



# ETHIOPIA

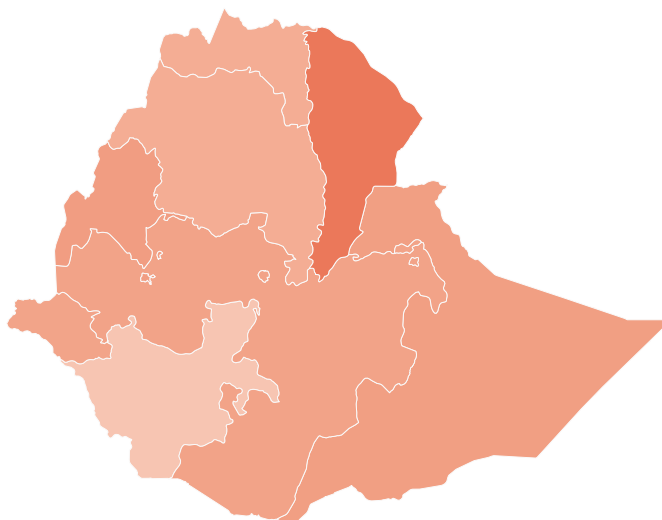
COUNTRY PROFILE



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# ETHIOPIA

**Percentage of women aged 20–24 years who were first married or in union before age 18.**



**Source:** Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey 2016. **Note:** This map is stylized and not to scale. It does not reflect a position by UNFPA or UNICEF on the legal status of any country or the delimitation of any frontiers.

## The country context

Ethiopia is home to 15 million child brides. Of these, 6 million married before age 15. The country has shown that even in countries with high prevalence levels of child marriage to start with, progress is possible. Since 1980, the prevalence of the practice has declined from 75 per cent to 40 per cent of young women being married before their 18th birthday. However, progress needs to be accelerated to meet the ambitious target of eliminating the practice by 2030 as set out in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). If progress observed over the last 10 years is doubled, the prevalence level will be down to 2 per cent first in 2050. And if the observed rate of progress continues at the current pace, the prevalence will be 9 per cent in 2050.<sup>1</sup>



In addition to being subjected to child marriage, girls are also at risk of undergoing female genital mutilation (FGM) in Ethiopia. Of all women aged 18–49 in the country, 13.8 per cent have ‘only’ gone through child marriage, while 37.8 per cent have been subjected to both harmful practices (child marriage and FGM). Younger women are less likely than older women to have experienced both practices, since both child marriage and FGM have become less common in Ethiopia.<sup>2</sup>

Like in Ethiopia, the global community has also seen a decrease in child marriage prevalence. Over the past decade, the proportion of young women globally who were married as children decreased by 15 per cent, from nearly 1 in 4 to 1 in 5. This means that, over the last 10 years, the marriages of some 25 million girls have been averted. This remarkable accomplishment is now under threat due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the next decade, UNICEF estimates that up to 10 million more girls will be at risk of child marriage as a result of

COVID-19, making the total number of girls at risk of child marriage by 2030 some 110 million girls worldwide.<sup>3</sup> The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) further estimates that nearly 24 million children and adolescents, including 11 million girls and young women, may drop out of school due to the pandemic’s economic impact.<sup>4</sup> This poses a big risk for girls in Ethiopia, as women in the country without any education are 3.4 times more likely to have experienced child marriage than women with a secondary education or higher.<sup>5</sup>

Despite these challenges, the elimination of child marriage by 2030 remains a priority under SDG 5 on gender equality. This monumental task puts pressure on the global community to deliver on effective interventions and policies at scale, generating calls for coordinated efforts and renewed commitments from stakeholders, particularly governments, to invest more to accelerate an end to child marriage.

## Key highlights



### The Global Programme reached



**152,782**  
adolescent girls and



**17,420**  
boys with prevention and protection services, including legal, psychosocial and case management services across the target regions.



Over  
**152,000**

adolescent girls were reached through life-skills training, including comprehensive sexuality education, with information and skills on sexual and reproductive health, and legal and psychosocial services.



Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the programme was able to reach adolescent girls with essential information and skills, as well as support girls' school attendance and community-based positive gender norms interventions, thus ensuring continuity of much needed gender-responsive services.



**MORE THAN 5,000 GIRLS WERE PROVIDED WITH SANITARY AND DIGNITY MATERIALS DURING THE YEAR.**

Under the recently launched **National Roadmap to End Child Marriage and FGM/C**, over

**10 MILLION**

individuals were reached via national and subnational media broadcasts throughout the country



The Global Programme reached over

**480,000**

community members, including boys, men and community gatekeepers such as faith-based organizations, with educational interventions and community dialogues, despite COVID-19 restrictions on gatherings.

## 2020 Achievements



Through complementary funding from the Government of Canada,

# 51,062

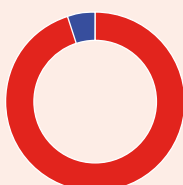
**copies of guidelines** for the school clubs were printed in eight languages and are expected to reach over

# 42,000

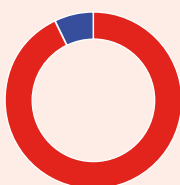
**primary and secondary schools.**



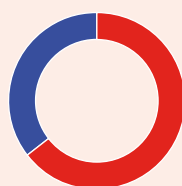
Data collected from **Amhara, Oromia** and **Somali regions**, where the programme has been implemented, indicated that **95 per cent, 93 per cent and 71 per cent**, respectively, of all girls went back to school.



**95% Amhara**



**93% Oromia**



**71% Somali**

### Providing intensive support to marginalized girls

The Global Programme works across the socioecological framework in Ethiopia by working with adolescent girls at risk of child marriage; influencers (e.g., family members, including women, men and boys; and community leaders such as religious and clan leaders); law enforcement bodies; the Bureau of Women, Children and Youth structures at different levels; health-care facilities; schools; and community structures such as Women Development Groups and Community Surveillance Committees and parent-teacher associations. The approach notes the importance of the interaction between these groups and structures, complemented by interventions to bring meaningful change.

Comprehensive capacity-building of girls, including life-skills, legal literacy and facilitation skills training, was carried out in six target regions in 2020, reaching 152,782 adolescent girls. Adolescent girls are targeted through these activities to increase their life-skills and individual agency, their ability to access information and services (including sexual and reproductive health, legal and psychosocial services, and support mechanisms), and build their confidence to protect themselves and their peers from child marriage. Continued support has been given to platforms such as girls' clubs both within and outside schools and safe spaces. These clubs give girls collective power for joint action when members of the clubs face the risk of child marriage. Dialogues in the clubs facilitate the exchange of experiences and information on the consequences of child marriage, strategies to negotiate with family members and to access prevention and response services, the benefit of education and how to support one another. Most of the girls were engaged in life-skills sessions and other training in the first quarter of 2020, before the pandemic hit the country. To ensure continued outreach during the pandemic, the programme adjusted its delivery of interventions by reducing the number of girls attending sessions, carrying out follow-up activities by telephone and engaging community volunteers for house-to-house visits.

Through complementary funding from the Government of Canada, 51,062 copies of guidelines for the school clubs were printed in eight languages and are expected to reach over 42,000 primary and secondary schools.

The guidelines inform school leaders on how to establish and run the clubs and how to engage boys, as well as provide specific examples on how to implement life-skills training.

In 2020, some 3,749 child marriage arrangements were identified, 2,051 (55 per cent) of which were cancelled by law enforcement bodies and/or community structures. Compared with the previous year, 2020 saw a decrease in child marriage reports: over the same period in 2019, some 4,991 cases of child marriage were reported, with 1,885 (37 per cent) of these being cancelled. Despite the lack of access to schools from 16 March until schools reopened in November 2020, cancellations of marriages were made possible through support mechanisms used by adolescent girls, such as going through members of the girls' clubs, community groups and anonymous suggestion boxes in the communities. That reporting of child marriage cases continued despite the COVID-19 outbreak indicates the success of girls' empowerment initiatives such as life-skills training and legal literacy sessions that have built the confidence of girls to seek support from community structures. Pre-COVID-19, schools enabled more than 80 per cent of child marriage arrangements to be reported. However, the increased functionality of community structures (e.g., women's development groups and surveillance mechanisms) to track child marriage cases, support girls and disseminate educational messages helped fill the support gap while schools were closed. The effectiveness of community

structures has been made possible by the support given by the Bureau of Women, Children and Youth and regional attorney generals to the structures to conduct more outreach activities through house-to-house visits. To ensure that these outreach activities could be conducted in a safe manner, project staff and representatives of community structures were provided with personal protective equipment (PPE).

During field monitoring visits to Afar, Amhara, and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' (SNNP) regions, it was observed that girls have the confidence to initiate discussions and influence decisions at the household level about when and whom they would marry, negotiate time for studying and participate in girls' club activities. Though not presented as something they encouraged, parents reported that girls do not accept their request for marriage as per the previous norm and they, as parents, no longer have the power to force their daughters as a parental right.

In partnership with VIAMO (a technology company and long-term agreement partner of UNICEF), the programme initiated a pilot project to reach leaders of the girls' clubs within the SNNP region with refresher training on facilitating discussions and activities through interactive voice response (IVR) technology, using their mobile phones. Based on the results from this pilot initiative, the IVR messaging with girls' club leaders will be scaled up to other regions.

## STORIES OF GIRLS

Girls leading the girls' clubs in SNNP region are witnessing how their leadership and communication capacities have improved. Alemnesh Ayele, the facilitator of the girls' club in Alemkorosa kebele, Dara woreda, describes how her confidence and pride have increased thanks to the role she is playing in engaging adolescent girls in discussions and encouraging them to continue their education. Alemnesh also supports the cancellation of child marriage arrangements in collaboration with the Woreda for Women, Children and Youth. Alemnesh notes that she sees a clear change in attitude among community members towards girls' education. Despite the

distance they had to travel, Alemnesh and her co-facilitators disseminated information and continued to engage adolescent girls through house-to-house visits during school closures because of COVID-19. Similarly, Asnakech Kebede, the girls' club facilitator in Delewache kebele, Dara woreda, notes how, by engaging out-of-school girls, the programme has increased their knowledge and enhanced their confidence to openly discuss issues around menstrual health and hygiene, sexual and reproductive health, when and whom to marry, and their life goals. Members of the clubs are eager to participate in the discussions and do not miss any sessions.



Even though ad hoc reports showed that school closures created a challenging situation for girls due to increased risks of child marriage, the proportion of girls who went back to school after eight months of closures showed promising results. Data collected from Amhara, Oromia and Somali regions, where the programme has been implemented, indicated that 95 per cent, 93 per cent and 71 per cent, respectively, of all girls went back to school. In most instances, the proportion of girls back in school is greater than that of boys. Although no specific assessment has been conducted on why the rate of girls returning in Somali Region is lower than for the other regions, factors related to the socioeconomic and cultural profile of the region might contribute to the situation, such as general level of literacy, infrastructure, penetration of media and value placed on girls' education.

Also during the year, the programme supported the national life-skills manual to be adapted, contextualized and translated into local languages and with specific training for Oromia, SNNP and Somali regions. The plan is to adapt the manual for delivery through radio and/or television in 2021. A desk review to inform the development of a manual for out-of-school girls' engagement with an implementation guide and monitoring framework has also been initiated, after agreement with the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth and the Bureau of Women, Children and Youth that the manual is to be implemented under their leadership in targeted regions.

### Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent restrictions on gatherings, movement in some areas, and school closures affected project implementation in 2020. The restrictions caused a temporary suspension of life-skills training at the onset of the pandemic. Factors related to COVID-19 also delayed initiatives, such as the development of the out-of-school girls engagement manual and implementation guidelines, which require evidence gathering and consultation at field level.

A lesson has been drawn regarding the adaptation of interventions to contexts such as COVID-19 and during restrictions on mobility and gatherings. The programme will increasingly translate interventions – including educational messaging around the rights of girls, reproductive health and self-managed psychosocial practices (e.g., breathing and relaxation techniques) – into media and digital formats, such as radio and telephone, as appropriate. To respond to girls' needs in times of humanitarian situations, it is useful to proactively think of ensuring integration of specific content on techniques of psychosocial support into existing manuals, including in the out-of-school girls engagement manual which is currently being developed.

Another lesson has been drawn about the value of out-of-school girls' engagement and community-level interventions such as strengthening of surveillance mechanisms. This was evident in the efforts made by those structures to maintain the continuity of community-level discussions through village-to-village and house-to-house visits despite the pandemic. The structures' availability was also vital for girls to be able to report and receive immediate support when they were at risk of child marriage.

Targeting out-of-school girls with meaningful empowerment interventions is challenging as, without schools, there is no strong platform that brings girls together. To respond to this challenge, as mentioned, the programme is supporting the development of an evidence-based implementation manual and monitoring framework – led by the non-governmental organization CARE – to ensure a stronger involvement of out-of-school girls in the programme.

In 2021, in line with COVID-19 protocols and to ensure that activities reach the furthest rural areas, there is a plan to deliver life-skills training via radio, supplemented by additional offline activities, to ensure the interactive part of skills-building.

### Enhancing the family and community environment

Community structures such as women development groups, anti-harmful traditional practices committees and other surveillance mechanisms play a critical role in disseminating information, tracking child marriage arrangements and facilitating cancellation of such cases. Yaleme Dires, aged 42 and leader of a committee in Qanat kebele, Farta woreda, Amhara region, expressed that the committee members were concerned about the vulnerability of adolescent girls to child marriage due to the school closures – and that this motivated her and other members to conduct house-to-house visits in the village to raise awareness on the harms of child marriage. Yaleme explained that their messaging was focused on helping girls and families to raise their hopes, by explaining that the pandemic is a temporary challenge. Through these visits, Yaleme and the other committee members provided reassurance that children will be back in school, and explained the consequences of negative coping strategies such as child marriage and uninformed and illegal migration. As a result, Yaleme said that no child marriages were carried out in her kebele during the lockdowns, and she is currently working with the kebele and school administrations to ensure that girls are going back to school.

To intensify collective community action to delay marriage and support girls' education or alternative life options (e.g., entrepreneurship training to support out-of-school girls to initiate their own small businesses), the Global Programme supports interventions targeting families and communities. Such interventions create a protective and empowering environment that enables girls to develop their potential and thrive. Community dialogues are a critical component in promoting a supportive and equal environment. The dialogues bring together men, women and community leaders

bi-weekly or monthly to engage in critical reflection around child marriage. The dialogues help individuals to reflect on the consequences of child marriage, the importance of enrolling girls in school and how to support girls' education. Since the end of May 2020, the number of people who attend the dialogues has been reduced from an average of 50 to between 7 and 12 individuals due to COVID-19 restrictions. Partners were

supported to cover the costs of PPE for community-level interventions. As witnessed by facilitators, the limited number of attendees has increased the quality of the reflections among participants. During the year, the programme was able to reach 484,696 community members with educational interventions and community dialogues, despite COVID-19 restrictions on gatherings.

● **Ateref Asaye, aged 30** and a community conversation facilitator, said that community engagement had been using different opportunities to disseminate information and to maintain the momentum, such as social gatherings at religious ceremonies and masses in church. The community dialogue members have been assigned the role of 'eyes and ears' of the communities, to cautiously watch how the community behaves in relation to child marriage. These members are also active in undertaking visits to villages and selected households to ensure that marriages are not being arranged behind the scenes. Ateref said that her husband, a priest, also played a key role in disseminating the educational message on child marriage to his congregation during church services. She further explained how his support is helping her to continue her role as an active facilitator and community change agent.

The testimonies from community members gathered during field monitoring and community dialogue sessions show increasing changes in attitudes towards child marriage, the readiness of parents to delay marriage for their daughters and expression of support for girls' education. Some parents in Amhara and SNNP regions said that they do not want their girls to repeat the same lifestyle and experience the deprivation they are facing due to their own limited schooling opportunities and forced marriage during childhood. In addition, the number of girls facing punishment from parents after reporting child marriage arrangements has decreased (reported by girls themselves).

The Ministry of Women, Children and Youth says that more than 2,000 communities (representing a population of 6 million people) across the target regions

are claiming that they are free from child marriage. However, these data still require validation through evidence generation.

● **Abala Obala, aged 30**, and Ato Okach Cham, aged 25, community facilitators in Jore woreda, Gambella region, said that they, together with seven members of an anti-harmful traditional practices committee, continued dialogues and to disseminate messages to the community dialogues members by going house to house during the pandemic. Ato Odol Omod, information and planning expert at Jore Woreda Bureau of Women, Children and Youth, said that the office is currently assessing the situation in consultation with community facilitators and health workers to come up with a plan to resume the regular community dialogues.

In addition to community dialogues with all community members, the programme also reached 178,501 men and boys with specific dialogues on the roles of men and boys in supporting adolescent girls to continue their education and reject child marriage. This intervention has helped support girls whose marriages have been

cancelled to maintain relationships with their families. Some boys consulted during field-level programme monitoring visits in SNNP and Amhara regions also expressed changes in attitudes and pledged to play an active role against child marriage in their communities.



The programme engaged 147,108 religious and other community leaders across the six programme target regions, leading to a renewed commitment to ending the practice of child marriage by these leaders. Religious leaders have committed to requesting age verification before blessing marriage arrangements, which contributed to the cancellation of child marriage cases and further strengthened the collaboration and referral linkages between the leaders, health-care facilities and law enforcement bodies.

To further disseminate messaging on child marriage, the programme used media and digital platforms to reach 2,063,000 individuals with educational information around the harms of child marriage, the benefits of girls' education, information about the national road map to end child marriage and the roles of different actors in the roll-out of the road map. Text messages gathered by broadcasting agencies revealed that the programme is helping to trigger discussions and debates on the issue of child marriage among friends and families.

UNFPA in collaboration with the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation also prepared radio sessions on different sexual and reproductive health issues that were aired for an hour two days a week. The sessions covered healthy sexual options for young people, issues of sexual and reproductive rights, unintended pregnancies, options for youth to prevent pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections, barriers to utilizing sexual and reproductive health services, and life-skills for coping with challenges faced by youth. The radio programme was found to be crucial for disseminating information to a large number of young people, especially as they were out of school.

The Global Programme also supported the national alliance against harmful practices to develop packages of messages on child marriage, FGM and gender-based violence, the increased risks for these practices during COVID-19, and where to seek support and services during lockdown. The aim is to integrate and align messaging among partners and contribute to ensuring consistency and coordination among different stakeholders.

### Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

A challenge encountered during the year was the limited number of institutional bidders for the redesign of the community dialogues interventions, leading to delays in the planned activity. This may be because it was advertised during the early onset of COVID-19 and there may have been a reluctance to bid given the global and country-level uncertainty on research and travel. In 2021, redesign of the community dialogues will be done through the application of human-centred approaches to engage women, girls, men and boys in the planning of

interventions and to provide regular feedback to inform programme adjustments as needed. For example, the content of the community conversation manual will be designed with the involvement of community members in a way suited to each region. Similarly, the training and message dissemination in collaboration with VIAMO is also designed through a consultative process and will be tested with the target groups prior to implementation.

Another challenge during the year was the conflict in several parts of the country which impacted the pace of programme implementation. However, efforts were made to keep the implementation of interventions at the community level going, with support from local structures and with limited technical support from the regional Bureau of Women, Children and Youth. In particular, in some woredas of Afar and Oromia regions, where there were restrictions on mobility, provision of technical support by the regional bureau was difficult but took place in some instances over telephone.

Some of the main priorities for the programme going forward are to use media and digital platforms, such as IVR, to provide community dialogue facilitator training in the context of COVID-19 restrictions. These modalities will be used as a way to reach more community members and supplement regular interventions that involve face-to-face interactions. Further, the programme will engage faith-based institutions through Programme Cooperation Agreements to strengthen their engagement in ending child marriage. It will continue to ensure boys' and men's engagement using a social analysis and action approach in partnership with CARE, which is expected to strengthen the gender-transformative dimension of the programme.

### Strengthening systems

Capacity-building was carried out at 288 child protection service delivery points during the year, including technical training, review and exchange sessions, and the sharing of materials that can serve as additional references. This enhanced the capacity of prevention and protection services delivered by structures of the Bureau of Women, Children and Youth, the regional Attorneys General, police and courts at subnational and woreda levels, which enhanced the accessibility of the services. Adolescent girls who were at risk of child marriage received a basic level of psychosocial support by staff from the Bureau of Women, Children and Youth in the targeted regions. The staff who provided the psychosocial support have received capacity-building training from various agencies, including United Nations agencies, as part of the humanitarian response. Non-governmental organizations working in the regions were critical in creating such capacity. The trained staff also



During the year, the programme supported **5.1 million** children (**45 per cent girls**) out of **24 million** children in total in primary and secondary school to continue their education through radio and other online platforms during the national COVID-19 school closures (mid-March until October/November).



cascaded the training to staff of woreda-level women, children and youth administrations to fill a gap which had been created by turnover of trained staff. The provision of psychosocial support services in their own localities helped adolescent girls rescued from child marriages to deal with family relationships that may have been negatively affected by their decision to report and stop the child marriage arrangements. To respond to the COVID-19 context, the capacity-building interventions were adjusted to reduce the numbers of participants in training and workshops and to cover the cost of sanitizers and face coverings. Some of the meetings and follow-up activities (including coordination meetings among stakeholders) were also held virtually on Zoom, Telegram and WhatsApp.

In total, the Global Programme reached 152,782 adolescent girls and 17,420 boys with prevention and protection services, including legal, psychosocial and case management services, across the target regions in 2020. Some adolescent girls interviewed during field monitoring visits expressed their satisfaction with services provided and the way service providers treated them. They also appreciated that services were

comprehensive. For example, many of the services not only focused on illegal marriages but also used the opportunity for dialogue to convince families to accept the decision, which made girls most comfortable. On the other hand, the study 'Assessment of Barriers to Accessing Violence Against Women and Children Response Services in Refugee and Host Communities of Ethiopia', commissioned by UNICEF, reveals that girls in Gambella region prefer to address issues like child marriage arrangements through existing community mechanisms rather than taking them to law enforcement bodies. This is because of fear of causing harm to the family and the potential of disrupting harmonious relationships/social cohesion.

Although adolescent girls have information on the existence of health-care facilities in their areas, they are often not aware that adolescent-friendly sexual and reproductive health services are available at those facilities. To give space to girls and link them to sexual and reproductive health services, safe spaces and girls' clubs have been established to provide access to information on life-skills, which helps develop their confidence and referral linkages. These spaces enable girls

to expand social networks, seek advice and information on family planning and sexual and reproductive health and rights, and participate in wider community discussions to express and exercise their choices. The programme continued its support to adolescent girls in 2020 through the procurement and distribution of sanitary and dignity materials for in-school and out-of-school girls: more than 5,000 girls were provided with sanitary and dignity materials during the year.

Further, the programme directly supported government-run health-care facilities in Gambella region to provide age-appropriate youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health information and services. The facilities were linked to girls for effective service provision and referrals. The programme also strengthened its partnerships with local organizations (e.g., health development armies) that have a stronger structure on the ground, to ensure continuity of sexual and reproductive health services as a preventative measure in case public health services became unavailable due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Support to community groups such as youth associations, youth volunteers and peer educators (whose members are mostly female) also ensures that implementing partners can easily monitor what is going on in communities in terms of sexual and reproductive health services, as well as occurrences of child marriage and gender-based violence.

During the year, the programme supported 5.1 million children (45 per cent girls) out of 24 million children in total in primary and secondary school to continue their education through radio and other online platforms during the national COVID-19 school closures (mid-March until October/November). Some 84 per cent of these are from Global Programme-targeted regions. The programme also supported the dissemination of messages around child marriage, gender-based violence, and mental health and psychosocial support during the school closures. As a result, more than 285,000 teachers in Amhara, Afar, Oromia and Somali regions were reached with relevant messages.

#### Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

The effort to institutionalize delivery of capacity-building for service providers will continue in collaboration with the Violence Against Children Programme, led by UNICEF. This will include the revision of the child justice training manual, roll-out of case management training, and development of the social and community workforce. Ensuring minimum requirements for services such as psychosocial services will be achieved by providing working manuals, procedures and good practices, and facilitating training opportunities for staff of implementing partners. Further, the social analysis and action approach to be implemented as part of the FGM

programme will be considered across all initiatives within the Global Programme to strengthen gender equality considerations throughout.

#### Addressing poverty

The Government's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) continued to reach vulnerable families in the target regions with direct support, cash for work, and participation in community mobilization interventions. The programme is supported by UNICEF and implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Agriculture. In 2020, some 910,000 adolescent girls benefited from the PSNP programme. The 'Child Marriage and Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme: Analysis of protective pathways in Amhara Region' study carried out in 2019 by UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti and BDS Centre for Development Research was completed in early 2020, and revealed that there are several pathways of change the programme can contribute to delaying marriage, including supporting girls to remain in school. A change in attitudes towards child marriage and girls' education was observed among the families participating in the community mobilization interventions. Based on the findings of the study and the potential contribution of the programme in reducing the vulnerability of girls to child marriage through supporting girls' education, both UNICEF and the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth will use the evidence to influence the design of the fifth phase of the PSNP.

#### Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

The fourth phase of the PSNP was in its last year of implementation in 2020. As a result, it was not possible to influence implementation and integrate the issue of child marriage into the programme. However, UNICEF is seeking to influence the design phase of the next phase of the PSNP, which began rolling out in January 2021. In collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, UNICEF is working to ensure the inclusion of gender-based violence and child marriage indicators.

The national social protection scheme has several priorities that include improved nutrition and health outcomes, and facilitating linkages with other social services such as education and gender-based violence prevention. UNICEF is using the recent evidence that relates to the benefits of ending child marriage to be included in the next iteration of the PSNP, noting that it may be linked via health, nutrition and other social services. Considering that the goal of the PSNP is to contribute to reducing extreme poverty and enhancing resilience of extremely poor and vulnerable rural households, it also reduces vulnerability of adolescent girls to child marriage.

## Facilitating supportive laws and policies

An analysis of longitudinal data on child marriage policy, published in 2020 by the World Policy Analysis Center, found that the rate of child marriage was reduced by an average of 6 per cent in countries that enforced child marriage laws. The same study found that child marriage laws, combined with advocacy efforts surrounding their enactment, fosters improvements in gender-equitable attitudes.<sup>6</sup> This is consistent with the hypothesis that gender egalitarian laws positively impact norms regarding women's equality and empowerment at national and subnational levels.<sup>7</sup>

In Ethiopia, support is provided to the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth; the Federal Attorney General; the Bureau of Women, Children and Youth; and regional Attorneys General at different levels across the targeted regions. The increased support was channelled towards the familiarization and promotion of the National Costed Roadmap to End Child Marriage and FGM/C (2020–2024),<sup>8</sup> advocacy for increased budget allocation, and strengthening of accountability and coordination mechanisms to prevent harmful practices at all levels.

The familiarization and roll-out of the National Costed Roadmap started in 2020 both at national and subnational levels. The aim of this effort is to familiarize the general public with the roadmap, the roles of different actors and the efforts of key stakeholders to end child marriage and FGM. This was done by organizing workshops with stakeholders, including national and regional-level officials, cabinet, parliament and council members, and non-governmental actors. Subsequently, a four-month media campaign was implemented in collaboration with Fana Broadcasting Corporate Share Company and the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth. Broadcasts of interviews and panel discussions with government and the National Alliance representatives about their organizations' efforts, mandate and commitment in implementing the National Costed Roadmap were aired nationally and in six programme target regions. Between the end of July and the end of November 2020, some 4,063,000 individuals were reached in the targeted regions and 13.7 million people across the country through the media broadcasts. Anecdotal evidence from listeners indicates positive feedback and favourable views towards ending child marriage and FGM.

With regard to the National Costed Roadmap, advocacy with key stakeholders in education, justice and health sectors has – through developing and disseminating advocacy briefs and organizing sensitization sessions, resulted in a 20 per cent increase in budget allocation for the Bureau of Women, Children and Youth in Somali

region for the fiscal year. Moreover, the region has assigned a specific budget line for the implementation of the road map. The allocated budget is planned to be used for scaling up the programmes to end harmful practice to woredas not covered by UNICEF or other non-governmental actors. In addition, ending child marriage and FGM is included in the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth's 10-year plan, in line with the core strategies, interventions and performance indicators. This puts child marriage and FGM on the national agenda to be tracked at a high level, including by the national and regional parliaments and cabinets.

The aim of the National Costed Roadmap is to promote and protect the rights of adolescent girls, including from child marriage, and to facilitate their access to services such as for their sexual and reproductive health. UNFPA and UNICEF continued advocacy efforts for increased budget allocations to roll out the National Costed Roadmap and provided support to finalize its resource mobilization strategy and advocacy plan. The increased budget allocation for the implementation of prevention and response interventions – including skills development for out-of-school adolescent girls, both in pastoralist and other communities – will further enhance girls' capacity to influence decisions that affect their lives. Similarly, it will contribute to ensuring adolescent girls continue their education through influencing families to support girls' education, as well as enhancing the capacity of schools to create a gender-friendly and safe environment where girls can thrive. Additionally, the National Costed Roadmap will contribute to ensuring that existing legal frameworks for criminalizing the practice of child marriage will be implemented and, hence, play a key role in protecting girls' rights. The focus of the road map on capacitating and advocating with stakeholders as duty-bearers to respond to the needs of girls makes it a key instrument in promoting and fulfilling the human rights of women and girls in Ethiopia.

During the year, the National Alliance to End FGM and Child Marriage continued its coordination role, synergizing the efforts of different stakeholders, facilitating the exchange of evidence generated by members and good practices through convening regular meetings, using virtual platforms between April to June 2020 and through resuming face-to-face meetings since July 2020. The level of participation of key ministries increased with the follow-up from the secretariat, notably from April to November 2020 and new members (e.g., GIZ) joined the secretariat of the National Alliance to support the initiative.

Efforts were made to influence the Afar and Somali regions to endorse the family law, which will strengthen the legal framework in these regions where children

and women are more vulnerable due to sociocultural factors and lack of basic services. The request for endorsement of the law was submitted to the regional government five years ago, but no action has yet been taken. However, two woredas (Chifra and Mille) in Afar region increased the punishment (to five livestock) for failure to comply with the community by-laws, one of which forbids making child marriage arrangements. The by-law is planned to be shared and contextualized across all communities in the regions. The elderly and traditional leaders such as the Abba Geda tribe in Oromia region are currently also reviewing 2017 by-laws, which may result in revision and increased effectiveness in stopping child marriages.

#### Next steps

In 2021, planned tracking of public finances and expenditures, with support from the UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office, will inform and strengthen the evidence base for advocacy for an increased allocation and accountability framework.

#### Generating and applying data and evidence

Evidence-generation activities were delayed due to COVID-19; these included the social and behavioural change baseline-midline-end-line survey, the desk review, and data gathering planned as part of the community conversation manual redesign and the development of the out-of-school girls engagement manual and the men and boys engagement package. However, the statistical brochure on 'Ending Child Marriage: A profile of progress in Ethiopia', developed with support from UNICEF's Data and Analytics Team, was published and contributed to informing the 10-year plan of the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth, which is being finalized.

UNFPA and UNICEF also contributed technically to the study conducted by Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE), led by Overseas Development International (ODI), on the experience of adolescents in relation to COVID-19 and issues that concern child

The aim of the National Costed Roadmap is to promote and protect the rights of adolescent girls, including from child marriage, and to facilitate their access to services such as for their sexual and reproductive health.



marriage, FGM and gender-based violence. This support helps to address data and evidence gaps through leveraging their resources and expertise, noting they have strong organizational capacity and established systems, and are engaged in ongoing research initiatives related to adolescents, young people and gender. In addition, a study commissioned by UNICEF, 'Assessment of Barriers to Accessing Violence Against Women and Children Response Services in Refugee and Host Communities in Ethiopia', which started in 2019, was completed in 2020. It also covered child marriage in two target regions of the Global Programme (Gambella and Somali).

### Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Evidence generation that was planned to be conducted as part of the out-of-school girls manual and the men and boys engagement manual development was delayed due to restrictions related to COVID-19. CARE was expected to gather evidence such as specific capacity development needs of girls, boys and men, as well as mechanisms to monitor these types of initiatives to inform the development of the manuals. This was planned to be done through convening consultations with different

stakeholders at national and regional levels, and others with community members including girls, boys, men and women. As a result of the COVID-19 restrictions, the initiative was postponed to the last quarter of 2020 and is expected to be completed in 2021.

One of the lessons learned has been using available long-term agreements for efficient and timely implementation of interventions that require outsourcing of technical expertise, such as surveys. This is anticipated to reduce the long process of procurement and repeated bids when very few institutions submit proposals.

Priorities for 2021 are to strengthen the gender-transformative approach of the programme, increase capacity for programme monitoring and generation of evidence (e.g., streamlining data collection tools and developing monitoring and evaluation guidelines, providing briefing and mentorships on its implementation to partners at different levels), and use findings of the public financing expenditure tracking as an advocacy tool for increased allocation of budget for the roll-out of the national costed roadmap.

## Partnerships and working as one

In 2020, the Global Programme engaged 304 partners across regional and country offices – an increase from 249 partners in 2019. In Ethiopia, the programme worked with 12 partners in 2020: one civil society organization, six government bodies, one media entity and four national partnerships. The government bodies focus on education, gender and protection, and two of the national partnerships are youth-led, aiming to ensure adolescent participation in programming and policymaking. Within the agencies themselves, cross-sectoral collaboration is ensured. The child marriage programme is a flagship programme within UNICEF Ethiopia, which allows the programme to benefit from integration of different sectors (health; nutrition; water, sanitation and hygiene; education; social policy; evaluation and research), including human and financial resources. Within UNFPA Ethiopia, the programme is aligned with the organization's humanitarian as well as adolescent and youth interventions.

UNFPA and UNICEF in Ethiopia are coordinating efforts for efficient and effective programme delivery as well as increased value for money. This coordination includes the joint managing of the social and behaviour change study, covering a baseline, a midline and an end-line.

Managing three surveys as one, rather than separate survey initiatives, has resulted in a minimum saving of US\$75,000. Staff time in managing the procurement process is also considered a substantial saving, though not accounted for in monetary terms. Similarly, the engagement of both organizations with the Population Media Centre as a partner has resulted in a saving of US\$50,000. This has allowed budget to be used for other new initiatives such as the engagement with VIAMO.

On a national level, the manuals for men and boys and out-of-school girls' engagement that are being developed in partnership with CARE are led by and will be used by both UNFPA and UNICEF. During 2020, UNFPA also enhanced its geographical focus of the programme to include the Amhara region, which ensured increased joint coverage of the two organizations in terms of implementation.

## Communicating the need to end child marriage

The Global Programme ensured coverage on social media of the secondary impacts of COVID-19 on girls and the potential increase of child marriage during the year, including calls for action on International Women's Day, on the Day of the Girl, and linked to the 16 Days of Activism Against Violence Against Women and Girls.

As a part of the 16 Days campaign, UNFPA organized a high-level panel discussion with faith actors, faith-based organizations and policymakers on the role of faith-based organizations in preventing gender-based violence and harmful practices in Ethiopia. The panel discussion shared experiences and knowledge around best practices and challenges around the elimination of harmful practices in local communities, and ways to consider going forward. A short documentary film was

also produced for the event to create awareness about the role of faith-based organizations in the fight against gender-based violence and harmful practices.

On the commemoration of World Population Day and the UNFPA launch of the State of World Population (SWOP) report subtitled 'Against My Will' (focusing on three harmful practices: FGM, child marriage and son preference), a panel discussion was organized. The panellists were from the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth, and representatives from civil society organizations. During the panel, the link between increased cases of child marriage and FGM and COVID-19 was the major topic of discussion. To reach a wider audience, the event was broadcast through the state-owned television channels.

### Summary of output indicator performance (2020)

Indicator	Target	Result
<b>Indicator 1111:</b> Number of adolescent girls (aged 10–19) who actively participated in life-skills or comprehensive sexuality education interventions in programme areas	93,373	152,782
<b>Indicator 1121:</b> Number of girls (aged 10–19) supported by the programme to enrol and/or remain in primary or secondary school	38,121	0
<b>Indicator 1211:</b> Number of boys and men actively participating in group education/dialogues that address harmful masculinities and gender norms	26,199	178,501
<b>Indicator 1221:</b> Number of individuals (boys, girls, women and men) who participate in group education/dialogue sessions on consequences of and alternatives to child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls and gender equality	504,922	484,696
<b>Indicator 1222:</b> Number of individuals (boys, girls, women and men) reached by mass media (traditional and social media) messaging on child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls, and gender equality	1,165,266	2,063,000
<b>Indicator 1223:</b> Number of local actors (e.g., traditional, religious and community leaders) with meaningful participation in dialogues and consensus-building to end child marriage	1,276	147,108
<b>Indicator 1231:</b> Number of civil society organizations newly mobilized in support of challenging social norms and promoting gender equality by the Global Programme	8	1
<b>Indicator 2121:</b> Number of primary/secondary/non-formal schools in programme areas providing quality gender-friendly education that meets minimum standards	N/A	N/A
<b>Indicator 2131:</b> Number of service delivery points in programme areas providing quality adolescent-responsive services (health, child protection/gender-based violence) that meet minimum standards	66	0
<b>Indicator 2211:</b> Number of partnerships (both formal and informal) established to deliver adolescent-responsive social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes and services	543	358
<b>Indicator 3111:</b> Number of policies or legal instruments addressing child marriage drafted, proposed or adopted at national and subnational levels with Global Programme support	N/A	N/A
<b>Indicator 3211:</b> Number of pieces of evidence and knowledge generated that focus on what works to end child marriage	4	0
<b>Indicator 3212:</b> Number of pieces of evidence and knowledge generated that apply a gender analysis	4	0
<b>Indicator 3221:</b> Number of South–South cooperation activities (conferences, expert visits, peer consultations, study tours, communities of practice) supported	3	3

N/A, not applicable.

# ENDNOTES

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- 5 *Understanding the Relationship Between Child Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation*.
- 6 Omidakhsh, N., and J. Heymann, 'Improved Child Marriage Laws and Its Association with Changing Attitudes and Experiences of Intimate Partner Violence: A comparative multi-national study', *Journal of Global Health*, vol. 10, no. 1, June 2020, art. 010707, <<https://doi.org/10.7189/jogh.10.010707>>.
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- 8 Ministry of Women, Children and Youth, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, *Summary: National Costed Roadmap to End Child Marriage and FGM/C: 2020–2024*, Addis Ababa, August 2019, <<https://ethiopia.un.org/sites/default/files/2019-09/Roadmap%20to%20end%20child%20marriage%20and%20FGM%20summary%20Unicef%20.pdf>>, accessed 27 August 2021.



UNFPA-UNICEF  
GLOBAL PROGRAMME  
TO END CHILD MARRIAGE

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Accelerating gender equality  
by eliminating child marriage  
in a pandemic

2020  
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