typically are comprised of 20 women, chosen to participate because they are poor and are committed to fighting harmful traditional practices. Each group also includes seven respected members of the community, typically elders and religious leaders. All kebele-level Women’s Watch Groups receive training from ActionAid on a wide variety of gender issues, including child marriage, land rights, divorce law, and sexual and reproductive health, and meet quarterly with the woreda-level Women’s Watch Group to review progress and needs.

We work on the prevention of girls’ genital mutilation, early marriage and so many others – even on sending girls to school. Our group works in collaboration with the health and justice sectors. We are 27 members-- 20 female and 7 elders/traditional or religious leaders.

(Women’s Watch Group Member)

The Women’s Watch Groups play several roles in their community. First and foremost, they teach villagers about the importance of girls’ education and the dangers of child marriage and other harmful practices. Working independently as well as with other groups such as local Women’s Development Groups and Parent-Teacher Committees, they have raised awareness of many important issues throughout the kebele.

The Women’s Watch Groups are also the front line of protection for out-of-school girls and girls at risk of early marriage. For example, when they are told that a girl is missing school, they approach the family to find out the reasons why and do what is needed for her to go back

to school (e.g. providing sanitary or other supplies to the school). Similarly, if they discover a child marriage is being planned (either because the girl herself or her peers report it), they first try to dissuade the girl’s parents from proceeding with it, and then, if necessary, take legal steps to prevent the marriage. The Women’s Watch Groups are effective because they cooperate closely with a wide variety of local actors, including teachers and school directors, the Women’s Development Groups and their one-to-five groups, the Women’s Association, the Office and Bureau of Women Affairs and the Department of Justice and law enforcement bodies in general.

Women’s Watch Group members invest a considerable amount of time in their work. To offset the costs of that time, the group provides its members with a revolving loan, usually worth around 3,000ETB, to support their own income-generating activities. Many members use it to buy livestock or set up a small business. Members also receive training on how to develop a business plan and manage their finances. This economic component of the Women’s Watch Group intervention has proved critical to its success. Not only has it helped women and their families to escape poverty, but it has also engendered community respect for the group, which means that villagers are more willing to listen to what they say and take it on board. Notably, because each Women’s Watch Group has its own bank account, they are self-supporting and sustainable.

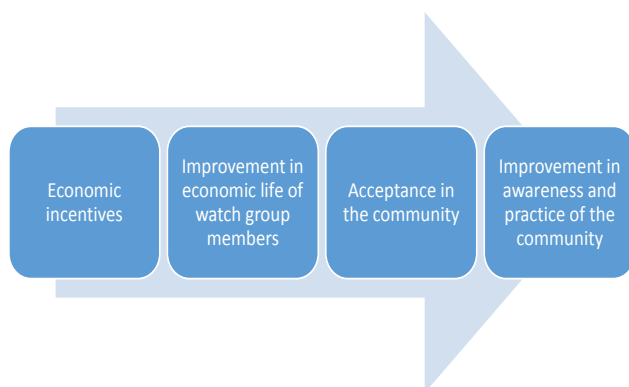
The boys’ awareness club is like the Women’s Watch group. It is mainly focusing on the prevention of early marriage, the prevention of gender-based violence, and ensuring women’s right to equality.

(Kebele level educational informant)

ActionAid supported Women’s Watch Groups are also supporting school-based girls’ clubs in Ofla. These clubs, a government initiative which serve all girls in 5th-8th grades, provide safe spaces for girls to meet and talk, and also offer information on sexual and reproductive health as well as sanitary and contraceptive supplies. As well as this practical support, the clubs provide vital emotional support to girls, in a culture where menstruation is regarded as shameful and taboo. Some clubs also make showers available at school so that girls can keep themselves clean while menstruating.

In five⁷ kebeles, Action Aid has implemented ‘boys’ awareness’ clubs. These clubs, comprised of equal numbers of girls and boys, initially aimed to change ‘the mindset of boys’ and encourage them to do their fair share of household tasks so that their sisters would have enough time to do their homework. Taking gender equality

Figure 4: Women’s Watch Group pathways to change



7 Some respondents say four.

Programme basics

Programme name: Combating Violence Against Women and Harmful Traditional Practices

Duration: The project began in 2009 (as ‘Enhancing the Legal Protection of Women and Girls from Gender Based Violence’) and ended in 2011.

Implementing agency: Bureau of Women Affairs

Budget: Between 2009 and 2011 the budget was \$999,752 (a no cost extension was provided for 2012)

Funding agency (if different): UN Trust Fund (UNTF) in Support of Actions for the Elimination of Violence against Women prior to 2012—and scaled up by the Tigray Regional State Women Affairs’ Bureau since then.

Geographical coverage: 20 rural and 3 urban kebeles in Ofla woreda, Tigray region (as well as five woredas in SNNPR, two in Oromia, one in Amhara, and one in Benishangul Gumuz)

Programme approach (locally):

1. Women’s Watch groups are organised in all kebeles in Ofla woreda. They:
 - a. raise awareness about Violence against Women, including child marriage
 - b. protect girls from child marriage by lobbying parents to cancel plans
 - c. protect women from GBV by seeking legal redress for victims
 - d. ensure that women are treated equitably in divorce
 - e. provide revolving loans to members to offset their time commitment
 - f. intensively liaise with local and community authorities
2. Women’s Watch Groups support school clubs:
 - a. Action Aid works to strengthen existent girls’ clubs, which:
 - i. provide safe spaces
 - ii. provide sanitary supplies
 - iii. teach girls about SRH concerns
 - iv. provide contraception (in some cases)
 - v. provide gender awareness training (in some cases)
 - b. In 5 kebeles (to date), Action Aid has directly established boys’ awareness clubs, which:
 - i. directly intervene to prevent child marriages
 - ii. report child marriages to relevant authorities, including Women’s Watch
 - iii. raise awareness of the harm caused by child marriage, GBV and other HTPs
 - iv. work to change gender norms, leading by example – doing more household tasks to free up girls’ time for schoolwork
 - v. run weekend tutorial sessions for girls.

Evaluation evidence and dates: Pro Ust Research And Training Centre (2013) External Evaluation Of Untf-Aae Project On Ending Violence Against Women And Girls.

messages to the broader community, the boys’ awareness clubs use short plays to show that boys can make bread and coffee just as well as girls, and to highlight the advantages of educating girls. Over time, the purview of the boys’ awareness clubs has apparently grown and they are now also working directly to prevent child marriage. Students keep an eye on their peers for signs of wedding

preparations and report any planned early marriages to the Women’s Watch Group and other authorities.

6.1.2 Evaluation evidence to date

ActionAid’s intervention, called ‘Enhancing the Legal Protection of Women and Girls from Gender Based Violence’ when it was funded by the UN Trust Fund (UNTF) in Support of Actions for the Elimination of

Violence against Women, was evaluated in 2013-- at the conclusion of its first phase of funding--by PRO UST Research and Training Centre⁸. The evaluation included its work in Tigray, Oromia, Amhara, and SNNPR and used a variety of primary and secondary sources. These included both individual interviews and focus group discussions with an array of stakeholders, such as members of Women's Watch Groups, officials, religious leaders and students, and also questionnaires to gauge understanding of issues related to violence against women. Overall conclusions were highly laudatory—with recommendations to take programming to scale as well as to disseminate, to other NGOs, lessons learned as best practices. Indeed, evaluators noted that while ActionAid had been working on gender for “quite a long time”, the current project represented a “strategic shift” in that it was able to maintain a focus on women's empowerment while also engaging men, law enforcement and religious leaders” (Pro Ust, 2013: 20). This sustained focus had, in some areas (based on different reports including those from law enforcement agencies), resulted in near total elimination of many forms of violence against women—including early and forced marriage.

Child marriage is only one of the forms of violence against women targeted by ActionAid's intervention. Overall objectives, gathered by evaluators from secondary sources, included:

1. Empower women and girls to attain consciousness and take collective action against violence and harmful traditional practices;
2. enhance broad based public awareness and behavioral change and strengthen the role of men and boys as key change agents for the elimination of violence against women and girls;
3. enhance accountability of law enforcement agencies and other institutions to respond to cases of violence against women/girls (VAW/G) effectively and efficiently;
4. rehabilitate and protect women survivors and girls from further harm; and
5. enhance linkage and coordination among government and non-government organs responsible to address the different dimensions of violence against women at all levels.

The evaluation identified a number of key programming strengths. These included:

1. A baseline survey which allowed local people to identify local needs and local stakeholders, therefore establishing ownership at inception;
2. Promising ways to engage community members themselves, which were described as “an innovative

approach which other organizations should learn from” (Pro Ust, 2013: 24);

3. Participatory monitoring and evaluation, which has allowed stakeholders to regularly monitor progress and identify challenges—and maintain ownership;
4. Holistic and integrated approaches, which paired empowering women through rights-based awareness-raising with recognition of the structural causes, including norms and poverty, of violence against women.
5. Working with grassroots structures, including religious and local leaders and through school clubs, to change communities' beliefs about gender and violence against women. The project's efforts to strengthen schools as a venue of support for girls facing child marriage was noted—and attention was drawn to the fact that the programme is particularly sustainable—and more easily replicable-- because of the way in which it relies on local structures.
6. Establishing Women's Watch Groups, which have become key players and leaders in their communities in terms of preventing and mitigating all forms of violence against women and improving women's overall well-being.
7. Establishing district level forums, which allowed kebele and woreda level officials from all sectors to meet with members of Women's Watch Groups to discuss opportunities and challenges and generate solutions for better outcomes.

The evaluation also noted a number of weaknesses. In some areas budgets were not sufficient to allow Women's Watch Group members to travel as they needed. In other areas the Women's Watch Groups were not well linked with formal government structures—including health institutions.

The evaluation made a number of recommendations.

1. Because violence against women spreads, it suggested that programming be taken to neighbouring districts. In Tigray, the government has adopted the model and scaled it up to other woredas.
2. Because violence against women is perpetrated by men and boys, it suggested more heavily involving them in programming, including the Women's Watch Groups.
3. Because the project is working well, it suggested sharing best-practices, such as grassroots implementation, with other NGOs.
4. Because the Women's Watch Groups have become powerful advocates for women and girls, ensure their continuation though funding.
5. Because monitoring and sharing are key to success, strengthen district and regional fora and link them more closely with those on a national level.

⁸ To the best of our knowledge there was no quantitative evidence collected for the baseline and endlines.

Box 3: Community overview

Hugumbrda kebele, in Ofla woreda, is just 21 km from the woreda capital, Korem. Its 6,500 people earn their living through mixed agriculture and animal husbandry. Most households are food secure. Residents are almost entirely Orthodox Christian, but there are some Muslim households.

Hugumbrda's schooling facilities accommodate students through to 8th grade. Students receive good-quality education: in 2013, all students who sat the 8th grade exam passed. Even though secondary school is a four-hour walk away, which means students have to board, most children who completed 8th grade last year continued their schooling at Korem's new secondary school (9th and 10th grades). There are more boys enrolled in lower primary school than girls, and enrolment rates fall off sharply after 4th grade (see Table 4). However, girls' enrolment is higher than boys' for upper primary. Teachers note that while absenteeism is high during the harvest season, most children return to school when it is over.

Table 4: Kebele school enrolment, by gender, fall 2014

	Boys	Girls
1 st -4 th grades	506	434
5 th -8 th grade	243	253

Ofla woreda has nearly 140,000 residents, most of whom are reliant on agriculture and livestock, and are predominantly Orthodox Christians. Unlike Hugumbrda, most other kebeles in Ofla are not food secure, due to weather patterns. Across the *Woreda*, while boys' enrolment in primary school outstrips girls', there are substantially more girls than boys enrolled in secondary school (592 girls versus 465 boys).

According to the 2007 census, rates of child marriage in Ofla were already low eight years ago by both zonal and regional levels (see Table 5). It was chosen by ActionAid due to ongoing programming in this area.

Table 5: Percent of girls married, by age, by residence (Source: 2007 census)

	Ofla	Southern Tigray	Tigray
Girls 10-14	5.8%	6.6%	6.9%
Girls 15-17	12.2%	16.3%	18.3%

6.1.3 Primary research findings

Having reviewed existing evaluation evidence, we now turn to a discussion of the findings from our primary research. In order to contextualise these findings, a basic community profile at woreda and kebele levels is presented in Box 3.

Local drivers of child marriage

While noting that child marriage has been all but eliminated in Hugumbrda kebele, respondents spoke of a number of active drivers of child marriage at the woreda level. Key informants from ActionAid, the Women's Association and Bureau of Women's Affairs in Ofla all commented that there is a need for vigilance and 'continuous trainings and meetings on the ground' to ensure that the drivers of child marriage are addressed and mitigated. Similarly, many respondents spoke of 'backwards' practices, such as child marriage, that continue to be seen in a positive light – even though they are no longer practiced.

Although most respondents felt that child marriage was perpetuated by social rather than economic drivers (see below), several key informants noted that economics does play a role. Several kebele and woreda level key informants believed that poverty pushes parents into arranging early marriages for their children. One commented: 'When we study the areas where there is high prevalence of early marriage, the motive is economic reasons.' She added that this is particularly the case where girls are unable to attend a local secondary school. 'Owing to the distance of schools, girls are obliged to rent a house and live around the school. And the parents have difficulties covering the

If she reached 10 years old, she was considered old. All of my sisters were married at the age of 7 and 8. They were sleeping for two and three years with their husbands before adolescence.

(Grandfather)

expenses of food and rent. Therefore, they prefer for the girl to get married at an early age and before completing her education.’ Another concurred: ‘When we move out of poverty, attitudes will be changed’, he said. However, other key informants and several mothers and grandmothers interviewed as part of intergenerational trios felt that wealthier families were often more likely to entertain offers for their daughters’ marriage.

As stated though, most respondents felt that child marriage is perpetuated by social rather than economic drivers. A kebele level educational informant, for example, highlighted that marriage has long been seen as essential to girls’ maturity – it is the way girls become women. She said, ‘In this locality, it was said if she has sex with a man she will grow fast.’ Another kebele level educational informant, on the other hand, explained that parents like to see daughters fulfil their ‘traditional’ role by providing them with a grandchild: ‘Parents want to see their girls get married and have a baby and live in front of them. They resist the idea that girls should get educated.’

Other respondents spoke of family honour as a key driver of child marriage, with parents fearing this would be tarnished if their ‘hot’ daughters engaged in premarital sex. For example, one father’s perception was that : ‘They want to go to bed with boys.’ He explained that this was leading to great conflicts with parents: ‘Parents regret their decision to let their girls to go school when the girls come with an unwanted pregnancy before formal marriage.’ A woreda level key informant noted that while premarital pregnancy is rare in Ofla, many families fear it. He said: ‘Some people propose that when their girls go to urban schools they might face unwanted pregnancy because they are out of family control.’ Boys’ club members who were interviewed believed that parents’ reactions are unfair. One observed, ‘If one girl is found committing such mistakes, it will be a reason to criticise all girls.’

A kebele level key informant also observed that not all child marriage is driven by parents; some girls, she believes, want to marry early ‘because they do not understand what comes later’. She said that while in Hugumbrda, girls are prohibited from marrying before they turn 18, they can have a ‘great desire internally’ to do so.

Local factors protecting children from early marriage

ActionAid’s programme approach, which fosters partnerships and builds local ownership of activities, makes it difficult to disentangle the role played by local factors in protecting children from the role played by programme modalities in Hugumbrda. That said, respondents identified several protective factors that already existed within the community – factors that were strengthened by ActionAid’s intervention. These factors include: the presence and activities of the Women’s Development Group and its nested one-to-five groups; the Women’s Development Army; school curricula aimed promoting gender equality in general and the risks of child marriage in particular;

Today’s generation is more advanced and joyful than the past. Girls have full right to decide anything.

(Mother)

government efforts to improve educational uptake and eliminate child marriage; and an emerging understanding that education rather than marriage is the best route to household economic security in the longer term.

In Hugumbrda, the Women’s Development Groups have been critical to reducing child marriage and working other ‘miracles’ (according to a woreda level key informant). These groups were developed by the government as a vehicle for development and to promote health education within communities (specifically to improve vaccination rates, good hygiene and child feeding practices, and to increase uptake of antenatal care and skilled birth attendants). Increasingly active throughout Ethiopia, they link all women in a community into groups composed of one leader, who directly participates in the Women’s Development Group, along with five other women. These so called one-to-five groups meet at least once a week (kebele level key informant), and often daily (kebele level key informant) in informal settings such as the local market. Serving primarily as two-way information channels, they ensure that information is not only available to villagers, but that it is discussed thoroughly and in ways that are understood. They also guarantee that the Women’s Development Group is kept apprised of villagers’ lives.

Women’s Development Groups, and their nested one-to-five groups, are active in the ‘prevention of early marriage, female genital mutilation, and promoting girls’ education’ (key informant). They talk to people through ‘house-to-house visits’ (in-depth interview with a girl who escaped early marriage – see Box 4), and have played a key role in ‘creating awareness in parents to send kids to school’. While these groups pre-date ActionAid’s involvement in Ofla, they have close links with the Women’s Watch Groups. The latter provide leaders with gender-related training and work with the one-to-five groups to make sure that all women and young girls get the message about girls’ rights to an education and an adult marriage to the man of their choice. Based on our research in other areas, the most critical contribution of the Women’s Watch Groups to the Women’s Development Groups (and their one-to-five groups) is that they help them prioritise gender-related messages. The Women’s Development Armies have very full agendas; they help women learn about everything from vaccination to sanitation to cook-stove ventilation—all of which are more concrete and perhaps easier to understand than “gender”. The Women’s Watch Groups make sure that gender issues remain on the front burner.

The local school curriculum is another protective factor against child marriage because it teaches girls how

Box 4: Saved by the Women's Watch Group

Genet is a 17-year-old 8th grade student who wants to finish 10th grade and then 'be a teacher or nurse'. While her mother (who has a 4th grade education) supports her plans, her father (who is illiterate) recently attempted to force her to marry. Fortunately, with the help of the Women's Watch, Genet's wedding was cancelled.

Genet's mother is on a Women's Development Group and leads her own one-to-five group. She teaches other women about the importance of girls' education and the dangers of child marriage. She very much prefers, explained Genet, that 'I continue my education'. When my father 'proposed me to get married', Genet continued, my mother refused to allow it. 'She said while I am fighting early marriage for other girls I will not allow my own daughter to get married at an early age.'

Genet refused as well – with little effect, since her 'father rejected my refusal' and decided to engage her anyway.

After much arguing, her mother enlisted the help of the 'Women's Watch group chairwoman, from Endedo village'. The marriage was called off, though Genet says she plans on marrying the young man when she is 19 and has completed her education.

While Genet feels totally protected from marriage by the Women's Watch, she also believes that strongly enforced laws are instrumental in combating early marriage. Her father, she explained, only 'cancelled the marriage because he fears the early marriage law'.

'I am happy with the cancellation of my marriage,' she concluded.

to identify and speak up for their own best interests, while teaching boys the advantages of marrying an adult woman. Several students noted that science teachers help students understand why early marriage and pregnancy is dangerous for girls – primarily focusing on fistula and uterine prolapse. One girls' club member added that civics lessons are promoting gender equality: 'Teacher Mulu has taught us in civic and ethical education to prevent girls from being attacked and insulted and undermined.'

Government efforts, in the form of strong national laws and policies effectively implemented by regional, woreda and kebele officials, are another important source of protection for Hugumbrda's girls. The government's first Growth and Transformation Plan (2010/11-2014/15) aimed to increase gross domestic product (GDP) by more than 10% a year. Alongside strong economic growth, it also aimed to dramatically improve girls' school enrolment by mobilising communities around a common goal (woreda level key informant, community timeline). Support was provided through the establishment of Parent-Teacher Committees, which usually meet monthly, whose role was to help identify out-of-school children and take necessary action to get them back in school. Indeed, one respondent noted that there has been a transformation in just a few years, such that now, 'girls are better attending than boys' (community timeline).

Local officials in Hugumbrda are also making strong efforts to implement national law regarding child marriage. As one father commented, 'The law is very strict... If somebody violates the law, he will be fined a sum of money or sent to jail for years' (Fathers FGD). All respondents (parents and adolescents alike) knew of families in other kebeles who had been penalised – some quite harshly – for ignoring more gentle forms of 'encouragement' to cancel a planned marriage. Indeed, during a focus group discussion

with out-of-school girls, one participant noted that justice officials take implementation so seriously that the Office

In the past, marriage was arranged and girls faced many troubles. Currently, girls are marrying who they want and the government is interfering on girls' rights, so that's good.

(Grandmother #1)

offers a reward to girls who do not proceed with their planned marriage. They reported that a girl in a neighbouring kebele had been paid 1,000 birr (nearly \$50) to report her father and for 'fighting and rejecting forced marriage'.

Economic changes being felt not just in Hugumbrda and Ofla but across the country as a whole are encouraging a shift that is seeing families more willing to invest in their daughters' education rather than simply looking to marriage. As land becomes more scarce (Fathers FGD, Mothers FGD) and is more equitably distributed by government, rather than being owned by just a few families, parents are realising that education is the best way to ensure that their daughters and grandchildren can escape poverty, as it means they can find better-paid work. One mother explained: 'Educated women get hired in various jobs. Since there is no land for agriculture, a woman can be hired by the government. If she does not get a job, she can engage in trade.' Indeed, a grandmother

We realise that cattle are vanishing but knowledge remains with you up to the end.

(Mother)

commented that the world is such a different place today that she cannot even visit the hospital without being ‘guided by people like I am blind’. She continued, ‘We were fools... Today, I regret it. In the past, people were hurrying to marriage not to education.’

6.1.6 Programme outcomes

Reducing child marriage

Respondents were unanimous in stating that while child marriage has not yet been fully eliminated in Ofla woreda, there have been no cases in Hugumbrda kebele for several years. ‘It has been declining,’ noted one community timeline participant, ‘as a result of awareness-raising training given by ActionAid Ethiopia.’ While there are no official data, a kebele level key informant emphasised that child marriage is down significantly in just the past few years; while another opined that child marriage was now only a very small fraction of its previous level. Progress is also being made across the woreda, with a woreda level key informant estimating a substantial reduction – ‘as much as 85%’. A regional level key informant said that

In the past, if the bridegroom violated what he promised and raped the little girl, the girl suffered a lot. But today there is no problem. Today’s marriage arrangement is the better one.

(Grandmother #2)

direct prevention is key to this level of reduction. Last year, officials prevented nearly 3,000 child marriages, mainly in lowland areas where socio-cultural drivers are stronger.

While Hugumbrda respondents attributed the end of child marriage in their kebele to cooperation between numerous initiatives and actors, they were clear that ActionAid’s Women’s Watch Groups had been key to success. School clubs, especially the boys’ awareness clubs, carefully monitor girls’ activities in the community. They talk to girls and watch for ‘new clothes as a sign of engagement’ (kebele level educational informant). If they discover a planned marriage, they report it to the Women’s Watch group. ‘First the Women’s Watch group warns the parent who arranges the early marriage,’ explained one boy in a focus group discussion. Then, ‘If he refuses and continues with his action, then they inform the police. Then the police accuse him in front of the court and he will be penalised,’ the boy continued. Girls too sometimes report their engagements. As Action Aid’s key informant said, ‘Girls report to the Women’s Watch group claiming that they are being forced by their parents to get married at an early age. Any individual can inform the Women’s Watch Group about early marriage whenever it happens.’

Indeed, in Hugumbrda today, our respondents said that no marriage takes place without the consent of the ‘Marriage Approval Committee’. This committee, ‘which comprises the women’s association, women affairs, security administration and prosecutor’ (as described by a father in a focus group), works to ensure that no girls are married before the age of 18, and no young women are married (regardless of their age) without their full consent; they also try to ensure that partners have an HIV test before marriage. If ‘she is not the right age, they refuse us’, explained one mother, and if they have any doubts then, according to one father, ‘the committee will refer her to the health centre/ hospital for further investigation’. Moreover, ‘if she is not interested, she will tell the committee that she is not happy with the arrangement,’ another mother concluded. This approach appears nearly fail-safe. Girls in Hugumbrda reported that they had no concerns about child marriage, forced marriage or abduction. One girl whose planned marriage was cancelled due to the Women’s Watch Groups’ vigilance, noted: ‘I don’t [fear early marriage] because I have the Women’s Watch groups.’

Raising community awareness

When asked about the effectiveness of ActionAid’s programme compared with other interventions that aimed to raise awareness about child marriage and other harmful practices, local respondents (including boys’ club members) singled out the Women’s Watch Groups as playing a ‘great role’ in changing community beliefs. A woreda level key informant said: ‘The good changes on every aspect are due to the Watch groups.’ However, because uptake of ActionAid’s programme activities has been widespread in the kebele, with interventions integrated into schools (through curricula and clubs) and the broader community (through working with Women’s Development Groups and Marriage Approval Committees), when asked how awareness about child marriage has shifted, respondents almost always spoke first about the role of education, and only then about ActionAid’s programming (see also Box 5).

Respondents overwhelmingly cited that education was behind the shift in thinking and practice on child marriage. First, they felt it had changed the way girls think, fostering independent thought and giving girls courage to speak for themselves. As a mother noted, ‘In the past, girls listened to what their parents told them. Whether you liked it or not, whether it was good or bad, you had to listen to what your parents told you. But today, due to education, they can identify what is good and bad for themselves.’ A Muslim religious leader added, ‘In the past, girls were engaged at the age of three or four and got married at the age of seven. Today, girls are prioritising and focusing on education.’ He continued: ‘In the past, girls feel shy; they do not express their feelings even with their families.’ Girls in Hugumbrda today, however, appear to feel confident talking to their parents. One, who convinced her own parents to cancel her planned marriage, explained: ‘If you help them to

Box 5: Prioritising university over marriage

Tehaytu is the 18-year-old daughter of subsistence farmers. One of four children, she plans to continue her education ‘up to university level’. Unfortunately, after she failed her 10th grade exams, she was unable to continue on to preparatory school. Then, soon after returning home, she received an offer of marriage.

But Tehaytu refused to give up on her dream. Because she knows that ‘education makes you self-disciplined’ and teaches you ‘business skills’, she rejected her marriage proposal and is ‘strongly studying to take the examination again in private’.

She knows some parents worry that ‘if girls are not married at an early age they will start practicing extra-marital sexual practices’. She knows that others would like to marry their daughters so that they recoup ‘what they have spent on other people’s wedding festivals’. Her parents, however, do not regret her decision to pursue higher education rather than marriage because ‘they have been getting lessons from me’.

She is determined, she says, to only marry after she has completed her university studies. ‘If you see your parents living a miserable life, how can you wish to get married at an early age and live the same life as your parents?’

understand that your problem is their problem, and again that your happiness is their happiness, they do not like to compel you.’ Besides, she added, ‘If they do not listen to your decision, you can go to the relevant legal bodies.

There was also consensus that education has broadened girls’ economic horizons, enabling them to see the possibilities of having their own independent means of support and giving them concrete reasons to reject premature marriage proposals. A woreda level key informant noted that there had been a very marked change recently in girls’ attitudes about their future. She said: ‘There is attitudinal change among educated girls. They realise that they should not sit down; they have to start their own business.’ School has given many girls a glimpse of the work opportunities available beyond subsistence agriculture, and most girls were clear that farming was at the bottom of their list of possible careers. During a focus group discussion with in-school girls, one girl explained, ‘If we do not learn, we must live on agriculture, but if we learn we will be in a better position.’ Another added, ‘We can get hired in jobs if we are educated.’ A third summarised her peers’ thinking, saying: ‘If you are not educated, you will remain as a subsistence farmer. Everything is achieved through education.’

There is growing awareness among people in Hugumbrda that education not only improves girls’ economic futures, but also their married lives. This awareness has helped to encourage parents to prioritise schooling for girls over

marriage. One father, for example, noted that educated wives are better able to manage household resources. He explained: ‘If she is educated, she knows how to manage income and expenditure properly. Therefore, a big change will be seen in married life... Educated girls can use resources wisely.’ Mothers (most of whom were ‘sorrowful’ that they had not been educated) also expressed similar views, understanding first-hand the benefits that education can bring to married life. One explained that an uneducated girl ‘thinks she has to live like cattle’. Another added that the educated girl ‘will not be oppressed’. She continued, ‘If they are not educated, then they get married while they are too young, they get pregnant and give birth before the right age and they are exposed to many problems, like us’ (Mothers FGD). Girls understand this reality as well. One noted that child brides are too ‘young to bear married life responsibility’ and will be ‘frustrated’. Another girl who belonged to the girls’ club explained, ‘She cannot lead a proper life because she is not mature enough.’

Adolescent boys and young men are also now more aware of the advantages of marrying a mature, educated young woman, which, given that they are future husbands, bodes well for girls—despite the fact that they pragmatically emphasizes girls’ instrumental value rather than their rights (see Box 6). In a focus group discussion, boys commented that educated women are not only able to contribute to household income, but are more likely to have harmonious marriages that do not end in divorce because both spouses ‘could love better’. One young man, now 20, felt that women should never marry before they are 22 years old, because ‘they can’t endure responsibility’. Another, now 17, insisted that he would only marry a girl who had completed 12th grade because ‘educated and uneducated persons couldn’t think equally’ and ‘she has to have a job’.

As noted, there has also been a government-led concerted effort in Hugumbrda to emphasise the health risks of child marriage and early pregnancy. These messages – which students have learnt in school and parents have heard from the Women’s Development

Educated girls are better in delivery, marriage, handling houses, family planning, and taking care of kids. If they are not educated, they will remain like us.
(Mother)

She has to get married whenever she is interested. She has to know how to live her life before marriage. She has to have the capacity and willingness.
(Mother)

Box 6: Choosing to combine tradition and education

Birtsehay is an 18-year-old 7th grade student who is a passionate supporter of education and gender equality. 'In the past,' she explained, 'women were oppressed. Due to the backward culture, they were confined to household chores such as grinding flour. But today women's rights are respected because they are educated as equal to men.'

After listening to the girls' and boys' awareness clubs and other messages in the community, she firmly believes that no girl should marry before the age of 18, because adolescent pregnancy is dangerous and married life requires maturity. She plans to continue her own education 'up to university' and has every intention of getting a job.

Interestingly, Birtsehay is married – based, she said, 'on my interest'. When asked about how she plans to combine education and marriage, she explained that her husband supports her schooling. In fact, she said that before she agreed to the marriage, 'I asked him whether he is willing to permit me to continue my education.' It was only after 'he promised me' that she agreed to marriage.

Birtsehay is also taking steps to ensure that pregnancy does not interrupt her schooling. After discussing the matter with her husband, she uses contraceptive pills.

Because she knows that schoolgirls are bombarded with messages and expectations, Birtsehay does not worry that in-school girls will be easily led into premature marriage. But she is concerned that out-of-school girls remain at risk. 'There are parents,' she explained, 'who do not let their girls attend school because they think that the girls will lose their virginity in school or in the bush. The girls from these families are exposed to early marriage.'

Groups and local health workers – have been reinforced (according to a kebele level key informant) by the changed reality of fewer maternal deaths as pregnancy rates in young girls drop. As one respondent commented, the community is aware that the 'fatality rate of mothers is also decreased'. Parents can see that if their daughters

One's sex is what anyone gets from the Lord. But gender equality is the distribution of housework.
(Women's Watch member)

I think today is the best time. Even the outlook of boys and men for the law is also good. They are alert.
(Grandmother #2)

marry when they are mature, then, as one father said, 'her body is full and strong'.

Respondents also noted – though rarely in response to questions about child marriage specifically – that ActionAid's intervention is changing the way people think about gender equality. ActionAid's approach to shifting gender norms is multi-pronged, helping women and girls understand and claim their rights, and helping men and boys to recognise their traditional privileges and promote equality by taking on their fair share of household work. Its messages are mainly disseminated to women through the government's Women's Development Groups and their nested one-to-five groups-- the first to receive training from Women Watch Groups--which ensures that those messages are heard repeatedly and provoke discussion. One mother, for example, said that her group teaches that 'a woman shouldn't be violated and her right should be respected irrespective of her age'.

ActionAid's boys' awareness clubs are also working to change community views on what boys and men can and should do in the home. As noted above, they use drama to 'create awareness that there shouldn't be an unbalanced division of labor at household level and that every activity has to be done equally and shared by both by male and female' (key informant ActionAid).

While several respondents noted that girls still do more housework than boys, some of the most forceful statements regarding gender equality came from men and boys. One father, for example, said, 'In the past, women were very highly oppressed and violated.' A boy added, 'Girls have equal rights with men.' This growing awareness of gender equality is beginning to deliver real changes within families and the wider community, with women speaking up in kebele meetings and taking on leadership roles in the community (FGD fathers). While in the past women were not employed, one girl who had escaped early marriage observed that today 'almost half of the positions are occupied by females'.

Hidden practices

There is considerable concern in the broader literature that legal approaches to ending child marriage can be ineffective and have unintended consequences for girls by driving child marriage underground. In Hugumbrda, however, all the evidence suggests that child marriage has genuinely ended – except perhaps in the rare cases where girls get pregnant out of wedlock. When asked about the impact of the law and the prevalence of secret marriages, respondents uniformly reported that the law played an important role in eliminating child marriage. While emphasising that social norms around child marriage genuinely seem to have changed as a result of awareness-raising activities, it was also clear that strong

local enforcement was important initially in ‘nudging’ the community towards accepting new norms. Furthermore, for parents who might still be inclined to arrange child marriage in secret, several respondents suggested that fear of the law continued to be an important deterrent. As a woreda level key informant noted, because the

Before two years ago it was because of the punishment, but nowadays it is due to a clear understanding of how early marriage hurts.
(Priest)

‘community’s awareness is changeable’, the marriage law is ‘supportive to prevent early marriage’.

Respondents noted that hidden marriages do take place in other kebeles in Ofla. A woreda level key informant explained: ‘People prepare a festival meal on the pretext of Saint Mary’s Day or Saint Michael’s Day, but when night falls they send the girl to her father-in-law’s house, which means that she gets married.’ Such deceptions are not possible in Hugumbrda because, according to one father in a focus group discussion, ‘the Women’s Watch groups from this kebele are very serious and strict’. Indeed, one girl whose own arranged marriage was canceled said, ‘If a parent conducts an early marriage in a secret way, they are sent to jail.’ While there are still some parents who might prefer to marry their daughters as children, because of ‘long years’ of culture, ‘there is no marriage in secret’ in Hugumbrda because girls have ‘champions’ everywhere – in schools and the wider community – who are willing to report planned marriages and ensure that the law is enforced (woreda level key informant).

Developing these champions within the community has taken some time. Several years ago, girls had to rely on just a handful of the ‘right’ people (mostly officials) to protect them from child marriage. Now, because social norms surrounding child marriage have genuinely shifted, there are numerous people with different roles in the community (including boys and girls themselves) who are working to make sure that no girl is pressured into a marriage that she does not want. A Muslim religious leader explained, ‘In the past, when government bodies start teaching about preventing early marriages, we hated them. We complained that the government brought an ugly programme and we rejected it and resisted delaying early marriage. But with repeated awareness-raising, the community is changed.’

Better coordinated services for girls

Efforts to ensure that girls attend school and do well with their studies are clearly paying dividends. As mentioned, Women’s Watch Groups have been a driving force behind getting girls into school. They do this by working with mothers (through the Women’s Development Groups and the one-to-five groups) and with teachers and community

members (through the Parent-Teacher Committees), even mobilising girls on a one-to-one basis by going door-to-door every August. While many of the adolescent girls in our research are old for their grade, because local schools have not been available for long, now ‘even the little girls whose age is 7 are competing with each other’ to go to school, explained a kebele level key informant. She continued: ‘If the neighbouring kid is going to school, the other girl asks why she is staying at home.’ The Watch also makes sure that enrolled girls attend school regularly. As one member noted, ‘There was a girl who missed a class and I went to her home... I consulted her teacher and fixed her problem.’

The boys’ awareness clubs set up by ActionAid also play an important role in helping girls succeed at school. Recognising that, as one girl said, ‘girls are not equal to as boys since they are overloaded with household activities and cannot study’, ‘outstanding’ club members offer girls tutorial support over the weekends. Girls felt that this support was important to help them ‘have proportionate academic performance with male students’. School officials in Hugumbrda agreed; after tracking girls’ pass rates on exams they are convinced that tutorial support is improving girls’ performance. While girls’ exam scores are still lower than boys’ scores, their pass rates are steadily improving.

6.1.7 Why has the programme been so effective?

Respondents attribute ActionAid’s success in Hugumbrda to its overall, multi-pronged approach: building partnerships, supporting hands-on action and promoting constant vigilance among ordinary members of the community as well as ‘champions’ of girls’ rights. As the organisation’s key informant explained: ‘We work every activity in partnership. We promote government bodies to support us. We clarify what programmes we can work together on and how to implement them. We classify what activity has to be made by whom. Then every person takes responsibility. That is why we are successful.’ As already noted, the fact that programme modalities were so thoroughly implemented by existing community groups made it impossible to disentangle the different structures and messages, because everyone ‘including peacekeeping, police and justices’ (woreda level key informant) and girls’ clubs in school, Women’s Watch groups, religious leaders, kebele administration, and Women’s Development groups’ (FGD fathers), is working ‘hand in glove towards preventing bad cultures and changing society’s outlook toward girls’ (woreda level key informant). All of our respondents emphasised time and again that the ‘partnership’, ‘cooperation’ and ‘networks’ built to prevent child marriage and other harmful practices had instilled community ownership, overcoming the ‘us versus them’ thinking that all too often constrains what programmes can achieve.

Respondents also felt that the direct actions taken by the Women’s Watch Groups were key to the programme’s success. Above and beyond their awareness-raising efforts,



'This picture shows that I did not know about the many problems with marriage-that my husband would not be around' Participatory photography participant, 2015

Women's Watch Group members act as a community-based 'shield' around at-risk girls and ensure that none will be married as children or against their will. The ActionAid key informant noted that when the Watch was first formed, the community mocked the idea. 'They considered it as a kids' play game,' he said. Over time, however, these groups of women living in poverty who are illiterate have become respected for their hard work and commitment. In Hugumbrda, the Women's Watch Group has quickly established itself as a kebele authority that has simultaneously provided women with a route to greater community participation and leadership while also eliminating child marriage.

Key informants further observed that ActionAid's continual programme monitoring has been critical to success. Even in Hugumbrda – where religious leaders and parents assured us that parents now genuinely prefer to educate their daughters rather than marry them – officials and programme implementers understand that because the drivers of child marriage still lurk beneath the surface, they must be continually vigilant to ensure that the practice does not creep back in. To that end, as ActionAid's key informant explained: 'The woreda-level Watch group meets every month. Representatives from the kebele level participate and they assess everything on the ground. Every best practice is shared and problems are also identified and forwarded to the concerned body.' The boys' awareness clubs are also involved in monitoring. They send monthly reports to the Women's Watch Group, 'focusing on what activities have been done, not done, and problems faced'. Furthermore, 'monitoring is conducted by schools' (according to mothers) and the kebele administration 'assesses and monitors and evaluates carefully on early marriage issues' (fathers). When problems are identified, according to a Watch member, 'we teach their family again'.

In addition to the Women's Watch, respondents mentioned other programme elements as being important:

- Some girls reported that the girls' clubs helped them 'not feel afraid during menstruation period and not to feel shy and not to be absent from class'. They also appreciated the clubs making showers available to them.
- Several adults mentioned the importance of involving religious leaders in sensitising the community to the dangers of child marriage and other harmful practices. A kebele level educational informant, for example, noted that 'the priest preaches early marriage is a sin'. Watch members also felt that involving religious leaders and elders in their work gave it more credibility.
- The ActionAid key informant and members of the Women's Watch Groups especially appreciated the revolving loans that come with group membership. Several women had started businesses, which meant they could keep all their children in school. The key informant is convinced that watching poor, illiterate women turn

their families' fortunes around has been critical to building community respect for the messages they promote.

- Most students regarded the boys' awareness clubs as a powerful vehicle for change. They liked the fact that they included girls and boys and that the clubs were involved in community sensitisation as well as hands-on marriage prevention. The impact on boys appeared particularly powerful; those we interviewed were fervent champions of gender equality.
- A woreda level key informant admired the fact that when the Women's Watch was found to be achieving 'radical' change, it was rapidly taken to scale across Ofla. She also appreciated the fact that as local ownership of groups and messages has expanded, leaders have minimised their presence to make space for 'ordinary women' to lead and promote gender equality.

6.1.8 What challenges did the programme face?

Given the impressive impact of ActionAid's programme, respondents from Hugumbrda had little to say about any challenges encountered. Several noted that permanent change takes time, and that while child marriage and other harmful practices such as female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) have been eliminated, some families still keep girls out of school. Key informants at the woreda and regional levels were also aware that inconsistent legal enforcement had reduced programme impacts in other Kebeles; as one noted, 'We have seen negligence on the handling of women's issues.'

The only significant issue raised by programme beneficiaries—and one that they were clear was not related to ActionAid but was instead the result of regular government meetings-- was 'meeting fatigue'. Because messages are being delivered through so many channels, some of those involved felt that their work schedules were significantly compromised by so many meetings. One father, who was opposed to child marriage and supported ActionAid's efforts, said, 'Unless you work, you cannot generate income.' Another added: 'When you made a network and have a development group meeting and then the next day they call you for a village meeting, it feels unexciting.' Key informants were also concerned about the impact of constant effort on women's schedules. One noted that between awareness-raising and monitoring activities, this is 'leaving a big burden on women beyond their capacity as a breadwinner with the family.' That said, none of the women we interviewed expressed anything but enthusiasm for the new world their daughters were privileged to live in – regardless of how much work it took to open up those opportunities.

6.1.9 Ways forward

Respondents were overwhelmingly positive about ActionAid supported Women's Watch Groups, and most felt strongly that the key route forward was a

continued commitment to constant awareness-raising. Several, however, had suggestions for how the child marriage programming could be improved and extended. These suggestions primarily related to budgets (which were perceived as low) and training (which was seen as insufficient to keep up with staff turnover in government offices). Furthermore, despite the multiplicity of channels through which to target messaging, respondents identified several groups that could also become involved.

Several key informants felt that budget issues were a significant issue. Indeed, one kebele level official said that a 'shortage of budget is the main problem' for most activities designed to prevent child marriage. An educational informant concurred, saying that while clubs are active in only five of Ofla's kebeles, they are unable to scale the intervention up because of a 'budget limitation'. Other key informants, however, disagreed. One, a woreda level key informant, protested that 'It is not a matter of budget. It does not need much budget. It is a matter of commitment.' Similarly, another key informant emphasised that human resource issues – in terms of limited 'human power', high staff turnover and insufficient technical support (mainly for kebele social courts unwilling to enforce the law) – were the main constraints.

Several respondents also mentioned the need for more training. For example, students who have recently joined the boys' awareness clubs have not yet had formal training, which is critical given their role in sensitising the community. New members of the Women's Watch Groups have also not received any training yet. A woreda level key informant suggested a greater investment in training kebele leaders, since their positions would allow them to 'pay forward their knowledge for those other parts of the society'. Similarly, a kebele level key informant felt that the leaders of Women's Development Groups, as the link between the Women's Watch and individual households (through the one-to-five groups), also needed 'repeated training'.

Financial incentives were also mentioned by several respondents. One young woman interviewed as part of an intergenerational trio noted that while the provision of school supplies is unlikely to improve girls' attendance, revolving loans may incentivise families to prioritise education. She explained, 'It's all about money. It would be good if they have special aid for girls or cash for their family'. Other respondents felt that out-of-school girls, especially divorcees (given their greater need for financial independence) might benefit from incentives.

While most members of the community appear to have been reached by ActionAid's chosen channels for messaging, respondents identified a number of groups who might benefit from special targeting. For example, adolescent boys suggested that health workers specifically target rural families when they go door-to-door to administer child immunisations. Furthermore, given the important role that religious leaders play in their communities, boys also felt that more efforts should be made to sensitise both

Orthodox and Muslim religious leaders – an idea supported by key informants at the regional level. Out-of-school girls, primary school-aged girls and married girls were also mentioned as potential targets.

Girls' clubs, because they are available to all girls beginning in 5th grade—on a national level, are an underutilised vehicle for awareness-raising, especially given that boys' awareness clubs have yet to be taken to scale. While girls appreciate the emotional and practical support that clubs offer, differences in how clubs work (not surprising given that local schools are responsible for design and implementation) mean that although some are acting as hubs for information on a wide range of rights issues, including those related to gender, others 'have limits in sharing knowledge and experience' (kebele level educational informant).

Given that the vast majority of adults are unschooled and most women are illiterate, there is also a need for more adult basic education. Many of the mothers we interviewed felt their own ignorance keenly and expressed a desire not only to educate their daughters but themselves too. Extending activities to adult basic education would also help as it would strengthen the capacity of Women's Watch groups (woreda level key informant). Since most members are illiterate, they have a 'problem making a report on a written form'.

Finally, adolescent boys – whose commitment towards a more equitable future was remarkable – also suggested that the government could reinforce changing social norms by investing more in providing employment opportunities for educated girls. They expressed concerns that if girls 'completed grade 10 but remained unemployed', then parents would lose faith in investing in their daughters' education.

6.2 Lessons learned /implications for future programming

- Women's Watch Groups are helping government structures, such as the Women's Development Group and their nested one-to-five groups, maintain tight focus on child marriage and gender equality—whereas otherwise those lessons might get lost in the welter of health and development related messaging.
- While Women's Watch Groups are women only, the experiences of both the boys' awareness clubs and TESFA suggests that progress towards gender equality does not require that groups be for women and girls only, but rather that they be directly focused on gender.
- Boys' awareness clubs are serving as the frontline of reporting—making sure that champions are aware of all planned marriages so that they can be canceled.
- Women's Watch groups are serving as a shield around girls—ensuring that they are never married as children or against their will. Local girls are absolutely certain that they are protected.

- Local government’s commitment to ending child marriage—and girls’ and women’s rights more generally—is exemplary in Ofla and clearly vital to success. Programming was taken to scale as soon as it was demonstrated to be effective and has been supported by a broad array of other awareness-raising and enforcement activities that have emphasized messages ranging from the health risks of early pregnancy to the economic advantages of educating girls.
- Engaging men and boys—and especially engaging male religious leaders—is a vital tactic because they hold more power than women and girls.
- ActionAid’s skillful combination of awareness-raising and economic empowerment has improved uptake of messages because it has transformed women’s position in the community.



Girl transporting goods on mule, Tahtay Adiabo, Dejenu Teklu 2015

7 African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN): Girl Power Programme

7.1 Key findings

Programme approach and modalities

- ANPPCAN tackles child marriage by using a child protection lens.
- The Girl Power Programme is working to develop government capacity to prevent child marriage, by providing training, fostering collaboration, and strengthening child protection mechanisms.
- ANPPCAN is working through and with schools to ensure that teachers and girls' club participants have access to training about child marriage and a plan for reporting child marriages.
- Sharing best practices with other NGOs has strengthened and broadened ANPPCAN's approach because it encouraged them to include boys in girls' club programming.

Lessons learned in Dembia woreda

- Kebele messages aimed at preventing child marriage are delivered frequently and in multiple venues—but without concerted focus – thus significantly limiting their uptake.
- Educating girls is not sufficient to prevent child marriage. While local parents are committed to school as a way to promote their daughters' economic independence, they have not replaced child marriage with school—merely combined the two.
- Local implementation of the law is inconsistent, resulting in levels of distrust that have precluded ownership.

Entry points for future programming

- Because Women's Development Groups, and their nested one-to-five groups, offer a way to reach all women on a regular basis, they represent a key entry-point for helping grow women's awareness about their own rights and those of their daughters. In Dembia, however, WDGs are not prioritising either gender or child marriage. ANPPCAN should consider working with these structures in order to expand local understanding of child protection.
- While girls' clubs are a useful starting point for helping children learn about the risks of and alternatives to child marriage, in order to grow stronger girls ANPPCAN should consider helping clubs directly focus on gender and empowerment and give girls the chance to develop skills through participatory activities.
- While the Girl Power Programme has an interesting macro design, and different programme approaches are clearly working well in various programme sites, in Dembia, existent efforts are not sufficiently informed by local norms and need.

7.1.1 Programme objectives and modalities

The Girl Power Programme (GPP) is a global initiative spanning 10 countries. In Ethiopia, it is being implemented in three regions by a consortium of NGOs. In Gargie kebele, the programme is being run by the African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN), whose broad

aim is to develop a ‘society where children live free from maltreatment and realize their potentials’ (ANPPCAN, 2015). In Gargie, ANPPCAN implements the Girl Power Programme to build ‘capacity in local civil society to support the empowerment of girls and young women for gender equality’ (Transition International, 2013: 7). It works in five schools across Dembia⁹ and implements three types of activities: providing practical items to individual girls; building school capacity for protection; and strengthening coordination across sectors and levels. In Gargie, these programme modalities are nested within a broader government push to end child marriage and are situated alongside longer-term efforts of various large NGOs, such as World Vision and the Amhara Development Association. Because of the wide range of organisations (governmental and non-governmental) implementing interventions (with government efforts targeting many aspects of everyday life, from coffee ceremonies to loan offices to health extension workers), and the fact that ANPPCAN’s efforts largely work through government channels, it is difficult to disentangle the impact of ANPPCAN’s and GPP’s contributions from others. Similarly, the larger budgets available to other NGOs have resulted in quite limited visibility of ANPPCAN’s efforts among the local community.

According to internal documentation, ANPPCAN provides school supplies such as pens and paper and feminine hygiene products to individual girls (Transition International, 2013). In Gargie, however, these resources appear to be distributed through the schools rather than directly—again effectively rendering their efforts invisible. Our adolescent and parent respondents mentioned that World Vision provided school supplies, but none mentioned receiving personal material support from ANPPCAN. A teacher, however, said, ‘this year ANPPCAN gave us five reams of duplicating paper, one pack of pens, three folders and 20 “Ladystay” [sanitary pads]’. Notably, and aimed at sustainability, over the course of the last year ANPPCAN has transitioned away from giving girls sanitary supplies and is now teaching them to make their own out of locally sourced materials.

ANPPCAN’s school activities focus on supporting existent girls’ clubs and helping them to keep girls in school, as well as raising awareness of their rights – including their rights to remain unmarried and to be free from sexual harassment. In Gargie, the club consists of nearly 100 children (5th-8th grade), about one-fifth of whom are boys who are also helping to spread messages about gender equality (school key informant). Meeting monthly or bimonthly, the club provides students with information about child marriage and sexual and reproductive health (SRH), and provides a forum for

children to report any planned marriages (in schools where children are not comfortable reporting to their teachers ANPPCAN has provided anonymous reporting boxes, but these were not needed in Gargie). It also ensures that girls have sanitary supplies and a private space to use them. ANPPCAN provides training to club members and teachers, ‘including methods and strategies of consultation, without being aggressive, on gender issues, early marriage and the like’ (ANPPCAN coordinator); they then take those messages back to the school and into the wider community by performing plays in villages (focus group discussion with boys). It should be noted that while essentially training trainers, rather than the school community as whole, allows ANPPCAN to simultaneously foster leadership and local ownership—and conserve scarce resources—it does make it challenging for most students to identify ANPPCAN’s role in awareness-raising.

ANPPCAN’s largest contribution to efforts aimed at eradicating child marriage, and to child protection more generally, is working to build a collaborative environment in which government officials (from the offices of Health, Education, Justice, WCYA, etc.) and NGOs can come together to ‘mobilise resources available in the community and support vulnerable sections of the population’ (ANPPCAN staff). Also “behind the scenes” from beneficiaries’ perspective, in six kebeles in Dembia, ANPPCAN has supported the formation of Community Care Coalitions that focus on ‘how to protect children from abusive labour or on child abuse issues’ (kebele level official). An official explained, ‘ANPPCAN gives training for groups selected by the kebele. It is intended for kebele leaders, the training was also given for women.’ The ANPPCAN coordinator explained that regular training is provided for all stakeholders, at both the kebele and woreda levels, to ensure strong support for programming messages. These messages are honed during ANPPCAN’s regular meetings with its partners—where they have developed a “learning agenda matrix” to ensure that best practices (such as opening girls’ clubs to boys) are shared and translated into future programming.

ANPPCAN has a variety of GPP initiatives that have been rolled out in the urban areas of Dembia or in other regions—but not Gargie. For example, in Koladiba, the capital of Dembia, ANPPCAN has provided vocational training to 18 girls and helped them to establish their own micro-enterprises by giving them their own sewing machines. They are also working with Gondar Fana Broadcasting to produce out radio talk shows about the importance of girls’ education, the risks of early marriage, etc.

9 ANPPCAN has chosen to concentrate its work in just a few schools in order to have better results.

Programme basics

Programme name: Girl Power Programme

Programme approach (locally):

- Allocating practical resources to girls, including school supplies and sanitary products
- Building capacity of schools as protective environments, including supporting girls' clubs and providing training to students and teachers about child marriage and gender equality
- Strengthening coordination among kebele and woreda sectors, including providing training on child rights and child protection for government officials, health providers, Women's Association leaders and Development Army members

Dates: The Girl Power Programme was initiated globally in 2010, formally launched in Ethiopia in 2012 and is set to conclude in 2015.

Implementing agency (in Dembia): The African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN). Across Ethiopia, the programme is implemented by a consortium of 12 partners including Plan International Ethiopia, ACPF, FAWE, ANPPCAN, FSCE, ECFA and ESD and DEC, ADV, CISO, MCMDO, IWCIDA.

Funding agency: Plan Ethiopia and Save the Children Norway

Budget: The 2015 budget for ANPPCAN's work in Dembia is 324,850ETB, for North Gondar it was 1,949,100ETB.

Geographical coverage: 10 countries globally. In Ethiopia, the programme is being implemented in three regions (Ammara, Oromiya and SNNPR) as well as six of Addis Ababa's sub-cities.

Number of beneficiaries: Across Amhara's North Gondar zone, ANPPCAN is working in 26 schools in five woredas. Of Dembia woreda's 127 schools, ANPPCAN is working in five. During the 2014/2015 school year there were nearly 550 students in these clubs. (The mid-term review noted that across Ethiopia, ANPPCAN had reached just over 22,600 beneficiaries.)

Evaluation evidence and dates: 2013 by Transition International.

7.1.2 Evaluation evidence to date

The Girl Power Programme was subject to a mid-term review in 2013 by Transition International, although programme activities had only begun in late 2012 and so the review largely focussed on planned activities and processes rather than outcomes. The evaluation process was also challenged by constraints imposed by the Ethiopian government's CSO law of 2009 and the fact that in Ethiopia the GPP is being implemented by a consortium of 12 NGOs, each applying different modalities in different woredas (See Box 7). This makes it almost impossible to ascertain the impact of any one NGO or modality.

Overall, the mid-term review found that '(i)t is probable that the GPP [Girl Power Programme] has contributed to empowerment of girls and young women' (Transition International, 2013: 4). However, because its interventions are closely aligned with government efforts, taking place in states already served by other civil society organisations, and focused 'on direct support to individual beneficiaries (bursary support, sanitary pads distribution)' that does not

'challenge the more strategic needs or interests' (ibid.: 68) of girls and women, the evaluation did not strongly attribute success to the ANPPCAN programme specifically. The mid-term review found that the Girl Power Programme was:

- Relevant, shown by the high satisfaction of beneficiaries;
- Efficient, given that it had managed to implement activities in spite of delays caused by national legislation;
- Effective, given outcomes such as strengthening child protection services and increasing girls' knowledge of services;
- Coordinated, given consistency with government policy and the sharing of good practices at institutional and community levels; and
- Sustainable if it were to be institutionalised.

The mid-term review concluded that ANPPCAN had 'visible and clear working relationships with government stakeholders', especially at local levels (Transition International, 2013: 50). It suggested that ANPPCAN direct more attention to monitoring and evaluation (M&E),

Box 7: Modalities used by the GPP in different areas by different NGOs

- Promoting ICT in basic education (DEC)
- Forming and strengthening girls' clubs (ANPPCAN, CISO, MCMDO, IWICDA) and Tuseme 'Let's Speak Out' clubs with boys (FAWE)
- Developing and promoting Gender Responsive Pedagogy model (FAWE)
- Revision of girls' education national strategy and promoting anti-harassment code of conduct (PIE, FAWE)
- Community conversations and media sensitisation through TV series, radio spots, messaging and programmes (FAWE, ECFA, PIE)
- Establishing and supporting multi-stakeholder child protection structures and working with existing governmental structures such as the Community Care Coalition (FSCE, ANPPCAN)

DEC Development Expertise Centre

CISO Community Initiative Support Organisation

MCMDO Mothers and Children Multi-sectoral Development Organization

IWICDA Illu Womens and Children Integrated Development Association

FAWE Forum for African Women Educationalists

PIE Plan International Ethiopia

ECFA Enhancing Child Focused Activities

FSCE Forum on Sustainable Child Empowerment

but acknowledged this would be difficult given that staff were already 'quite loaded with work' (ibid.: 45). While ANPPCAN was found to be a gender-sensitive organisation, 'there is no specific policy on gender, and no gender mainstreaming of gender analysis practice' – a notable gap given that the programme aims to empower girls (ibid.).

The review included CIVICUS Civil Society Index exercises¹⁰ in three districts, one of which was Gondar (where Dembia is located). The exercise found that while ANPPCAN's relationship with government stakeholders was close, it 'does not collaborate with all relevant government organs e.g. health bureau, education bureau' and it does not adequately coordinate activities with its consortium partner FAWE, which also works in the district (Transition International, 2013: 50). That said, it concluded that 'GPP is a very important programme in Gondar' and 'should not be limited to 5 years' (Transition International (Annex H), 2013 : 13).

7.1.3 Primary research findings

Having reviewed existing evaluation evidence, we now turn to a discussion of the findings from our primary research. In order to contextualise these findings, a basic community profile at woreda and kebele levels is presented in Box 8.

Broader programme modalities

Identifying ANPPCAN's modalities is challenging, given the broad range of activities going on in Dembia to combat

child marriage—and the fact that one of ANPPCAN's primary modalities is to support existent government interventions. Indeed, local efforts to disseminate messages about child marriage appear to use all available channels—albeit in a manner which appears to effectively hide them in broader development-oriented themes, rather than coupling them in such a way as to develop synergies. As noted by a woreda level key informant, officials use 'every public gathering and stage to disseminate information concerning early marriage not only by our office, but by any of our stakeholders'. This includes, according to our respondents, 'every Sunday morning after attending mass' (kebele level key informant), '*ekub*' (a kind of traditional money saving group), '*edir*' (a traditional association that handles mourning and burial ceremonies), and '*senbete*' (religious feast at the church every Sunday) (woreda level key informant). The issue of child marriage is also raised 'when farmers are gathered to get information on modern farming techniques and the use of fertilisers' (according to a focus group discussion with girls), and in 'school forums, saving and credit enterprises and public mourning ceremonies' (woreda level key informant).

This flood of information is further bolstered by the day-to-day activities of health extension workers, who 'visit every house regularly' (according to Development Army members), as well as Development Army members (see Box 9) and the Women's Association, which has 280 members in the kebele.

10 CSI exercises are a "participatory needs assessment and action planning tool for civil society around the world, with the aim of creating a knowledge base and momentum for civil society strengthening initiatives" (<http://www.civicus.org/csi/>).

Box 8: Community overview

Gargie kebele, in Dembia woreda, is situated in North Gondar zone, Amhara regional state. Gargie has just over 6,600 residents, almost all Orthodox Christian. Most households depend on rain-fed agriculture for their livelihood, and are largely food secure. Gargie has its own school, which covers pre-school until 8th grade, and there is gender parity in enrolment rates. The area has good transportation links to the rest of the woreda. These represent significant improvements on the past. A grandfather in our research commented that life in the kebele is recently much improved: ‘The present day life is good... The road is constructed very well starting from Gondar town. Large number of youth has got jobs, and the living standard is improving.’

Gargie is one of 40 rural and 5 urban kebeles in Dembia woreda, which has nearly 275,000 residents. Nearly all are Orthodox Christian and most are farmers. The woreda has five secondary schools (9th and 10th grades) and two preparatory schools (11th and 12th grades). Across Dembia, there are slightly more girls than boys enrolled in primary school and substantially more girls enrolled in secondary school. At the preparatory level, there is gender parity.

Access to health care has improved considerably in recent years across the woreda. There are now 10 health centres and each kebele has its own health post. According to the key informant at the woreda Health Office, vaccination rates are now over 80%, and 62% of women receive at least one antenatal visit. However, less than 40% of women deliver at a health facility or have skilled care.

At the time of Ethiopia’s 2007 census, child marriage rates in Dembia were higher than both zonal and regional averages for young adolescents (see Table 6) and slightly lower for older adolescents. Officials indicate that while rates of child marriage have been falling recently, in part because the woreda was a target of Leave No Woman Behind, they vary considerably from kebele to kebele.

Table 6: Rates of child marriage, by residence and age (Source: 2007 census)

	Dembia	North Gondar	Amhara
Girls aged 10-14	11.2%	10.3%	9.8%
Girls aged 15-17	27.1%	30.5%	27.2%

Box 9: The emergence of a Development Army

Health extension workers have organised 563 of Gargie’s women into 21 ‘developmental teams’ consisting of around 30 women each (kebele level key informant). These teams, called Women’s Development groups in other kebeles, meet twice a month to discuss ‘health, agriculture, and fighting harmful traditional practices’ (according to a woreda level key informant), provide adult education (FGD Development Army members) and monitor the marriage plans and school attendance of members’ children (kebele level key informant). As one Development Army member said in a focus group: ‘No one is allowed to be absent from the meeting.’

Nested under the development teams are 105 women’s ‘one-to-five’ groups’ (kebele level key informant). Meeting almost daily for coffee ceremonies (kebele level key informant), these groups are organised by health extension workers but led by villagers themselves (one leader to five other villagers). Mainly concerned with ‘natural resources development’, they also teach about ‘various issues’ including child marriage and girls’ education (focus group with Development Army members).

Health extension workers prioritise women ‘because we assume the females’ team performs better on the health packages’ (woreda level key informant) and because of the widely held view that ‘if the mother is aware of the negative effects of early marriage, she can better help her daughter’ (woreda level key informant). But there are also men’s one-to-five groups and Development Armies. Though these are typically concerned with agricultural issues, key informants felt that they played some role in raising awareness about the dangers of child marriage.

Gargie also has a Community Conversation programme. Started by federal government in 2002, and initially aimed at ‘awareness creation on the HIV/AIDS pandemic’, the Community Conversation group has been used over the years by different organisations for different purposes—including, in the last year or two, to initiate a ‘discussion on the issue of early marriage’ (focus group with Community Conversation members). The group has, for example, ‘drafted a community rule to punish individuals who are involved in such wedding ceremonies’ and uses every ‘different occasion where people are found gathered’ to talk to others about child marriage (FGD with Community Conversation members). Our research team was told that in recent months, due to a lack of leadership, the group is now largely defunct.

Local drivers of child marriage

Our respondents identified two main drivers of child marriage: poverty and culture. Some thought that parents of child brides were motivated by money – in effect, selling their daughters. Others recognised that families who had little land and many children were often pushed into child marriage to make ends meet. Deeply held beliefs about girls’ sexuality and family honour encouraged other parents to look favourably on child marriage.

Many of our respondents felt that ‘some families give their daughters just for the sake of the money they get as a present’ (woreda level key informant). Because the money can be significant, starting ‘with 3,000 ETB, but now reaching up to 5,000 ETB to 10,000 ETB’ (almost \$500), these ‘bribes given to girls’ family via mediators’ can be quite tempting (community timeline), leading parents to dream only ‘of the money that would be obtained because of the marriage’ and causing them to not ‘take into account her age’ (according to a focus group with boys).

In the past, however, things used to be different, with girls from well-off, landed families more likely to be married as children – even ‘while they were under others’ arms’ (boy, aged 14). Now, with income distribution in the woreda essentially flat (woreda level key informant) and land distributed by the government, wealthier families are investing in their daughters’ education while poorer families are more likely to look to child marriage. A woreda level key informant explained that while he understood the patterning of yesterday’s marriages, today ‘the magnitude of early marriage is mainly on the poor side’. Indeed, he added, ‘I have so much evidence that poor parents give their daughters only because they don’t have any money.’

Because land is very ‘fragmented and has become very small’ (community timeline) while family size has increased (focus group discussion with girls), parents have a difficult time feeding and educating all of their children. A woreda level key informant noted that one result of this pressure is

that families with many daughters often resort to marrying one just to send the others to school. He explained, ‘If you ask a certain farmer why he didn’t send his daughters to school he might say “I have four daughters. I don’t have any money to feed them or buy any exercise books for them. I must give one of them in marriage to get some money so that the remaining three can get basic needs and educational material”.’

Strong cultural norms about girls’ sexuality also continue to drive child marriage. A woreda level key informant, for example, noted that ‘there is a fear by most families that their daughter might involve herself in illegal sexual affairs with a male, which is a shame for her family and herself too. For fear of this, some families give her early to marriage.’ This fear prevents some families from sending their daughters to school at all, because parents are afraid that girls might ‘engage in sexual activities in school’ (in the words of one 16-year-old girl who escaped early marriage). It also encourages others to marry their daughters immediately after they leave school, which is usually well before they are 18 (community timeline). Indeed, as one girl in a focus group noted, child marriage is closely linked to exam failure,¹¹ because ‘when girls fail to get promoted to the next grade level’, their parents worry that they ‘will be idle and switch to practice sexual activities’.

Their age is a fire age at which they need males.

Once males observed the attraction signal from the girl, he will be motivated to have sex with her.

If sons commit sexual mistakes in such a case, they should not be blamed for that.

(Focus group discussion with mothers)

The depth of parents’ concerns about girls’ sexuality was apparent from the focus group discussion with mothers of adolescent girls. While not all mothers agreed, several were of the opinion that ‘marriage would be good for a girl if she is beyond 12 years old’. It ‘would be nice’, said one, ‘if the government and the school community would permit for her to be married then’, because she ‘would be too hot sexually when she passes the age of 12’. While one mother felt that girls older than 12 were ‘beautiful and would get ruined’, several others were adamant that ‘it is the girls who are responsible for any sexual mistake. If girls don’t go, no one would force her to have sex.’

Respondents noted that another local driver of child marriage, inexorably bound with norms around girls’

11 Students sit for national exams at the end of 8th and 10th grades.

sexuality, is the requirement that deacons and priests marry virgins (focus group with Community Conversation participants) (see Box 8). Indeed, as one father explained, ‘religious leaders are expected to marry at their early ages with kids below 10 or 11 years’ (focus group with fathers).

Family-based marriage engagement is good for the female, because it gives warranty for the female whenever there is quarrel between couples. When couples tied with marriage without involving their parents, the male may look down at the female, thinking that she is not as respected as those obtained through parents.

(Grandfather)

Finally, one of the woreda level key informants interviewed as part of our research indicated that some parents marry their daughters at an early age because they are worried that the girl may find it difficult to attract a husband later – something that would bring a great deal of stigma. He explained, ‘As a girl gets older and older, the probability of getting married is diminished. Families do not want their daughter to become stigmatised as a result of lack of husband in the future.’

Local factors protecting children from child marriage

There are two main factors protecting girls in Gargie from child marriage: the availability and uptake of education, and shifting economic realities. The two, working hand in hand, are effectively sheltering the majority of girls from marrying at a very young age (though they are perhaps not protecting older adolescents).

One of the main changes is due to strong government investment in education, such that one woreda level key informant commented that ‘schools are everywhere now’. And a mother confirmed, ‘Since the school is near to our

village, we can send our children to school without doubt,’ adding that ‘otherwise if it was so far we might fear to send our children’. The availability of schools below the level of a kebele, in a *got* (village), (woreda level key informant) has had a particularly powerful impacts on girls’ enrolment. ‘This is because,’ explained the 13-year-old brother of an adolescent girl, parents ‘felt very unsafe for their daughters due to the problems that happened to girls on the way to school and in school. Parents were referring to the risk of being raped and abducted.’ Since rape ‘is a disgrace for her parents,’ he continued, ‘parents preferred marrying off their daughters rather than sending them to school’ in the past.

Now, thanks to government investment, schools are not only available but also largely mandatory. While our research uncovered several children (girls and boys) who had never been to school, respondents told us that ‘parents who are not willing to send children to school are punished’ (FGD mothers) and that ‘no child is left even keeping cattle’ (a focus group discussion with fathers). School and government officials also reported that enrolment had increased considerably in recent years.

According to our respondents, formal education acts as a form of protection for children in several ways. First and foremost, it changes girls’ aspirations – because of what they learn and who teaches them. ‘No girls will marry young,’ explained one grandmother. ‘All female children prefer an education,’ added a 14-year-old boy. ‘Compared to the dirty lifestyle of those who remain illiterate,’ concluded a mother, girls are highly motivated to attend school. Indeed, several girls’ club members related stories about friends and sisters who ‘refused to be a housewife while being at her juvenile age and decided to continue her education’.

Given Dembia’s longstanding tradition of child marriage, school also provides some girls’ parents with a ‘defence against a marriage’ (community timeline). Community members explained that as long as girls are enrolled in school, when parents are approached by

Box 10: Left alone to suffer

Girls related this story about a friend who was forced to leave school in 7th grade and marry a priest, even though ‘she is below 15 years old’. While the friend has tried to escape, she has been abandoned by her parents and left to suffer a husband willing to use violence to maintain the prestige of his priesthood. They reported: ‘She was our friend and so cute before getting married.’ But this year, ‘I saw her carrying a child when she came to her parents’ house. Now she no longer looks as beautiful as she was. You would hardly recognise her. I felt like I was seeing someone else or something terrible. She looks sick and unhealthy.’

She tried to leave her husband, but ‘he said no as he doesn’t want to lose his priesthood’. She ‘ran away from her husband’s house and returned back to her parents’ house and acted as if she was possessed by an evil spirit’. She ‘acted crazy and said to her parents “you should rather kill me”’. Her husband came and took her ‘by beating and pulling her on the ground’. She ‘yelled loudly, but there was no one to protect her’ because ‘her parents said nothing as he is a priest’.

Now ‘She cries a lot when she sees her friends who are fortunate to continue school... Many times she has been found trying to hang herself.’

The little girls watch the female teachers as a role model. Out of 508 certificate-holding teachers in Dembia, 380 are female and 128 are male. Out of 1, 079 diploma holders in Dembia, 613 are females and 466 are males.

(Woreda level key informant)

mediators seeking to arrange a marriage they have a ready excuse that enables them to ‘escape’ being pressured.

Parents can, they noted, simply and honestly say ‘the girl is at school in education, so there is no room for marriage’ (community timeline).

Greater access to education has come at a time when there are fundamental shifts in Ethiopia’s economy, which, for most people, makes schooling ‘the only hope to be out of poverty’ (focus group discussion with fathers). The fragmentation of land ownership, driven by high population growth, means that ‘parents are unable to give either farmland or other things for girls or boys to be married’ (community timeline). This is ‘why everybody is struggling to educate school-age students at all costs’ (focus group with fathers). Most parents in our research appreciated that education opens up new opportunities for their children, offering them ‘a better life in towns’, full of ‘marvellous opportunity’ (mother).

The ‘shortage of farm land at this time’ (grandfather)

I want my children to live a life which is better than my life. So I will never return back to the harmful traditional practices. This kind of behavioural change in society is due to the lessons taken from the problem itself. That is the problem or the sufferings by themselves give advice to the society.

There is a proverb from our ancestors which says: ‘if someone is not changed by advice, then the risk itself will advise him’.

(Community timeline)

is leading some parents not only to educate their children but – as reflected in enrolment statistics – to prioritise girls’ education. A grandfather explained that because land is so scarce, it is better for parents to save their land for their sons and ‘push girls to school for education’. This is reinforced by a widespread belief that it is better to invest in girls’ education because they are more likely to ‘support the family well’, while ‘boys waste money’ (kebele level key informant). A father explained: ‘Males are more extravagant than females’ and are ‘involved in different wasteful activities like chewing *chat* and drinking alcohol’. On the other hand, girls, ‘after completing their education and becoming employed in different activities, support their parents’ (focus group with fathers). Key informants

and parents alike noted that despite these high expectations of girls, ‘generally boys perform better’ because of a ‘lack of moral encouragement [for girls] from parents’ and too many ‘household activities’, which prevents them from studying (educational key informant).

Many parents also commented that another reason

Parents also want to educate their daughters because they see neighbours with educated daughters who have decent jobs and send them money.

(Girl who escaped child marriage, aged 16)

Gargie is moving away from child marriage is that weddings are simply too expensive. Given limited resources, ‘Parents prefer to invest in educating their children rather than having an excessive banquet for a marriage ceremony,’ said one father. A grandfather went even further, explaining that: ‘Early marriage is a means of resource wastage. It is only a means of boasting oneself by preparing a large amount of foods and drinks, which is a sign of ignorance.’ Especially given that child marriages are likely to end in divorce, parents increasingly see that ‘the invested money will become wasted’ (kebele level key informant).

7.1.7 Programme outcomes

As noted, because the Girl Power Programme serves only a small number of beneficiaries directly and is implemented alongside a broad array of other programming and through government channels, it is not possible to attribute any specific outcomes to the programme alone. As the mid-term review concluded, while it seems likely (even probable) that the programme GPP is contributing to progress, impacts are probably due to a combination of factors.

Reducing child marriage

Most respondents reported that child marriage has been very significantly reduced in Gargie. Timeline participants told us that this trend has been evident for at least 15 years and has been accelerating since 2006, when the issue began to receive significant attention from the government and NGOs. However, evidence to confirm this trend is quite mixed. On the one hand, there is a small group of people who insist that ‘in this kebele, there are no early marriage practices’ (grandfather). On the other hand, most adolescents and service providers such as teachers and health extension workers report that while child marriage has become uncommon, ‘we can’t say that early marriage is totally eliminated in this kebele’ (boy, aged 13). A few respondents, including adolescent girls and well-placed woreda level key informants, insisted that, at least in some of the more rural areas, child marriage remains the norm

and that ‘they will never wait for a rural girl until she reaches 18 (focus group discussion with girls).

If you go and examine girls in some schools you will find that up to 57% are engaged to be married. This is what I discovered during my study.

(Woreda level key informant)

Early marriage is still a huge problem although its rate is declining.
(Focus group discussion with adolescent girls)

While most respondents agree that child marriage in Gargie is now rare (a kebele level educational key informant noted that last year only two or three girls were married), a number of comments suggest that child marriage *may* be more common than people believe. First, as already mentioned, it is common for religious leaders to insist that brides are virgins, which means (according to our respondents) that they marry girls aged 10 or 11. A second and probably more widespread issue is that when respondents talked about forced marriage, explaining that it was totally eliminated and that girls now ‘marry only by their interest’ (mother), many deemed the girls’ age at marriage as ‘mature’, even though they were technically still a child according to international standards as well as national law (which states the minimum legal age at marriage as 18).

The goal set to eradicate early marriage in the year 2025 (2017 E.C) for me it seems difficult.
(Woreda level key informant)

For example, an adolescent boy (aged 13) who had previously said that child marriage in the kebele was uncommon explained that ‘girls are getting married at the age of 16 and 17 based on their full consent’. Similarly, a grandfather who expressed appreciation for the fact that very young girls were no longer married off against their will said: ‘Today, they marry their wives through mutual understanding at school, it could be at the age of 15 or more.’ Statements such as these suggest that while the youngest girls are now unlikely to marry, older girls may not only still be marrying, but may be doing so invisibly, because the community may not consider their marriages as ‘child’ marriages. This interpretation is not improbable, given that historically, girls in Dembia were often married as infants or young children.

Respondents noted that the law was an important reason that child marriage was becoming less common in Gargie. A member of the Community Conversation team explained that because ‘early marriage results in several problems for children, and because of the negative cascading effects it imposes on the future lives of society as a whole, we have drafted a community rule to punish individuals who involve on such wedding ceremonies.’ He continued, ‘The punishment is in terms of money ranging from 50 ETB to 400 ETB’. Several other respondents, including a kebele level official, added that in addition to fines, parents and mediators are often ‘charged and sentenced to imprisonment’ under national and regional laws for their roles in child marriage (FGD fathers), even if they ‘may be angry’ (kebele level key informant).

We had a disagreement when we dealt with a poor woman who prepared a wedding for her daughter’s marriage. The girl’s father was dead and her mother wanted someone who works on the land so as to support the household. She decided that her daughter should marry and her husband will work on my farm land to support the family.

The girl’s mother became angry with us. She said that ‘I am weak and poor, and my son is not healthy, and everybody knows this. And I have no one to work on my farm land so I need someone who will marry my daughter so as to support me’. She also said that ‘having understood my problems, why do you intend to cancel my girl’s marriage?’

She paid money as a result of her involvement in the early marriage.

(Kebele level key informant)

Raising community awareness

As already noted, there is a wide range of awareness-raising activities in Gargie that use all available channels. That said, however, the vast majority of messages reflected back to us during our research were directed not at the risks of child marriage specifically, but at the broader benefits of girls’ education. While some respondents mentioned that child brides were more likely to divorce and suffer from health problems such as fistula, these themes were dwarfed by awareness of the advantages of sending girls to school – both in terms of the number of respondents who mentioned them and the fervour with which they expressed their views.

Respondents had taken full ownership of messages about the importance of girls’ education. One father in a focus group discussion noted that while people had initially needed ‘mobilisation’ to encourage them to send their children to school, ‘now the society has better awareness and does not need any external body’. In another focus group, one girl said that awareness about

girls' education – and how it could lead to a more secure future – was driving the reduction in child marriage. She explained: 'The reason why the rate of under-age marriage has been declining may be related to the aspiration for a better life. For example, if four to five educated children in a particular family are able to secure professional jobs, other people will learn from that and perhaps cancel the plan of early marriage and rather send them [their daughters] to formal education.'

It should not be left only for the government; the society should also struggle to end early marriage. It has negative physiological, social, economic and health problems. So, we have to stand together, besides the government role, against the act.
(Focus group discussion, fathers)

Unfortunately though, schooling does not always protect girls from child marriage. Indeed, one way to disentangle awareness about the benefits of girls' education from awareness about the risks of early marriage is to turn scenarios upside down and look at the impact of girls' marriage on their schooling. In Gargie, it appears to be minimal. A kebele level educational informant, for example, said that of the eight girls who had married as students,¹² six of them 'came to school the next day after their wedding'. An adolescent boy added that 'marriage can't be the cause for school dropout' because 'it is becoming common that husbands have promised girls to allow them to continue their studies after marriage' and 'there are many students who continue their education after marriage'.

Some respondents also spoke directly about the risks of child marriage – evidence that awareness-raising messages are being heard even if not embedded throughout the community. Participants in several focus groups, for example, mentioned that 'girls are also vulnerable for a disease known as "fistula" because of early marriage and giving birth early without maturity' (community timeline). Others mentioned that child marriage increased the odds that 'marriage will be broken' (community timeline) because 'the woman doesn't want to live with the man she doesn't love' (woreda level key informant).

Adolescents – particularly though not exclusively girls – appeared to have a better awareness of the risks of child marriage. One girls' club member, for example, explained that 'if she is under 18 years old, then having intercourse may be painful to her'. She added that adult women were more likely to 'know everything, including how to manage her period, control unwanted pregnancy and so on'. Similarly, an adolescent boy reported that he had learnt at

school about 'harmful traditional practices, especially child marriage', which can even cause 'the death of girls'.

However, just like their parents, most girls spoke primarily of the benefits of education rather than the risks of child marriage. 'Marriage for a girl,' explained one girls' club member, 'would be good if she does it after having her own income source'. Girls were focused not only on what their education could do for them (and their parents) but also on its importance for the country's broader development goals. As another girls' club member noted, 'Educated females or mothers usually leads to an educated family and educated nation at large.' She continued: 'Educating females takes care of the health of children, sanitation and hygiene of the environment as well as controls unwanted pregnancy and birth.'

While respondents had good awareness about the importance of girls' education, and some awareness about the risks of child marriage, there was little evidence of awareness of girls' rights and gender equality more generally. For example, respondents did not speak of girls' right to an education – just the instrumental value of schooling. Similarly, they did not speak of girls' right to choose their own husband or the age at which they marry, merely of the risks of child marriage. Indeed, although some discriminatory and harmful practices and behaviours are shifting, they appear to be doing so without altering fundamental beliefs about girls' role and value in society vis-à-vis boys. Community Conversation members, for example, said that they send their daughters to school because 'sons are not willing to be ordered by their parents'. Furthermore, they flatly admitted that their daughters are 'weaker in their education' solely because 'males do not agree to share household activities' and they, as parents, are unable to overcome their 'weakness' to insist. Similarly, in the community timeline focus group, participants said that it was important to send girls (but not necessarily boys) to school on time, no later than the age of seven, so that 'they can finish their education... before they go to puberty...'

Leading to hidden practices

While one kebele level key informant was clear that hidden marriages are not an issue in Gargie kebele, there were mixed views from other respondents. The first informant explained that while in other communities 'parents force their child to get married by mimicking other religious social ceremonies... in our case, we never hide this issue.' Other respondents took a different view. Some spoke primarily of hidden marriages in neighbouring kebeles where child marriage remains more common (focus group with Community Conversation members); others seemed to suggest – though not definitively state – that perhaps there are some, albeit not many, secret marriages in Gargie.

12 No timeframe was given for these eight marriages.

Some child marriages take place because the parents are dishonest about their daughter's age. A kebele level educational informant, for example, told us that he had tried to prevent the marriage of a 12-year-old girl; he called the police to intervene after she approached him for help when she learned that she was soon to be married against her will. The girl's father, however, claimed that his daughter was 19 and that the police 'don't know about the age of my daughter because I am her father'. In focus group discussions, some fathers also mentioned secret marriages that were arranged 'by exaggerating the age of the female'.

Other child marriages seem to take place under the pretence that they are not marriages, but other types of ceremonies. Some parents 'cheat the activists', we were told, by 'preparing a local ceremony known as "Mahiber"' (focus group discussion, Community Conversation). A kebele level educational informant explained that this is because 'farmers are becoming more wise' about how 'to escape from the penalty'.

Escaping early marriage

Supported by ANPPCAN, Gargie has mechanisms in place to help girls escape from planned child marriages. Girls, their peers and champions (primarily teachers) can approach officials or the police and have weddings called off. Adolescents related several stories to confirm this (see also Box 11). Boys, for example, said that last year, two girls – one aged 13, one 14 – 'were given to husbands'. The girls themselves 'applied to the concerned body to be saved from the illegal marriage,' they explained. Ultimately, their parents were accused of breaking the law and the planned

marriages were cancelled. Similarly, in a focus group discussion, girls' club members said that they (and boys who are members) would report to the school director when 'elderly people are sent to a girl's family to request her for engagement and marriage' so that 'police will be sent to the girl's family to interrupt the marriage'.

Some respondents, however, reported various impediments to cancelling a marriage. Fathers, for example, explained that when marriages are arranged 'secretly and information is released at the eleventh hour... it becomes difficult to take remedial actions'. This is because, according to one woreda level key informant, kebele leaders are afraid of rejection by groups with whom 'they have lived for many years' and have strong cultural ties.

In other cases, girls were reported to have recanted their objections to the marriage either for fear of seeing their parents punished or because they were threatened by their parents. One girl in a focus group discussion with girls' club members said: 'Whenever the girl knows that her parents are going to be punished seriously, she states that she cancels her accusation and has accepted the marriage proposition on her own willingness'. Another added that because girls want to protect their parents, it is better to help the girl concerned try to persuade her parents before going public and 'accusing her parents to the police'.

Other girls either backed down from objecting to the marriage or even lied about their age to the authorities under pressure from their parents. Girls' club members said that 'parents will warn their daughter that they will set fire to her or kill her unless she cancels her accusal'. The school director noted that the 12-year-old girl mentioned above, whose father

Box 11: Escaping her mother's plans

Asayou is a 16-year-old girl determined to complete her university education and then marry a teacher. While her dreams were twice nearly disrupted by child marriage – at her mother's instigation – her teachers and grandmother helped her secure a better future.

Asayou said that one day, when she was only 10 years old, she came home from school and was told by her older sisters that her parents were planning her wedding. Because she had learnt in school 'about harmful traditional practices like abduction, rape and early marriage', Asayou refused. She explained, 'I threw my exercise books and ran outside and started to cry and scream on the road and that made me act like a crazy person.' She continued, 'I also started threatening my father, saying "I will report the case to the school director if you ever try to marry me off". I told him that I only want to continue my school.'

Her father, Asayou said, was won over: 'He changed his mind with an assurance to wait until I finish my education.' Her mother, on the other hand, persisted in making wedding plans. Although Asayou was only 10 years old, 'She told me I am a big girl now and I must get married.' When reasoning failed, Asayou fled to her grandmother's house. 'She is with me and she advised me, saying "don't be a fool, it is better for you to continue your education. We had gained nothing by marrying early.'

Asayou is clear that, despite custom, girls should never marry before they are 25 years old. Because 'it is better to educate girls than boys', they must first finish university. She explained that most families now understand the importance of girls' education. 'If a girl is educated and has a job, she would help her family a lot. She would give everything she gets to her mother. But boys don't care about their family; they tend to spend everything they get for themselves.' While some parents 'still are not comfortable sending their daughters to school as they believe that girls may engage in sexual activities in school... most parents don't urge their daughters to stop.'



School girl, Amhara region, Nicola Jones, 2015

claimed she was 19, ultimately retracted her objections to the marriage ‘because her family forced her to say like that’.

Woreda level key informants explained that there are two legal impediments to making cancellations more airtight. First, the law does not acknowledge intent – only ‘committed cases’. This means that even if the authorities know that a wedding is being planned, they cannot take the case to court to prevent the wedding; they can only cancel it after it has gone ahead. Second, and evidencing legal confusion on the part of officials¹³, we were told that there is no vehicle for a child bride to request a divorce; ‘because her age is less than 18, the court will not accept her complaint’.

There was a scenario where a girl accused her parent of arranging an under-age marriage and ultimately the mother and the girl were imprisoned. The prospective man pushed his request while the mother and the intended girl are still imprisoned. The funny thing is that the father gave him the elder sister in return and the man accepted her.
(Adolescent girl, focus group discussion)

More coordinated services for girls

There is no evidence of any concerted effort across the woreda or kebele to provide more services for girls, whether coordinated or not. Girls are given school supplies if they are very poor, sometimes by ANPPCAN itself (though through the school), but the primary focus appears to be their economic status, not their gender. Likewise, there are some tutorial classes offered for struggling students, but they are neither coordinated (teachers offer them for individual classes on different days) nor aimed at girls. Indeed, some boys stated that tutorial support in Gargie has been discontinued for the current academic year.

7.1.8 Why has the programme been effective?

Because ANPPCAN’s Girl Power Programme is one of many interventions in the woreda and was specifically mentioned by only a few of our respondents, it is difficult to identify which elements of its approach have been most effective. This is particularly so given that many of its modalities involve strengthening existent platforms and messages (e.g. ANPPCAN’s support of already existent girls’ clubs). That said, respondents did specifically mention the following contributions:

- Girls’ clubs have helped girls learn that menstruation is a ‘natural phenomenon, so girls will not be absent from schools’ (focus group with Development Army members). They also ‘provide them with modis¹⁴

[sanitary pads]’ and have built a special room at school for girls to rest if they are in pain. Helping girls manage their periods is very important, explained the teacher who runs the club, because ‘if a girl is seen having her period, she will never come back to school ever again, because she is filled with shame’.

- The girls’ club has organised students into one-to-five groups to ‘discuss early marriage and dropout problems’ and inform ‘the home room teacher or the school director’ as needed (key kebele level educational key informant). Adolescents report that they have learned about sexual and reproductive health issues (including fistula) at the club and there is clear evidence that the club has helped prevent some marriages. One member of the Development Army said: ‘The clubs are very important. I do have my own uncle’s daughter who was to be marrying early. She told her club and she was rescued and now she is in education.’
- The girls’ club ‘works on gender equality issues’ and teaches girls that ‘they can be a leader, can perform better or equally in academic issues’ and that ‘there is no difference between girls and boys’ (according to a kebele level educational informant). The ANPPCAN coordinator believes that this has helped girls ‘develop confidence’ to ‘argue for their rights’ and ‘discuss with boys’. He also believes the clubs have helped girls ‘develop competitive capabilities in academic performance’.
- Following training provided by ANPPCAN, girls’ club members have raised issues and ideas about gender equality with their fellow students. Last year, 20 students and five teachers received training on gender equality and sexual and reproductive health. Students have then taken those messages to other students as well as the broader school community. One boy in a focus group explained that he was trained on ‘abduction and sexual harassment and how girls are being taken on their way to school or home by criminals for sexual intercourse.’ He added: ‘I shared the knowledge in the classroom.’
- As a direct result of ANPPCAN’s work, last year girls’ club membership was opened up to boys. A kebele level educational informant explained that because of sharing ‘best experience from another school, we understand that harmful traditional practices like early marriage, abduction, sexual harassment and rape are carried out by boys, so we decided that boys should be part of the solution’. Male club members agreed with this reasoning and felt that they were building a new partnership with girls. One boy, for example, said: ‘The challenges faced by girls could not be solved by their own efforts. It needs the collaborative efforts of both boys and girls.’ Another reported that as the result of his training, he feels empowered to step in and act when he sees

13 The procedure for a nullification is different than for a divorce—but the legal pathway to canceling a child marriage is well established.

problems: ‘In my village, if I witness a problem, I do not pass over it. Rather, I began to react to it.’

- The girls’ club also helps educate the community about the risks of child marriage and the benefits of educating girls. Members read ‘emotion-arousing poems in front of the parents’ (according to a focus group discussion with boys).
- ANPPCAN ‘works on awareness creation’ (woreda level key informant) by training local officials and community members ‘on issues such as gender equality, girls’ empowerment, and gender based violence’ (ANPPCAN staff), joining the efforts of local authorities ‘willingly at the kebele level’ and ‘doing the job well’.

7.1.9 What challenges did the programme face?

Most villagers were either unaware of ANPPCAN’s presence in the community or were unable to distinguish its modalities and messages from those used and delivered by the government and other NGOs. Key informants – who were more aware of which authorities and organisations were doing what in the kebele and the woreda – were able to identify a number of challenges specific to ANPPCAN’s Girl Power Programme activities.

First, its activities are very small scale. As a woreda level key informant noted: ‘In its previous project, ANPPCAN involved 37 schools; in its current project, it covers only three.’¹⁴ Another woreda level key informant suggested activities need scaling up, both in terms of financial and human resources. The kebele level key informant said that in Gargie, ANPPCAN was providing ‘education material support’ to only 12 students, boys and girls.

Second, key informants in one woreda office felt that ANPPCAN was not sufficiently coordinating its activities, with one saying that ‘ANPPCAN’s contact with our office is very limited’. He added that sometimes the office does not even know what materials ANPPCAN is distributing to girls and does not know about planned training sessions until a few days before they begin. He went on to say that ANPPCAN’s coordinator ‘most of the time is not at his office’ and ‘the reporting mechanism is weak’.

Another key informant added that another major shortcoming was the programme’s time frame, especially given that ‘government bodies are not following up’. He said: the ‘project duration is very short and things may not be persistent.’ Several villagers suggested that lack of sustainability is a longer-standing concern. In a focus group discussion, one father said: ‘Most of the supports are not sustainable. Even the material supports given for students are not satisfactory like the ones which were given before.’ Another explained that while local women are ‘participating in meetings, particularly about microfinance and saving issues... their participation is not like before. It has declined through time.’

7.1.10 Explaining broader challenges

As discussed earlier, while local communities seem to have taken ownership of messaging about the importance of girls’ education, the same cannot be said of efforts to eliminate child marriage. Child marriage *is* dropping and may well be on its way to elimination. But it is dropping despite the fact that ‘local elderly people are challenging anti-early marriage activities’, the ‘tradition that deacons must marry virgin daughters’ (FGD with Community Conversation members), and mother’ beliefs that 12-year-old girls ‘crave having sex’ (FGD). In part, local ownership is hampered by the ad-hoc way in which many messages are being delivered, mixed in with information ‘about the use of fertilizers, health issues and child education’ but not so tightly linked with any as to make it especially salient on a day-to-day basis (according to a focus group with mothers). Local ownership is also hampered by meeting fatigue. One father said: ‘Every sector from the woreda is arranging meetings at different times. There is not any coordination. Meetings with the whole kebele community are arranged frequently, even up to five to seven days consecutively’. A mother added, ‘If we don’t harvest our crops on time and take care of our cattle... then how can we manage to afford to buy fertilizer, educate children in school or even survive?’ Even an official admitted that he ‘feels shame in calling the meetings because the community is bored because of so many meetings’.

Villagers also reported that local efforts to directly prevent and cancel child marriages are often half-hearted. Some said that marriages are rarely called off because once ‘money has been invested for the ceremony... no one wants to stop the marriage’ (community timeline). Indeed, the Community Conversation member who proudly announced that the kebele had ‘drafted a community rule’ to ensure that parents who engage in child marriage are appropriately punished commented that while it was a ‘good rule, the implementation is not effective’—especially, added a community timeline participant, since kebele and woreda officials do not ‘apply the rules and regulations equally’ and refuse to accuse their own relatives.

Ahaha! No one is punished legally as a consequence of catalysing or facilitating early marriage.
(Adolescent girl, focus group discussion)

In Gargie, hostility towards government leaders and government messages appeared to be significant, even when villagers ultimately understood the value of messages to their own lives. Respondents—both villagers and key informants-- reported that local officials handed out

14 ANPPCAN’s programming has included different numbers of schools in each year

training opportunities to their own relatives, ‘fabricated reports to the upper officials about activities’, accepted bribes, and misspent NGO funds meant for the poor. This engendered a great deal of passive resistance. In a focus group discussion, one mother commented that ‘if they gather us by force, we may go there, but we never give concentrated due attention’. In another discussion, a father added that while the government had tried to build a network of one-to-five groups, they were ‘no longer successful due to strong resistance from the people’. Indeed, a kebele level education informant told us that at times villagers’ strong resistance was not passive—but active. Observing that the ‘society here is mostly used to harming girls’, she was concerned for her own safety when she approached parents about child marriage. ‘There will be a personal attack and hatred,’ she explained, ‘because the people around here are dangerous’.

Finally, one key informant at the woreda level commented that the government’s CSO law had constrained the activities of international NGOs, particularly those dealing with ‘human rights cases’, which had in turn reduced their effectiveness within communities.

7.1.11 Ways forward

Villagers were not sufficiently aware of ANPPCAN’s activities to offer any specific suggestions about how to improve the Girl Power Programme. Many of their suggestions for broader modalities, however, align with programme interventions and could be used to strengthen and expand programming. For example:

- Adolescents felt they needed more training on child marriage issues in general and how to talk to their parents about child marriage in particular. A 13-year-old boy observed that children are a primary vehicle for teaching parents and, as such, needed support in order to ‘transfer the knowledge’.
- Given the importance of religion in the community, several adults suggested more closely integrating churches into the fight against child marriage.
- Several adults specifically noted that deacons and priests need to be targeted for more education, as they are especially culpable in perpetrating child marriage.
- Development Army respondents called for best practices to be shared between kebeles, so that those struggling with how to spread messages and reduce the incidence of child marriage can learn from those who are succeeding.
- Because girls’ school performance is hampered by the amount of housework they have to do, villagers felt that tutorial support just for girls could be useful.
- Parents also felt that the material support given to poor students had been decreasing over time and should be stepped up.

Not directly related to ANPPCAN programming, villagers also called for:

- better community surveillance of planned marriages, especially during the marriage season
- better enforcement of the law, perhaps using security agents
- more jobs for female graduates, as educated girls who remain unemployed not only discourage children and parents from investing in education but also encourage early marriage as adults believe that it ‘exposes girls to giving birth to illegitimate children, abortion, prostitution, sexual assault and so on’.

Apart from observing that ANPPCAN needs to support more students in more schools, our key informants also had little to say about specific improvements to the Girl Power Programme. Like villagers, however, they did make various suggestions about how to strengthen and expand NGOs child-marriage related programming more generally:

- Several key informants observed that awareness-raising activities needed to be specifically directed at developing local ownership of child marriage messages and its elimination. But they were unsure about how this might be accomplished, given that villagers expect payment for every meeting they attend.
- A woreda level key informant observed that a safe house for girls escaping child marriage would be useful, as it would give girls somewhere to go if staying at home was not an option. He considered that this intervention would be a good way for NGOs to support the Office of Women, Children and Youth Affairs.
- Key informants felt that women and religious leaders needed more training on issues surrounding child marriage.
- A woreda level key informant noted that because kebele leaders must be ‘strong and committed’ to end child marriage, they need more ‘capacitating’.

Outside of the potential purview of ANPPCAN or other NGOs, key informants also suggested some other ways to speed up the elimination of child marriage:

- A woreda level key informant noted that if the woreda had a unified registration system for births and deaths, where the ‘age of every person is known’, parents would not be able to make false claims about their daughters’ age.
- A woreda level key informant felt that special courts should be established in every village to deal with child marriage cases. These courts should deal not only with marriages that have taken place but with intended marriages too, and should even-handedly and consistently enforce the national law.
- A kebele level key informant noted that female graduates need employment options that will help the community to continue its investment in girls’ education and delaying the age at marriage.
- A woreda level key informant felt that empowering ‘women with jobs and leadership positions’ would help

build community support for women achieving their full potential in life.

- Several education key informants felt that making schools more ‘attractive’ to children (child-friendly), so that no child ever wanted to miss a single day, could help further increase enrolment rates and contribute to the full eradication of child marriage.

7.2 Lessons learned /implications for future programming

- Change in deeply rooted social norms is messy and non-linear. This is clearly evident in the way that educating girls is now seen as vital—while child marriage persists.
- Child marriage messaging needs more dedicated venues. Including it everywhere means that beneficiaries learn to “tune it out”.
- In other sites the one-to-five groups are working well as that dedicated venue. They not only serve as a focus—

but target mothers—who in this site appear to hold particularly strong views about their daughters’ sexuality.

- In Tigray, the risks of adolescent pregnancy are very tightly bound into other messages and interventions aimed at reducing maternal mortality—such as facility delivery. This seems to provide a reason to abandon custom that is concrete and explicable.
- While linking child marriage with health, education and economic messages is powerful, it is clear that in order to effect real change in norms it is vital to include broader messages aimed at gender equality. Those messages are nearly lacking in Dembia.
- Using the school curriculum to teach about the risks of adolescent pregnancy appears to be an effective way to reach-school girls in Tigray. It does not appear to be implemented here.
- In order for girls’ clubs to empower girls they must not only have a curriculum that emphasises gender, but implement it through hands-on, participatory activities that grow girls’ confidence and voice.
- Trust in local government is important to uptake of messages and adherence to the law.



Girl working in sand mining area, Quarit woreda, Geday Emirie, 2015

8 Finote Hiwot: End Child Marriage Programme

8.1 Key findings

Programme approach and modalities

- Finote Hiwot/End Child Marriage Programme seeks to delay marriage for Amharan girls by empowering community stakeholders –girls, boys, parents and the broader community -- to become partners in change.
- The programme uses different combinations of community conversations, school clubs, and economic incentives (loans and school materials) within different kebeles in four woredas to promote the abandonment of child marriage.
- The programme is also building the capacity of regional, district and village governments (especially BoWYCA, and the Justice Office) to implement child marriage programming at scale.

Lessons from Mecha and Sekela woredas

- In both woredas, while child marriage rates are declining, girls’ domestic burdens continue to hinder their schooling and vocational opportunities.
- Some programme participants reported feeling more empowered to refuse child marriage.
- School administrators and teachers play an important role in protecting girls from child marriage.
- While not yet common, some religious leaders are serving as champions of change and teaching about the negative effects of child marriage to their congregations.
- While kebeles with ‘intensive’ programme inputs have seen transformational effects on both girls’ and broader community attitudes, impacts appeared limited at best in the ‘expansion’ sites.

Entry points for future programming

- School clubs emerged as an important protective factor but need to be supported with content more than with multi-media equipment.

- Economic incentives need to be well targeted to the poorest families--and material support to girls should be prioritised over household loans.
- Robust data collection on child marriage prevalence rates is urgently needed so as to ensure programmes are established in the areas with the greatest need and that programme design is tailored to woreda and kebele specificities.
- Monitoring and evaluation systems need to be designed and followed up to tease apart impact pathways and track the cost-effectiveness of different modalities. Moreover, when adapting programmes from evidence on good practice – in this case the well-known Berhane Hewan programme – it is critical that variations in programme design are justified on the basis of a robust baseline.

8.1.1 Programme objectives and modalities

Finote Hiwot, or “Pathway to Life”, is a DFID-funded programme, working to end child marriage in East and West Gojjam zones, in Amhara. Launched in the first quarter of 2012, the “intended outcome of the End Child Marriage Programme is to delay marriage for at least 200,000 girls¹⁵” (Finote Hiwot, n.d.a). It aims to meet this goal by empowering community stakeholders to become partners in change (Finote Hiwot, 2013b). The programme’s theory of change is built on evidence that suggests that delaying child marriage can be achieved through changing social norms in regard to adolescent girls, and tackling economic drivers underpinning household decisions to marry children early (Calder & Goodman, 2012). Finote Hiwot is implemented by the Ethiopian government through the Ministry of Women Children Youth Affairs (MoWCYA) and Amhara Bureau of Women Children Youth Affairs (BoWCYA).

The programme, also titled End Child Marriage Programme (ECMP), is structured in four overlapping phases of up to two years each to cover all 38 woredas in each zone. Each phase covers 8 woredas and lasts 6 months. In each woreda, ECMP works intensively in four kebeles that were selected for having amongst the highest

15 This has since been revised downwards.

prevalence of child marriage¹⁶ (assessed using a cross-sectional mixed methods baseline survey, discussed below), and then less intensively in the remaining ‘expansion’ kebeles. According to key informants from the Finote Hiwot office, “the basic principle is working intensively in intensive kebeles and taking the best practice to the expansion area since the intensive kebeles are highly vulnerable to child marriage”. The intensive kebeles include all components of the programme discussed below while the expansion kebeles only include the community dialogues and multi-media support to school clubs.

Finote Hiwot has four components (Finote Hiwot, n.d.a). First, it directly works with villagers—including girls, boys, parents and the broader community—to raise awareness about the risks of child marriage, the legal implications and how best to counter families who are planning to marry their daughters off under-age. This component works through Community Conversations, school-based activities and provides some girls with financial incentives. Second, in collaboration with national and regional decision-makers, it is creating and distributing a communication package of anti-child marriage messages. Third, it is building the capacity of all levels of government to design and implement a programme at scale aimed at the elimination of child marriage. Finally, it is contributing to the evidence base of what works to prevent child marriage by disseminating resources in relation to planning and implementation of the programme (although see discussion on dissemination shortcomings below).

A key modality of Finote Hiwot is the Community Conversation (CC) (Finote Hiwot, n.d.b). CCs are being implemented in 32 kebeles in 8 woredas and are focused on helping communities understand what drives child marriage on a local level—with an end goal of helping villagers identify the threats and vulnerabilities that girls and women face in order to bring about norm change. Working with trainers from a variety of sectors—including education, justice, religious institutions, local administration, and the Amharan Women’s Association—Finote Hiwot has organized over 200 Community Change Groups to “actively campaign in their own community” (ibid.). Finote Hiwot is also providing training to other NGOs/CSOs in non-target woredas so that they can run their own Community Conversations with their own constituent populations, although it is unclear how systematic this is. According to existing evaluation evidence, in some kebeles there is evidence that child marriage “has most likely ceased” based on programme reporting; in others, however, CCs ended as soon as Finote Hiwot stopped directing activities (Finote Hiwot, 2013b).

Finote Hiwot is also piloting economic incentives as an approach to tackle child marriage. It is using two different methods. First, the project is providing girls with school

materials and supporting their caregivers with training (e.g., financial literacy training or skills training) (Finote Hiwot, 2013b). Second, the project is also providing girls’ families with a revolving fund aimed at improving income generation (ibid.).

Poor girls aged 9-15 years (irrespective of the other vulnerabilities such as orphanhood or disability) were targeted for economic incentives. Both conditional (on school attendance) and unconditional transfers were tested in terms of impact on child marriage. For girls in school, 4 payments (of 420 ETB each) were to be given—spread out throughout the academic year (upon enrolment, in December and when girls had achieved 80% attendance each semester). Additionally, girls had to remain unmarried in order to be eligible for the school material support. In terms of unconditional incentives, 3,500 Ethiopian Birr were given to chosen households (Calder & Goodman, 2012). According to the implementation manual (Finote Hiwot, n.d.d.), once a girl is selected for the educational materials incentive, her family/caregiver will be automatically eligible for the revolving fund loan—unless the household has any married girl under the age of 18.

School-based clubs and trainings are another key component of the Finote Hiwot package (Finote Hiwot, n.d.c). In addition to training teachers, the programme is developing and empowering peer educators—who facilitate debates and discussions amongst children and adolescents on child marriage and other gender-related issues. It is also providing clubs with mini-media materials that enable members to more easily communicate messages to their families and communities “through drama, poetry and other artistic works” (Finote Hiwot, 2013b). Over the project lifespan, Finote Hiwot ultimately plans to work with schools in all 38 woredas in East and West Gojjam.

8.1.2 Evaluation evidence to date

The programme has been reviewed yearly as part of the DFID annual review process and underwent external review by IMC Worldwide in 2015. While in 2012, the programme was given an overall score of C, by 2014 it had earned a score of A+—although it is noteworthy that the metric highlighted in the assessment was ‘value for money’. The annual review concluded that overall, “ECMP has made great progress over the last two years. It has received accolades from many visitors including the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, UK Government and South African Parliamentarians” (DFID, 2014:4; see also IMC Worldwide).

Cost-Benefit Analysis

According to both the annual and mid-term review, even with the most conservative reduction of child marriage (24,000 cases) and especially given the best case scenario (37,500 cases), the programme continues to represent

16 Kebeles were also selected on the basis of whether they had at least two primary schools and were well situated for diffusion.

Programme basics

Programme name: Finote Hiwot: End Child Marriage Programme

Programme approach:

The original intended outcome of the End Child Marriage Programme was to delay marriage for at least 200,000 girls in Amhara's East and West Gojam zones. This was revised downward, to 37,500 girls after the 2011 DHS reported steep "natural" declines. The programme is composed four major components:

- **Community Level Programmes** are comprised of community conversations and support for school-based clubs. They are also piloting economic incentives.
- **Strategic Engagement and Communications** are primarily aimed at creating and disseminating key messages to support the end child marriage campaign. They engage with national and regional decision-makers, including elected representatives, and hold dialogue to strengthen policies, improve legislation and capture resources for scale up
- **Capacity Building** is aimed at strengthening the capacity of the government to design, plan, implement, monitor and finance a large scale programme to end child marriage in Ethiopia
- **Monitoring and Evaluation, Learning and Dissemination** is primarily aimed at providing a solid evidence basis for decision-making in relation to planning, implementing and distributing resources (human and financial) for evidence-based interventions.

Dates: Started on October 2011 (Implementation phase commenced in February 2012) and will end on September 1st, 2016

Funding agency: UK Department for International Development (DFID)

Budget: £10 million over 5 years

Geographical coverage: FH is working in all woredas in East and West Gojam—but varies interventions by kebele, based on whether the local area is targeted for "intensive" intervention or is part of the "expansion" phase. \ Kebeles chosen for the former have: (a) the highest prevalence of child marriage; (b) at least two primary schools; and (c) are well situated for diffusion. The four target woredas are Mecha and Anchefer (in West Gojjam) and Dejen and Aneded (in East Gojjam).

Number of beneficiaries: The programme is aimed at delaying the marriages of 37,500 girls. As of the mid-term review, it had trained over 4,000 community facilitators, was supporting over 460 school clubs and had held nearly 70 training events in expansion villages. It has also supported nearly 2500 households with loans and provided school supplies to nearly 6000 girls.

Evaluation evidence and dates: Internal evaluation through an annual review undertaken by DFID in late 2014 and external mid-term review undertaken by iMC in 2015.

good value for money, with benefits being nearly twice as high as costs (Benefit to Cost ratio of 1:1.8 and 1:2.2). An independent VfM (value for money) analysis indicated that the programme will be improving value for money over the 5 years of the programme from "£5.38 per girl (compared to a budget of £10.47) in intensive programme areas and £0.21 per girl (compared to a budget of 0.81) in expansion areas" (DFID, 2014: 4). Box 12 details this cost-benefit analysis. As discussed below, however, existing methodologies for assessing value for money on such complex social norm processes arguably require further thought.

Despite progress, the reviews noted some weaknesses of the programme so far. First, the current 'intensive and

expansion' approach has been assessed as too expensive to be taken up and replicated by government. Given the drop in the number of expected preventions (from 200,000 to 37,500), the reviewers noted that it is important to assess whether a re-design of the programme is required in order to combine a low cost "expansion plus" intervention that can be scaled up by government with a targeted intervention focused on those most difficult to reach (e.g. out of school girls). Furthermore, according to the annual review, "it is critical that learning from qualitative and quantitative evidence informs this decision" (DFID, 2014: 7). This will be challenging, both reviews notes, given that the current M&E system is not working well-- despite

Box 12: Programme achievements so far as per DFID annual review

- FH ECMP has been transformational in helping the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) develop its commitment to preventing Child Marriage (CM) as announced at the July 2014 London Girl Summit.
- FH ECMP has contributed to creating momentum to address Child Marriage issues under the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) 2 and to secure GTP 2 budgets, and future sector/regional plans.
- The target number of girls that the programme hopes to prevent getting married has been reduced from 200,000 to 37,500, due to a faster than anticipated “natural” decline in child marriage.
- Community-based interventions have been expanded into Phases 2 and 3.
- Strengthening of Harmful Traditional Practices committees is underway at district level and gradually, extending to village level.
- The Economic Incentives Programme is now into its third round of revolving fund loan disbursements to 2,377 beneficiaries over the three months to end September 2014.
- Training on business development and entrepreneurship is delivered to beneficiaries.
- School materials disbursement is on track.

Source: DFID Annual Review 2014, pg. 2-3

Box 13: Financial performance of FH

A DFID-commissioned VfM assessment of ECMP was produced in February 2014 and then again in September/October 2014 to examine whether the programme continues to represent value for money.

Table 7: Costs per efficiency indicators

Efficiency Indicators	Budget	Cost 2013	Cost 2014
Spend per girl in intensive areas (excluding Technical Assistance costs)	ETB 332 / £10.47	ETB 508 / £16.00	ETB 171.00 / £5.38
Spend per girl in expansion areas (excluding Technical Assistance costs)	ETB 25 / £0.81	ETB 7 / £0.22	ETB 8 / £0.25
Cost to train one CC Facilitator (intensive areas)	ETB 6,816 / £215.03	n/a	ETB 2,670 / £84.24
Spend per school club member (intensive)	ETB 134 / £4.31	n/a	ETB 75.00 / £2.37
Cost per CC meeting/session	ETB 2250 / £71.00	ETB 1965.4/£62.00	ETB 1616.7/ £51.00

Source: DFID 2014; ECMP Programme Expenditure Report to 30 September 2014

A few key findings that emerged from the VfM analysis (DFID 2014:15):

- Reaching girls via Community-Based Programmes costs nearly 20 times in intensive areas versus expansion areas (£5.38/girl versus £0.25/girl).
- Unit costs for many activities are below budget. For example, the cost per trained Community Development Facilitator (CDF) in expansion areas is only 28% of the budgeted cost and the cost per expansion training event is some 20% of what was budgeted. (This could mean that there is slower than expected local spending.)
- The number of girls impacted by the programme needs to be reviewed in light of information from the control site (South Gonder)—which suggests that 24,000, rather than 37,500 girls may be impacted. On this basis, the estimated benefit:cost ratio falls from 2.2 to a finally agreed ratio of 1.8.

Source: DFID Annual Review 2014

heavy emphasis on learning. Not all information is passing from village to district level and the evidence data base, which is required in order to help the GoE meet its commitment to abandonment, is suffering as a result. Finally, the review states that there is a weak exit strategy for each phase and for the programme as a whole, which is of concern given that the broader evidence base on social norm change processes underscores that shifts in norms and related behaviours are rarely linear in nature (e.g. Bichierri, 2012).

8.1.3 Primary research findings

We now turn to a discussion of the findings from our primary research conducted in Mecha and Sekela woredas in 2014. In order to contextualise these findings, a basic community profile at woreda level is presented in Box 14. Our concerns about the differences in these communities, and how they were reflected in practice, is presented in Box 15

Local drivers of child marriage

The general consensus in both Mecha and Sekela was that child marriage has declined significantly in recent years. Respondents also noted a greater awareness about the risks

of child marriage. On the other hand, there is also evidence of “hidden practices”, with child marriage occurring “when the school is closed for a semester break” so as to avoid intervention from school administration.

As one of the community conversation facilitators noted, it is important to be “cautious and critical” before claiming that child marriage has been eradicated. He explained that “it is difficult to ensure that every individual is changed. Many peasants still believe that, ‘I must see the wedding of my child before I die!’” Indeed, in the Golen kebele of Sekela, Finote Hiwot volunteers were only “able to force the people to cancel some 50 wedding plans out of 82 planned arrangements”. Fathers in focus group settings further revealed that “after girls reach grade 5 or 6, there is this our culture of marrying them. This culture does not cease to exist”.

The main driver for child marriage in Mecha and Sekela is parental pressure --mainly due to socio-cultural traditions that see child marriage as an expected part of childhood. This is reinforced by parents’ need for support in old age—and their belief that uneducated children will be less likely to migrate and therefore provide better care. An Iddir member in Mecha, for example, explained

Box 14: Community overview

With an area of 1,481.64 square kilometres, *Mecha* woreda in the West Gojjam Zone of Amhara, has a total population of nearly 300,000 and is considered one of the most food secure and surplus producing woredas in the region. Livelihoods primarily depend on agricultural production and trading, though fishing is also important during the months of July-September and there is some migration to other woredas—mostly also for agricultural work. A good road network facilitates trade within the woreda and provides access to external markets.. The biggest markets in woreda are in Merawi and Bahir Dar. Mecha woreda has 101 full-cycle primary schools (Grades 1-8), which enrol nearly 81,000 children, and 7 secondary schools (Grades 9-12), which enrol just over 8,500.

Tagel Wodefit kebele has a population of 7,300, all of whom are Ethiopian Orthodox. While the kebele is still productive, land shortages have encouraged over-farming, which has reduced soil fertility. There are 2400 students enrolled in its three primary schools—a slight majority of whom are girls.

Sekela woreda is also in West Gojjam and has a total population of nearly 150,000—nearly all of whom are Ethiopian Orthodox Christians . Unlike Mecha, Sekela is food insecure, due to extensive soil degradation. Nevertheless, the majority of households earn most of their income from agricultural wage labour. While a few households use irrigation, most agricultural activities are dependent on summer rains. The main crops cultivated are barley and potato, the bulk of which are produced for household consumption as access to markets is limited. In addition, three-quarters of households have at least one member who migrates in search of paid agricultural work. Sekela has 38 first-cycle primary schools (Grades 1-4), 34 full-cycle primary schools (Grades 1-8), and 2 secondary schools (Grades 9-12).

Bahirazafa kebele also has a population of 7300, the vast majority of whom are Ethiopian Orthodox farmers. Its three primary school enrol just over 2,00 students, a slight majority of whom are male.

Table 8: Rates of child marriage, by residence and age (Source: 2007 census)

	Mecha	Sekela	West Gojjam	Amhara
Girls aged 10-14	11.9%	17.7%	14.2%	9.8%
Girls aged 15-17	35.1%	45.5%	37.4%	27.2%



IGT participants, Tahtay Adiabo, Dejen Teklu, 2015

Box 15: Finote Hiwot's baseline survey

Finote Hiwot undertook a large cross-sectional baseline survey at the end of its first year of programming—aimed at both fine tuning approaches as well as establishing a baseline against which to measure impact. The survey had a mixed-methods design that included a quantitative survey completed by nearly 10,500 people in 36 woredas and qualitative component that included 250 interviews. Questions were aimed at exploring the interaction between child marriage and education, community norms regarding child marriage, knowledge about the law, etc.. Approximately two-thirds of respondents were from intervention areas in East and West Gojjam. The other one-third was from a control area in South Gondar.

Our research raises a number of questions about whether and how this baseline survey was used to tailor programming. There appears, for example, to have been no attempt to account for kebele—or even woreda—specific context. Mecha, for example, is not only food secure but surplus producing. Sekela, on the other hand, is food insecure. Furthermore, the two areas differ widely in terms of both children's access to secondary schools and the relative activism of local officials.

Furthermore, while the baseline survey found that child marriage in the implementation areas was not strongly associated with poverty, with 25% of married girls identifying their families as “rich” and another 40% considering their families “comfortable”, Finote Hiwot has none-the-less heavily invested in economic incentives. With the baseline data, care could have been taken to ensure that only the poorest are offered school supplies and loans. However, the mid-term review noted that “a fixed number of families receive support in each woreda, regardless of the relative wealth/poverty in the area” and our research has uncovered evidence of both elite-capture (with well-off families more likely to receive loans) and unintended negative consequences on children's education (with loans being used to purchase livestock that then keeps children out of school).

Finally, the survey counted girls who had been “promised” in marriage as married—both because the community sees them as married and because it was assumed that at some point they would begin living with their husbands. However, the survey also noted that two-thirds of all promises had already been cancelled—primarily so that girls could continue their educations. Given our work in other hotspots in Gojjam, which found that very young girls were almost exclusively married “ceremonially” –with divorce most often following marriage by only a few weeks and no expectation that the marriage would ever be “real”—we question the survey's categorization. Indeed, the inclusion of these “promised” girls makes many of the other findings hard to interpret. For example, the survey found that only 16% of promised girls in the implementation area were informed of the promise beforehand. This is hardly surprising, however, given girls' ages when promised—and of limited meaning in the context of rapid divorce.

that “some parents with more children might decide to settle early marriage for some of them. They consider it as prestigious. They also prefer to have someone helping them during old age. They believed that after completing their education, they will depart from their parents due to employment. Children who are not educated and settled nearby are considered as an old age security in the society”. Similarly, adolescents noted that parents feel that it is important to see their children get married “before they die as marriage is seen as one of the best cultural practices that brings pride and happiness”.

In Sekela, stories from girls who escaped marriage—either just before or just after—revealed the extent to which parents are willing to hide marriage arrangements to prevent their daughters from finding out in time to get help (see Box 16).

Economic need pushes some girls into child marriage. Sometimes it is parents who see marriage as a route out of financial difficulties. One girl who escaped child marriage, for example, stated that “the father of the boy who offered the marriage for me is rich afutnd so my parents cannot refuse the marriage”. Other times, however, girls

themselves see marriage as an exit strategy from poverty. Girls' club members said that some girls were attracted by the “clothes and gold they may get during marriage”.

Care work burdens are another risk factor for girls dropping out of school and in turn being more vulnerable to the risk of child marriage. In Mecha, girls' club members explained that “during busy times, being absent twice a week from class is common”. Girls also have little time to keep up with their homework. An iddir member explained, that “For the girls, after returning from schools, they are forced to help their parents in domestic activities. They are not allowed to do their homework and using their extra time for studying. They are engaged in activities like fetching water, helping their mothers, and doing some familial activities”. Teachers are very aware of why girls are truant and often ill-prepared for class. A teacher said, “I try to give them advice so they can prioritise their education, but they say that unless they help out in the house, there won't even be food to eat”.

School-leaving is also related to poor access to secondary schools. As most are located in towns, girls

Box 16: Genat's struggle against her father's wishes to marry

Genat, who is 14 years old, was not informed about her marriage until the day of the wedding—when she was asked to wear “new clothes” for her sister’s wedding. Little did she know that her father had arranged her marriage for the same day. Though she “cried and refused to go with the groom”, who was a priest, her parents insisted and she was married. She was “made to leave the home from the back of the street to hide and escape from the eyes of community”. She only stayed for two days with her husband’s family and then returned to her parents because her in-laws decided that she should continue her education—mostly because her father was afraid of being caught and imprisoned. “My father told the groom’s family his fear that he will be prisoned if he didn’t send me to school. Once I came back home, I told my father that I will report to the school principal if they forced me to drop my education”. Genat is still married to her husband, although she has no relationship with him. Because he is a priest, she is not allowed to divorce him.

“must rent a dorm and she needs food and everything, so that might be very difficult”, explained a mother in a Women’s Development Group. Especially, added a father, “since the productivity of our land decreased, it is difficult for us to send our children to areas far from our village to attend secondary school”. Other parents told us that they were worried about their daughters’ physical and sexual safety if they were living away from home and felt that the best option was for “a secondary school (at least for ninth and tenth grade) should be opened in our locality”.

Interviewer: *How many girls drop out of school?*

Participant: *Every year five to ten girls will marry early before the age of 18.*

(Focus group with school going girls in Mecha)

Local protective factors against child marriage

While child marriage continues to threaten many girls in Sekela and Mecha, there are a variety of local factors supporting elimination—though they are difficult to disentangle from Finote Hiwot’s impacts. Indeed, respondents told us that recent progress towards abandonment has been so significant that “child marriage is old fashioned” now and “those who didn’t send their children to school are regretting it now”. A girls’ club leader added that the prestige formerly afforded to parents at their daughter’s wedding was increasingly shifting to the parents of graduates. She said, “now the graduation ceremonies are labelled as wedding ceremonies. The wedding is substituted by graduation”.

The most significant factor working to protect girls from child marriage is their own increasing access to decision-making. In Mecha, for example, a 14 year old refused a marriage even after her parents had received the bride price. “Her parents,” she explained, “became afraid of possible punishment and so returned the bride price to

Now there is a change, now marriage is the interests of the couple. Most of the time, the children are getting married after completing their education and choose their partners by their own interest of each other. Now, marriage by the interests of parent is not there.

(Father of adolescent girl, Mecha woreda)

the boy’s family”. Another girl, who was unsure of her exact age, had managed to escape marriage—though not return to school. She explained that when her family had tried to make her marry, she had refused and determined to support herself rather than follow their demands. She explained, however that “Although I was able to escape early marriage, they refused to support me in school any longer and so I made ends meet by working as a babysitter in a neighbouring town”.

Girls’ increasing awareness of the law is supporting their increased decision-making—most today know that the law is on their side and a growing number are willing to use reporting chains to ensure that they are not married. A Women’s Development Association member explained that child marriage “has come to an end because if parents attempt to give away their children in marriage to another person without the knowledge of the local law enforcement agencies, children would run away from their

The problem that I faced as child marriage. Then I respond to the school director that my family is forcing me to marry against my will. After that my father was called by the school director who advised him not to marry me off and made him sign an agreement that stated that he cannot marry me off before I become 18 years old. My father agreed and cancelled the marriage.

(13 year old girl in Sekele who escaped child marriage)

home to inform or report the case to their school teachers or to the nearby police office”.

Girls’ clubs have been critical in helping girls learn about the law. In Mecha, a girl’s club leader explained that “we teach our members to inform us if their families are forced them to marry. As a result in the previous school I was at, we cancelled two early marriages”. Teachers also follow up with parents when students “are absent from the class three days a week without any valid reason”. For example, one girl in Sekela reported that when her mother was trying to make her marry, “my teacher called my mother and advised her.” Even though her mother had refused to listen to other advice, even from her own parents, who “requested that she should drop the marriage proposal... when my teacher advised her, she accepted”.

In some cases, local religious leaders “vehemently condemn” child marriage and “promote girls’ education” (fathers)—albeit with the significant caveat that girls of 15 are no longer seen as children. An iddir member explained, “Biblically, in the *Metsihafe-tekilil*, marriage below the age of 15 years for female and 18 years for males is not allowed. Even, a marriage without the consent of the couples is not encouraged by the church”.

Programme outcomes

Awareness raising of harmful effects of child marriage

Respondents in intensive kebeles were agreed that Finote Hiwot had been key to changing both attitudes about child marriage and actual practice—primarily through

the community conversations and dialogues. The most important theme has been helping villagers learn about the risk of child marriage. One member explained, “*The local community has learned about it from the awareness creation programs conducted in the locality through community conversations, community dialogues, and community trainings with the help of health extension workers.*” A father in Sekela agreed. He explained, “unlike in the past, child marriage is not a common practice today. Nowadays, this has changed due to the continuous community awareness raising campaigns. Currently, the local community is incredibly aware of the depressing sides of marrying girls as early as eighteen and the positive outcomes of educating girls”. Indeed, a father in Mecha added that community conversations, which “take place in different places including the church and are led by community facilitators”, have been far more important to changing attitudes than fear of the law. He stated:

Usually our people do not believe in penalty because if they fear penalty they may practice it secretly but what I have understood is that the practice is reduced due to community conversations conducted in the community rather than due to penalty. Now people started thinking it’s more important to care for their daughters and get educated. So, I can say that this change is the result of education.

In addition to emphasising the direct harm that child marriage causes girls, community conversations have

Box 17: Naya’s perseverance in getting an education for herself

Naya wanted to attend school because “when she saw her friends who went to school, she really got worried thinking about her future and did not want to remain a cattle herder”. She asked her parents to send her to school but they disagreed with her. Naya’s parents wanted her to be at home because “there is nobody who can help them in household chores. They wanted me to help them in the household chores. My father especially wanted me to look after the cattle as I had no brother who can herd the cattle.” But, she added, “I don’t think they would prevent me from going to school if I were a boy, rather they would encourage me”.

So Naya sought help from her aunt, who is a teacher, and told her that “if they do not give me the chance to go to school like my friends, I will run away”. As a result, her aunt intervened and advised her parents to send her to school. She has also been helping Naya pay school fees—since she is not a beneficiary of any of the community’s interventions.

Naya said, “my mother can’t write her name. She signs using her fingerprints. She can’t lead a planned life. So I don’t want to be like my mother. Rather I want to be successful in life and lead an independent life. If I could establish a family in the future, I would like to lead a planned life and I always dream of my future children’s good and bright future. I also want to educate my younger siblings. This way I can benefit myself, my family and my country”.

Naya’s plans for the future did not stop her father from arranging a child marriage for her to “someone who is rich and has a lot of land.” Even though she was only 15.

Naya once again stood up for her rights and told her father that “material wealth/land can be diminished to nothing but education is the long lasting wealth so I have to be educated rather than get married.” Threatening to run away, she continued, “If you insist on marrying me, I will migrate to a town and engage in daily labour and continue my education in the night shift so I will have a better future. I don’t want to be illiterate like my mother”.

When he did not agree—Naya carried through on her threat and ran away to her grandparents’ home.

Her father conceded defeat and cancelled the marriage.

also helped participants see the relationship between land fragmentation/degradation and education—and the advantages of adult marriage. Specifically, they have emphasized that it is vital that girls have other livelihood options—other than farming—with which to support their future families. A member in Mecha explained, we are “teaching them how education is useful since the land has become scarce”. Nowadays, said one father, the community has rallied around girls’ education. He said, “if someone keeps his daughter at home or tries to marry her, his friends may tell him that he would better send her to school so that both he and his daughter can be benefited from the fruits of education.”

Awareness raising about gender inequality

Community conversations are also helping kebeles engage in dialogue about broader gender inequalities. A Women’s Development Group member, for example, commented “we have learned about gender equality through community dialogue, and the one to five development groups, etc. For instance, we reconcile a husband and wife if there is any confrontation between them.”

In Mecha, dialogues are separated so that men and women discuss issues independently. According to facilitators, this has improved women’s confidence and voice and led to “women being highly benefited”. She continued, “They can freely express their idea and they have the courage to talk in public. In previous times women used to hide their problems and did not want to talk to their families and their husbands. Now this attitude is changed and they express their feelings frankly”.

Community conversations are also helping villagers understand how the unequal division of household labour is impacting girls’ education. Girls in Mecha reported that though they used to be “absent from school on Monday and

Wednesdays when our mothers went to the market. But our household work is decreasing now because our mothers are getting more awareness from Finote Hiwot conversations”.

Fostering cooperative legal enforcement

Finote Hiwot also works closely with local institutions—including the police, churches and schools—to foster the cooperation needed to ensure that child marriages are reported and cancelled. A woreda level informant noted that while the justice office is working “on prevention of the practice of child marriage”, they are doing so in close cooperation with “BoWCYA, Police, Finote Hiwot, UNICEF/Gender Based Violence”. According to the Mecha justice office’s report, more than 50 marriages had been cancelled in 2014. Similarly, in Sekela, community conversation members said they had “stopped 82 planned arrangements—32 of them cancelled through education while 50 others who refused to accept the training were brought to the kebele evaluation and assessment committee/gingema committee and finally were forced to cancel it”. A Women’s Development Group member added, “We report to the nearby police office if there is a case related to child marriage”.

Increased school retention of girls due to economic support

If there was no intervention of Finote Hiwot, we would get married early.

(Girl in Mecha)

In intensive kebeles, Finote Hiwot’s economic incentives have been key to improving girls’ school enrolment and reducing dropout. Many beneficiaries noted that “our

Box 18: Community conversations in the Finote Hiwot programme

Community conversation participants “are selected from youth, women, religious leaders, and community elders”. They are then provided, by Finote Hiwot, with training and materials (both content and stationary)—after which they begin to lead their communities in dialogues about child marriage. In Sekela, community conversation facilitators indicated that Finote Hiwot also provides refreshments and “some allowance” for meetings.

Community conversations are run in both intensive and expansion kebeles. In the intensive sites, training is first given at the zonal level to representatives from Women, Children, and Youth Affairs—who then become trainers themselves. Finote Hiwot then selects 25 people from each kebele, all of whom agree to stay in the area for at least a year. When these 25 return home, they register 70 people (35 men and 35 women), selected from different sectors such as the church, women’s association and other structures. Working carefully with training manuals, community conversation leaders encourage groups to be vigilant about spotting and reporting planned child marriages, particularly during the wedding season. These kebele level facilitators also have opportunities to exchange experiences with facilitators from other kebeles. Such opportunities were positively valued by those involved.

The process differs in expansion sites. In those kebeles, 5 people per kebele—selected from Women’s Association members and local religious leaders—are chosen for a three day participatory training. Working closely with the Office of WCYA, they are also given manuals and are then sent back to their kebeles to register 40 people (20 men and 20 women) for conversation groups.

families send us to school because Finote Hiwot gives us exercise books and they also get money from Finote Hiwot”.

In Mecha, for example, one girl reported that Finote Hiwot had helped her return to school after years of domestic service. After a “friend told me that there is an organization that is helping poor girls”, her parents “changed their plan and I came back to school”. She

Had it not been for the help we obtain from this Finote Hiwot, I would have forced my second kid to be a maid in someone’s house so that I can get some money. I am poor.

(Mother of beneficiary girl in Mecha)

added, “the Finote Hiwot programme is providing us with various educational materials like exercise books (nine exercise books each contains fifty pages), pens (five BIC pens), pencils (four pencils), bag (one), soap (six soap), underwear (two), sanitary pad (four modes)”.

In addition to providing school materials to girls, Finote Hiwot has also been providing the parents of girl beneficiaries with a revolving loan/fund—also aimed at keeping them in school. A father explained that though he wanted his daughter to go to school, his wife did not want that because the elder sister failed grade 10 examinations. As a result, his wife forced his daughter to “withdraw for one year. But in 2012 she got aid like education materials. She was also selected to get some loan because of being poor. Through this loan, I [the father] bought three sheep”. Now the father feels that his wife is keen that his daughter continues to go to school so that they can continue receiving economic incentives. Notably, access to loans is only available to the families of girls who remain unmarried.

Improving awareness on child marriage through school clubs

School-based girls’ clubs, which are receiving mini-media support from Finote Hiwot, have also been important to reducing child marriage. In Sekela, for instance, the girl’s club leader indicated that “until last year, there were a number of child marriages in this locality.” Now, she added, we teach girls and “focus on the impact of early marriage on the health, education, economy. We also convince parents not to practice it”. As we note further below, however, school clubs are part of a nationwide government initiative, and so it is important to consider how and to what extent Finote Hiwot is adding value. Perhaps the most important contribution emerged as the provision of menstrual management support in some schools— including the construction of a room where girls can change in privacy – and sanitary pads for girls selected for the material support package. Girls reported that such support was helpful in reducing embarrassment around menstruation which often results in regular absences from

school, which can over the longer-term have a negative impact on girls’ schooling.

7.1.6 Programme challenges

While as discussed above the programme has had a range of positive effects in intensive intervention kebeles, our findings suggest that Finote Hiwot faces a number of challenges, not all of which were highlighted in existing evaluation documents.

Meeting fatigue (CSA and ICF International, 2012)

A broad complaint to come out of our research is that the community conversation component has engendered considerable meeting fatigue. Many people told us that they are absent from the conversations because they feel that they have heard the lessons before and would rather spend their time working. While facilitators have tried to rotate topics, in order to circumvent this, they also noted that attendance has not improved. There were also concerns from some community facilitators that there was very limited follow up by either programme coordinators or woreda bureau staff, which was not only personally discouraging but also signalled to villages that the issue was not a priority agenda.

Challenges facing economic incentives component of programme (CSA and ICF International, 2012)

Finote Hiwot’s economic incentives seem especially challenged, though beneficiaries were loath to complain because they see them as important to economic mobility. First, in regard to the revolving fund, many of our respondents were under the impression that the support was a donation—not a loan that had to be repaid. While programme coordinators stressed that they had emphasised that the programme was providing ‘loans not grants’, the fact that we heard this concern in several sites suggests that more detailed information and communication is required. Others felt that Finote Hiwot’s loan terms were less generous than other sources of credit in the community. “Why”, asked one father, “we can borrow from other loan providers which can lend us up to 6000 birr instead of only 3500 Ethiopian Birr from Finote Hiwot?” Families also noted that disbursement was difficult. One girl, for instance, explained that “my mother came and signed on a form three or four times” before she could get the money to buy livestock.

A key issue facing the revolving fund, according to our respondents, is that it may be inadvertently keeping girls out of school. Several noted that when families are able to purchase extra livestock, girls are required to stay home and tend them. One girl explained, “because as soon as the father gets the money and buys the poultry or sheep or any other animals, the need for taking care of the animal increases which demands more time. So the father needs his daughter to take care of the animals and forces her to be absent from school.”

Finote Hiwot's material support to girls has also faced challenges. First, respondents told us that process for selecting beneficiaries is not transparent and often fails to include the poorest girls (see Box 19). Others told us that targeting is haphazard, providing support to one girl in a family while ignoring her sister, or that the programme was essentially wasting resources, by "targeting children who come from the well-to-do families". Finally, even beneficiaries who were pleased with support noted that it was too small scale to have much impact. As one girl explained, "Finote Hiwot is providing us all these services once a year, and it is largely insufficient"—the supplies, she added, do not even last the school year.

It should also be noted that an unintended consequence of providing school supplies to the poorest has been increased bullying. Girl beneficiaries reported, "intermittently our friends and classmates insult, humiliate and demoralize us due to the programme which basically target girls who come from poor family like us." There is clearly a need for broader school-wide communication about the programme and its objectives so as to tackle this risk more proactively.

Management challenges (CSA and ICF International, 2012)

Respondents noted a number of management challenges as well—primarily related to staff turn-over and failed diffusion. For example, while Finote Hiwot trains officials at the BoWCYA, high turn-over in that office means that employees often have no familiarity with programme components. Similarly, an iddir member explained that at the kebele level, programmes are often "interrupted" because "no one is taking the courage to run the dialogue". In part, added a woreda level informant, this is because rather than providing stipends, which would encourage the most competent to become involved, Finote Hiwot relies on "facilitators who are illiterate volunteers who lack the capacity". Programme implementers noted that beyond mere turn-over issues, the fact that the programme only stays in a given site for one year, and then moves on to another, not only precludes long-term follow-up, but also

risks being able to address potential reversals in social attitudes and behaviours, and to proactively address the underground practice of child marriage.

Geographical constraints also create challenges for the programme because they prevent the diffusion on which outcomes rely. An implementer, for example, told us that more remote kebeles are often totally inaccessible. He said, "in some cases also the two kebeles may be separated by mountains. So due to geographical and other barriers it becomes difficult to access some kebeles". In this regard, transportation limits are a real concern – while the programme woreda coordinators have access to a motorbike this was reportedly not available to BoWCYA staff whose only option is to rely on joining other woreda staff on periodic trips rather than being able to arrange a systematic programme of kebele visits given that most sites are too far to reach within a reasonable timeframe on foot. This is particularly problematic in assessing whether there has been any real impact in the extensive kebele sites.

Budget limitations (CSA and ICF International, 2012)

Key informants reported that despite the fact that Finote Hiwot is a well-funded programme, on a local level they face significant constraints due to budget short-falls¹⁷. A justice official, for example, noted "in terms of financial support, Finote Hiwot has limited finance to support us". Similarly, teachers leading girls' clubs believed that budget issues were significantly hampering their work. One commented that "we have no office and we meet in under the tree. We tried to apply to get office but they keep silent." Others added that club leaders receive no training and that there is an inadequate supply of materials given the number of girls who wish to participate in clubs. While teachers were grateful for the mega-phones they had been given by Finote Hiwot, they felt that content related supplies would have been far more useful. And as mentioned above, while facilitators in intensive sites appreciated the ability to share experiences with facilitators from other kebeles, several noted that the community conversations relied primarily on the personal motivation of facilitators rather than on

Box 19: Missed opportunity for helping Yidet

"At the beginning, my parents did not buy clothes and I have no information about the marriage relation that they decided to create with my husband's parents. I tried to refuse the marriage by reasoning that I have to go to school and finish it before marriage. My parents pressurized me to marry by refusing to give my educational materials like pens, exercise books and other things. Because I had no choice and they refused to help me, I started to engage in some income generating activities at my leisure time. So now on Saturday, I am so involved in trading activities. I only sell soaps. I am now learning by saving from what I get from the market. Otherwise, my parents do not provide me with learning materials. Thus, I can say that I learn by myself without getting any support from parents or from any other institution".

¹⁷ Note that the annual review found that the programme is under budget and noted that this could be because funds were not being dispersed quickly enough.

follow up by programme coordinators or local bureau staff, thus helping to explain the wide variation in community conversation outcomes and activism.

Evidence base

While a key goal of Finote Hiwot is to establish an evidence base about what works in terms of reducing child marriage, our research, as well as both DIFID's 2014 annual review and IMC's 2015 mid-term review, found that evidence is thus far lacking. Finote Hiwot has an innovative design which ought to allow it to test different combinations of interventions. It has intensive sites and expansion sites. It provides two types of economic incentives. It offers incentives on a conditional and unconditional basis. And yet, despite the fact that the programme has been running for three years, there is no clear evidence about which modalities are the most efficacious—which makes planning scale-up impossible. This is particularly glaring in light of the fact that serving the intensive sites costs 20 times more than serving the expansion sites. Furthermore, our interviews with programme coordinators also suggested that the existing evidence was not closely integrated with the programme cycle and was not leading to programme adaptations on a timely basis. Most basically, while there was considerable investment in collecting baseline data, there is no evidence that subsequently woreda and kebele specific evidence-informed profiles were developed in order to shape programming responses. Instead a standard approach was used across irrespective of potentially different drivers of child marriage, locally protective factors, woreda capacities and so forth. In the same vein, to date the programme has not managed to generate compelling insights into what matters in terms of programme site base conditions, programme component sequencing, or programme component combinations – all of which appear to be missed opportunities given the innovative design and scale of the programme.

Moreover, Finote Hiwot's existing documentation is difficult to find. The programme's website has links to only a handful of news stories and publications—all from 2013 and largely dedicated to the programme's goals rather than its impacts. The website contains no mention of the baseline survey, conducted in 2012, mid-term survey, undertaken in 2014, or the mid-term review, completed in 2015. In the interests of broader learning, ensuring that this sort of documentation is available is vital.

Finally, although the DFID annual and mid-term reviews have highlighted the programme's value for money credentials, there are important methodological shortcomings in existing VfM approaches for understanding programming aimed at social norm change processes. Focusing on the number of marriages averted when a) existing reporting systems are weak and flawed, b) given the acknowledged emergence of underground practices and c) in light of what is known about subsequent reversals over time in social norm change processes is at best a limited

measure. One would hope to see more nuanced discussions about these caveats, as well as an investment going forward in collecting cost effectiveness data from multiple programmes with different programming approaches both during and then several years after the end of these programmes to assess legacy effects so as to facilitate a more robust assessment of value for money.

8.2 Ways forward to strengthen programming effects on child marriage

Based on our findings, we propose the following ways to strengthen the existing programme:

- More creative approaches are needed to deal with the meeting fatigue plaguing community conversations in some kebeles. This is especially important given that the diffusion effects envisaged from the intensive/extensive kebele design does not appear to be effective.
- School clubs are an important protective factor, but could have a more impactful role if they were provided with support in terms of content (e.g. manuals, discussion guidelines/ suggestions) and not just multi-media equipment. Moreover, because the teachers leading girls' clubs are the key interface between content and girls—they need training on how best to support girls given the gendered vulnerabilities they face.
- Counselling services must be launched in the school for both students who are targeted by the programme and for those who are not yet targeted by the programme to counter reports of bullying which may lead to school dropout.
- The economic incentives need to be better targeted—and explained—if they are to be continued. Our work suggests that school supplies are likely a better way to keep girls in school than household loans. Given that the quantity of materials is inadequate to last for a school year, we suggest increasing the amount of support.
- The programme's monitoring, evaluation and learning system need considerable strengthening, the evidence base brought up to date, and findings better disseminated. Immediate efforts need to be made to disentangle programme impacts and to ensure that evidence is available online. To these ends working more closely with a research institution rather than relying on periodic and relatively disjointed evidence collection efforts should be considered if learning opportunities are to be effectively leveraged.
- Caution needs to be taken in assessing value for money performance for a social norm change programme such as Finote Hiwot and greater investments made going forward in creating more robust and nuanced methodologies.
- Greater capacity building efforts to increase cross-sectoral cooperation and synergies is also needed. At the most basic level, woreda level offices need transportation support if they are to make regular follow-up visits to all kebeles. This is especially critical for the remote kebeles, which are not reachable on foot.

9 HUNDEE Oromo Grassroots Development Initiative

9.1 Key findings

Programme approach and modalities

- HUNDEE Oromo Grassroots Development Initiative engages the community in awareness raising and seeks to transform the lives of individual women through economic empowerment schemes.
- Community awareness raising includes training about harmful traditional practices, including early marriage, rape, abduction, and circumcision.
- Economic empowerment activities include organising women into self-help groups to save money and generate income.
- HUNDEE also provides training to one-to-five group leaders in schools and helps build the capacity of women's associations.

Lessons from Diksis woreda

- Marriage under 18 years is very common in the programme focus woreda; key drivers include children forming relationships at a young age, low valuation of girls' schooling and pressure from family and local elders.
- Local protective factors include school-based strategies that work on increasing girls' enrolment and decreasing dropout from school. Financial support is collected from school clubs to provide scholarship money to poor and orphaned children.

Entry points for future programming

- Future efforts should attempt to disentangle awareness-raising on the risks of child marriage from health based programming so as to give this harmful traditional practice a more focussed, multi-sectoral focus.

- Proactively including boys and men in programming strategies will be crucial to achieving HUNDEE's objectives.
- Finally, there is a need to target out of school children (such as unpaid carers) who have largely been missed in programming efforts.

9.1.1 Programme objectives and modalities

Established in 1995, HUNDEE is a local non-governmental organisation based on the philosophy that poor rural communities should be responsible for their own development. HUNDEE aims to act as a facilitator in this process, strengthening the dialogue between service providers and service users in order to improve basic service delivery in Oromiya Regional State. HUNDEE's major programmes include community organising, civic education, environmental rehabilitation, and economic support for women and older persons.¹⁸

According to the HUNDEE programme coordinator, 'HUNDEE is an Oromiffa term and can be roughly translated to 'Oromo grassroots development initiative'. Its mission is to enable small farmers, women, older persons, youth and other marginalised groups to get organised around common issues of concern for livelihoods, and to revitalise traditional community-based support systems and institutions. HUNDEE also seeks to empower women to attain economic and social rights and to eradicate all forms of violence and discrimination against them. Finally, HUNDEE's approach relies on coordination with government and civil institutions and other NGOs to implement development activities together.

HUNDEE works with communities and individuals in the Arsi region in Oromiya. Working with community facilitators, HUNDEE engages the community in awareness raising and seeks to transform the lives of individual women through economic empowerment

¹⁸ See <http://rsr.akvo.org/en/organisation/425>.

schemes. A key informant interview with the programme coordinator indicated that with respect to community education, the ‘major focus is on awareness training about harmful traditional practices, including early marriage, rape, abduction, circumcision, etc. Much of our focus has been on the harmful traditions of rape and FGM [female genital mutilation]’. These community education efforts involve facilitating conversations around harmful traditional practices with women, men, local leaders (particularly Gadaa leaders),¹⁹ teachers, and adolescent boys and girls. In addition, HUNDEE provides training to one-to-five group leaders in schools and helps build the capacity of women’s associations. In these community education meetings, the programme facilitates ‘declarations’ on community decisions on the topics that have been discussed (e.g., banning child marriage). Once made, these declarations are meant to be upheld by the community members and followed up by the respective government structures responsible.

In terms of economic empowerment, the organisation focuses specifically on adolescent girls and women. Using a similar approach to ActionAid’s women’s watch groups in Tigray region, HUNDEE helps organise women into self-help groups to save money and generate income. A programme coordinator at HUNDEE explains:

We encourage women to have regular weekly savings. We don’t determine the amount of money they save. They decide based on their capacity. Our role is to

facilitate such conditions and match their funds. After they save an adequate amount of money, we also encourage them to give credit to themselves on a rotating basis. We hire workers who facilitate this type of credit service.

These self-help groups have their own regulations regarding interest (when someone borrows from them) and fines (when someone fails to get permission from the group for borrowing or if they miss or are late to meetings). The below provides a brief overview of the programme.

9.1.2 Primary research findings

We now turn to a discussion of the findings from our primary research. In order to contextualise these findings, a basic community profile at woreda level is presented in Box 22.

Local drivers of child marriage

According to the 2007 census data, the rate of child marriage in the woreda is relatively low – 5.4% of young adolescent girls were married and 11.2% of older adolescent girls were married.. Our primary research in Dhangicha Gefersa, however, suggests that currently the majority of girls are marrying as adolescents, ‘*which is,*’ explained a father, ‘*a disgrace for us and very risky for them*’.

In Dhangicha Gefersa , there are several types of marriages:

- *gurgurtaa*, which is a marriage arranged by both sets of parents

Programme basics

Programme name: HUNDEE Oromo Grassroots Development Initiative

Programme approach:

- Empower women to attain economic and social rights and eradicate all forms of violence and discrimination against them in Oromia regional state
- Work with government, civil institutions and NGOs to implement development activities together.

Funding agency: Plan International

Budget: US\$287,194

Geographical coverage: Five woredas in the Oromiya region, including Deksis and Duna woredas in East Arsi Zone.

Number of beneficiaries: Five kebeles in Diksisi woreda

Evaluation evidence and dates: Not available.

¹⁹ Gadaa is a social stratification system of age-grades (in eight year cycles) dictating military, economy, political and ritual responsibilities. It has guided the religious, social, political and economic life of Oromo for many years. It can be understood as a socio-economic and politico-cultural governance system for the community. In this system, male members at every age go through stages of development, each of which defines his duties and way of life in the society. Although this system is not highly prevalent in the Arsi region, it is seeing a revival. Gadaa leaders continue to be highly respected in the community by all.

Box 20: Programme site overview

Diksis woreda is in Arsi Zone in Oromia Region. According to the 2007 census, the total population of the woreda was 72,301 (M=35,970; F=36,331). 63% of the population was Muslim and 37% identified as Orthodox Christians.

The major source of livelihood in the woreda is agriculture and livestock. Farmers grow, barley wheat, pulses and teff. The woreda is considered as food secure. There are 30 schools, of which 27 are primary schools (grades 1-4=4; grades 1-8=23), and three secondary schools (grades 9-10=2, grades 11-12=1). In terms of infrastructure, there is a dry-weather road passing through the passing the woreda town linking the woreda to the zonal city and other woredas.

Our primary research took place in Dhangicha Gefersa kebele in the Diksis woreda. Its total population was 4,209 in 2007 (M=2130; F=2079). According to the kebele director, the main source of income for the population is agriculture, followed by cattle fattening. According to our community mapping exercise the majority of the population is Muslim and most identify as being of Oromo ethnicity. In terms of infrastructure, there is a dry-weather road that connects the kebele to the woreda town, but transportation is limited.

There is only one primary school (grades 1-8) in the kebele; the total number of students registered in the in the school in 2015 was 986 (M=490; F=496).

- *buttaa*, which is a marriage transacted by forcible abduction and is becoming relatively rare
- *jala-deemuu* or *waliin-deemuu*, which is a “love match” entered into without parental arrangement
- *aseenmaa*, which is when a girl forces a boy to marry her—and is seen as quite shameful
- *irrechibsa*, which is when a family is required to accept a marriage proposal or be cursed.

Of these types, *waliin-deemuu* was identified as the most popular form of marriage among young people in Dhangicha Gefersa. Numerous respondents—both adolescents and adults-- reported that children as young as 13 ‘start love relationships’. Focus group discussions indicated that couples engage in premarital sex as young as 12 years of age (according to out-of-school focus group discussions with girls) and the majority of adolescents are currently in relationships.

At 13 and 14 age a girl cannot know who would be a good or bad husband because of low levels of maturity. It is better if the family sorts out to whom their daughters marry or whom their son has to marry. The other thing which disappoints us is the process through which they marry each other. It is neither cultural nor religious.

(Father)

While acknowledging that child marriage is illegal even it is chosen by girls—and recognising that girls’ “free” choice is likely never “free-- adolescents and adults in Diksis both agreed that child marriage is “girls’ fault” and that girls often ‘decide to marry without the knowledge of their respective family. Indeed, respondents noted that once girls decide to marry—there is little parents can do to stop it. In some cases, when parents try to prevent their daughters from marrying, ‘elders advise parents to agree

to the marriage since the girl has already made a decision based on her own preference’. In other cases, if parents threaten to go to court, the community reminds them that ‘if they take the case to the court, the court itself will do nothing because the girl has done it based on her own will’.

There is a community attitude that even if girls attend school, they do not go further and hold higher positions. Therefore, they give priority to boys’ education.

(Adolescent girl)

Some respondents reported that adolescent love matches were complicating parents’ decisions about sending girls to school--as school is where girls tend to fall in “love”. One in-school adolescent, for example, said,

‘At the beginning, even when we registered in this school, many girls were getting married. So parents assumed that schools were the place where girls and boys get the opportunity to get married. Because of that, I think, they have developed a negative attitude towards education’.

Other respondents, however, observed that girls have never been especially likely to complete primary school, because of strong cultural norms that overburden them with domestic work and call for them to marry soon after puberty. A kebele-level key informant, for instance, reported that when the school surveyed girls to see why they dropped out after 6th grade, ‘we found it is because of early marriage’—which, as some mothers observed, is the best way to ‘get more children’ who are ‘smarter and stronger than the child you get in your late 40s’.

Many girls in Diksis marry as children because of community pressure. Some parents are pushed into arranging marriages for their daughters by local elders—who can manage to persuade even legal officials to look

There are a lot of duties and responsibilities in the household, for instance cleaning up cattle dung, baking injera, cooking food, cleaning the house, etc. Even if I tried, I would have no time for my education.
(Adolescent girl)

the other way . One married girl said that although she did not want to get married and her father initially supported her, ‘the local elders advised my father to give me for marriage. They told him that he will be blamed and shamed by the community if he refused the marriage’. As older unmarried girls (sometimes as young as 17) are considered *haftu* --‘as a curse for the family’—few parents feel they can turn down proposals in case others are not forthcoming in a timely manner.

The attitude of the community towards girls is still backward. The community believes that the destiny of girls is marriage and that it is good if girls marry under the age of 18. Hence, parents and the community at large have a low level of understanding and a backward attitude towards girls’ education. There is also limited marriage law enforcement by the courts and the community’s failure to abide by the law.
(Key informant interview with kebele director)

Local protective factors against child marriage

Despite the various drivers of child marriage in the kebele, there are several factors working to protect girls from child marriage by ensuring that they remain in schools. These include a variety of government efforts involving financial support for vulnerable students, girls’ clubs and extra tuition for girls, as well as awareness-raising efforts with religious leaders, as discussed below.

Interviewees at the Bureau of Women, Youth, and Child Affairs (BoWYCA) said they with vulnerable and poor female students to ensure they are able to attend school. It provides material and financial support to five impoverished children from each woreda, totalling about 130 children in all. The office also coordinates with community associations known as *Idirs* that work together to help students in need (e.g., poor students or orphans). *Idirs*, like the one in Diksis named Aliku Kara, ‘support female children who are in need of support. Each member shares one birr every two weeks. This money supports many children who face economic hardship to continue their education’. The BoWYCA has an education and training officer who is ‘responsible for monitoring and controlling the educational enrolment and achievement of

female children’. The information collected from BoWYCA is then shared with the *Idir* to identify students in need.

We know a student who was abducted when she was young. She has now graduated from Jimma University. Our office played a tremendous role in helping this student return to school. We are continuously following up and making sure she finishes her university education. We are also planning to hire this girl so that she could serve as a model and educate other female students about the courage they should have to continue their education.

(Key informant interview with representative at BoWYCA)

According to the representative at the BoWYCA, during girls’ week (or *yesetoch samint*):

female students in need have the opportunity of getting financial support from their peers and schoolmates. The finance will at least cover their uniform and stationery needs. Then the schools will report to the concerned office when the girl joins her high school education.

This was triangulated by female and male students in school who said that ‘students collect money from each member of the club and give it to those who are poor’. In some instances, schools bought sheep to support impoverished students.

Not only does the girls’ club raise financial aid for poor students, but according to student testimonies it plays a strong role in creating awareness about harmful traditional practices such as ‘child marriage, sanitation issues, FGM, abduction, and polygamy’ as well as teaching them about the importance of education.

According to the kebele director:

The girls’ club is organised by female teachers and supported by Women’s and Children Affairs at different levels of governance. The club teaches girls’ rights, gender equality and problems related to girls in school, at home and in the community.

Besides girls’ clubs, students receive information about the harmful effects of child marriage in ‘civic and ethical education and in social science classes from teachers’.

Tutorial classes are given to under-performing students so that they do not fall behind in their classes. As one boy described, ‘students are divided into three groups (high achievers, medium and low achievers). For weak and medium achieving students, tutorial classes are given to support them’.

Teachers are known to intervene if they hear about of any cases of child marriage among their students. They ‘come to the villages to discuss the issue and if possible

to cancel the planned marriage. They take time to discuss with the parents so that they could agree on the issue’.

Awareness raising is one of the strong protective factors against child marriage. Though as noted in the previous section, while some sheiks continue to perform *Nika* in cases of child marriage, there is growing evidence that sheiks are ‘giving advice not to marry before 18 years of age’. The kebele director explained that the marriage law has influenced religious teachings by the sheiks:

For example, they now teach that marriage under 18 is a crime and has problems. Basically the Quran doesn't encourage early marriage. Also the Quran doesn't order FGM. These and other misunderstandings are changed through awareness creation and training.

A community timeline participant said that:

Even though, circumcision, inheritance, abduction are supported from the Muslim religious point of view, Muslim leaders accept its negative impacts and working against these harmful traditional practices. For example to fight these harmful practices, Muslim religious leaders currently refuse to perform Nika for abduction cases. Now abduction is rare.

The next section describes in details the programme contributions of HUNDEE that have helped towards strengthening protective factors against child marriage.

9.1.5 Programme outcomes

There is a general consensus that community views on child marriage have changed for the better. The kebele director attributes these changes to ‘continuous teaching, training and campaigns to make the kebele’s community aware about harmful traditional practices and rights’. Moreover, as the representative from BoWYCA said, there are many NGOs working towards economic empowerment for women that have ‘no doubt, brought significant change in the economy of households’. These key informants specifically name HUNDEE as one of the NGOs making a difference in the community.

We had no awareness about rules and penalties, but HUNDEE has given information about the cultural marriage system, about the different types of marriage and how only one type of marriage is good, but the others are considered as harmful traditional practices. They have told us that participating in harmful traditional practices can lead to legal penalties.

(Interview with 16-year-old boy in Dhangicha Gefersa)

Raising community awareness

A core HUNDEE approach is raising awareness around harmful traditional practices. Focus group discussions with fathers suggested that community-level discussions around child marriage that are creating awareness about the risks of child marriage. A father stated:

We get continuous understanding and awareness from government and non-governmental organisations. The government, through the zonal and woreda Women's and Children Affairs, Education and Justice offices, have given us awareness about harmful traditional practices in general and about early marriage in particular. There are community conversations and women conferences on which the government teaches/trains us. Not only the government but also NGOs have a vital role in educating us on different topics. Regarding the disadvantages of early marriage and other HTPs it was the NGOs which took the first steps. NGOs like HUNDEE, Path Finder and Plan International have worked a lot on this issue.

Building on the organisation’s philosophy that ‘education given to the community at the grassroots level brings real change’, their efforts involve ‘giving education to the community about the risks of rape, abduction and early marriage’. According to the HUNDEE coordinator, they ‘train government officials, community elders, religious representatives, *Idirs* and others so that they can also pass that education down to the community’. Engaging leaders (both local and religious) has been effective, as noted by multiple participants who stated that ‘the current societal structures like *shanee*, *garee* and *goxii* (local leaders) are key in bringing change’.

Important to note here is that HUNDEE differentiates between community conversations (involving all community members) and community conferences (involving only local leaders, including religious leaders and representatives of government sector offices, including the police and justice office). Given that local leaders are highly respected in the community, their voice against child marriage may be an important contributor to changing social norms. The HUNDEE coordinator explained their approach:

We also conduct community conferences to extend our trainings down to the grass root level. It should be known that community conference is different from community discussion. Community conference is not organised with a committee. It follows the Gada system approach. In Gada system, Gada leaders, women, youth and children are called. Similarly, community conference involves individuals from different sex and age groups. In order to make people socially responsible, ‘seretuma’ is applied in the conference. It is a kind of promise held among the conference participants. Seretuma is just like enshrining a law to be obeyed by the community.

They promise not to participate in any kinds of harmful traditional practices, after the nature and risks of these traditions is explained by HUNDEE. Participants will also educate others who have not attended the conference for any reason.

In addition to community conversations, HUNDEE also works with ‘government structures such as Women’s and Children Affairs, the justice office, the police office, and others who could play a great role in bringing real change’.

Finally, HUNDEE works with the ‘girls’ club and the child parliament’ to train one-to-five leaders at the school level. According to focus group discussion with boys in school, the responsibility of the one-to-five group is to:

work on how to end harmful traditional practices like FGM, early marriage, abduction, etc. Through the meetings, one-to-five makes its members aware about HIV AIDS, fistula, FGM, etc. The group identifies who is vulnerable to these HTPs and then gives advice to him or her. Moreover, the group gives guidelines. For instance, before getting married, the group advises the girl that she has to check her blood and be sure that it is HIV negative. The same is true for the boy as well.

In addition to raising awareness, one-to-five structures also act as study groups where girls ‘study together and do their homework together’. They also ‘go to the homes of students who are absent from school to encourage them so that they come back to school’. The approach is described in more detail by a HUNDEE coordinator as follows:

We have been also working in schools. In these schools we have created awareness about the risks and legal consequences of child marriage. We have given school children the education that fits to their developmental level so that they can easily understand it. The goal is that students go home and give education to the wider community. Also, if parents arrange child marriage without the consent of the girl, she could challenge them or report to the concerned body.

As a result, children in school, both boys and girls, reported that they are aware that ‘marriage at less than 18 years old as illegal and it is known as early child marriage’. It is worth pointing out, however, that partly as a result of high rates of migration to the Middle East, there is a growing number of *madrasas*, religious schools which teach and reinforce more conservative gender roles and social norms.

Reducing child marriage

While acknowledging that child marriage has not been fully eradicated from the kebele, participants unanimously agreed, in the words of one, that ‘the number of girls who get married at an early age is decreasing at present. We can certainly say that there is positive change in this regard’.

The concerned offices have worked well in bringing about attitudinal changes among the community members. The different concerned bodies are coming from different areas and offices and stay with the community by giving training. These concerned bodies come to our villages to meet our parents. Then they train them on the advantage of girls’ education. They also discuss many issues related to girls’ education with them. This has brought some changes. Because of the efforts of this group coming from different sectors, female students have had the chance to go to school. The concerned bodies call the villagers to gather at a particular place and they teach about the benefits of girls’ education. They inform them that they should send their daughters to school for the benefit of their children themselves, the family and the country at large. They try to convince our parents that this can be achieved when girls are educated. That by itself is a good ground for the community members to get the appropriate education concerning girls’ education. Therefore, this has brought some changes for the increase in the enrolment of girls in schools.

(Focus group discussion with girls enrolled in school)

Multiple participants attribute this change to the efforts by HUNDEE in their community. For instance, mothers in a focus group discussion explained that although:

the marriage law is among the things that the government does to control early marriage, we have also endorsed a cultural marriage law/principle which binds members of the community not to encourage/support early marriage. It is HUNDEE that supervised us while we have made this culturally based law on early marriage.

This suggests that efforts by HUNDEE to involve members of the community in making declarations to stop child marriage is having a positive effect. One example of this is noted in an interview with a 15-year-old girl in school who said that:

I heard my mother refuse my father’s plan to get me married. He wanted to give me to someone to serve as his wife. At the time, I was listening to their disagreement on the marriage issue. My mother resisted him and said that she would not allow him to decide on her daughter’s future. She said I am not old enough for marriage. This attitudinal change has been brought about because of the community conversation she attended with different community members and concerned individuals.

Other instances also indicate that HUNDEE’s work at the community level is helping to bring an attitudinal change.

School-attending boys said that parents of daughters are resisting marriage proposals presented to them by boys' parents. When asked what has caused this change, they reported that 'parents are participating in different meetings and trainings that are related to issues of early marriage. Parents began to delay the marriage age of girls.'

HUNDEE has focused specifically on building awareness around the harmful effects of abduction in the community – a practice known to be very common in the past. Community timeline and other respondents noted that 'among all kinds of marriages in the community, abduction has been stopped, whereas cases inheritance and arranged marriages are practiced rarely'. Girls in school reported that this practice stopped 'about five or six years ago'. They indicated that one of the reasons for a reduction in this practice is 'the government and NGOs' emphasis on the disadvantages of abduction'.

The HUNDEE coordinator stated that while abduction has been 'greatly reduced' and people recognise that importance of consent before marriage, 'it is difficult to say the problem has been totally eradicated'. Since abduction typically involves the rape of girls who resist the practice, HUNDEE ensures that there is:

psychosocial support to children who are victims of rape. Guidance and counselling service is also given to these child victims. This service helps them to continue their education in a safe way. The medical check-up process is also sponsored by our organisation. The medical result will help the justice system to pass the appropriate decision. We also pay allowances for the girl's and her family's costs.

Abduction and rape have been reduced as a result of legal action taken against those who are accused. The justice office representative said that if they receive any 'evidence from hospital that confirms a rape case, a person who has committed rape is accused on more than three counts; if a girl is under 18 years, he has violated the criminal Code of the country, he has violated the rights of the child, he violated etc. If the girl is 12 years and below the punishment is even more severe' Unfortunately, this does not hold true of child marriage since 'no one has been punished for involvement in early marriage in our case'. The key informant stated that 'this does not mean that early marriage practice is absent in the area, but may be because cases are not reported'.

Overall the training given by NGOs, including HUNDEE, are identified as 'encouraging' by the representative at the justice office, suggesting that there is good coordination between the different actors working at awareness raising. As a result, there is a general understanding that awareness raising has brought about major changes in the community.

Economic empowerment for women

HUNDEE is also focused on empowering women economically, based on the idea that both resource allocation and behavioural change activities are inter-related:

They cannot stand independently. The economic empowerment activities create an opportunity for creating awareness about harmful traditional practices. Conversely, if people are free of those harmful traditions, they can create a conducive environment for empowering themselves economically.

Similarly, a school director said that one reason for children's irregular attendance in school is poverty:

The students in this area are suffering from chronic financial shortage. In order to address this they sell goods and services in the markets and try to meet their living costs as well as purchase stationery for their education. They do this even to the extent that they spend the whole week there and perhaps visit school for only one day per a week. By doing so they disrupt the regular teaching and learning process. It is so difficult to take corrective measures on such students because they claim that they would drop their education totally if we forced them to attend school more often. There is a severe economic problem for students.

While the programme is not involving children in economic activities, it does engage women in income-generating schemes in order to improve household stability. HUNDEE has 'designed a self-help group scheme' in which women are organised into groups that support themselves. Members of a savings group contribute money into a savings fund which HUNDEE matches. The HUNDEE coordinator stated that this way they 'enhance their culture of saving. Real social and economic change can only be achieved if individuals are the means and actors of their change. If they develop a culture of saving, they can be self-sufficient'. This social fund can then be used for income-generating activities or can act as a loan to finance day-to-day expenses in these women's lives.

9.1.6 Why has the programme been effective?

Although there is still a long way to go to end child marriage, the programme has been effective in raising awareness and reducing instances of child marriage. There are various factors that could explain why. One is its multi-pronged approach to empowering community members in decision making around harmful traditional practices – an approach which does not just focus on social norm change but also shifting power relations through efforts to enhance women's economic empowerment. By allowing members of the community to make their own declaration, collective responsibility is placed on the members of the community,

with government offices responsible for following up. As a member of the BoWYCA said:

our major task is raising awareness, together with the justice officers. After giving the awareness training, the decision is left to the community. Customary law is widely applied in our woreda. People in the community discuss each and every aspect of harmful traditional practices and are allowed to enact their own law to prohibit the practice. Plausible solutions are also devised by the community itself. This customary law is more acceptable within the specific kebele and woreda. Based on our evaluation, this method is more effective.

The HUNDEE coordinator also explained a step-by-step approach to raising awareness at both the individual and community level. He explained that before implementing the community education programmes, they ‘made separate dialogues with male teachers, female teachers, male students and female students. After conducting separate dialogues, we bring them together to a holistic discussion, which is intergenerational dialogue’. The importance of separate dialogue according to HUNDEE is that it allows individuals to ‘freely explain their thoughts without the influence of others. By following this technique, we were successful in creating awareness about the harmfulness of rape.’

Given that this community ‘faces problems with both the issue of harmful traditional practice and economic empowerment’, HUNDEE seeks to address them both through a multi-pronged effort. The self-help group meets weekly to discuss their savings. During these weekly meetings, members ‘also talk about how to minimise the extent of harmful traditional practices’. In this way they are able to continuously criticise HTPs.

Although coordination between the various offices in the kebele and woreda working for gender justice is not seamless (as discussed in the next section), the key informant at HUNDEE said that without coordination with those stakeholders, HUNDEE can never be effective:

There is child rights committee at the woreda and kebele level. We are working in collaboration with this committee. The kebele chairman, finance and economic development office, justice office, police office, social affairs office, health extension worker and women affairs office of the kebele are members of the child right committee. Thus, when we are working with harmful traditional practices, we work with all these offices and committee.

In terms of monitoring and evaluation, HUNDEE has a system in place which involves first designing and proposing the activities that need to be accomplished, after which an ‘action plan breakdown is prepared and distributed to project officers’. Monthly reports that track the progress of these activities are drafted for quarterly reporting. There

The sitting position of the self-help group is in circle. It encourages face-to-face contact and communication. This could also enhance members’ confidence in explaining things in front of others. They will develop the courage for communication and become accustomed to dialogue. The group does not have a chairperson, treasury and secretary. In the concept of self-help group, there is rotational leadership. If one woman is leader of the self-help group in this week, another woman will be the leader the next week. This can encourage the habit of leadership and communication.

(Key informant interview with HUNDEE coordinator)

are bi-annual meetings at which ‘both governmental and non-governmental organisations participate to discuss and evaluate what has been achieved and what is not achieved of our programmes’. Activities are monitored on a daily basis in order to determine which practices best meet the organisation’s goals. However, to date there have not been any independent evaluations of the programme so it is hard to assess the efficacy of this approach.

8.1.7 What challenges did the programme face?

Despite the progress that HUNDEE is making, the programme faces multiple challenges that could hinder its continued effectiveness. One of the fundamental issues identified by the coordinator is the ‘number of participants who are motivated to come to the meetings and discussions’. Given that HUNDEE’s central strategy is based on community awareness raising, meeting fatigue can seriously hinder the programme’s goals. According to the key informant, the ‘number of participants attending training is lower than our expectations. Also, those who attend training are not determined to share it with the others in the community’.

Another challenge noted by the programme coordinator is the ‘lack of resources, especially financial resources’. This not only impeding NGO efforts but also those from government offices. According to the key informant at HUNDEE:

there are child focal persons in every kebele. However, they are not paid for what they are doing. Budgets should be allocated to these people who are doing well in protecting the welfare of children. NGOs also have financial problems allocating budgets to these individuals. The government should make such structures budgeted. The lack of financial resource is the major challenge we face in running our programmes effectively.

HUNDEE programme coordinators also explained that since the strategy of the programme is heavily dependent on coordinating with various government bodies, it is difficult to hold frequent meetings with them. As a result,

they are attempting to devise joint action plans with timetables across offices.

Although HUNDEE and government structures have good coordination, one difficulty in reducing child marriage is the fact that health programming is not specifically focused on tackling child marriage. The representative at the woreda health bureau said:

As a sector, there is some move towards alleviating the problem of early marriage. However, we don't have a clear and specific programme designed for early marriage and the bureau does not have a tradition of doing this. We address the issue of early marriage as part of youth reproductive health programs but we don't have a plan to tackle this problem.

Since the government's health extension programming does not include child marriage explicitly, the effectiveness of NGOs that work with health offices is affected.

9.2 Ways forward to strengthen programming effects on child marriage

Participants, particularly key informants, had multiple suggestions for improving the child marriage situation in the community. One of the ways in which future programming can be improved is to build on existing work that has been done by other NGOs such as Pathfinder (see box 21). Observing that child marriage is not one of the pillars in health programming, the HUNDEE coordinator's key informant interview suggested one way forward:

In order to achieve the objective of eliminating child marriage, the issue needs an independent programme. Until now, early marriage has been treated in combination with harmful traditional practices. Because of this, the issue hasn't received special emphasis. Thus, an independent programme should be designed in order to address the issue of early marriage.

Another way forward suggested by the kebele director was to engage boys and men in changing attitudes towards girls' education in the kebele. The kebele director feels that:

Box 21: Programming efforts in Diksis

In addition to HUNDEE, another NGO, Path Finder is also working to combat child marriage in the Arsi Zone. Path Finder is working in all twenty five woredas of the Arsi Zone and state that they are reaching and providing services to "about 3.2 million people of the zone".

The NGO is mainly focused on reproductive health and family planning in the Arsi region and its main objective is to increase the use of high family planning and maternal and child health practice. According to a key informant interview with a representative at Path Finder, the main activities to achieve the objective are as follows:

- Working at the family or community level to involve health extension workers, Women's health development army, and volunteer health workers.
- Improving the quality of service delivered by health centers and institutions by maximizing the quality of health service and expanding the service capacity.
- Improving the system of health institutions.
- Utilizing best practices learnt from experiences and incorporating the lessons for the upcoming projects.

To date, Pathfinder has worked with 11 health centers across the different woredas to provide essential services around sexual and reproductive health to the youth. They provide training on reproductive health, adolescence substance abuse, peer pressure (especially against waliin-deemuu), family planning, abortion, and children married as youth.

The interviews with representatives of Path Finder suggest that the NGO is not directly working with issues around child marriage. Nevertheless, they are addressing it indirectly by training teachers and peer educators (both in-school and out-of-school children). In each woreda, they have trained "25 peer educators". However, out-of-school children only have access to information and awareness raising at health centers. Trainers and peer educators meet woreda officers monthly where they "evaluate their plans and activities regularly by having tea ceremonies". Testimonies by participants in the study confirmed the work by Path Finder:

"Path Finder is an NGO working in relation to health. This year they have organized about 18 trainings in relation to avoiding females' early marriage".

With a strong monitoring and evaluation system in place that has quarterly review meetings with stakeholders, mid-term evaluations at the community, health post and health center level, and regular impact assessment programs, Path Finder is establishing a system to improve the sexual and reproductive health services and knowledge, including related risks of child marriage, in Diksis.

the error we have been making is to have a separate focus on girls to improve their education and minimise early marriage in particular. However, girls cannot do anything alone. They marry boys, and they have relationships with boys. Therefore we have change the attitude of boys and request their support to improve girls' situations. Boys have to think of girls as their sisters, mothers and their wives of tomorrow.

Focus group discussion with boys in school indicated that boys are highly attuned to the needs of girls' education. They explained that since parents prefer a Quran-based education for themselves and their children, it is 'negatively impacting the lives of rural community. Very few individuals are educated in our community'. According to these boys, this makes raising awareness on HTPs 'difficult and time- and resource-consuming'. The rise of Madrassa education is a concern for this region because of its strong link to migration for young girls. As one girl explained:

parents prefer that their daughters learn the Quran instead of sending them to secular education. They do this because they want to send their daughters to the Middle East. Quran education gives them some understanding about the Arab culture and religion.

As a result, many girls themselves choose Quran education over other schooling. It is important to consider building the community's awareness on all types of education in order to protect girls from different types of exploitation (e.g., that resulting from migration).

Additionally, participants said that in formal education 'there is no specific programme for children who drop out that has taken the initiative to teach these youths outside of school'. While there is an independent committee for drop-out children that 'consults, advises and facilitates things for them so that they return to their education, there is no programme to teach them about harmful traditional practices unless we [school attending children] teach them as friends'.

Finally, given that there are many children in this kebele who are unable to attend due to poverty or household burdens, it is important to consider efforts that can help such children attend school. One father said:

I had a plan to teach my children but i don't have enough farm land to generate income to be able to afford school materials. Therefore I delayed the start of their school so I can support the family. I will send them to school later because I don't want to distort their life with the lack of education as happened to me.

More efforts need to be directed at providing economic relief to such families to ensure that these children obtain an education.

Based on our findings, we propose the following ways to strengthen the existing programme:

- Recognise that girls' agency is a double-edged sword and that some girls are actively choosing to marry as children. Adolescents need to be supported to manage relationships without rushing into marriage. Parents need to be supported to prevent child marriages. And the law needs to be enforced—regardless of whether the marriage is "chosen".
- Strengthening the woreda Women's Affairs office to follow up implementation of programmes and projects at grassroots level, including the creation of an extension programme.
- Strengthening programme linkages with health extension programming given its broader reach.
- Strengthening coordination between NGOs and government/community structures.
- Providing economic scholarships to students who are unable to attend school.
- Directing awareness-raising efforts towards the negative effects of migration for young girls, and accompanying this with economic incentives such as skills development and employment opportunities.
- Focusing on services for children who have dropped out of school. Attention needs to be paid to unpaid carers who remain largely invisible in programming efforts.
- Providing special training for local elders around child marriage so that they do not endorse it in the community.
- Strengthening effective processes for legal action against those responsible for child marriage so that more are willing to report violations.

10 CARE Interventions: Towards Improved Economic and Sexual Reproductive Health Outcomes for Adolescent Girls (TESFA) + follow-up programming

10.1 Key findings

- TESFA was aimed at improving the lives of married girls but led to significant reductions in child marriage.
- TESFA's targeting ultimately resulted in both empowerment and community norm change because it included girls and their gatekeepers, women and men, and adolescents and religious leaders.
- TESFA's curriculum, which emphasised gender relations and power differentials, was key to many improvements seen in the community.
- TESFA's groups were vital to both awareness raising and prevention, with the married girls especially vital to reporting chains.
- CARE has worked synergistically with and through government structures, including Women's Development Groups and their nested one-to-five groups, which ensured broad uptake of messages into the community.

10.1.1 Programme objectives and modalities

Hawzet is one of nine kebeles in Farta in which CARE implemented TESFA, which was designed not to prevent child marriage, but to mitigate its impact by providing support to ever-married²⁰ adolescent girls, 'who are among the most marginalized members of society' (Edmeades et al., 2013: 4; Warner et al., 2014). TESFA, which means 'hope' in Amharic, was also unusual in that it was aimed at both improving girls' wellbeing and generating robust evidence about how empowerment happens (Edmeades and Hayes, 2013).

To that end, CARE implemented different arms of programming in different kebeles. In Farta, TESFA ran programming aimed at improving ever-married girls' sexual and reproductive health (SRH) outcomes. In a neighbouring woreda, Lay Gayint, it ran two arms, one

I have been astonished with the objective of the programme; it is about saving lives.
(Priest)

20 'Ever married' refers to persons who are married or have been married at least once in their lives.

dedicated to improving ever-married girls' economic empowerment and the other focused on both SRH and economic empowerment. A fourth group was kept as a control and received a delayed version of the combined curriculum. While TESFA was not designed to prevent child marriage, its awareness-raising efforts significantly changed communities' understanding about the risks of child marriage, leading to an unexpected and very significant drop in prevalence on both a kebele and woreda level. Furthermore, as the programme gained traction, ever-married girls and their champions quickly took ownership of the child marriage problem and began to work directly to cancel planned weddings, saving hundreds of girls from marriage. In 2013, when TESFA ended, CARE solicited funding to continue programming. Overwhelmed by community demand, which was far higher than anticipated, CARE wanted to make sure that communities continued to be supported as they moved towards abandonment. While follow-up programming has been limited in scope and duration, our Hawzet respondents, who have benefited from both follow-up phases, noted that it has been important to progress.

The TESFA project itself took two main approaches in Hawzet and its sister kebeles in Farta. First, it brought together ever-married adolescent girls and provided them with education on SRH and life skills. Using CARE's peer-educator approach, 93 groups of girls were formed and offered training on basic biology, pregnancy, contraception, and sexually transmitted infections (13 of these groups are in Hawzet). Girls were also taught about gender-related issues such as gender-based violence (GBV) and harmful traditional practices and were coached in communication, decision making and problem solving. Groups met every other week and their facilitators met at least once a month to discuss problems with the leaders of the Social Action and Analyses groups (SAAs).

TESFA's second major approach in Hawzet and Farta involved the formation of SAAs. These groups, which were composed of a mix of respected community members, including kebele officials, health extension workers and religious leaders, as well as a variety of 'gatekeepers' such as husbands and mothers-in-law, were aimed at supporting girls and working to change harmful community norms. SAAs were formed on a sub-kebele level, meaning that Hawzet had four SAAs, typically with 25-30 members each. SAAs had their own manual, were led by two facilitators, one male and one female, and met at least once a month. The curriculum was diverse and covered topics ranging from GBV to the importance of sharing household chores and financial decision making. Facilitators met regularly with officials from the Office of Women, Children and Youth Affairs and TESFA officers to work out any problems.

TESFA's two main modalities were accompanied by a range of other activities, such as supporting girls' clubs in school and providing menstruation-related supplies. They were also set

against a backdrop of broader government interventions, such as using Women's Development Groups and health extension workers to deliver messages about the health risks of child marriage and the importance of girls' education.

When TESFA ended, CARE project officers sought funding to continue to provide support to some beneficiary kebeles. The first follow-up phase, which was only 5 months long, began to directly target the prevention of child marriage. Working only in Farta, the programme empowered girls' groups to identify and report planned marriages and SAA groups to work towards marriage cancellation, involving kebele and woreda leaders if they were unable to do so via persuasion. As part of their efforts, beneficiaries produced a film, which captured married girls' negative experiences and parents' regrets at having made their daughters marry. This phase of programming also worked to strengthen schools as venues for prevention by improving their ability to deliver awareness-raising messages and facilitating anonymous reporting. Schools were provided with reporting boxes, mini-media materials and hundreds of copies of a specially written book on puberty that girls read with their mothers. Female teachers were given training on how to counsel at-risk girls, and girls' clubs were provided with sanitary supplies and funded to establish private spaces in schools for girls to change. Finally, CARE's follow-up programming also brought a greater emphasis on religious leaders as agents of change. While priests had been key members of SAAs during TESFA itself, this phase broadened outreach efforts.

During the second follow-up phase, CARE worked in only two kebeles, one of which was Hawzet. It helped girls establish their own savings and credit groups, which they have used to help each other fund emergencies and income generating activities.

10.1.2 Evaluation evidence to date

As noted, above, TESFA was designed not only to improve outcomes for girls but also to generate evidence. To that end, it was evaluated in 2013, after programming ended, by ICRW, one of its implementing partners. That evaluation found that TESFA had significantly improved girls' economic, health and social outcomes, but that it had often done so in ways that were unexpected (Edmeades and Hayes, 2013). The SRH intervention, for example, returned particularly large gains, including rather surprising economic ones, but improvements seen through economic empowerment intervention were not always consistent with the theory of change, suggesting that one of TESFA's main contributions may have been the way in which it improved girls' relationships with their husbands and peers and fostered a more supportive community (*ibid.*).

ICRW used a variety of methodologies to evaluate TESFA. In addition to quantitative surveys at both baseline and endline, it used qualitative interviews and

Programme basics

Programme name: The main programme was Towards Towards Improved Economic and Sexual Reproductive Health Outcomes for Adolescent Girls (TESFA). The first follow-up was called START. The third phase appears unnamed due to its small size.

Programme approach: In its main phase, CARE's TESFA ran three parallel arms of programming in order to ascertain not only whether programming improved girls' wellbeing, but how. Specifically:

- The SRH arm provided girls with basic knowledge about contraception and sexually transmitted diseases and aimed to improve uptake of both family planning and broader health care. It also taught girls negotiation and communication skills and organised community leaders and gatekeepers into groups to provide support to girls.
- The economic empowerment arm used CARE's well-established Village Savings and Loan Association model and encouraged girls to engage in income-generating activities and paid employment and supported them to increase their savings and loan rates. It also focused on financial literacy and budgeting skills.
- The combined arm used both curriculums.
- TESFA also maintained a control group which received a delayed version of the combined curriculum.

In phase 2, START took on the prevention of child marriage directly by strengthening schools as an awareness-raising and reporting venue and empowering SAA groups to work towards marriage cancellation. Phase 3 has helped ever-married girls establish their own savings and credit groups.

Dates: 2010-2014

Implementing agency: Care-Ethiopia and the Organization for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara (ORDA) with support from Birhan Research and Development Consultancy, the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) and the Family Guidance Association of Ethiopia.

Funding agency: NIKE and the Packard Foundation for TESFA (3 years). DFATED for START. The 3rd phase was funded by the Fischer Foundation and SKY SCRAP.

Budget: The budget for TESFA was \$1.7 million.

Geographical coverage: TESFA worked in 20 kebeles in 2 woredas (Farta and Lay Gayint) in South Gondar, Amhara; START worked in 20 kebeles in Farta; Phase 3 worked in 2 kebeles in Farta.

Number of beneficiaries: TESFA initially planned to reach over 5,000 ever-married adolescent girls in Farta. woreda-level key informants believe they ultimately reached over 6,000.

Evaluation evidence and dates (for TESFA): Edmeades and Hayes (2013)

Photovoice.²¹ It also included the monitoring data that was collected during implementation.

Compared to the baseline, girls in all four of TESFA's groups, including the control, were more likely to have income generating activities or paid employment at the end of the project. Intervention groups saw the largest gains, 36-40%, compared to only 27% for girls in the comparison group. Evaluators noted that given that girls were older at endline than they were at baseline, meaning that they were more developmentally capable of income

generation, and set against the backdrop of Amhara's rapidly changing economic environment, these differences are indicative that 'that TESFA indeed made a difference in married adolescent girls' economic engagement' (Edmeades et al., 2013: 6; see also Edmeades and Hayes, 2013).

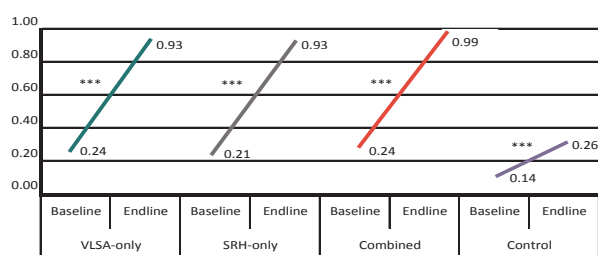
Intervention girls were also especially likely to be saving money at the end of the project. Compared to girls in the comparison group, only 3% of whom reported saving any part of their income, nearly 30% of girls in the economic empowerment group, 23% of girls in the combined

21 Photovoice is a participatory research and critical thinking method that allows community members to share their experiences and collaborate for change.

group and 20% of girls in the SRH group saved some part of their earnings (Edmeades et al., 2013). Indeed, by endline, the percentage of girls with savings of their own had grown by 72% for those in the intervention groups, compared to only 12% for those in the comparison group (see Figure 5). Surprisingly, even girls in the SRH arm, who received no financial training, reported having their own savings, apparently because the ‘dynamic of the group environment...encouraged girls to begin saving together using traditional saving approaches such as *ikubs*’ (Edmeades and Hayes, 2013: 13). Finally, girls who participated in the economic intervention were especially likely to save towards productive investments.

The evaluation found mixed evidence regarding girls’ access to and control over productive assets. On the one hand, their control over less-valuable assets, such as chickens, increased over the course of the project. On the other hand, their control over larger assets, such as cows, either remained the same or fell. Qualitative evidence suggests that this unexpected finding does not reflect girls’ loss of autonomy, but rather the development of more ‘cooperative and collaborative decision-making processes, particularly with their husbands’ (Edmeades and Hayes,

Figure 5: Has savings of her own? (Edmeades and Hayes, 2013: 13)



2013:23). That is, what at first glance looks negative is likely an ‘important step forward for the young wives’ because they are sharing control of larger assets with their husbands (Edmeades et al., 2013: 8).

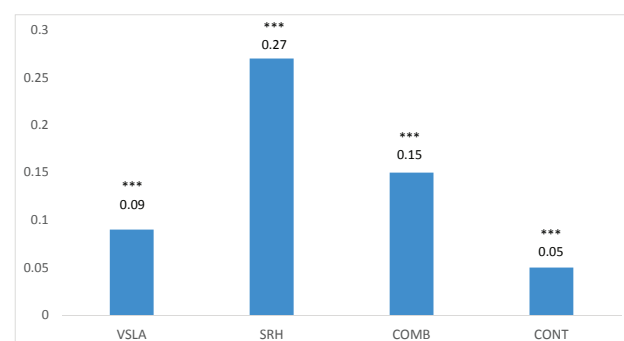
The SRH arm of TESFA was found to be especially powerful, generating ‘large gains across a wide range of outcomes that exceeded those seen in the economic and control arms’ (Edmeades and Hayes, 2013). Girls in the intervention reported significant increases in knowledge about contraception, antenatal care and sexually transmitted diseases and also significant changes in behaviour in regard to contraception and HIV testing. For example, girls in the SRH arm were far more likely than those in other arms to understand that contraception can

result in improved maternal and child health. Accordingly, they saw the largest improvement in contraception use: a 27% increase in over the course of the project (see Figure 6). Girls in the SRH intervention also reported that it had improved their ability to communicate with their husbands about contraception and optimal birth spacing.

Indeed, TESFA’s impacts on girls appear to in large part grow out of the way it has strengthened their relationships with their husbands and in-laws and facilitated the development of ‘deep friendships’ with their peers (Edmeades and Hayes, 2013: 45). Girls in all three arms, but especially the SRH and combined arms, were found to be more optimistic and have better mental health, in part because they felt closer to their husbands and more hopeful about their marriages, but also because they had a supportive network of friends with whom to discuss life’s challenges – often for the first time. Similarly, qualitative evidence suggests that TESFA participation led to dramatic reductions in all types of GBV, primarily because the programme improved spousal communication and made the distribution of household labour more gender equitable (ibid: 36).

The evaluation also noted that TESFA had produced several unintended consequences. Not only had some

Figure 6: Difference between BL and EL in current use of modern contraception (Edmeades and Hayes, 2013: 13)



married girls returned to school, and some fathers stepped up their engagement with cooking and childcare, traditionally the domain of wives, but the programme had prevented dozens of child marriages. While prevention was ‘most certainly not a goal of the program’, the messages generated about the harms of child marriage had so resonated with communities that they expanded the intervention on their own (Edmeades et al., 2013: 12).

The evaluation concluded that TESFA had ‘significantly improved the lives of participating girls in all of the key outcomes included in this evaluation’ (Edmeades and Hayes, 2013: 47). While noting that SRH and social gains were especially large, and that there do not appear to be any synergistic effects in the combined arm, it also observed that the core financial literacy skills girls learned

in the economic empowerment intervention were likely to serve them well in the future and that using a combined curriculum often resulted in larger improvements.

10.1.3 Primary research findings

Having reviewed existing evaluation evidence, we now turn to a discussion of the findings from our primary research. In order to contextualise these findings, a basic community profile at woreda and kebele levels is presented in Box 22.

Local drivers of child marriage

Respondents identified two main types of drivers of child marriage in Hawzet and across Farta: economic and socio-cultural. Most perceived the latter to be more important, not surprising given that both the kebele and the woreda are food secure.

For economically marginal families, child marriage can represent one form of social protection. A woreda-level key informant, for example, noted that labour constrained families sometimes marry their daughters in order to bring an adult male into the family. He also noted that because some parents believe that ‘in the old age there should be someone who is expected to care for parents’, some

families use child marriage as a form of ‘social security’. Community members felt that ‘economically weak parents’ most common motivation was simply to see their daughters ‘autonomous’ before they were retired.

A number of key informants commented that the cost of education acts to drive child marriage. An educational key informant, for example, said that child marriage is only practised by ‘poor families who don’t send their kids to school because they can’t afford it’. Another key informant agreed, noting that when girls are forced to drop out of school, because it is too expensive, they are effectively left with only one option – marriage.

A kebele-level key informant, however, noted that it is not always poverty that drives child marriage. As has been verified by an array of other researchers, in Amhara it is often relatively wealthier girls who are at the highest risk of marriage. He said, ‘highlanders are economically better and practise early marriage. Areas in the low land, where productivity is less, are not practising early marriage as much due to their economic problems’.

Respondents overwhelmingly felt that sociocultural traditions were the largest drivers of child marriage. Some focused on the prestige that parents gain at their daughters’

Box 22: Community overview

Hawzet kebele is in the Farta woreda of South Gondar Zone, Amhara. It has nearly 8,000 residents, is near to good roads and is nearly entirely Orthodox Christian. Most of its residents are farmers who produce not only enough for their own needs, but also raise cash crops, meaning that this rural kebele is both food secure and comparatively well-off.

Hawzet has two of its own schools, one for 1st-4th grades and one for 1st-8th grades. While girls’ enrolment has been going up over the last few years, and early grades have achieved gender parity, boys are still more likely to be enrolled in higher grades.

Farta woreda has just over 232,000 people, also primarily food secure, Orthodox Christian farmers. Transportation is good, although some kebeles remain inaccessible to vehicles. Farta’s school infrastructure is well developed. In addition to over a hundred primary schools, it has four secondary schools and its own Technical and Vocational Education and Training centre. Across the woreda, boys’ enrolment is higher than girls’.

The prevalence of child marriage varies across Farta’s kebeles, largely depending on the presence of NGOs targeting the practice. The district as a whole, however, had rates that were comparatively low by both zonal and regional standards as of the 2007 census (see Table 9).

Table 9: Child marriage rates, by age, by residence (Source: 2007 census)

	Farta	South Gondar	Amhara
Girls 10-14	8.5	9.8	9.8
Girls 15-17	22.3	29.4	27.2

Because both Amhara and South Gondar are known to be hotspots for child marriage, there is a wide array of NGOs working in the area. These include not only CARE, but also the Amhanran Development Association, the Organization for Child Development and Transformation, WABI, Wabe Children’s Aid & Training, CVM, the Organization for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara, Save the Children Norway – Ethiopia, Children Aid-Ethiopia, the Gonder Relief, Rehabilitation and Development Association, and TANA BELES.

marriage. An SAA member, for example, explained how ‘we allow our children get married so that we will be called *emetie* and *yeneta* [terms of respect]’. Another added that parents who practise child marriage feel that they ‘need to see their children’s destination before they die, they need to see them establish new family with newly born children’. A woreda-level key informant said that this is ‘considered as *Alem Mayet* – the highest satisfaction and prestige seen before death’.

Other respondents mentioned other socio-cultural drivers. A handful, for example, talked about the prestige that parents gain just from hosting a wedding feast. Quite a few mentioned that parents sometimes marry their daughter just ‘to be paid back the material cost’ that they have ‘already paid for their relatives’ and neighbours” weddings (kebele-level key informant, woreda-level key informant). A girl who had escaped early marriage at the age of 14 said that her parents had been aiming to strengthen social ties and ‘make the other person’s family closer as relatives’.

Many respondents highlighted that concern about girls’ sexuality encouraged child marriage. In particular, they explained that ‘religious fathers believe that a deacon should not marry a girl who has started menstruation’, preferring to marry only girls who are ‘under the age of 10’ (Priest). This is because, said a woreda-level key informant, they believe that girls who are already menstruating ‘commit premarital sex’ and are therefore not pure enough to serve as priests’ wives.

Girls and a kebele-level educational key informant note that baseless concerns about girls’ purity aside, girls in the area are at risk of sexual violence, which can not only push them into child marriage, but also keep them from attending school. For instance, adolescent girls noted that ‘males try to abduct females, both at school and outside school’ (focus group discussant). Similarly, a kebele-level educational informant said that ‘some male students were found to abuse girls for sex in schools’. Still worse, he added, ‘Sometimes teachers themselves engage in sexual abuse’.

Local protective factors against child marriage

There are a number of local factors working to protect girls from child marriage. These include not only a recent push to get all girls enrolled in school, but also direct government efforts to eliminate child marriage. Very recent shifts towards adolescents’ own decision making are also working to protect girls.

Officials in Farta and Hawzet have made tremendous efforts over the last few years to make sure that all children – girls included – go to school. Schools are now available in every kebele and leaders are working ‘to enrol all children above the age of 7 years...including females’ (kebele-level key informant). The kebele has a mobilisation campaign that ‘always starts before the beginning of the new school year, in August’ (kebele-level key informant) that focuses on teaching parents ‘the significant difference between educated and uneducated women’ (FGD with

married girls) and also provides children in need with uniforms and school supplies, funded by selling grain collected from better-off families. Respondents were agreed that the ‘strong woreda leadership and the commitment of the educational leaders’ (FGD religious leaders) had resulted in a new reality in which ‘all girls go to school’ (FGD unmarried girls).

Parents and adolescents are investing in education not only because they have been told they must, but because they increasingly understand its value. While Hawzet does not face the land pressure seen in other locations, making getting an education less of a desperate need, parents still seemed pleased that they are free of the challenge of ‘empowering the children economically because they are educated and able to get jobs by their own efforts’ (FGD SAA). They also understand that because previous generations were not educated, ‘we lost numerous potentially smart children who could have been leaders of their country’ (FGD SAA).

As became apparent in our focus group discussions,

In the past, our grandfathers’ motto was that girls should stay at home, with no chance to go to school. But, currently, this old idea does not have any place and attention.

(Unmarried adolescent girl)

girls are even more invested in education than their parents, both in terms of their own futures and in terms of the future of the country as a whole. They understand that their mothers’ lives have been difficult because ‘our mothers were not educated’ (FGD married girls). They understand that ‘females have to learn’ because ‘a male can go far in the desert looking for a job even if he is uneducated’ but ‘the only chance waiting for a girl is to marry and give birth’. They are also proud of the role that the government has given them in regard to the country’s future. Several made comments such as ‘a country will develop when females participate equally in all activities’ and ‘education plays key role to change and development’.

This national level focus on gender equality – and the way in which it is unfolding on a grassroots level through the work of woreda- and kebele-level officials – is working to protect girls in other ways as well. Messages are shifting the value placed on girls and women and are transforming their daily lives as they become more visible and valuable. One adult woman said, ‘In earlier times, we were so oppressed. Girls did not go to churches. They simply collected animal dung. We usually did not go outside of our homes. Now things have changed. I have to appreciate the current government of Ethiopia’. A kebele-level key informant, when asked directly to explain recent changes

in gender relations, said, 'To be honest, it is to do with the EPRDF government'.

The national focus on gender equality and investing in girls and women as a route to economic development has worked locally to keep kebele and woreda officials directly focused on preventing child marriage. A woreda-level key informant explained that they had first started by identifying kebeles where early marriage is widely practised and they then 'prepared a training manual in collaboration with the concerned government bodies and other stakeholders', including the police department and the Office of WCYA, and implemented a 'type of community dialogue' that has resulted in extensive awareness. A kebele-level key informant told us that local follow-up of child marriage related activities is good; he said that they 'evaluate the activities at the kebele level 12 times a year', paying attention to both 'our weaknesses and successes'.

The local government's focus on child marriage has resulted in several forms of grassroots protection for Hawzet's girls. Well implemented Women's Development Groups, especially their nested one-to-five groups,²³ appear to be amongst the most powerful. These groups, which are a national development initiative that functions with variable success in different kebeles and which were just forming in Farta as TESFA was coming online, link all women into small groups that consist of one leader and five members. Initially formed around health objectives and promulgating better sanitation and childhood vaccines, in many locations (Hawzet included) their purview has expanded to include promoting girls' education and preventing child marriage. A kebele-level key informant said that one-to-five groups 'have a discussion session every three days' and that once a week groups are brought together into 'developmental units' for more formal teaching.

Hawzet also has an 'actively engaged' early marriage eradication committee that 'includes representatives from Education, Health, Agriculture, Women and Children offices apart from HAPCO' (woreda-level key informant). While another woreda-level key informant admitted that the committee often fails to meet on a regular schedule, because everyone is very busy, its basic structure appears to protect most school girls from child marriage since it has resulted in a clearly delineated reporting chain that works from the 'classroom level' up. All school children know to approach their teachers if they or someone they know is threatened by child marriage; then, explained the kebele administrator, 'together with the justice office and police, we take actions to dissolve the marriage'.

A kebele-level key informant also noted that local health extension workers have integrated the risks of child marriage into their regular messaging. He said, 'Health extension professionals are strongly communicating the adverse effects of early marriage on the health of women'.

Recent shifts in decision-making are also protecting girls from child marriage. Girls and their older siblings are increasingly willing to stand up for their rights. A

kebele-level key informant explained that girls 'have better awareness and understanding now than ever before' and 'Students themselves are appealing to the court if there is an intention of arranging early marriage by parents'. A priest added that recently, 'Girls do have the right to disagree with parents' decision pertinent to their life' and now 'marriage is not conducted without their consent'.

Our kebele is selected as a role model mainly in health, natural resource management, and related issues.
(Kebele level key informant)

Adolescent sisters in a focus group discussion noted that the support of older siblings, especially brothers, can be critical to claiming their rights. Now in high school and not married, they attribute their parents' acquiescence to the 'strong support' of their brother.

10.1.6 Programme outcomes

Reducing child marriage

In Hawzet, 'The coming of TESFA brought a tremendous change' in terms of both child and forced marriage (FGD married girls). As one member of an SAA commented, 'In the past, girls were marrying at 5 or 8 years of age. Today, in most cases they marry at age 20 or above'. Estimates on the magnitude of the reduction vary, with a married girl saying child marriage is '70% to 80% minimised', and a kebele-level key informant claimed '97 or 98%', but all of our respondents were clear that 'the number of those marrying below the age of 18 has decreased' (FGD SAA).

Respondents were also agreed that forced marriage has essentially been abandoned. While it is clear from third-person anecdotes that a few girls are still made to marry against their will, adolescent girls in our research claimed that in Hawzet girls are now 'totally protected' from marriage 'on the basis of their parents' will' (FGD married girls). They explained that while it used to be the case that 'if a girl chose her mate' she was considered 'easy' (18-year-old girl who escaped early marriage), now, 'following the coming of TESFA, girls resist any marriage proposal from their parents' (14-year-old girl).

Government initiatives have clearly been important to achieving these reductions, especially the reporting chain established in schools. A woreda-level key informant explained: 'Students are coming from every corner of the woreda and they have better information...than government officials or the committee members'. An unmarried girl agreed, saying, 'Whenever students hear about early marriage, immediately they will tell to the director'. The director, in turn, 'will take the issue to the kebele...manager and the proposed marriage is terminated' (kebele-level key



Research participants in North East Oromia, David Walker 2015

informant). In cases where the age of the girl is in doubt, the kebele arranges for an age check at the health centre.

Respondents are clear, however, that CARE's programing has been critical to local success at reducing child marriage. Not only did TESFA help focus the attention of emerging one-to-five groups on child marriage, and START help strengthen schools' reporting chains, but TESFA's groups have been powerful protectors. A married girl explained that not long after her group formed, it decided that no other girls should have to suffer as they had²². 'We said 'ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!' They began moving through their villages, listening and looking for wedding preparations. 'If they hear any information about early marriage, they work hard to stop it using all means,' reported an unmarried girl. First, they try direct persuasion. If that does not work, they involve the SAA, who 'try to convince the concerned parents by telling them the disadvantages of early marriage' (FDG SAA). If that does not work, then they involve the kebele leaders and have the marriage cancelled. Said the kebele administrator, the married girls are 'our best informants'.

Raising community awareness

CARE and the local government have also worked hand in hand to raise awareness in the community about the risks of early marriage. Using a variety of channels, including 'formal government organisations like one-to-five development arrangements and schools', key informants feel that 'TESFA has done remarkable work in creating awareness within society at grassroots level' (woreda-level key informant). Villagers agreed. Noting that 'collaboration with the kebele leaders' has also been important, a married girl concluded that TESFA had 'played a decisive role against early marriage'. Another woreda-level key informant attributed this in part to the way in which the programme had not focused solely on early marriage, but had acknowledged that 'much of the problem is directly related to the lack of attitudinal changes on gender issues'.

While they were united in their support of TESFA and CARE's other programming, key informants had mixed views on who ought to lead the fight against child marriage. One woreda-level key informant, for example, felt that the government's role was the more important. He said, 'the most powerful instrument to be used is strengthening the governmental structure up to the grassroots level'. Another woreda-level key informant, on the other hand, felt that it was best to let NGOs lead the fight because people pay more attention and work harder for organisations other than the government. She explained, 'The community pays more attention to this kind of NGO than to government officials under the formal structure'.

In addition to serving as a primary vehicle for reporting planned child marriages, schools are also one of the most important channels in Farta for raising awareness. For parents, messages are disseminated through the parent-teacher committee (woreda-level key informant). For girls they are primarily disseminated through girls' clubs, which teach girls about the risks of child marriage and what they should do to keep themselves safe. An initiative of the national government, but implemented locally to better address local needs, clubs are, according to an educational key informant, 'the most promising structure that has brought changes'. A woreda-level key informant added that they have been critical to helping children to understand

There is peer teaching regarding early marriage. We talk about how we do not have to repeat our history. We have to change it.

(SAA member)

their rights and know what to do if their rights are violated – 'by anybody, including their parents'.

CARE has worked to strengthen the awareness-raising potential of Farta's schools, organising educational programmes on child marriage for the parent-teacher unions (kebele-level key informant) and providing an array of support for girls' clubs. During the START phase, CARE provided clubs with books about puberty, critical given cultural shame about menstruation and widespread beliefs that it is a sign of sexual activity. It also helped clubs design and run 'question and answer sessions...on marriage at early age and sexual and reproductive health', providing prizes for the students who demonstrate proficiency (CARE project officer). The training that CARE provided to female teachers, helping them become more effective counsellors, has also been important, as 'due to cultural influence, girls of rural areas are afraid to talk of their engagement with friends and other relatives' (woreda-level key informant).

TESFA and other CARE programming have also been vital to strengthening community-based awareness-raising platforms. The married girls groups, for example, have both directly and indirectly helped the community understand the risks of child marriage. Specifically targeting unmarried girls and their parents, they tell them 'our life experiences [and] the harmful effects of early marriage' (FGD married girls). Using all social opportunities, married girls are 'educating parents not to commit these kinds of harmful practices on their children' (kebele administrator), convincing schoolgirls to focus on their education (FGD unmarried girls) and urging out-of-school girls to resist child marriage (FGD married

22 We were told by one of TESFA's lead evaluators that local ownership of ending child marriage had already been established—on girls' own initiative—by the end of the pilot.

girls). Unmarried girls noted that even when the married girls are not teaching, they are still ‘good examples’ who demonstrate that girls are strong and have worth.

The SAA groups also work to raise awareness about child marriage, highlighting not only the health and educational risks for girls, but also teaching about legal penalties. As one member explained, ‘We are teaching the villagers to avoid early and unbalanced marriages. Such marriages have disadvantages for both the husband and wife. Particularly for the girls, these types of marriage are disadvantageous. Girls’ health is affected by early marriage and associated problems. They get married, dropping out of their school’. Another added, ‘We inform them that defying the law would have costs for them. We let them know that they would be penalised if they disobeyed the rule’.

One factor contributing to the awareness-raising success of TESFAs groups has been the way in which they cascade their knowledge through the community using personal one-to-five groups. At school, students ‘have their own structure and action plan’ (kebele-level key informant). The one-to-five groups not only ensure that ‘best experiences’ are shared between students, but, by linking groups with one another, also guarantee that they are shared ‘among schools’ (kebele-level key informant). Similar diffusion occurs on a community level. SAA members ‘use the one-to-five work arrangement structure to discuss and evaluate the activities that we do regarding early marriage’ (FGD SAA members).

CARE’s messages about child marriage are broad. Not only do they include information on the health risks of

Every Friday we meet here around the water pipe and raise the issue informally.

(Married girl)

adolescent pregnancy to mother and child but they also teach that wives should be close in age to their husbands, so that they can live together more happily. ‘The gap,’ explained one married girl, ‘should not be wide’. Critically, TESFA also raised awareness about the importance of emotional maturity, which is key given that many girls are physically mature long before they are ready for marriage and motherhood. Members of a SAA group noted, for example, that girls who are not ready for marriage ‘in some cases kill themselves entering to a deep lake...or sometimes hang themselves. SAA members help their fellow villagers to recognise the magnitude of harm that child marriage can cause.

Leading to hidden practices

Key informants reported that hidden marriages are an issue in Hawzet and Farta. Some families, according to a woreda-level key informant, ‘do it in the form of participating in *mahiber* [a feast in commemoration of the saints] or *zikir* and coffee ceremony’. Others, explained

another, use the age of an older daughter for ‘the marriage of the younger one’.

Escaping early marriage

While awareness-raising efforts have clearly been critical to the reduction in child marriage, especially in Hawzet, which was amongst the first of Farta’s kebeles in which TESFA

We tried to work aggressively each and every day to deliver the assignments that we have given. When some cases arose, discussions were made in the one-to-five-structure, the coffee ceremonies, and in all conditions where we meet the community.

(FGD religious leaders)

was implemented, it appears that helping girls escape either immediately before or soon after their weddings remains a vital strategy. The CARE project officer reported that TESFA had led to the direct cancellation of 180 marriages over the course of its lifespan. A woreda-level key informant, however, hinted the scale of cancellation was far greater. He said, ‘last year 43 girls were prepared for marriage at a single school called Kanat. Through the collaborative action of the different stakeholders, the marriages of 42 students were terminated’.

TESFA’s groups have worked hard to help girls escape child marriage (see Box 23). One of the groups of married girls in Hawzet, for example has gone so far as ‘to hide the girl when the wedding day arrived’. Married girls reported that they ‘sacrificed a lot in general’, because it was ‘so hard to prevent the early marriage even on the wedding day’, but they are proud of each and every girl they saved. SAA members feel the same way. One group, which has cancelled ‘about 18’ early marriages, has at times had to have men to defend them against sudden attacks. For the most part, however, by working through ‘close relatives’ and ‘godfathers’ they are able to win parents over to putting off marriage without forcing a confrontation.

The CARE project officer noted that the anonymous reporting boxes brought into schools in the START follow-up phase had vastly increased marriage cancellations. He said that while in the three years of TESFA itself there were “only” 180 cancellations, in the year after the reporting boxes came into play there were over 100 marriages reported and cancelled.

10.1.7 Better coordinated services for girls and women

CARE programming, and especially TESFA, has not so much led to more coordinated services for girls and women as it has facilitated transformative changes in the overall family and community environments and the way in which they support girls and women. The programme has helped married girls find their voice and claim their rights to

participate in community life and helped the community to see and work to mitigate the gendered threats facing girls and women. This approach not only led to better uptake of services, but, as noted by TESFA's internal evaluation, to differences in terms of how supported girls and women feel.

Girls' clubs, strengthened by CARE programming, offer younger unmarried girls a number of concrete services, as well as providing a place to develop confidence and voice. Amongst the most critical services provided by girls' clubs has been menstrual support. Girls are taught about puberty and helped to understand that periods are a natural part

One SAA group managed to convince a father to cancel a wedding at the last minute—and turn the feast into a house-raising party.

As per the discussion made between him and us, he used the materials prepared for the marriage for a house construction with 80 thin sheets. Now his girl married a priest and enjoyed a better life after her age was reached for a legal marriage.

(Priest)

of growing up. A kebele-level educational informant noted that local 'tradition made girls feel ashamed of it [menstruation]', because 'they perceive a [menstruating] girl as one who is having sexual intercourse with someone'. One married girl explained that before TESFA came, there was no one she could talk to about her period: 'Even at home,' she said, 'I did not tell the truth. Not even to my mum, I was frightened to tell.' She added that if her period came while she was at school, 'I went home, leaving right away to not be seen by others'. Now 'thanks to TESFA, currently, we openly discuss all issues'. CARE has also helped girls learn to make their own sanitary pads and helped the school set up a room for girls that has soap and water and privacy. Notably, according to a TESFA evaluator, girls themselves requested this intervention.

The girls' club in Hawzet maintains a separate library just for girls. It has, said one unmarried girl, 'made me into one of the clever students'. The library gives girls a 'relaxed' space in which to work without being 'disturbed' by boys. Recognising that many girls are not supported to study at home because of the volume of domestic work for

In the past, we were trampled like mud
(Female SSA member)

which they are responsible, the library facilitates girls' daily homework and longer-term academic success.

One of the most critical functions of the girls' club is growing strong girls. The CARE project officer explained that the training that they 'provided helped girls to become assertive and able to develop self-confidence'. Given that many parents still that believe boys are 'better students than girls', helping girls believe in themselves means that they are 'able to effectively attend to their education successfully' (CARE project officer). Girls agreed. When asked what she had learned in the girls' club, one unmarried girl said, 'positive attitudes towards ourselves and others'.

Married girls also have more access to services as a result of the TESFA intervention. Most importantly, from girls' perspective, is their improved access to contraception. One SAA member explained that in the past, mothers-in-law would 'nag their sons' about the need for a baby immediately after marriage. If young wives did not immediately fall pregnant then their mothers-in-law would 'characterise her as a mule' and urge her son to divorce her. Now, however, after efforts to help villagers see that they should 'have a planned number of children that considers the economic capacities of their families' (FGD religious leaders), girls no longer have to take contraception secretly (FGD married girls). Indeed, noted one married girl, while in the past 'even to be seen in the health centre itself was assumed as a crime, currently, our husbands are by our side, they remind us to go to the clinic'.

Married girls and their older peers are also better at utilising maternity care. A woreda-level key informant noted that women go to health offices to get advice from health workers if they conceive. Furthermore, noted a married girl, while in the past it was common for women to give birth at home, now 'we give birth at the clinic'.

TESFA not only facilitated better uptake of services, it transformed marriages by helping men 'fully understand the burdens women bear in the house' (FGD with religious leaders). Now, said one married girl, 'husbands are completely changed. They are very cooperative. They help us in the household activities.' One husband, a SAA member, said that he had initially not wanted any part of activities 'culturally assigned to women'. After training, however, he began to shoulder some of his wife's work. 'When she goes to the river to fetch water, I carry the child. When she carries the crop harvest (*nedo*), I look after the children' he explained. His neighbours were 'so surprised' that they laughed and insulted him: 'they even consider me as a woman'. As time went on, however, and his *injera* got better, his neighbours too began helping their wives. Now, he concluded, 'some of them engage in household work even better than me!'

More cooperative work arrangements are only one of TESFA's transformations. Girls also report that the programme has had impacts on their mobility, decision-making and ownership of assets. When the programme first started, explained one, some husbands and in-laws would not even allow girls to participate. 'Through time,' she said, 'we were able to persuade them'. Now, added a priest, 'The

Box 23: Stronger marriages help save girls

TESFA's approach has managed to simultaneously strengthen the marriages of ever-married girls and prevent those of their younger sisters and peers.

Zufan is an eighteen-year-old mother of one from Hawzet. When she was in 6th grade she was told to leave school. When she asked why, her mother told her that school was 'not important'. Soon after, she observed her mother making a large feast. Again she asked why. She was told that it was for the 'anniversary of St. Michael'. Because, she explained, 'I was a little girl, I did not suspect anything.' As it got dark, however, and 'the best man came to take me to the bridegroom', she learned her fate and 'began crying'.

Two years after her surprise wedding, CARE's TESFA came to her village. This not only strengthened her own marriage, but has saved her younger sisters' lives.

Zufan explained that before TESFA came, she and her husband 'didn't have good communication'. Her husband never included her in decision-making and when she asked, 'he replied that it was not my concern'. With training, however, 'we began to understand each other and he shares with me how much he has sold and we have built a peaceful life'.

Zufan explained that her more supportive marriage soon became important on another front, when her mother decided that her younger sister Sewumehon, then 14, had to marry – all because her mother 'wanted share her happiness with the society and be proud of her daughter for becoming responsible to manage her own household.' Armed with knowledge about the importance of school and the dangers of fistula, and seeing that Sewumehon's bridegroom was old enough to be her father and a drunkard to boot, Zufan tried to talk her mother into cancelling the wedding, first alone and then with the help of programme volunteers.

Her mother was furious. She not only took back the land she had given Zufan as a wedding gift, but she also 'gave the order to somebody to shoot me.'

Zufan's husband was very supportive of her efforts to stop Sewumehon's wedding, in part because 'we had received training from TESFA Project and we began to understand each other' and in part because 'he cared for her like his own younger sister and he knew that she was too young to get married'. She continued, 'He told me not to worry about the land which was snatched and promised me that his land would be enough to survive on or else we could move to some other town in search of work. All that made me stand strong by the side of my sister.'

With the wedding still on, Zufan approached kebele officials, who arrested her parents. They were taken to jail for a week and only released when they 'signed a warning to pay 7,000 birr to the government if they broke the law and forced [Sewumehon] to get married against her will'.

To make that sure she was safe, Sewumehon was sent to stay for a month with CARE volunteers in another village – a wise precaution given that her drunken ex-fiancé soon proved himself dangerous and 'began hunting' Zufan 'for revenge with a gun and sword.'

Zufan's willingness to stand with her sister 'even in death' ultimately earned her the admiration of her mother, who came to see, in Sewumehon's words, that 'it was because of her that I stayed alive.' Zufan said that her mother 'regretted by her wrongdoing...and forgave me and gave me back my plot of land.'

Sewumehon is now 18 and a top-ranked and unmarried student. She keeps a close eye on her youngest sister. While she believes that her parents have now learned their lesson and would not try to arrange a marriage, she says that if they tried, she too would report her parents to the police. 'Let them be in prison. It won't be equal to her life. It will be better if they are jailed', she explained.

power of men over women is not like the past. Women do have power in deciding issues which affects their life and families.' They can, according to an SAA member, 'sell even an ox, where in the past they were insulted if they sold a hen'. Gender-based violence is also decreasing over time (Priest), with girls now less likely to be 'forced to get married and commit sexual intercourse or be beaten when they try to resist' (married girl).

10.1.8 Why has the programme been so effective?

Hawzet is now 'a role model kebele' (FGD religious leaders) in terms of preventing child marriage, which

respondents attributed directly to the careful design and implementation of TESFA. In particular, they highlighted the way in which the programme had worked 'collaboratively' and 'in an integrative manner' with all sectors and levels while fostering local ownership by working through 'influential people' so that the community could learn through its 'own systems' (kebele-level key informant). A TESFA evaluator noted that this approach has been honed over the course of CARE's work in Ethiopia—which began 25 years ago. Long-term relationships with communities have resulted not only in good credibility with villagers, inclining them to trust

even interventions built around new ideas, but also a solid understanding of who in which community should be chosen to get programming off the ground.

Several priests noted that CARE had worked to build local ownership while TESFA was still in the design phase, by approaching the community to ascertain how to best tailor messages to local realities. One said, for example, that the module aimed at helping priests see that religious texts do not decree that they should marry young girls was added after community consultation. Another added that the focus on reducing the extravagance of weddings as a route to reducing child marriage itself was strengthened at the behest of local leaders. 'We are,' he explained, 'always after parents to be clever enough. Rather than investing 20,000 birr for marriage ceremonies, it would be better to educate the girl so as to have 20,000 birr at the end'.

In addition to shaping messages to fit the local context, the care that TESFA put into the composition of the SAAs was also seen by beneficiaries, officials and implementers as critical to programme success. Targeting not only those who were 'influential' over girls' lives, such as their husbands, their mothers, their mothers-in-law and religious leaders, TESFA also deliberately co-opted the 'guilty' in order to increase the effectiveness of its messengers. One mother-in-law, in a SAA group, said that she was chosen because her son, a priest, had married a young girl. She explained, 'The kebele administrators warned me that my son was married to a girl whose age is unbalanced with his. Thinking that I could teach other community

Care was also taken to see that SAAs achieved gender balance.

Mothers are influential in matters of early marriage. Men are considered as less powerful in this regard.
(Educational key informant)

In most cases, decisions regarding early marriage are undertaken by the fathers; the power of the mothers and children is very low.
(Priest)

members about the disadvantage of unbalanced and early marriage, they invited me to take part in the committee.' She concluded, 'They forgave me for my fault, but with a responsibility to preach the community so that they will protect girls against unbalanced and early marriages'.

CARE's focus on religious leaders, during both TESFA and START, as the ultimate mediators of child marriage was also seen as key to programme effectiveness since 'the community trusts and accepts issues which are disseminated by elders and religious leaders' (kebele level key informant) (see Box 24). One priest explained, 'we religious leaders were also the ones who promote harmful

traditional practices by giving blessings while the wedding ceremony was taking place and acting as the key observant as well as being religious fathers for the grooms'. Another added that religious leaders are key to elimination, because 'Religious leaders in some instances are working better than the formal structure designed by the government' because they can 'solve conflicts which cannot be solved through the legal courts'.

This use of persuasion, rather than legal force, was also seen as important to CARE's success. As one SAA member explained, 'we fight early marriage through awareness creation, not through force. We fight it strategically.' If families choose not to listen then SAA members first approach 'religious leaders and some social institutions like *edir* so that the family would be cast out from the community'. Even at the last minute, SAA members and CARE project officers attempt to avoid having the police 'pick up the bride', because they assume that 'serious problems' will occur if they do (key informant).

TESFA's married girls groups were also seen as important to the project's success at reducing child marriage. Before the project, married girls were kept isolated at home, not only out of public sight but away from each other. After TESFA arrived, girls were brought together and into public view. The groups and the film they made during the START phase put a face on pain. This helped people 'witness how the victims of early marriage are negatively affected economically, psychologically, morally and socially' (woreda-level key informant). Further, the very act of coming together empowered girls to address not only their own problems but the threats facing their younger sisters and friends. After TESFA, explained another woreda-level key informant, 'Girls who had hidden themselves were able to come out and join each other'. This helped them build the 'confidence to talk openly about all our problems' (FGD married girls) and 'express their ideas' to the community (kebele-level key informant).

TESFA also fostered local ownership by providing thorough training backed by clear, easy-to-follow manuals with both text and pictures (FGD religious leaders). Soon after SAAs were formed, group facilitators and kebele leaders 'were invited to attend a training at woreda level' (FGD religious leaders). SAA members explained that 'religious leaders, elders, famous persons, husbands, wives, and other important persons from each got (village) of the kebele' were taken to attend training. While The quality of this training ensured deep understanding that resulted in a high level of ownership of messages. Several SAA members noted particular satisfaction that the training had been a two-way relationship: while CARE's manual had originally covered 11 topics, two more topics were added at the community's behest.

Finally, one of the key ways that TESFA fostered ownership was using trainees to train others. The composition of SAA groups did more than improve villagers' uptake of messages: by turning students into

Box 24: Priests move from prejudice to pride

Takele is priest in Hawzet and is 'really embarrassed' that his wife was only 12 years old when they married. Now a member of an SAA, he is working to 'change the attitude of the society through time, using a systematic approach' that works separately with mothers, fathers and girls themselves to emphasise 'the side effects of early marriage, such as complexity during delivery, exposure to fistula, and its psychological as well as social problems'. As a religious leader, he is emphasising that any girl, even if she is 25, 'could be an appropriate wife of a priest or deacon'.

When he first began his work, Takele was 'highly disappointed with being a leader' because 'my life and family were facing different challenges'. For example, he explained, 'My potato garden was devastated one night and unknown individuals also damaged my house.' Now, however, Takele takes great pride in the changes he has helped bring to Hawzet.

Girls, he explained, have 'better awareness about their rights, the benefits of education, the effects of early marriage on their life, and how to report' if they are threatened. Also, he said, 'gender equality has gained due attention in the society'. Takele reports that women are now participating in and leading a wide array of community and religious activities and that 'gender based violence has been decreased through time'. In particular, he explained, the community has come to see the 'long-term benefits of educating girls' rather than investing already strained resources in wedding feasts.

Takele also explained that his personal life has been totally transformed. In the past, he said, 'I myself had practised gender violence even in front of her father and brothers.' Now, he explained, 'after having the training and participating the CARE project I have completely changed in ideology and tried to help my wife in every aspect.'

Takele is especially proud of the girls he has directly saved from child marriage. His SAA alone has 'saved 28 girls from being engaged in early marriage'. One case, he reported, was 'a big challenge from both parties', forcing them to 'hide the child' from her own parents before her marriage was ultimately cancelled by the courts. While his work has been hard, he knows that 'I have special place in the lives of the victims and respect from the majority the society'.

Progress has, Takele admits, often been slow, with women themselves sometimes hesitant to embrace new norms. However, Takele is convinced that 'sustained behavioural change' is far better 'than taking the case to the court'. Now that his neighbours are largely in agreement, they are proud that CARE facilitators are 'have got the chance to share our experience to other kebeles' and have asked his forgiveness for their earlier 'evil acts'.

teachers, it also ensured that the same people who had been most likely to perpetrate child marriage became the strongest advocates for its elimination. By supporting them to teach others, TESFA ensured gatekeepers' ownership of messages. Several religious leaders spoke of the care they put into planning how they would take their messages to their one-to-five groups. Similarly, a Priest who had been invited to go to other kebeles and share his TESFA experiences told us that 'experience sharing' had made a 'paramount contribution'.

The local ownership that TESFA fostered entirely precluded the meeting fatigue that broad interventions can lead to. Indeed, an evaluator told us that while CARE had initially worried that they would be unable to arrange bi-monthly meetings for married girls, soon the girls themselves were asking to meet weekly. Similarly, SAA members told us that 'there is high competition between us' with particularly effective group members getting the most respect. This means, added another, that 'we perform the activity without any fatigue'. The pride that group members take in the changes they have brought to their community is palpable. Some described their work as 'tangible and remarkable' and another added: 'It is not an exaggeration that we have saved the lives of lots of rural girls'.

By situating the SAAs between implementers and villagers, TESFA also appears to have headed off

meeting fatigue on the part of the broader community and simultaneously improved uptake. Indeed, a TESFA evaluator noted that CARE was almost overwhelmed by community support—at some meetings nearly 900 people came to learn. A kebele-level key informant commented that while 'the community is fed up with the meetings conducted at the kebele levels and do not come willingly', CARE's approach of 'gathering influential people and discussing the issue with them' has been very successful. This is because, she added, it lets the 'community learn through its own structures'. She concluded, 'If [people] feel that they are being preached to by outsiders, they do not accept the training.'

CARE's deliberate efforts to inculcate a sense of shared responsibility between all sectors and levels was also a factor in its success at reducing child marriage.

TESFA took the initiative to train teachers on the disadvantage of early marriage and other related issues. Teachers in turn replicated the training to the parents. The teachers also gave trainings for selected students and hence the students are arranged to work on the issue at kebele level.

(Kebele level key informant)

The project worked carefully with all ‘different organs’ (woreda-level key informant) and helped support a ‘strong relationship between the kebele and woreda leaders’ (FGD married girls). It also made sure that the groups of married girls were well supported by the adults in SAAs: as well as holding monthly reporting meetings at which all participants felt secure enough to criticise each other to bring about the desired change, they also ensured that girls understood that they could get help at any time (FGD married girls). Finally, while CARE’s ultimate goal with TESFA was to help communities ‘to solve the issues by themselves’ (CARE project officer), beneficiaries told us that project officers got personally involved when necessary, such as when vandals destroyed the garden and damaged the house of one SAA leader (Priest).

TESFA beneficiaries also reported that CARE carefully monitored progress in each kebele, working to ensure that successes were taken on board for dissemination to other kebeles and that problems were worked out. One married girl explained: ‘Every month, people come from TESFA ... They help us by commenting on the errors committed and taking corrective measures’.

While unremarked by our respondents, who were exposed to only the SRH arm of TESFA programming, an evaluator noted that the communication skills provided by that arm had been so powerful that that modality was immediately taken on board in other arms. He explained that helping girls learn to talk to their husbands and in-laws—and interact with one another—had led to transformations that were visible in just a few short months.

10.1.9 What challenges did the programme face?

Outside of initial hostility from the community, which prevented some married girls from participating and left SAA members feeling physically threatened, our respondents reported no significant challenges related to programme operations. The constant refrain was that the programme had been transformative but too short.

When CARE first approached community and religious leaders in Hawzet, and explained the goals of the TESFA, ‘we were highly surprised’, explained one priest, largely because until then married girls were effectively invisible and their need for specific services or support unrecognised. In a community where child marriage had long been common, getting the programme up and running took considerable effort. Husbands, would not ‘allow the married women to go to meetings’, even prohibiting them from ‘listening to equality issues that were raised at Sunday services’ (FGD religious leaders). When SAA members began their teaching they faced constant threats from parents who insisted that they were the only ones who could decide the fate of their daughters (FGD SAA). Priests and other SAA members reported that initially they were under attack – sometimes physically – from all sides, ‘with families of the girls on side and families of the bridegroom on the other’.

With this initial hostility now long past, the most common programme challenge identified by our respondents was that TESFA had ended too soon. A woreda-level key informant said, ‘One major challenge is the problem of continuity of the campaign. TESFA project has lasted only for three years’. While progress, particularly in Hawzet, has been remarkable, key informants and SAA members are ‘frightened that the community will retreat’ (Priest) into old traditions because three years ‘is not really enough to achieve behavioural change’ (woreda-level key informant).

While respondents identified few challenges directly related to CARE’s programming, they observed that the implementation of the law in Farta is quite weak. When girls report their marriages to the school, and school directors turn them over to the police, ‘Court officials do not respond immediately’, explained one woreda-level key informant. In other cases, parents are taken to court offices, made to sign a form promising not to marry their daughter, and immediately return home to arrange the marriage ‘in a different way – like in the form of coffee ceremony, *mahiber* and the like’ (woreda-level key informant). There is little authorities can do about this, explained another woreda-level key informant, because eyewitnesses will never volunteer to testify ‘due to fear of exclusion’ and ‘revenge of the guilty ones’. Finally, added a Priest, while girls’ parents are sometimes penalised for their part in child marriage, grooms’ parents are never held accountable, even when the young bride suffers ‘death or life-long complication due to exposure to sexual intercourse at an early age’.

10.1.10 Ways forward

Beneficiaries, both adults and adolescents, were clear that their primary desire was to have CARE resume TESFA programming. As noted, they felt that three years was not long enough to produce sustainable change and were afraid that without longer-term efforts, child marriage could become common again. Indeed, one priest observed that backsliding might already be happening: ‘I saw that there are some problems as compared with the last year’.

Key informants at the Offices of Justice, Education and WCYA are agreed that sustained attention is the key to ending child marriage. They felt that ‘scheduled, planned and sustained’ education, aimed at helping parents understand that eliminating the practice is ‘for their own sake and for the benefit of their children’ would be far better than ‘using annual festivals like Epiphany’ as a venue for training. However, with the exception of a single kebele-level key informant, who said ‘we are now in a position to run and handle it by our own capacity because the activities accomplished by TESFA enabled the government structure to be self-standing’, most key informants were agreed that low government budgets were a ‘critical constraint’ to eliminating child marriage. For example, one woreda-level key informant admitted that while they would like to be able to match the training provided by CARE, ‘it is difficult for us to afford the

financial cost of such extensive training for a huge number of people'. Another said that the cost of age checks was almost prohibitively high, meaning that the resources mustered to call off a single planned wedding often far outweighed those dedicated to prevention-oriented awareness-raising education. All agreed that partnerships with and funding from CARE and other NGOs was vital to continued progress.

Although detailed cost benefit data was not collected

We must educate them continually without being disappointed.
(Woreda-level key informant)

(and would be useful to do in the future), it is likely that key informants' concerns about programme costs are overblown. The programme relied on peer educators, and maintaining the intervention is probably quite inexpensive, although this requires further assessment. While key informants were concerned about the cost of training, it had in reality been both efficient and inexpensive. Not only was CARE able to train an entire woreda worth of SAAs in a single session, offering participants no more than reimbursement for their travel costs—but each SAA group needs only a single manual. Moreover, married girls' groups have already taken on lives of their own. In addition to the SRH arms forming their own savings groups, as they have in Hawzet, older groups are now training new groups—merely requesting manuals from CARE.

Outside of future work with CARE and other NGOs, key informants had a number of ideas about how to strengthen local efforts to eliminate child marriage. One kebele-level key informant, for example, felt that girls needed to be asked, for every marriage, whether it was of their own free choice. A woreda-level key informant felt that the early marriage eradication committee needed to meet more regularly and asked for 'modern medical instruments' to more accurately ascertain girls' ages.

In addition to direct efforts to eliminate child marriage, respondents had a number of other suggestions for programming which would benefit girls and ultimately reduce the odds of an early marriage. Key amongst those ideas was strengthening and expanding local education. Several noted that the poorest families could not afford to send all of their children to school because parents needed at least one to work at home. Others noted that the cost of high school in particular is too high. Efforts also need to be directed beyond enrolment towards actual learning. A woreda-level key informant explained that awareness about the importance of girls' education remains low and that excessive domestic workloads result in rates of school-leaving and grade repetition that exceed those of

boys. He also noted that girls' higher rates of exam failure push them into migration.

A more concerted effort to develop local employment options was also seen as an important way forward in the fight against child marriage. High rates of unemployment are not only driving migration (both internal and to Saudi Arabia), but are discouraging parents and students from adequately investing in education, according to a kebele-level key informant. He explained that when parents are 'without hope for their children's job opportunities ... they prefer their children to marry early'. Girls agreed that a lack of jobs was a 'serious problem affecting the eradication of early marriage' (FGD unmarried girls). When even university graduates were unable to find employment, parents feel dismay at the 'wasted' fees and the value placed on education deteriorates.

10.2 Lessons learned and implications for future programming

- Significant reductions in child marriage can be made even where economic pressure does not drive widespread desperation for education.
- Significant reductions in child marriage can be made by addressing gender inequality at the household and community level— even where larger development messages vis-à-vis the role of women in transforming the country are more muted.
- While persuasion is effective at reducing child marriage, tighter legal enforcement is probably required to eliminate it.
- TESFA, like Action Aid, introduced separate groups that ultimately helped one-to-five groups stay focused on child marriage and girls' education, as well as gender more broadly. Key is that the groups are dedicated to gender issues, not that they are women-only.
- TESFA's engagement with men – both husbands and religious leaders – returned huge investments.
- TESFA's use in its campaigns of individual girls who had been harmed by marriage improved uptake of messages. This is similar to the way in which the government in Kiltewlalo used the experiences of fistula victims.
- TESFA's simultaneous focus on girls and adults was very powerful and may have led to the absence of concern here about 'hot' girls who are only interested in sex.
- As Ethiopian diets improve, it is important for adults to know that earlier menstruation is linked to better nutrition and is not associated with earlier mental/ emotional development.



School girls in North East Oromia, David Walker 2015

11 Gambela Educational Materials and Scholarship Support Programme

11.1 Key findings

Programme approach and modalities

- The Gambela Educational Materials and Scholarship Support Programme seeks to improve access to education for poor and vulnerable female students by providing them with school materials in primary school and scholarship support in secondary school.
- In primary schools, the programme also provides solar lamps to female students in order for them to complete their schoolwork in the dark after they complete their domestic responsibilities.
- Funds from the scholarship programme have been used by beneficiaries for school related expenses as well as daily household expenses.
- While the programme is not directly aimed at tackling child marriage, education can serve as a protective factor against the risk of child marriage: the programme's spill-over effects in the lives of beneficiaries are significant, although total beneficiary numbers are very low and inadequate compared to demand.

Lessons from Itang and Lare woreda

Not only is marriage under 18 years very common in the programme focus woredas, but additional bride price payments are given to reward a young woman's fertility.

- With an increasing number of girls attending school in both Itang and Lare woreda (from a very low baseline), there have been positive changing beliefs around benefits of education for girls. Among in-school adolescent girl respondents, professional aspirations are high and there are increasing role models in the community who act as a source of inspiration.

Entry points for future programming

- Given the small number of beneficiaries in the current project design, the low levels of girls' schooling (particularly at secondary and preparatory school

levels), and very high levels of child marriage, there is a need to scale-up the programme.

- The programme is effective at an individual level but is not helping to change attitudes of the community towards child marriage. Future efforts should be aimed at twinning support for girls' education with community awareness efforts on child marriage specifically and gender equality issues more broadly in order to tackle child marriage in the Gambela region.

11.1.1 Programme objectives and modalities

The Gambela Educational Materials and Scholarship Support Programme was started in 2013 to tackle the very low rates of girls' school enrolment in Gambela Regional State (see Box 2). The programme is supported by UNICEF and implemented by the regional Bureau of Education. This initiative is not directly aimed at tackling child marriage, but given the close relationship between school attendance and a reduced risk of child marriage (Malhotra et al., 2011; EGLDAM, 2008; Jones et al., 2014), it was included in our good-practice mapping in order to explore support for girls' education as an entry point to addressing child marriage.

The main objectives of the programme are twofold:

1. Providing school material support for vulnerable primary school children
2. Providing scholarship stipends for vulnerable secondary school female students.

The programme seeks to provide beneficiaries both school materials and scholarship support in order to implement the Education for All Plan and Back to School Campaign. The programme selected seven woredas in the Gambela region (Abobo, Gog, Itang, Lare, Mekoy, Jikawo, Mengeshi) in which it would aim to improve equitable access to and quality of education. For the purposes

Box 25: The gender education gap in Gambela

Gambela is a region which had a relatively small population of 307,096 according to the 2007 census, of whom 25.4% were urban inhabitants (N=77,925). Girls' education is a recent phenomenon in Gambela, with girls first starting to attend school under the Derg Regime in the late 1980s. Compared to other states, Gambela's gender gap is relatively high. According to the Ministry of Education (2015: 33), in the 2013-14 academic year, the gender parity index (GPI) indicated that the participation of girls in primary education (Grades 1-8) was 0.93 at the national level, while the Gambela index was 0.84. For secondary education, the national GPI for the 2013-14 academic year was 0.94 for Grades 9-10 compared to 0.78 in Gambela, and for second cycle or preparatory education (Grades 11-12) it was 0.85 nationally, compared to 0.29 in Gambela, the lowest rate in the country.

Over the last five years, however, there has been a gradual improvement in the number of girls enrolled in primary schools. In the 2009-2010 academic year, the percentage of girls enrolled in primary education was 44.2 and this increased to 46.8% by 2013-14. Yet as the GPI figures above indicate, the gender gap remains marked at secondary (Grades 9-10) and especially preparatory (Grades 11-12) levels. Table 10 presents the gross enrolment of Gambela Region in 2006 Ethiopian Calendar (EC, i.e. 2013/14) by grade level and sex.

Table 11 indicates that there is a relatively better participation rate of females in the first cycle of primary education, especially among the Nuer Ethnic community, who participate in relatively equal numbers in Grades 1-4, but very few girls reach secondary (30.7% in 2012/13 and 32.5% in 2013/14) and preparatory (6.8% in 2012/13 and 9.1% in 2013/14) levels. Considerably more girls in the Anywa community continue their secondary education (50.7% in 2012/13 and 49.9% in 2013/14) and preparatory education (28.7% in 2012/13 and 33.1% in 2013/14).

Table 10: Gambela Region Gross Enrolment for 2006EC (2013/14) by Grade Level and Sex

Grade level	Total population*			School age population**		Enrolment				Gross Enrolment Ratio***		
	Male	Female	Total	Boys	Girls	Both	Boys	Girls	Both	Boys	Girls	Both
1-8	208,018	190,814	398,832	39,441	35,232	74,673	60,998	51,394	112,392	154.7	145.9	150.5
9-10	197,039	181,687	378,726	9,452	8,510	17,908	8,748	6,181	14,929	92.6	72.6	83.1
11-12	197,039	181,687	378,726	9,364	8,544	17,908	3,096	810	3,906	33.1	9.5	21.8

Source: MoE (2015) (see General Educational Annex, p.96)

* Source of population data: The 2007 Population and Housing Census Projection Results of Ethiopia

** School age population: 7-14 for Grades 1-9; 15-16 for Grades 9-10; and 17-18 for Grades 11-12

*** The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is defined as the proportion of the total pupils in a particular level, expressed as a percentage of the population of the corresponding school age. GER is a crude measure of school coverage. Since it includes under-aged and over-aged students, GER can be higher than 100%. This is frequently the case in countries attempting to address the backlog of students interested in attending school but previously unable to attend (for example because of financial problems, family issues, or lack of access to schools).

With a diverse ethnic population (see footnote 1), it is also important to understand trends of enrolment in education between the two largest groups in this region. According to the Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia (CSA), the total population of Gambela region was 309,916 in 2007, of which the majority are Nuer (46.7%) followed by Anywak (21.2%).

Box 25 (continued)

Table 11 Enrolment figures among two of the largest indigenous communities in the region: Nuer and Anywa

Year	Ethnic groups	Grade 1-4			Grade 5-8			Grade 9-10			Grade 11-12		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2012	Nuer	15,006	14,778 (49.6%)	29,784	10,477	6,904 (39.7%)	17,381	4,447	1,966 (30.7%)	6,413	1,047	76 (6.8%)	1,123
	Anywa	6,722	6,864 (50.52%)	13,586	4,466	4,589 (50.7)	9,055	1,595	1,637 (50.65%)	3,232	273	110 (28.7%)	383
2013	Nuer	20,240	16,076 (44.3%)	36,316	11,199	7,466 (40%)	18,665	4,637	2,231 (32.5%)	6,868	1,657	165 (9.1%)	1,822
	Anywa	7,360	7,265 (49.7%)	14,625	4,879	4,987 (50.6%)	9,866	1,694	1,690 (49.9%)	3,384	303	150 (33.1%)	453
2014	Nuer	16,491	12,052	28,543	10,256	6,519	16,775	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Anywa	7,323	5,842	13,165	4,782	4,056	8,838	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Source: Gambela Peoples' National Regional State Education Bureau (28 April 2015)

of the evaluation we selected Itang special woreda and Lare woreda. These research sites were recommended by the Gambela Education Officer based on programme implementation evaluation and monitoring results that showed that among all the seven target woredas, Abobo and Itang special were the best performing whereas Lare and the other were among the worst performing.

The school material support targets poor female children, including orphans, and consists of providing beneficiaries with exercise books (10 over two semesters), pens (20 over two semesters), pencils (4), a sharpener (1), eraser (1) and ruler (1). In the 2014-2015 year, this support was given to 40 students in the Lare woreda (five students from each of the eight schools selected). Female students also receive solar lamps to help them study in the evenings. However, according to the programme coordinator in Lare woreda, since the majority of rural primary schools do not require students to wear uniforms, the programme does not provide school uniforms through the DRS project fund. They also do not provide school bags so that they can instead 'support many vulnerable children'. Key informants explained that the woreda's Education Quality and Equity Office is responsible for the timely provision of school material support. However, the new academic year's distribution was 'delayed' due to delays in the release of funds from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development; the support was therefore provided to selected primary school beneficiaries during the first semester and then at end of the second semester, but with a view to the materials being used in the next academic year.

The second arm of the programme provides 1,000 Ethiopian birr in two instalments (500 birr for each instalment) over the 2013-14 academic year to 200 vulnerable girls (poor girls or orphans who are unable to cover school-related expenses) in Grades 9 and 10. In the 2014-15 academic year, these beneficiaries received 1,250 birr in two instalments (750 birr in December 2014 and 500 birr in April 2015). Students in Grades 9 and 10 were specifically chosen because their retention will be key in improving the exceedingly low numbers in Grades 11 and 12. The Regional Education Bureau is responsible for the timely provision of the scholarship money for the beneficiaries. While there are 200 beneficiaries in Gambela, 54 beneficiaries were selected in Itang special woreda since 'the number of the beneficiaries varies according to the total number of pupils in the secondary school'. Accordingly, Itang Secondary School has 20 beneficiaries, Wankie Secondary School 8, Acodo Secondary School 8, Pal Secondary School 2, Basel Secondary School 6, and Eliya Secondary School 10 beneficiaries.

11.1.2 Primary data

In the absence of formal evaluation data on the programme, we undertook an assessment of the programme in two woredas – Itang and Lara – the basic profiles of which can be found in Box 26.

Local drivers of child marriage

Our primary data findings suggest that child marriage is highly prevalent and that almost all girls marry

Programme basics

Programme name: Gambela Educational Materials and Scholarship Support Programme

Programme approach:

- Secondary education support for girls provided through scholarship and tutorial programmes
- Vulnerable children (including female children) provided with educational and sanitary material support
- Provision of solar lamps for girls at primary level since they typically do household chores during the day and homework during the evening.

Dates: 2013-2015

Implementing agency: Gambela Regional Bureau of Education together with the woreda-level education offices

Funding agency: UNICEF

Geographical coverage: The project has seven target woredas which have been selected from the region's three Administrative Zones (Nuer, Anywa and Mejeng) in proportion to the number of woredas and the population size:

1. Abobo: Anywa Administrative Zone of Gambela Region (Non-Developing Regional State)
2. Gog: Anywa Administrative Zone of Gambela Region
3. Itang: Developing Regional State consists of mainly Anywa and Nuer ethnic communities, Opo and other indigenous populations of the region
4. ikawo: Nuer Administrative Zone of Gambela Region
5. Lare: Nuer Administrative Zone of Gambela Region (Non-Developing Regional State)
6. Mengeshi: Mejeng Administrative Zone of Gambela Region
7. Mekoy: Nuer Administrative Zone of Gambela Region.

Number of beneficiaries: In 2013 the beneficiaries totalled 320 vulnerable children (girls from poor families and orphan male students). In 2015, the number was reduced to 200.

Evaluation evidence and dates: Not available.

between the ages of 14-16 among the Nuer and Anywa communities in Itang and Lare woredas. Citing economic reasons as the strongest driver, participants reported that girls are considered as a 'source of wealth' since they attract a substantial bride price for the parents (paid in cattle among the Nuer and in money among the Anywa). One key informant interview explained that in Lare, 'a girl child is an emergency or reserve fund for her brother, father, and the family as a whole'. The standard bride price in Gambela ranges from 15-40 head of cattle (from 15 for younger and under-educated girls to up to 40 for girls in wealthy families and with tertiary education); for Nuer community members, bride price ranges from 2,000-3,000 Ethiopian birr. This bride price has changed very little over time, although there were several accounts of fluctuation caused by a shortage of cattle or by agricultural shifts (decreasing the price from 25 to 15 cattle for an uneducated girl, but increasing it from 25-40 cattle for an educated girl). Given the very high expectations around bride price, the justice office representative explained that

the community does not fear the law or even consider child marriage as a crime.

An unintended consequence of economic constraints has been the rise in marriage by abduction among the Nuer community. As secondary school boys in Itang explained, 'marriage through abduction is a newly emerging culture due to a shortage of money to prepare wedding feasts among the Nuer community. This is the major cause for schoolgirls dropping out: forced marriage and giving birth to children'. There is 'no marriage by abduction among the Anywa boys'.

Other dominant drivers of child marriage in the woredas include socio-cultural norms around protecting girls' virtue. Fathers and mothers consistently reported that they feared that their daughters would get pregnant before marriage. Parents blame modern education and technology for this and believe that the trend toward girls' independent decision-making is a contributing factor. For instance, in a focus group discussion in Itang, fathers explained that 'schoolgirls go to dancing clubs

Box 26: Assessment of programme woredas

Itang woreda

Itang woreda is not part of any zone in the Gambela Region and is considered a 'special' woreda. It is bordered on the south and southeast by the Anuak Zone, on the west by the Nuer Zone, on the northwest by South Sudan, and on the north by the Oromia Region; part of the southern boundary is defined by the Alwero River. According to the CSA, the woreda had a total population of 35,686 (M=17,955, F=17,731) in 2007. The majority of the population are from the Nuer (70.0%) or Anywa/Agnwa (25.2%) ethnic communities; similarly, 68.7% speak Nuer and 25.8% speak Anywa/Agnwa. Most people are involved in more than one economic activity. The main sources of livelihood are crop cultivation (mainly maize and sorghum), livestock keeping and fishing. Farmers living on the riverbanks of the Baro cultivate vegetables or tree crops such as mango and avocado for their own consumption or for sale. Considered mainly food insecure, all except one of the 21 kebeles in Itang are located in the floodplain of Baro River, which is the widest river in Ethiopia. More than 95% of the inhabited area is situated in the left and right banks of the Baro River and is susceptible to flood damage. It has a mixed community of agriculturalists, agro-pastoralists, white-collar workers and business people. Income-generating activities in Achua kebele of Itang town include crop production, livestock keeping, fishing, trading, salary work, and daily labour. There is high prevalence of child marriage in this woreda as highlighted in the census data (see Table 12).

Table 12: Child marriage rates in Lare woreda

	Rate of child marriage	Number of girls married	Ranking out of 741 woredas
Ages 10-14	17%	1,892	44th out of 741
Ages 15-17	22%	852	264th out of 741

Source: 2007 Ethiopian Census data

According to the key informant interview in the Itang Education Office, there are 26 primary schools in the woreda, with six covering Grades 1-4, 19 covering Grades 1-8 and one Grades 1-9. Additionally, there are nine secondary schools (six from Grades 9-10 and three newly opened schools with only Grade 9 for the academic year beginning September 2014).

Achua kebele, the study site, is the only urban kebele of Itang that has two full cycle primary schools (Grades 1-8). It has also one secondary school (Grades 9-10) and one preparatory school (Grades 11-12). The UNICEF programme good practice study was conducted in this kebele with a special focus on the Scholarship Programme since it is the kebele with the largest number of scholarship beneficiary female students (owing to the size of secondary school student population). Among the 54 secondary school female scholarship beneficiaries selected from six targeted secondary schools in Itang special woreda, the largest number (20 beneficiaries) are found in Itang Secondary School. Table 13 presents enrolment figures from 2012-2015 in Itang woreda. As indicated in this table, the number of children (both males and females) decreases significantly from primary to secondary and preparatory levels. Moreover, relatively fewer girls participate in education compared to boys as they grow older.

Table 13: Itang special woreda educational participation by year, grade level and sex

Year	Woreda	Grade 1-4			Grade 5-8			Grade 9-10			Grade 11-12		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2012-2013	Itang	3094	2760	5854	2242	1904	4146	1217	768	1985	241	73	314
2013-2014	Itang	3575	3030	6605	2624	2181	4805	1282	989	2271	409	125	534
2014-2015	Itang	3555	2822	6377	2982	2036	5018	1622	1282	2904	346	122	468

Box 26 (continued)**Lare woreda**

Lare woreda is part of the Nuer Zone and is bordered on the south and east by the Anuak Zone, on the west by the Baro River which separates it from Jikawo, and on the north by the Jikawo River which separates it from South Sudan. It was part of Jikawo woreda of Nuer Zone of Gambela Region before 2005 but became an independent woreda in 2006 after the 2005 national election. It has 28 kebeles, of which two are considered urban kebeles. Based on the 2007 Census conducted by the CSA, the woreda has a total population of 31,406 (M=16,145, F=15,261). Of these, 6,547 (20.9%) of the population are urban inhabitants. The majority of the inhabitants identify as Protestant (86.8%), while 7.5% practise traditional religions, 2.7% are Catholic, and 1.8% of the population practise Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity.

Lare is found in the agro-pastoral livelihood zone in which the livelihood of community depends on livestock rearing (mainly cattle, goats and sheep) and crop production (mainly maize and sorghum). Its total food production is persistently inadequate to cover the population's food requirements. The main food sources are self-produced food, purchase and livestock product supplemented by wild fruits, fish, and game meat. The livelihood of Teluth community depends on livestock rearing (mainly cattle, goats and sheep), crop production (mainly maize and sorghum) and fishing. Prone to natural disasters, flooding affects livestock grazing, land and results in large population movements from riverside to upland during the rainy season to avoid flooding. Recurrent flash floods, erratic rainfall and pest infestation are chronic hazards affecting production in the agro-pastoral livelihood zone in general and Lare woreda in particular. Like Itang, there is high prevalence of child marriage (Table 14).

Table 14: Child marriage rates in Itang special woreda

	Rate of child marriage	Number of girls married	National ranking
Ages 10-14	16.1%	2,286	56 th out of 741
Ages 15-17	28.9%	1,201	142 nd out of 741

Source: 2007 Ethiopian census data

There are 26 formal schools in this woreda. Out of these, 20 are primary schools serving Grades 1-8, two schools serve Grades 1-9, three schools serve Grades 9-10, and there is one preparatory school for Grades 11-12. There are 40 beneficiaries for the school material programme and 32 scholarship beneficiaries from Lare woreda. Table 15 presents enrolment figures from 2012-2015 in Itang woreda. Similar to Itang, the number of children (both males and females) decreases significantly from primary to secondary and preparatory levels. Moreover, fewer girls than boys continue to participate in education as they grow older.

Table 15: Lare woreda's educational participation by year, grade level and sex

Year	Grade 1-4			Grade 5-8			Grade 9-10			Grade 11-12		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2012-2013	3,625	2,980	6,605	1,949	1,500	3,449	1,015	513	1,528	238	4	242
2013-2014	4,648	4,202	8,850	2,517	1,851	4,368	1,305	616	1,921	517	50	567
2013-2014	3,694	3,216	6,910	1,882	1,377	3,259	970	685	1,655	382	56	438

Source: Gambela Education Bureau Document (April 2015)

In our community, the majority of the Nuer and Anywa people still consider girls as source of wealth and it is very difficult to change the local peoples' attitude towards the practice of bride price or selling girls by cattle or cash through early arranged marriage. Both the Anywa and Nuer fathers want to have many children by marrying many wives and wives are not allowed by their husbands to control their birth by using modern contraceptives. As a result, early-married schoolgirls are forced to drop out from school to take care of their children as well as their husbands.

(Focus group discussion with adolescent girls in Itang woreda)

and get pregnant. Then they marry, dropping out from school. Nowadays, schoolgirls and boys do not listen to their parents' advice'. Similarly a woreda official noted that there is a new culture of drinking alcohol: 'children start drinking as early as fifteen. They freely create love relationships with schoolgirls. This in turn leads them to face many problems, such as early pregnancy and dropping out'. Focus group discussions with girls, however, revealed that adolescents' fear that once a girl is pregnant, her parents will force her to get married in order to 'get bride price from her boyfriend', and that this is also perpetuating the practice of under-age marriage.

There are also high socio-cultural expectations around fertility. Having children is accorded high prestige, such that with every child, the father of the girl may receive additional bride price payments. In a discussion with Nuer and Anywa boys, it was said that:

there is no end for the bride price payment as long as the girl stays in her marriage and continues to give birth. For instance, the first bride price payment for a girl can be 2,000 Ethiopian birr and then her father asks her husband to pay additional bride price money whenever she gives birth to a new child. If she does not give birth she will be divorced.

This expectation was found in Lare woreda as well. Interviews with adolescent girls suggested that the community expects that if you do not give birth within a year after your marriage, 'you will be divorced and your father will be forced to return all the bride price cattle to your husband or his father'. The social norm around returning bride price after divorce however only holds true for the Nuer community such that 'if the girl does not give birth to a child she will be divorced immediately and her father will be forced to return all the bride price cattle'. High fertility expectations used to fuel high rates of polygamous marriages in the past but in the current generation, boys revealed that they do not want to marry more than one wife. However, they attribute this changed

attitude primarily to the economic burdens of having more than one wife, rather than broader qualms with the practice.

We [fathers] make the final decision and our children in general and daughters in particular will not refuse their fathers' decision according to our [the Nuer] culture.

(Parent-Teacher Association representative in Lare woreda)

While education is a significant protective factor against child marriage (discussed below), girls are constrained from this through reproductive care roles in the household. For instance, in Itang, boys said that their 'sisters do not have sufficient time to study their school lessons at home because they have to assist our mothers in domestic activities. They usually study their school lessons during the night or evening when they finish domestic activities'. When asked when boys study, they said, 'most of the time, we study our school lessons during the afternoon after eating our lunch'. Saying that 'cultural' norms dictate that boys do not do cooking and cleaning, the boys explained that they do not help their sisters with domestic chores.

Moreover, limited water and sanitation facilities are obstacles to girls staying in school. While separate toilets are said to exist in one school in Lare woreda, many girls said that 'there is a strong need for separate toilets for female students in the school so that female students can have room for changing their sanitary pads'. Even in the school that does have a sex-segregated toilet, participants explained that

there are some schoolgirls who fear using the toilet since they do not use it at home or in their village and these students prefer to use the open field outside the school compound since the school is not fenced. These girls say "we are not accustomed to using the toilet in the school since it is a new thing for us".

Another factor hindering school attendance in is language. One girl who moved from South Sudan and is considered as high performing in her school noted that 'some schoolgirls do not know how to speak in English in the class and they drop out from school ... The medium of instruction is English [from Grade 1]'. In a similar vein, the girls' club in Lare kebele's Teluth Primary School is led by an Amharic subject teacher who does not know the local Nuer language. As a result, Nuer girls do not want to join the club because they are fluent in neither Amharic or English.

Some parents believe that being educated had no intrinsic value other than increasing bride price. A key informant explained that many girls marry before finishing their primary education, while:

secondary school girls who marry while still at school are vulnerable to dropping out since they are responsible for managing household activities and giving birth and taking care of children. Also, parents' economic problems and housework burdens in girls' natal family also prevent them from accessing formal education or being successful in formal education.

Against this backdrop, Box 27 contains the story of one girl's struggle to continue her education.

Local protective factors against child marriage

There are a number of local factors working to protect girls from child marriage. These include a recent push to get all girls enrolled in school by the Education Bureau at the regional and woreda levels as well as direct government efforts to eliminate child marriage.

I managed to come back to school since all girls in our locality come to school due to the protestant church education and the health extension workers' community conversation programmes about the value of educating girls.
(15 year-old-girl in Lare woreda)

In terms of socio-cultural factors, the church featured consistently as a source for guidance and lessons on the benefits of avoiding child marriage. Respondents cited 'teachings from the church leaders' as a strong contributing factor to a decrease in both child marriage and polygamy. Additionally, the church was considered as an important contributor to girls' education: 'The church teaches about the value of modern education in general and girls' education in particular'.

One girl who dropped out of school because of child marriage attributed her escape from the marriage and return to school to norms set by the church on sending all girls to school. Moreover, polygamy was generally considered a regressive practice, linked to prior generations and strongly correlated with limited education. The majority of respondents noted that as daughters become educated and 'modern', they are unwilling to let their husbands have more than one wife:

Do you allow your husband to have a second wife if he wants to do so? No, I do not allow him to have a second wife. Why not? Because of my religion (Mekane Yesus) and my formal schooling. My husband, who completed 10th grade, also follows the same religion.

The vast majority of respondents also demonstrated a progressive attitude about the role of education in reducing child marriage and noted the economic benefits (including returns in terms of better bride price) and life opportunities. Educational aspirations were also considerable: the majority of girls declared an interest in tertiary education and in a few cases post-graduate training (although vocational training prospects were almost never mentioned), even though as the statistics above underscore there is a significant disconnect between stated aspirations and lived reality. In terms of role models, there were numerous references to local professional women – often district-level workers such as health extension staff, teachers and agricultural advisors – who motivate girls to continue their education. Moreover, fathers explained that their attitudes towards child marriage and the benefits of education are changing because 'educated females teach us [parents] not to marry-off our daughters below the age of 18 and the importance of educating them'. In some instances, other family members promoted education and

Box 27: Asha's story: struggling to continue her education

I am 15 years old. I was forced to get married last year at the age of 14 while I was in Grade 6. I was performing well in my formal schooling. For example, I stood second out of 100 students when I went up to Grade 6. However, my father forced me to marry an old man (of about 40 years old) as a second wife just to get bride price (25 head of cattle) during my marriage. I did not like my old husband (who was as old as my father) husband and I did not want to give birth. I started to use birth control or modern contraception through injection without informing my husband because I wanted to continue with formal schooling after getting divorced. I came to know about the use of contraceptives through my science (Biology) teacher while I was attending Grade 6 in this school and through the extension health workers in our village. My husband divorced me since I did not give birth and my father was forced to return the cattle. After getting divorced, I came back to my parents' village and tried to convince my father to allow me to continue with my schooling since there are many girls at school in our village. Now I am in Grade 6 while living with my parents in a rural village near to the school. I also advise female students in my village to use birth control in the form of injection in order not to give birth while attending school. The school should provide this service to married female students.

15-year-old divorced female student, 6th grader from Lare woreda

it was noted that older siblings (both males and females) were advising their parents to ‘educate their sisters instead of marrying them’.

The changing beliefs around the benefits of education and the increase in girls’ access to education were attributed to various factors, including awareness-raising through ‘village-level community conversations with mothers and health extension workers’, which was considered highly effective. As one parent-teacher association member in Lare commented,

nowadays, there are more girls attending school due to awareness creation programmes at community level through different government sectors (education, health, justice, security and administrative offices). NGOs are currently supporting the efforts of different government sectors to promote girls’ education through finance and capacity building (training of trainers)’.

The expansion of primary and secondary schools was also considered important with respect to improving access to education. Additionally, as young fathers in a focus group discussion explained, school-related initiatives such as girls’ clubs, parent-teacher meetings, and teacher-based interventions are all aimed at (and slowly becoming successful at) teaching community members ‘about the problems of marrying children below the age of 18 and the need to educate girls to a higher level to improve their life and to make them economically independent and not dependent on their husbands for everything’. It was reported that school teachers, together with the Parent-Teacher Association representative work hard at reiterating the importance of attending school and avoiding child marriage. It was also found that media clubs in schools plays an important role in protecting girls against child marriage by communicating the law against both child marriage and polygamy

After getting awareness, now, we [the mothers] advise our children to be strong in their education and not be victims of child marriage or polygamy like their mothers’ generation were and are still, but instead get married in a monogamous marriage. Polygamy has to be stopped because during our generation most mothers were not educated, but now our daughters are attending modern education, so they should be strong in their education and have a good marriage in a monogamous relationship
(Focus group discussion with mothers, Itang woreda)

The Nuer culture does not allow us (females) to use birth control, but unmarried secondary schoolgirls can use it to prevent pregnancy while attending school

without informing their parents. In our school female teachers give advice and a modern contraceptive service if girls want to use it. (Adolescent girl in FGD)

Programme outcomes

Reducing child marriage

Given that the the programme’s material support and scholarships are aimed at improving girls’ access to education and not reducing child marriage, there was limited evidence from the interviews to support the idea that it has reduced child marriage directly. However, the increase in the number of girls attending school is indicative of a slow and gradual change. When participants (both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries) were asked which factors contributed to the reduction in child marriage, they identified ‘the provision of school material support for some primary school female students and the provision of scholarship (pocket money) for some secondary school female students’. Community timeline testimonials indicated that the most effective programme that contributed to the reduction of child marriage was ‘UNICEF’s school materials support, solar lamps and scholarship (pocket money) for orphans, children from poor families (who have fathers and mothers alive but do not have cattle and land) and children with a physical disability’.

Moreover, as discussed above, given that economic incentives of bride price are one of the strongest reasons for child marriage, school material support in primary school and scholarship money in secondary school seemed to play a role in ensuring that girls stay in school. For instance, many participants commented that while most of the scholarship money was usually used for school fees and equipment, often it was diversified into small enterprises (e.g., distilling *arakie* for selling in Itang special woreda and opening shops selling tea and bread in Lare woreda) and direct subsistence:

What did you do with the scholarship money (1,000 birr) you received last year?

I used the money to buy school materials (such as exercise books, pens, pencil), school uniform, soap, shoes and I gave the remaining money to my maternal cousin since I have been living with her since 2013.

When girls are able to contribute economically to household expenditure simply by attending school, it is possible to infer that parents (or guardians in the case of orphaned girls) would be more willing to send them to school instead of marrying them. In one instance, a 19-year-old girl in Grade 10 was able to come to Itang town from her rural kebele to attend school because of the scholarship fund and support from her father to finish her education.

Improving girls' education

The project has played an important role in improving access to education for a select number of vulnerable girls as noted by numerous participants who believe that the 'the provision of school material supports for some primary school female students' has helped vulnerable girls attend school. Other girls commented that child marriage is reduced because of, among other things, 'economic support for old and poor parents (fathers) who would force their daughters to get married just to get the bride price cattle'.

Since school materials have been provided I have been regularly attending school, whereas before I was not.
(Focus group discussion with beneficiaries)

This was reinforced by the beneficiaries who indicated that they were able to continue attending school regularly because 'their parents sent them to school when they received this support'. Beneficiaries in Lare, for instance, stated that 'both the school materials provided to us last year in the second semester and the money given to our mothers are very important for all of us to attend school regularly and to succeed in going up to the next grade last year even though we did not receive this year's school materials till now'. Another respondent noted that she feels motivated to continue her education until college 'since she was already selected for the UNICEF programme' suggesting that perhaps this scheme provides hope and encouragement to those who may not have the economic means to pursue education. The solar lamps were another important component of the school material support programme that benefitted beneficiaries. As discussed above and noted also in focus group discussions with boys who have beneficiary sisters, girls face tremendous domestic burdens in terms of the household work they must complete before they are allowed to work on their school lessons. As a result, they are unable to use daylight to study and find the provision of solar lamps a considerable asset since 'there is no electricity in their kebele'.

In what ways has the programme been effective?

There are several initiatives in both woredas trying to address harmful traditional practices such as child marriage and polygamy, including awareness raising by church leaders and health extension workers. In this regard, the education support programme is a complementary initiative.

Moreover, while there are many concerns regarding the effectiveness of targeting vulnerable students (see below), there were a few beneficiaries who shared the importance of having these supports given their economic status. In a focus group discussion in Lare, beneficiaries reported:

we were selected because we have economic problems around continuing with our education. Some of us lost our parents and we do not have parental economic support to continue with our secondary education. Some of us are from poor families from rural areas and we are living with close relatives who are also poor.

These students (both unmarried and married beneficiaries) explained that they use the money for both their educational and daily expenses and that this was a much-needed support in their lives.

What challenges did the programme face?

While the results of the programme have indicated good progress so far, there are some challenges that should be considered in order to improve its effectiveness. First, although the amount of scholarship was deemed sufficient for unmarried girls, beneficiaries with other responsibilities (e.g. children) felt that they would be unable to meet all their household needs with the amount disbursed to them. Additionally, with orphaned girls often living with cousins or other guardians, there was a general desire for those taking care of them to receive economic incentives as well:

guardians of the deserving beneficiaries from poor families should also be supported through revolving funds since the scholarship money is not enough to cover the beneficiary's school-related and other personal expenses and other household expenses such as buying some food items.

Many participants explained that they 'used the money to buy school materials (such as exercise books, pens, pencil), school uniform, soap, shoes and gave the remaining money' to whomever they were living with.

Second, there are numerous gaps owing to high turnover of focal persons at the woreda Education Office, which results in delays in transferring the material support and scholarship stipends to the beneficiaries. Moreover, our findings suggested that no girl received a solar lamp in the 2014-2015 academic year until November 2014. Delays with the scholarship stipend have also led to the disbursement of the money in two instalments as opposed to every month for 10 months.

Third, weaknesses in terms of programme monitoring and evaluation were also noted. According to the education office, there is no baseline information that could help determine the effectiveness of the programme over time.

Additionally, there are challenges with the selection criteria of the beneficiaries. The major aim of both the educational materials and scholarship support is equity-based allocation of the benefits for deserving beneficiaries (vulnerable children and girls from poor families). However, the programme evaluation and monitoring results shows that there are problems related to selection of appropriate beneficiaries through the woreda-level

selection committee members: the most deserving beneficiaries are excluded, whereas the relatively less vulnerable schoolgirls or girls from relatively better-off families are included in the list of beneficiaries. In two cases, divorced mothers said: ‘we are educating our children by distilling *arakie* (local liquor) and collecting firewood for sale. It is not sufficient, but there are no other alternatives because our daughters are not supported’.

Finally, a major challenge is that, in its current state, the impacts of this programme are limited given its small scale of (200 beneficiaries in the region). Tables 16 and 17 present the breakdown of the number of beneficiaries in Itang and Lare. From these tables, it is evident that in both Itang and Lare, only a small percentage of the vulnerable female population is being given support suggesting that future programming needs to consider scaling up the initiative considerably in order to be most effective.

Box 28 presents a case study of the challenges discussed above. In the case presented below, like other scholarship beneficiaries, this student is not using the limited amount of the money mainly for education-related expenses since she needs to support her family’s basic necessities. As a result, her school performance is not improving.

Ways forward to strengthen programming effects on child marriage

The feedback from community respondents revealed a number of areas where programming to tackle child marriage could be strengthened. They included more community engagement and awareness raising, asset and in-kind support (including economic incentives), and sexual and reproductive health and rights services (contraception and sanitary towel provision), to

Table 16: Itang Secondary School educational participation by year, grade level and sex (Itang special woreda)

Remarks	Grade Level						Remarks
	Grade 9			Grade 10			
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
2013/14	304	254 (45.52%)	558	367	233 (38.83%)	600	4 (1.57%) out of 254 Grade 9 female students were scholarship beneficiaries.
2014/15	290	261 (47.37%)	551	397	279 (41.27%)	676	16 (6.13%) out of 261 Grade 9 female students are scholarship beneficiaries

Source: Itang Secondary School Academic Vice Director (Itang special woreda, 8 July 2015)

Table 17: Kureng Secondary School educational participation by year, grade level and sex (Lare woreda of Gambela Region)

Year	Grade Level						Remarks
	Grade 9			Grade 10			
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
2013/14	283	115 (28.89%)	398	368	164 (30.83%)	532	12 (10.43%) out of 115 were scholarship beneficiaries
2014/15	236	148 (38.54%)	384	260	132 (33.67%)	392	12 (9.09%) out of 132 were scholarship beneficiaries

Source: Kureng Secondary School (Lare woreda) (18 November 2014)

Box 28: From hope to despair: Nayah's story

I live with my maternal aunt's daughter (my cousin) here in Itang town because my uneducated parents live in a rural village far from Itang town. I am now attending Grade 10 at Itang secondary school. I have been a UNICEF scholarship (pocket money) beneficiary since last year (September 2013). I received 1,000 birr over two terms (500 per term) in the last academic year (September to June). I used some of the money to buy school materials including school uniform and I gave the remaining money to my cousin. Till now [November 2014], I have not received the scholarship money for this academic year. For the last three months my cousin has been supporting my education by distilling and selling arakie (local liquor). She also collects and sells firewood. I assist her both in distilling arakie and in collecting firewood on non-school days and in the afternoon. I study when there are no domestic activities at home and usually during the evening (between 8-10 pm) if there is a candle. If not, I cannot study. Last year, I took a solar lamp from the school and used it for studying during the evening, but I returned it when the school was closed for the summer vacation. As to my school performance, I scored the average point of 56% when I went up from Grade 8 to Grade 9, but I do not know my Grade 9 marks since I have not received my report card. Now I am not performing well in my school since I have to assist my cousin with the domestic income-generating activities. I need to get this year's scholarship money to properly follow my schooling. I would also like to have tutorial support during the afternoon. We [female students in this school] also need to have a separate room for changing our sanitary pads, which is not available in our school.

19-year-old woman, 10th Grade at Itang woreda

complement the scholarship programme and awareness-raising activities conducted in church and by teachers in school.

According to the respondents, there is a need for continuous awareness creation about the problems of child marriage. The girls' club needs more financial help as well as there should be other opportunities for girls to play leadership roles at school more generally (e.g. in the school councils). Moreover, better WASH facilities are needed, including separate toilets for female students to reduce stigma around menstrual management and irregular school attendance.

In terms of the Gambela scholarship programme, key informants at the offices of justice, education and health (female gender experts) believe that there are a number of ways through which the programme can continue to be successful:

- There should be an independent committee responsible for the selection of deserving beneficiaries for both the material support and scholarship stipend.
- Material support should be given to the deserving beneficiaries at the beginning of the academic year in a timely fashion or vulnerable students might drop out from school.
- Scholarship stipends should be given to the beneficiaries on time and on a monthly basis. Irregular payments might not keep girls in school.
- There is also the need to give awareness training to scholarship beneficiaries as well as their parents/guardians about the purpose of the pocket money because the money is not being consistently used for improving school girls' academic performance.
- The mothers/guardians of the beneficiaries from poor families should also be supported through revolving funds since the scholarship money does not cover their school-related and other household expenses.
- Key informants at Lare woreda in the Kureng secondary school report a big need for a separate boarding school for secondary school girls because female students (even scholarship beneficiaries) are not following their school lessons seriously because they are involved in domestic activities after school or are being influenced by negative social attitudes towards girls' education in general and reading in school libraries in particular because only male students are expected to read in school libraries.
- Non-beneficiary secondary school female students both in Kureng and Itang secondary school said they needed a scholarship stipend like that of their peers, while the beneficiaries felt they needed continued support when they went up to preparatory school.
- Given the small number of beneficiaries for both the school material and scholarship programme, there is a need to scale-up future efforts to target more girls who are vulnerable and in need of the support.
- Finally, the findings suggest that the programme is effective for individuals, but is not helping to change attitudes of the community towards child marriage. Future efforts should be aimed at incorporating a wider range of initiatives (for example, awareness raising through community conversations) into the programme to tackle child marriage in the Gambela region.

that is contributing' to the elimination of child marriage—not the law—most respondents felt that legal approaches had initially been quite important to success. The KI from Abreha Atsebeha's Women's Association explained, 'Being very strict about the legal framework of early marriage is the other experience in which other kebeles can take from us so as to end early marriage.' While this is in part because the certainty of punishment prevents parents' involvement in early marriage and other harmful traditional practices, the KI at the WCYA office reported, it is also because knowing that the law will protect them 'makes females feel free'. Because of the woreda's policy of requiring the marriage of all girls to be approved in advance and accompanied by a medical check if there is any doubt over her age, girls in Abreha Atsebeha know they have no reason to be afraid.

11.1.7 What challenges did the programme face?

Challenges are rare in Abreha Atsebeha and Kiltawlalo and are almost entirely budget-related. For example, the KI at the Education Office felt there needed to be more 'support for destitute girls'. Right now, with UNICEF funding, girls are given only 100 birr a month, which he felt was too low. Similarly, woreda level KIs at Justice and the WCYA wanted more money for training. The former said, 'if we had budgets supplemented by NGOs, earmarking resources for harmful cultural practices, we could emphasise early marriage effectively'. The latter agreed. She said that while World Vision funds training on early marriage, the funds are low and 'not predictable'. She explained that while they run one-day training sessions, 'we believe it would have been more intense and solid if the training was for 3-4 days'.

While most respondents indicated that priests are publically supportive of adult marriage and preach against child marriage, there are some hints that at least on a woreda level 'there are still some few individuals among the elders who are not yet convinced about the harmfulness of underage marriage' (KI Office of WCYA). It is also clear that regardless of priests' support for adult marriage, many still believe that the virginity of their wives is of paramount importance. While local officials have temporarily quieted their dissent by offering not only age checks but also virginity checks at Mekelle hospital, the need for such a practice is indicative of continuing gender inequality (Justice KI).

Finally, while expanding women's literacy through the provision of adult basic education was a core modality in original plans, uptake has been lower than hoped. Abreha Atsebeha's 'culture' of education notwithstanding, the KI at the WCYA office said that between assuring their families' food security and attending regular community meetings, women 'are unable to find enough time to attend this adult education programme effectively and as expected'.

11.1.8 Ways forward

Other than providing more sensitisation to deacons and priests, and installing separate toilets for girls and boys at school (KI Education Office), our respondents felt that the ways forward for their kebele and woreda were primarily dependent on developing more local options for adolescents to study and work.

Abreha Atsebeha does not have a high school. When students complete 8th grade, they must move to Wukro, renting a house, to continue their studies. This option is not only more expensive than most families can bear, but because it results in teenagers living away from home, it means that it is not uncommon for students who do move on to high school to study less than they should. As the school director noted, 'up to grade 8 they are competent and complete their education well. But from grade 9 they go to Wukro to attend high school education. Since they are...out of the family control they do not pay much attention to education'. The KI at the Education Office also felt that it would be good to publicly 'recognise and award' parents of female university students. By highlighting and praising their commitment to their daughters' education, he felt the community could be inspired to emulate it.

By far, however, what our respondents most wanted for their adolescent daughters was work. Parents felt that local jobs were critical to a number of outcomes. First, because they had 'invested a lot for house rent and made all these efforts to educate them' and 'sending them to school so they will not lead lives as miserable as ours', parents wanted to see that their sacrifices had paid off (FGD mothers). While some acknowledged that even girls who ultimately failed their 10th grade exams are better off than girls had been in the past because they can still take on 'petty jobs', most were concerned about educated adolescents who were sitting 'idle' and being a source of 'frustration' to their families (FGD mothers). This, noted a father, caused parents to 'get depressed' (FGD fathers). It also, said a health extension worker, 'leads many girls to migrate to Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia'. Indeed, mothers were clear that local jobs were critical to not only keeping girls and families focused on education, but to preventing the community from backsliding in terms of child marriage. Those in our FGD knew that girls who went to Saudi Arabia were 'disappearing'. 'This situation,' explained one, 'demoralises us and our daughters.'

11.2 Lessons learned and implications for future programming

- Local government attention to gender in general and child marriage in particular has ensured that the one-to-five groups stay focused and that relevant messages are not lost. This is similar to Farta and Ofla, but quite different from Dembia.

- Efforts here to identify women with fistula and treat them and use their experiences to demonstrate the harms of child marriage have put a face to pain. This is similar to TESFA.
- The tight bundling of child marriage with other maternal risk factors appears to have made it easier to shift habits immediately. There is zero tolerance for anything that increases maternal and child mortality.
- Combining school curricula with girls' club programming ensures that adolescents are receiving both information and provided with opportunities to discuss it in ways that are meaningful to them.
- Proximity to urban areas can speed change, largely because there are more job opportunities for the educated.
- While awareness raising is ultimately key to abandonment of early marriage, it must be coupled with strict law enforcement.



'In my parents' time, they were not able to make a choice about marriage. These locks represent that their decision was closed' Participatory photography participant, 2015

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Annex 1: Good practice programming overview

Summary table

Drivers of early marriage from review of literature on EM in Ethiopia	ICRW programme typology from international literature on review of what works to end EM	Programme type for UNICEF/ Alliance mapping	Proposed programme for analysis	Regional balance of programmes to review
Economic deprivation/ poverty/ in some contexts migration	Offering economic support and incentives to families and girls	Economic incentives	DFID-funded Finote Hiwot programme, especially the economic incentive pilot	Mecha and Sekela woredas, Gojjam, Amhara
Limited educational opportunities, especially at secondary school level	Enhancing the accessibility and quality of formal schooling for girls	Promotion of girls' school retention and attainment, including through tutorial support, material support, WASH/sanitary material and spaces support	Girls' tutorial support and scholarship programme (Grades 9 and 10) by BoE and UNICEF support	Gambela
Lack of girls' empowerment and awareness of their rights	Empowering girls with information, skills, and support networks [could be general or specific to early marriage]	Girls' clubs / peer education /married girls as change agents	Plan Because I'm a Girls Programme girls' clubs and peer-to-peer discussions – implemented by ANPPCAN	Dembia woreda, Gondor, Amhara
Discriminatory social norms and practices) (relating to virginity and family/individual honour; stigma surrounding unmarried women; role of FGM in some contexts)	Educating and mobilizing parents and community members	Community dialogues and outreach	Hunde funded by USAID-funded Pathfinder and John Snow Inc. Integrated Family Health Programme including community dialogues and mobilisation against health consequences of early marriage	Oromia
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – To raise awareness of EM health consequences, including early marriage – To tackle discriminatory social norms 		Women's Affairs/ UNICEF community dialogues/ public awareness raising but more focused on FGM than EM	Somali
Limited knowledge and especially enforcement of legal frameworks prohibiting early marriage at community level	Fostering an enabling legal and policy framework and enforcing this [emphasis in red is our addition]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Legal awareness, – Legal enforcement, – Capacity building of officials and justice sector personnel 	Action Aid Women's Watch Groups for maintenance of EM reduction, and cancellation of marriages	Ofla, Woareda, Tigray
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Awareness-raising capacity building for religious leaders – Strengthening of child protection systems 	Govt approach to community dialogue led by BWYCA	Kittelawalo woreda, Tigray

Annex 2: MaxQDA coding scheme

The screenshot displays the MaxQDA software interface with a coding scheme tree on the left and a document browser on the right. The coding scheme tree is organized as follows:

- Code System** (Total: 10690)
 - community perspectives (1)
 - Views on FGM (70)
 - General community views (228)
 - Change over time (0)
 - Past/future comparison (531)
 - Programme approach and objectivess** (3)
 - direct focus on early marriage (212)
 - indirect focus - focus is on girls' empowerment more broadly (60)
 - indirect focus - focus is on sanitation (53)
 - indirect focus - focus is on girls' education (160)
 - indirect focus - focus is on SRH (149)
 - Programme modality (1717)
 - Target group (1)
 - poor girls (31)
 - school girls in general (37)
 - primary school age girls (0)
 - girls in general (21)
 - secondary school age girls (6)
 - girls and boys (16)
 - mothers (26)
 - community leaders (21)
 - community broadly defined (69)
 - fathers (2)
 - husbands (12)
 - parents (21)
 - justice sector personnel (5)
 - religious leaders (34)
 - teachers (17)
 - mixed approach (5)
 - single approach (2)
 - Monitoring and evaluation approach (16)
 - non-existent (19)
 - internal (66)
 - external /third party (13)

The Document Browser on the right shows a list of segments with a bracket indicating a group of segments (6-7) labeled **..Occupation**. The Retrieved Segments panel at the bottom shows the following structure:

- DFID - Hiwot
 - PROJECT COORDINATOR DI
 - 8-8
 - Programme approach and obje
 - direct focus on early marriage
- DFID - Hiwot
 - PROJECT COORDINATOR DI
 - 8-8
 - Programme approach and obje
 - indirect focus - focus is on gir

Annex 3: Draft data collection instruments

Identifying “good practice” programming

Programme mapping of all relevant child marriage programmes in Ethiopia

In order to investigate the actions being taken by government, NGOs, civil society groups and donors/international agencies to prevent child marriage or manage its consequences at the national, regional and local level, we will locate best practice examples by combing through existent programming and identifying which are working, which are not—and why. Programme identification will begin by combining a secondary review of published and grey literature with both a national stakeholders workshop and a survey to be distributed through umbrella organizations. Once a handful of key projects are identified we will work with project heads to locate other projects and snowball from there.

Based on ODI’s previous work in Ethiopia we are aware that local and regional governments are often behind good practices. We will work to identify and include their efforts.

Programme name	Approach taken	Period of implementation	Implementing agency / funding agency (if known)	Geo-graphic coverage	Key issues/ sector within child marriage/ girls ed	Objective	Implementation strategy and activities	Target group	Results and evidence source
E.g. UNICEF child marriage programme in Amhara									
E.g. Local NGO implemented programme on prosecuting child marriage									

Programme documents review template

Aiming to focus on a maximum of five programmes during fieldwork, it will be crucial to first identify a diverse set of possibilities. To that end, we will ensure that our sample includes projects which represent different geographic locations, employ different approaches to change and are funded by a diversity of agencies.

Example

Implementing agency and partners
Funding agency
Period of implementation
Budget
Target groups
Geographical location and coverage
Aims / objectives
Consideration of social norms (explicit/implicit)
Strategy
Activities
Key messages per activity (where feasible)
Programme approach (see typology)
Monitoring and evaluation and learning system
Evaluation results and impact
Knowledge management approach / documentation
Exit strategy and/or future plans/sustainability

Good practice interviews

National and district level KI interviews

Government ministries/donors/CSOs

1. Key concerns relating to early marriage and under-investment in girls' education/training/employment/SRH
2. Key developments in terms of addressing early marriage and under-investment in girls' education/training/employment/SRH
3. Key challenges remaining
4. Programming landscape – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats
 - a. Extent to which programmes are adequately tailored to local context or one-size-fits all
 - b. model adopted?
 - c. including coordination across actors/sectors
 - d. sustainability of interventions
 - e. funding
 - f. grappling with social norms
 - g. exit strategies
5. Examples of successful programmes. Ingredients of success? M and E quality/quantity?
6. What sort of knowledge sharing mechanisms exist in the field of early marriage and girls' education? How could this be strengthened?

Programme KIs

1. Basics? (aims; duration, budget, staffing levels, capacities, partners)
2. How long have you been involved in the programme? What is your role in the programme?
3. How did you get involved?
4. What were the origins of the programme? (national hq, international good practice, scaled up from a project)
5. Relevance to national policy? Which one is it trying to contribute to?
6. What was the programme design process? Were you involved and if so, how? Were local beneficiaries involved in the design and if so how?
7. Does the programme design consider social norms, if so, how?
8. Have the objectives of the programme been met? Have there been unexpected results/impacts? Overall, what have been the key achievements or what do you think they will be? How do you measure this?

- a. Do you have a logframe/ TOC? Did you do a baseline? What indicators do you use? How were they developed (by you, your partners, your beneficiaries)? What m&E have you undertaken? How are the results of monitoring fed back into the on-going programme to improve it?
9. What design elements have been key to programme success?
10. What sort of support do you get from other staff or agencies, if any? Strengths/ weaknesses of that support?
11. Coordination with other relevant interventions in the sector ; issues of decentralisation
12. Opportunities for strengthening going forward
13. Barriers to full achievement of original goal / ongoing challenges
14. Exit strategy/sustainability strategy
15. If you had an opportunity to scale up, what would you keep, what would you do differently?

Community level interviews

Community leaders

1. Changes in early marriage and girls' education/training/employment/SRH over time
2. History of donor /ngo/government programme interventions –and how those integrate with community timeline overall and changes in marriage/education
3. To what extent has XX programme contributed to change? How? Evidence? What do you think about the programme?
4. What are some of the key challenges the programme/intervention has faced?
5. Have there been any negative effects/backlash/ practice being driven underground etc?
6. Perceived differences between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries (where beneficiaries are clearly identifiable).
7. To what extent have you been involved or linked to the programme? Quality of interaction.
8. What would you change about the intervention/programme?

Community participants

Who? People directly or indirectly involved in/affected by the programme/ representative of the target population that the programme is aiming at – either the girls themselves and their relatives, or fathers/mothers/other relatives as target group and their daughters

1. Are there activities/programmes going on to address the problem of early marriage and girls' limited educational opportunities?
2. How effective are these in your view? Why?
3. You are participants in X programme – can you please describe your involvement, activities, experiences, reasons for involvement, why, when?
 - a. List activities participants have been involved in and then use most significant change tool below.
4. Most significant change tool – related to programme-specific intervention

What was your life like before the programme? What has changed in your life (reference to private and public) after programme X?

- Time use
- Economic worries
- Labour engagement (chores and economic activities)
- Relations within the family – with parents and siblings and other relatives
- Self-confidence/ self-esteem/ assertiveness
- Better psycho-social wellbeing /less pressure/stress
- Friends and social networks
- Mobility
- Choice/ agency /decision-making/voice
- School attendance/ completion
- Access to and utilisation of social services including SRH
- Less stigma
- Perceptions about marriage / marriage relations /including desired age of marriage
- Freedom from violence
- Expanded sense of opportunities/ aspirations/ vision for future
- Other?

Analytic approach

Data from interviews will be analysed by feeding it into an Excel thematic matrix that is both comprehensive and flexible. The draft matrix will be constructed using the research tools. After interviews have been transcribed and translated they will be read and fed into the matrix, which will be continually adjusted to account for unexpected findings and linkages. After all transcripts have been read once—and the matrix finalised—transcripts will be re-read a second time to make sure that each is read with the final framework in mind. Matrix construction will allow not only for overarching analysis, but also for separate analyses by age, gender, location, etc.. It will also allow for individual quotes to be linked to the analysts' conclusions so that the voice of specific participants is not lost in amalgamation.

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