

Accelerate Actions to End Child Marriage and Early Unions in Latin America and the Caribbean



EXECUTIVE REPORT



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This joint report reflects the activities of individual agencies around an issue of common concern. The principles and policies of each agency are governed by the relevant decisions of its governing body.

Each agency implements the interventions described in this document in accordance with these principles and policies and within the scope of its mandate.

Graphic Design:
Tinto Estudio, S.A.

Published June 2018
Printed in Panama

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FOREWORD

Despite regional advances on gender equality, the prevalence rate of child marriage and early unions has remained stagnant over the past 10 years in Latin America and the Caribbean. This situation, typically not part of the national development agendas, had barely been considered in our countries' public policies. Invisible and therefore with little to no actions to solve it, the problem will escalate to affect nearly 20 million girls in the region married before age 18, by 2030.

Girls and adolescent girls are the most affected by this situation because many of their rights are violated and their optimal personal development during childhood is impeded. The consequences for these women and their families will be felt throughout their life cycle, perpetuating situations of poverty and inequality.

The interrelation among early, unplanned or unwanted pregnancies, the multiple manifestations of sexual and gender-based violence experienced by girls and adolescent girls, and school dropout are as much cause and consequence of early unions in Latin America and the Caribbean. All of them are factors that determine not only adolescent girls' development opportunities and potential today, but also their future development opportunities as adult women.

The United Nations System in the region is committed to support adolescent girls, families and communities, governments, civil society and academia in the transformation of gender inequalities, which are structural causes of all these situations experienced by adolescent girls.

Consequently, the agencies of the United Nations System came together in 2014 to support national legal reform processes to raise the legal age for marriage in accordance with international standards. In 2017, this collaboration crystallized in a **Joint Inter-Agency Program to End Child Marriage and Early Unions in Latin America and the Caribbean: 2018-2021**, which aims to transform gender norms and empower girls, as well as to promote the legal and political reforms necessary to tackle this problem. Likewise, and under the provisions of the approval of the **Common Chapter** in the strategic plans of UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and UN WOMEN, the Joint Program seeks results in accordance with SDG 5 (gender equality), based on our mandates and the comparative value-added among the three latter agencies.

The purpose of this initiative is to promote regional and national actions looking to end child marriage and early unions, through a holistic and comprehensive response. It is necessary to not only reach important consensus on what to do, but also to rethink current strategies to address the phenomena that work as causes and consequences of child marriage and early unions, such as adolescent pregnancy and gender-based violence.

The joint program consists of a coalition of three agencies, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN WOMEN. The first phase will involve five countries in Latin America and the Caribbean: Colombia, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Mexico. Other countries will benefit from regional activities and are expected to gradually join the initiative. The program represents the expression of our commitment to work together, in the most effective manner, to accelerate the achievement of girls' and adolescent girls' equality in the region.

The regional program was launched in October 2017, and culminating with the International Day of the Girl, the regional program was launched in the event "Accelerate Actions to End Child Marriage and Early Unions in Latin America and the Caribbean," in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. This meeting brought together diverse State and civil society actors to define joint actions on this issue and for the fulfillment of girls' and adolescent girls' rights in the region.

Our three agencies wish to thank the Ford and The Summit Foundations, co-sponsors of the event, and partners in the fight for the equality for girls and adolescent girls. With their support, and under our motto to join efforts to *Leave no girl behind*, the meeting gave way to the creation of a regional platform based on like-minded ideas to accelerate the responses to end child marriage and early unions in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The 2030 Agenda commits us as a region to end child marriage and early unions, assuring for these girls today—who will be adults by 2030—and their families, opportunities for their full development. To achieve this, we can wait no longer. Now is the time to act. THEIR time is now.

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Acknowledgments

Special thanks to all participants of the Regional Meeting of the same name held in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 9-11 October 2017, in particular, the technical teams from Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico and the Dominican Republic. The regional offices of UNFPA, UNICEF and UN WOMEN thank the logistics and coordination teams at the national and regional level, especially in the Dominican Republic.

THE EVIDENCE CONFIRMS IT: GIRLS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN MARRY AND ENTER INTO UNION

Child marriage and early unions (CMEU) is a global problem, identified as a harmful practice in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is the only region in the world where overall prevalence has not changed significantly in the last 10 years.

This stagnation in LAC has occurred in the context of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and in a context of progressive public policies in the region, with greater investments in social services, including education and health, as well as sustained economic growth in the last decade.

The fact that the prevalence of CMEU has not changed in recent decades indicates the omnipresent and persistent nature of the inequalities and discrimination girls face, which are exacerbated depending on the level of income, education and/or cultural group. CMEU has remained on the margins of regional agendas, where it is **a silent alarm** in terms of being an obstacle to gender equality for girls in the region. This silence must be broken at a political, economic and social level to guide collective actions towards elimination and to mitigate the effects on the long-term development and well-being of girls and adolescent girls.

CMEU key drivers are interrelated, and they include:

(i) unequal gender norms, roles and relationships; (ii) the intergenerational transmission of gender inequality; (iii) poverty; (iv) legal frameworks that prevent girls from enjoying their rights; (v) teenage pregnancy; (vi) dropping out of school and dropping out of secondary education; and (v) gender violence. In this context, it is important that strategies to address CMEU in the region, in addition to taking into account the key drivers, be developed from an ecological perspective, considering social and political factors, communities, families and girls.

Some Facts about Child Marriage and Early Unions in Latin America and the Caribbean

- CMEU prevalence is **25%**, which is lower than in most of the African continent, but higher than in the Middle East and North Africa.
- Adolescent girls aged **15 to 18** are the most affected, but the situation may change for girls under 15 years old if there is no greater investment for prevention.
- Over 60% of women in LAC married before age 18 are from the **lowest income quintiles, and 36% live in rural areas.**
- **Indigenous girls** have a greater risk of entering into early unions. In Colombia, of the women married before 18 years old, 33.8% belong to indigenous communities, almost 10% more than non-indigenous women.
- **Early non-marital unions** are more frequent than formal, legal marriages. According to available data, the proportion of non-marital unions represents approximately 70% of all early unions and marriages in the region.
- In the last 10 years, the average annual CMEU reduction rate has been **12 times lower** than the region with the second lowest decrease (Western and Central Africa). To achieve the goal established in the SDGs and end them by 2030, the average annual reduction in the region must be **200 times greater** than it is now. **It is urgent to act now!**



A PACT FOR GIRLS AND ADOLESCENT GIRLS OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: UNITE EFFORTS AND PROPOSE SOLUTIONS WITH AND FOR THEM



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A joint inter-agency effort of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), under the auspices of the Ford Foundation and The Summit Foundation, involved holding the regional event “Accelerate Actions to End Child Marriage and Early Unions in Latin America and the Caribbean,” from 9 to 11 October 2017.

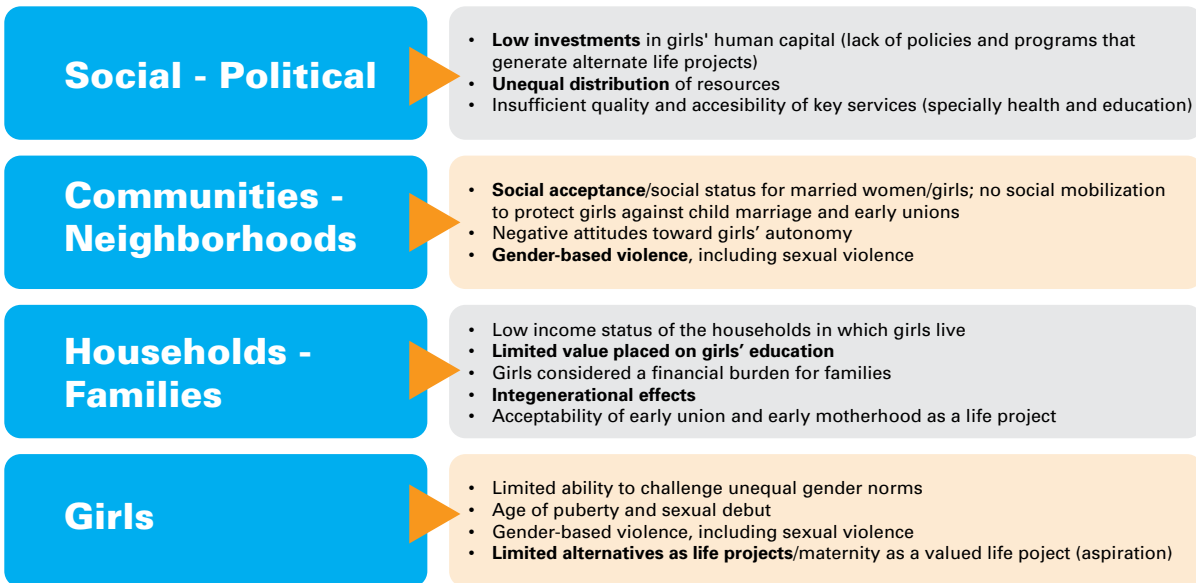
The purpose was to share experiences, identify common challenges and strategies, and develop national and regional roadmaps to contribute to compliance with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, in particular, Target 5.3 of SDG 5, as well as the goals and indicators of the SDGs that represent the main drivers of child marriage. Under this scenario and in the context of the International Day of the Girl, the Joint Inter-agency Program (UNFPA, UNICEF, UN WOMEN) was launched for a Region Free of Child Marriage and Early Unions in Latin America and the Caribbean. It will take place in 5 countries initially: Colombia, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Mexico.

The meeting was attended by multi-sectorial and inter-disciplinary teams from the 5 countries that make up the regional program, including broad participation of inter-institutional actors (government, legislators, judges, civil society, and international organizations). In addition, a simultaneous methodology was organized, where adolescent girls, youth network representatives from four of the five countries, were part of the discussions on the analysis of the problem and the proposed solutions and efforts to end child marriage and early unions. In addition, global and regional partners and allies from governments, intergovernmental mechanisms and non-governmental organizations also participated (see Annex, list of participants).

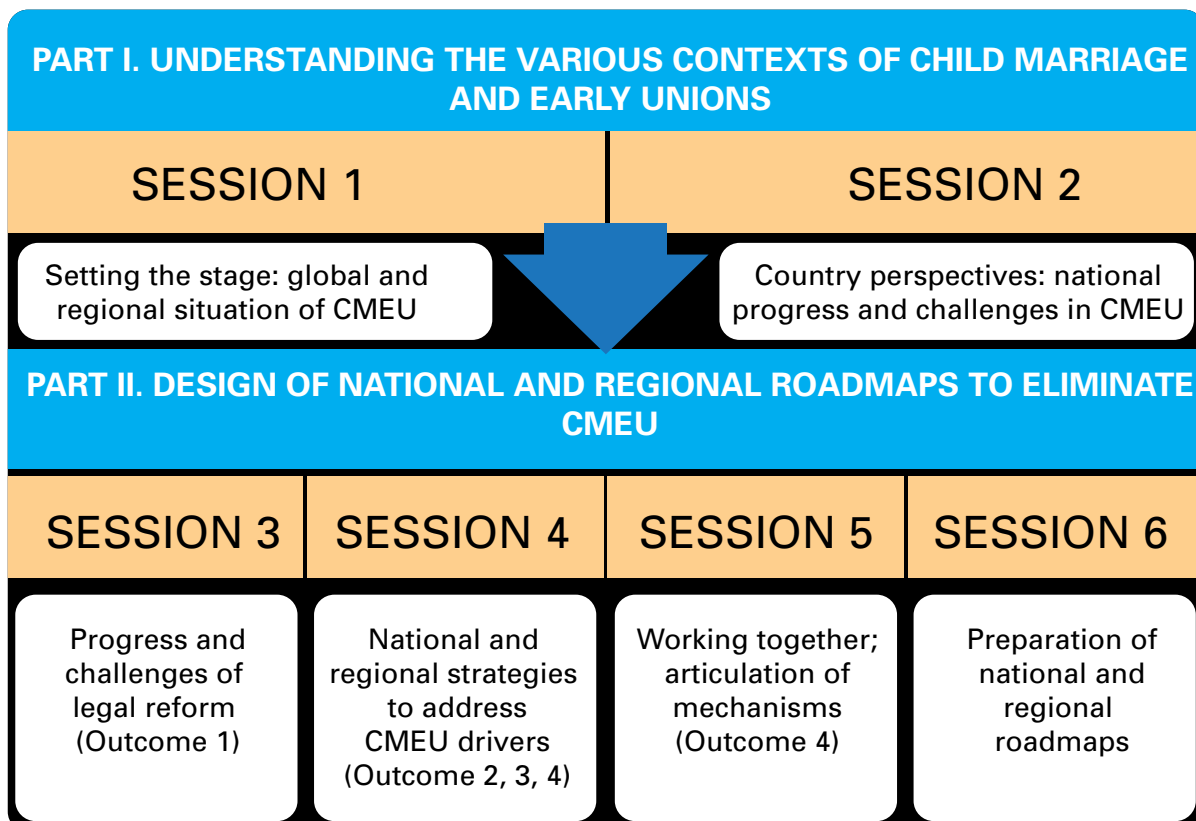
This program aims to achieve four interrelated outcomes that respond to an ecological model to address the problem (see Table 1):

1. Align national legislation with international frameworks by raising the age of marriage to 18 years, without exceptions;
2. Promote policies and services in the areas of health, education, violence, social protection, gender equality, child protection and economic development that help to prevent and respond to CMEU;
3. Promote the empowerment of girls and promote more equal relationships in their immediate environment (peers, family, home and communities);
4. Generate a regional platform of allies around the issue to mobilize cooperation among and within countries, and expand the initiative to more countries, based on the generation of evidence, knowledge and lessons learned.

TABLE 1: ECOLOGICAL MODEL OF THE REGIONAL PROGRAM: LEVELS OF ACTION AND RELATED OBSTACLES TO GUIDE ACTION



The technical meeting was divided into six sessions aimed at creating a common narrative, sharing knowledge and designing multi-country strategies that respond to each of the four program results of the regional program. The graph below illustrates the methodological flow of the meeting and connections to the outcomes of the joint regional program.



HOW TO END CHILD MARRIAGE AND EARLY UNIONS IN THE REGION?

The regional and national presentations on the current situation showed that the region has a **political framework on CMEU** that supports actions both in the legal sphere and in other sectors. In addition, the issue is already mentioned in statements of various regional meetings, which shows increasing attention to the problem. Table 2 summarizes some of the global and regional frameworks around CMEU.

TABLE 2: INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK ON CHILD MARRIAGE AND EARLY UNIONS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993). Repeal of laws/regulations and elimination of customs and cultural practices that discriminate against and cause harm to girls.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) - child and early marriage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Area of Concern C. "Women and Health" - Area of Concern D. "Violence Against Women" - Area of Concern L. "The Girl Child"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple resolutions of the UN General Assembly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A/RES/71/175 (2017) "Child, early and forced marriage".
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Development Goals (2015); Target 5.3. "Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation".
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolution AG/RES. 2908 (XLVII-O/17) of the OAS General Assembly "Promotion and Protection of Human Rights" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To continue supporting the work of the Inter-American Commission of Women (IAW) in fulfillment of its objectives and functions by addressing issues of special concern, in particular: [...] (ii) The promotion of the human rights of women and girls and the eradication of gender-based violence and harmful practices including child, early and forced marriage and unions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement 1 (d) of the Executive Committee of the IAW 2016-2019 (Sept. 2017) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Request that the Executive Secretariat of the IAW develop the Inter-American Model Law against Child Marriage and Early Union, and accompany it with a Guide for its implementation.

Source: Presentation by Hilary Anderson, IAW-OAS, at the Santo Domingo Meeting.

Also, at the general level, the group agreed that **the causes** of CMEU lie in the power imbalances between men and women, persistent discrimination and multidimensional poverty. They also act as cause and consequence of teen pregnancy, gender-based violence and gender norms. The adolescent girls at the meeting agreed on these key CMEU drivers, adding the following:

- social and school harassment;
- school dropout;
- social pressure and discrimination;
- the lack of options for pregnant adolescents, married and/or in union, and
- the high probability of being a single mother. Since adult parents do not want to bear the responsibility, the burden is left to the child.

Regarding **legal reforms** (*Outcome 1 of the Regional Program*), the group agreed on the importance of actions to raise the age to 18 years and eliminate exceptions. All commended the fact that recent changes have occurred in legislation in several countries in the region. However, the significance of issuing legal reforms that are beyond a change of age, or the elimination of exemptions, was also highlighted. In **federal states** like Mexico, the importance—and consequent challenges—of achieving harmonized reforms was noted. The relevance of designing and implementing **communication strategies to promote awareness of legal changes**, their positive implications for the lives of girls and adolescent girls, and the consequences for the people that influence—even force—the decision of these unions.

Disseminating legal changes is part of empowerment strategies for girls and adolescent girls, so that they can claim their rights and escape from these situations, but also to ensure that authorities and decision makers implement those laws and fulfill their duty to protect girls. In all contexts, the importance of **including legal protections for adolescent girls who are in non-marital unions** was highlighted; as well as ensuring that legislative progress to increase the age of marriage **does not translate into a regression of their sexual and reproductive rights**, considering the principle of progressive autonomy that should guide public policy in this regard.

Regarding Outcome 2 of the Regional Program, the promotion of policies and services in the areas of health, education, violence, social protection, gender equality, child protection and economic development, the participants emphasized that CMEU represents a phenomena in which there are transfers of inequality from mothers to daughters, which requires inter institutional, multisectoral and multilevel strategies to address **social norms that reproduce gender violence**, economic empowerment, and access to **specialized sexual and reproductive health services for adolescent girls**. Indeed, there is a clear link between the empowerment of girls and access to sexual and reproductive health services to help end child marriage. The evidence collected in the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage showed the relevance of this work of transforming social norms with key influencers in the communities, in the countries or using social networks and the importance of a multidimensional approach on all the CMEU drivers.

The region has very significant experiences in the development of **Multi-sectoral Strategies in the area of preventing adolescent pregnancies and gender violence**, which are important references for this program, and with which great interaction must be pursued. The group identified the main difficulties of these initiatives and how they could be overcome. It also reflected on learning around strategies to keep girls who are already in union, or pregnant, in schools, and about initiatives to advance gender equality relations in the environments closest to girls.


The participants recognized the difficulty that changes to gender norms imply in a regional context of increased conservatism and fundamentalism. In order to tackle these obstacles, they agreed on the importance of: **working from among civil society, for the actors of children's or youth movements and women's movements to join forces, identify youth networks at the community level to deliver the information and to work with men and boys to reaffirm the equality of girls as a social good.**

On the **girls' empowerment** and their environments, Outcome 3 of the Regional Program, the group of adolescent girls identified a roadmap to prevent CMEU, as seen in Table 3, which is related to the four program outcomes. The **preconditions** for implementation of this Roadmap include the creation of a permanent space for the participation of adolescent girls in the implementation and monitoring of the regional program, and the development of specialized methodologies to ensure their protagonism in the different components of the program.

For the three outcomes mentioned above, each of the five countries identified the main actions for their national work plan under the program.

TABLE 3: ROADMAP TO AVOID CHILD MARRIAGE AND EARLY UNIONS - WORK OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS

1. Teach sexual and reproductive rights in the context of the human rights of children and adolescent girls, so that girls have the necessary knowledge and do not allow their rights to be violated. For example, the right to decide when and with whom to start their sex lives. Girls and adolescent girls must be empowered to decide for themselves; adults should not decide their futures for them.
2. Organize joint workshops for parents, guardians, teachers and youth so that all can present their points of view and others can listen and understand their opinions, from a rights-based approach.
3. Use social networks to reach the adolescent audience through the creation of specialized pages, applications and platforms such as Facebook. Celebrities that are connected to the youth like Shakira, Bastian Baker can also be approached to transmit messages to the youth. It is also important to enable spaces in social networks where the youth can express themselves. Hashtags that draw the attention of the youth can also be used, such as *#quéésloqueyenosé* (#what is it that I don't know), *#quéésloquetengoqueaprender* (#what is it that I need to learn about) so that the youth can enter them and learn: What is sexuality?, What are child marriages?, What are early unions? Those platforms teach adolescent girls the implications of an active sexuality, the hardships derived from early pregnancy and marriage, and the alternative that represents being able to enjoy their adolescence. For example, they could be taught that, while living in the homes of parents or guardians, adolescent girls have limited responsibilities, whereas, if they assume a marriage, they have the full responsibility for a house. Since they often do not know how to carry out that task, the consequence is the physical and verbal abuse of the adult spouses when they realize that the girl or adolescent girl does not have the capacity to assume that responsibility.
4. Access to health services through the creation of specialized centers so that adolescent girls can easily arrive, ask and receive information about their sexuality and the consequences of poverty and ignorance. These centers must also have available necessary medications for adolescent girls. It is important to take into account that these centers must be located in a place that allows adolescent girls living in remote rural areas to access health services.
5. Talks and workshops on the use of condoms and other contraceptive methods.
6. Use trained youth personnel in health services so that adolescent girls can identify with their peers and establish a relationship of trust.
7. Legislation should include harsh punishment for adults who marry or enter into union with girls under the age of 18 and consider that practice as abuse and/or rape.
8. Work in compliance with laws that already exist.
9. Design youth programs for the eradication and prevention of CMEU. Use the image of popular people on television networks so that messages reach adolescent girls.
10. Organize a national tournament in Colombia to promote gender equality and for girls to understand that there are alternatives to learn different ways of seeing life and learn many things about their bodies and their dignity as women.
11. Prepare joint work plans among countries that include budgets.
12. Develop a strategy to mobilize financial resources.
13. Follow up on the strategies and look for solutions to the additional problems of each country that influence CMEU.

A close-up photograph of two young women with long hair, smiling warmly at the camera. The woman on the left has light brown hair, and the woman on the right has dark hair. They are both looking directly at the viewer with bright, happy expressions.

*Key actions were identified
to coordinate efforts and to
create a regional alliance of
like-minded actors.*

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Outcome 4 of the Regional Program proposes the creation of a platform of partners and allies which, based on the generation of evidence, knowledge and lessons learned, mobilizes cooperation among and within countries, and expands the initiative to more countries. The work being carried out by many of these partners at the global and regional level was shared, and key actions were identified to coordinate efforts and to create a regional alliance of like-minded actors.

The participants recognized that no actor can work alone to face such a complex problem, but that “acting together” does not mean losing neither institutional identity nor responsibility. It means the **will to share information, pool resources (human, economic and political), avoid duplication of efforts and advocate jointly for girls’/adolescent girls’ rights.**

One of the central areas to join forces is the **improvement of data and the evidence about CMEU** that will allow better advocacy and decision making. The other is to prepare **communication campaigns to break the silence on the subject in the region.** The group prioritized advocacy in regional structures from advocacy efforts will reach more countries: OAS, SICA, MERCOSUR, CELAC, GRULAC, the Regional Conference on Women, the Regional Conference on Population and Development, and key areas for monitoring the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

COMMITMENTS FOR COMMON ACTION

Each of the countries developed a Roadmap to eradicate CMEU with actions that can be carried out by the actors present, awaiting a greater mobilization of resources and broader convening at the national level of other important actors.

In the case of **Colombia**, it was agreed to prioritize the issue of legal reform to prevent the marriage of children under 18, following other examples in the region and to raise awareness on the issue of CMEU to key actors, to situate the topic on the political agenda. The group highlighted the importance of inter-institutional collaboration among all entities working on children, adolescence and youth, within the National Family Welfare System, as well as to map the institutional services offered to girls to prevent CMEU and include them in all policies issued on childhood and adolescence. An important opportunity identified is the 2018 census as a way of generating CMEU information. The immediate steps, as agreed, were to draft a 2018 work plan, taking advantage of the existing resources and initiatives and begin advocacy work at the country level.

For **El Salvador**, the priority was to disseminate the reform of the Family Code and in order for it to be applied effectively, by promoting case monitoring by the judicial branch and working with families and communities, but also working with families and communities. The group also recommended taking

advantage of the approval and implementation of the adolescent pregnancy prevention strategy, in order to position the issue of CMEU with national institutions. The country team highlighted the importance of reinforcing comprehensive sexuality education in schools, raising awareness among CMEU State operators and of supporting different organizational efforts of adolescent girls and youth for advocacy in this area. Finally, evidence generation was a prioritized area of action. As immediate steps, it was agreed to strengthen the coordination of the three agencies to define joint and/or coordinated technical assistance with partners regarding CMEU and to promote a strong alliance with civil society organizations.

In the case of **Guatemala**, meeting participants identified the centrality of public dissemination the progress made in legal and political matters to girls and women, but also to operators, as a strategy to be able to implement them. In addition, the group mapped the different ongoing government programs with which it could be articulated to improve the prevention and care of CMEU, and take advantage of existing resources. The need to strengthen access to adolescent girl-friendly sexual and reproductive health services and access to contraceptive methods was identified as a key strategy. Immediate steps involved presenting the initiative in the special Cabinet of dialogue with the Ministry of Public



As immediate steps, the country team from El Salvador agreed to strengthen the coordination of the three agencies to define joint and/or coordinated technical assistance with partners regarding CMEU and to promote a strong alliance with civil society organizations.

Affairs and to organize a multisectoral meeting with key actors to generate alliances, as well as to disseminate community experiences such as the *Opening Opportunities* program.

Mexico noted the approval in the remaining six States of the prohibition of marriage before age 18 as a priority, but also the legislative coherence between codes and laws (federal, state and municipal) that may be related to CMEU. The group defined key services in education, social protection and sexual and reproductive health. In addition, the group identified several training programs for different audiences (operators, families, girls, etc.) where CMEU prevention could be included. They pointed to the importance of improving data, especially in children under 15 years of age, improving administrative records and standardizing indicators, among other key actions. Among the immediate actions, the group agreed to promote a program alignment with the adolescent pregnancy prevention strategy, establish a timetable until the change of government and make publicity spots at the civil society level to make the problem visible.

The host country, the **Dominican Republic**, indicated the centrality of advancing some pending legal reforms (CMEU, sexual violence, sexual and reproductive rights) in its roadmap, and formulating a national strategy to eradicate CMEU in the

country. The group also identified how this issue can be integrated into several ongoing government programs of the different institutions. It was agreed that pilots could be developed in several communities that could serve as inputs for the development of the national strategy. As immediate actions, it was agreed to form a national team to eradicate CMEU and develop an action plan with available resources. In addition, advocating for the approval of the civil code reform was identified as a key action.

The **Roadmap developed by adolescent girls** was included in the previous section, but they also established certain agreements of immediate steps to take into account and the expectations that their opinion will be considered at all program stages. They proposed to share this experience with peers and create workshops and youth groups to analyze the risks and guide youth about CMEU, especially in the most vulnerable areas, and to make them aware of the international and legal framework in the countries and the programs that protect them. They proposed creating a reference group that can advise other adolescent girls, as well as follow up on the agreements of this meeting in different countries.

Regional and global organizations also agreed on pathways for action for regional work where six themes linked to the Joint Regional Program were

As immediate actions, the team from the Dominican Republic agreed to form a national team to eradicate CMEU and develop an action plan with available resources. In addition, advocating for the approval of the civil code reform was identified as a key action.



identified: (i) legal change; (ii) regional spaces; (iii) evidence generation; (iv) articulation with other regional partners; (v) the non-Hispanic Caribbean, and (vi) the 2030 Agenda and SDGs.

In relation to legal changes, several ongoing initiatives that can be enhanced were identified, such as lobbying with parliamentarians by bringing girls themselves closer to congresses or exchanges among legislators from different countries to promote legal changes, which have been successful strategies until now. It was also agreed to follow up on the work carried out by the Inter-American Commission of Women (IAW) to formulate a framework law on CMEU for Latin America and the Caribbean and an implementation guide.

Key regional opportunities and spaces were identified for the next two years, such as those generated by the IAW, the Presiding Committee Meetings of the Regional Conference on Women, the Regional Conference on Women, the Population and Development Conference, the Central America Donors Forum in Panama, the Gender Statistics Meeting in Aguascalientes, the CEDAW Meeting, the Feminist Meeting in Montevideo, the Youth Forum in Panama promoted by the Catholic Church, among others.

In the area of evidence generation, regional and global partners agreed that everyone is producing a lot of information; and that a regional data dialogue is needed to bring together different initiatives so that all the partners can have access to information about successful experiences, for example, in the prevention of adolescent pregnancy and gender-based violence. A proposal was made to organize a regional event around data and evidence generation for informed decision-making on CMEU. The need to create a LAC-specific, with Spanish content, repository of specialized documents was prioritized, which is an initiative that had already been proposed by the CAMY Fund and to send them to the global documentation center of Girls Not Brides, to shed light on the work of the region and have the information and knowledge accessible to a broad global and regional audience.

The issue of the non-Hispanic Caribbean represents a challenge for regional partners because the strategies are not the same. Partners currently



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working in the non-Hispanic Caribbean will share their on-going efforts for others to join forces and identify opportunities.

Lastly, the partners agreed to use the SDGs platform to generate a discussion with the people who are working on statistics at the regional level of the United Nations System agencies and the regional coordination mechanisms led by ECLAC, such as the Statistical Conference of the Americas, in order to develop a specific strategy with the CMEU indicator.

The group agreed to continue working in a coordinated manner on this issue and to enlist other organizations in this process.

SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK

The exchange at the workshop allowed to conclude a series of general recommendations to be taken into account in the implementation of the agreed national roadmaps, as well as in any action to end CMEU. The recommendations are organized by outcomes of the joint program.

I. TO CONSOLIDATE INTER-SECTORAL, INTER-INSTITUTIONAL AND COMPREHENSIVE RESPONSES

1. To organize a national gathering by the participating team in Santo Domingo to socialize the work done with other key actors, and move forward with a national plan, multi-sectoral and inter-institutional, for the eradication of CMEU.
2. To ensure that the approach to child marriages and early unions takes into account multi-sectoral, multi-dimensional and multi-causal nature of the problem, as well as its intergenerational effects.
3. To implement the lessons learned from the UNICEF-UNFPA Global Program to End Child Marriage, that non-governmental organizations work together to multiply the results and reach as many girls as possible, considering the importance of mobilizing political will and raising awareness for the issue to be incorporated into national development plans and budgets, and noting the importance of catalytic efforts.

II. TO ALIGN THE NATIONAL LEGISLATION WITH INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS BY RAISING THE AGE TO 18 YEARS, WITHOUT EXCEPTIONS

1. To design and implement strategies to disseminate and raise awareness of legal reforms on CMEU, using key influencers in the media and social networks as spokespersons.
2. To guarantee that the legislative progress to increase the age of marriage does not mean a setback to the sexual and reproductive rights of girls and adolescent girls considering the principle of progressive autonomy that should guide public policy in this regard.



3. To consider legal protections for adolescent girls who are in de facto unions.

.....

III. TO PROMOTE POLICIES AND SERVICES IN THE AREAS OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, VIOLENCE, SOCIAL PROTECTION, GENDER EQUALITY, CHILD PROTECTION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THAT HELP PREVENT AND RESPOND TO CHILD MARRIAGE AND EARLY UNIONS

1. To formulate common strategies in the areas of pregnancy prevention in adolescence, the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, the transformation of gender norms, the generation of evidence for decision-making, and keeping adolescent girls in schools in order to address their interrelationships as drivers of CMEU.
2. To strengthen specialized services for girls and adolescent girls, under inter-institutional and inter-sectoral coordination.
3. To address gender-based violence (GBV) through multilevel strategies that focus on the transformation of social norms that reproduce GBV.

.....

IV. TO BOOST THE EMPOWERMENT OF GIRLS AND PROMOTE MORE EQUAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THEIR IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENTS

1. To reproduce the use of the methodology with adolescent girls in the preparation of national plans to ensure the voice of girls.
2. To use the Roadmap to End CMEU, made by the group of adolescent girls, in the development of national plans.
3. To promote the creation of an adolescent advisory group to support actions to prevent CMEU.
4. To work with youth networks at the community level to deliver information and work with men and boys to reaffirm the equality of girls as a social good.

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V. TO GENERATE A REGIONAL PLATFORM OF ALLIES ON CMEU, WHICH, STARTING FROM THE GENERATION OF EVIDENCE, KNOWLEDGE AND LESSONS LEARNED, CAN MOBILIZE COOPERATION AMONG AND WITHIN COUNTRIES, AND EXPAND THE INITIATIVE TO MORE COUNTRIES

1. To articulate the approach to child marriage and early unions between the worldwide movement for childhood and the feminist movements. It is necessary to develop regional spaces specialized on the subject.
2. To identify, disseminate and regionally adapt successful experiences that have contributed to stop the practice of child marriage in other regions of the world and that constitute concrete evidence, with quantitative data.
3. To boost, urgently, information and guidance on non-marital unions for both legal protection and care strategies for affected girls.
4. To strengthen actors' capacities for response and accountability on national and international commitments and goals for the eradication of CMEU (for example, SDG 5).
5. To generate and support alliances for the implementation of multi-year action plans in order to produce sustainable and measurable results towards achievements. Temporary and isolated projects should be placed within long-term plans with the ability to scale at the national level.

ANNEX: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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