COUNTRY PROFILE 2021: UNFPA-UNICEF GLOBAL PROGRAMME TO END CHILD MARRIAGE

MOZAMBIQUE
Child marriage context

There are 4.4 million child brides in Mozambique, 1.6 million of whom were married before the age of 15. Currently, the prevalence of child marriage (marriage before the age of 18) among girls stands at 53 per cent.\(^{38}\) Projections for the elimination of the practice in the country are not possible as the country has not shown any evidence of progress in reducing the prevalence of child marriage among girls in recent decades.

Programming context

The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly affected the everyday lives of girls for a second year in 2021, including their physical and mental health, education and the economic circumstances of their families and communities. Globally, up to 10 million more girls are estimated to become child brides by 2030 as a result of the pandemic.\(^{39}\)

UNFPA and UNICEF Evaluation Offices conducted a joint assessment of Global Programme adaptations to the COVID-19 crisis in 2021.\(^{40}\) The COVID-19 assessment aimed to:

- Assess relevant contingency planning and implementation and alternative delivery and management arrangements for the Global Programme due to the COVID-19 pandemic, taking into account the views of vulnerable adolescent girls, their families, communities and key implementing partners.

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• Make recommendations for the immediate to mid-term improvement of the Global Programme response to COVID-19, identify ongoing programme changes and recommending any additional support required to implement those programme changes and shifting priorities.

• Make any recommendations required to adjust the Global Programme Phase II to the new context, including its theory of change and the targets established before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The results of the assessment indicate that:

• It is critical to keep the focus and efforts in reaching the most vulnerable and marginalized adolescents, including those in remote areas.

• Lessons could be taken from experiences using multi-channel and two-way communication approaches, while also being attentive to the digital divide.

These results will inform future adjustments and refinements to the programme. They will help continue delivering in changing contexts and accelerating the pace, during the Decade of Action, of eliminating child marriage to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

### TABLE. Conclusions and recommendations from the COVID-19 assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONCLUSION</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programme advocacy and engagement efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic kept child marriage on national agendas</td>
<td>Advocate with governments to continue developing legal and operational frameworks contributing to ending child marriage with a rights-based and multisectoral focus</td>
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<td>The COVID-19 crisis underscored the vulnerability of adolescent girls in rural and remote areas</td>
<td>Reinforce efforts to reach the most vulnerable and marginalized adolescent girls, boys and their families</td>
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<td>Adoption of digital and mass media approaches demonstrated a high potential for sustaining engagement of adolescent girls at scale, although the digital divide should be considered</td>
<td>Develop complementary multi-channel approaches to reach target populations, ensuring that they foster two-way communication</td>
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<td>COVID-19 restrictions limited adolescent girls’ access to health and social welfare services</td>
<td>Continue technical support and explore the most effective approaches to ensure adolescent girls have access to essential services</td>
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<td>The programme theory of change remains valid but poverty and economic drivers need to be stressed further in operational strategies</td>
<td>Further articulate the strategy to leverage social protection schemes such as cash transfers and income generation opportunities for adolescent girls and their families</td>
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<td>COVID-19 programme adjustments created a high demand on data and evidence for adopted approaches</td>
<td>Continue adjusting monitoring, data generation and analysis in order to reinforce evidence-based programming</td>
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Key highlights

- In 2021, more than two million men, women, adolescents and children were reached through the integrated package of messages on essential family practices with a specific focus on child marriage.

- Close to 5,000 boys and men actively participated in group education/dialogues that address harmful masculinities and gender norms.

- More than 150,000 individuals (boys, girls, women and men) participated in group education/dialogue sessions on consequences of and alternatives to child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls and gender equality.

- 102 primary, secondary or non-formal schools in programme areas were supported to provide quality gender-friendly education that meets minimum standards.

- In 2021, the Mozambique country office was part of the trailblazer countries that rolled out the Gender-Transformative Accelerator (GTA) tool. A GTA workshop was held in May 2021 with the active participation and engagement technical staff from UNFPA, UNICEF, government and civil society organizations, resulting in concrete actions to support gender-transformative approaches to end child marriage.
Programme performance

**TABLE. Summary of output indicator performance (2021)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATOR</th>
<th>TARGET</th>
<th>RESULT</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator 1111:</strong> Number of adolescent girls (aged 10-19) who actively participated in life skills or comprehensive sexuality education interventions in programme areas</td>
<td>56,533</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator 1121:</strong> Number of girls (aged 10-19) supported by the programme to enrol and/or remain in primary or secondary school</td>
<td>1,740</td>
<td>384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator 1211:</strong> Number of boys and men actively participating in group education/dialogues that address harmful masculinities and gender norms</td>
<td>3,100</td>
<td>4,875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator 1221:</strong> 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</td>
<td>148,616</td>
<td>150,754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator 1222:</strong> 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</td>
<td>2,500,000</td>
<td>2,213,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator 1223:</strong> Number of local actors (e.g., traditional, religious and community leaders) with meaningful participation in dialogues and consensus-building to end child marriage</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator 1231:</strong> Number of civil society organizations newly mobilized in support of challenging social norms and promoting gender equality by the Global Programme</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator 2121:</strong> Number of primary/secondary/non-formal schools in programme areas providing quality gender-friendly education that meets minimum standards</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator 2131:</strong> Number of service delivery points in programme areas providing quality adolescent-responsive services (health, child protection, gender-based violence) that meet minimum standards</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator 2211:</strong> Number of partnerships (both formal and informal) established to deliver adolescent-responsive social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes and services</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator 3111:</strong> Number of policies or legal instruments addressing child marriage drafted, proposed or adopted at national and subnational level with Global Programme support</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator 3211:</strong> Number of generated evidence and knowledge that focus on what works to end child marriage</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator 3212:</strong> Number of generated evidence and knowledge that apply a gender analysis</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator 3221:</strong> Number of South-to-South cooperation (conferences, expert visits, peer consultations, study tours, communities of practice) supported</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NA = Not applicable (the country programme does not work on or report on this indicator)
**Providing intensive support to marginalized girls**

Supporting access to education for girls and young women has proven to be an essential tool for empowering girls and women to make sound decisions about their sexual and reproductive health and rights, including decisions about their marriage. The Global Programme in Mozambique has included in its action plan the process of identification of out-of-school girls, their reintegration back into schools and the provision of scholarships for vulnerable girls, including girls in situations of early marriage. During 2021, the programme together with civil society organizations and the government sectors of education and human and social affairs supported the integration of 384 adolescent girls who had dropped out of school to return to school in six districts in the Nampula and Zambezia provinces.

A new programme component on economic empowerment was also introduced in the Global Programme in 2021, which targets girls and young women. The Global Programme in partnership with a local civil society organization, Fundação para o Desenvolvimento da Comunidade, piloted the economic empowerment intervention in the Angoche district in Nampula province, focusing on three core areas that include training girls and young women in financial literacy, the provision of start-up kits for small businesses and the creation and support of saving groups. 150 girls and young women have benefited from the partnership that has so far created seven community saving groups.

**CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS**

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic led to a government-imposed state of emergency, including numerous countrywide restrictions, such as closures of schools and certain types of establishments, limitations on gatherings and restrictions on movement. Many of these restrictions also continued in 2021 and had a large impact on the Global Programme implementation, as the programme – just as in 2020 – had to suspend or adjust all in-person programme activities to adhere to relevant COVID-19 prevention and protection measures. The girls’ mentorship sessions which usually take place in the Global Programme targeted districts under the Rapariga Biz programme that created important synergies and complementarities with the Global Programme interventions and strategies were also suspended for an extended period due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Problems with violations of the rights of minors continue to be a reality in Mozambique, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in an increase in the numbers of children – especially girls – who have experienced physical or psychological violence and sexual abuse. As part of protection and prevention measures, UNICEF has signed an agreement with the Mozambican Women’s Lawyer Association to provide legal assistance to victims of child marriage with the main purpose of guaranteeing greater access to justice for minors through the training of duty bearers and rights holders, as well as by providing legal assistance and legal aid for minors.

**Enhancing the family and community environment**

Preliminary results from the social norms baseline study of the Global Programme show that the proportion of individuals who demonstrate a willingness to change harmful practices has increased by 37 per cent thanks to community dialogues. As a result of community awareness campaigns, an additional 40 per cent of individuals feel the urgent need to change some of the practices of initiation rites for girls that are described as a step to adulthood and acquisition of gender and sexual identities, and an additional 16 per cent of individuals can now cite at least three benefits resulting from delayed marriage.

In Nampula province, over 2,600 community dialogue events were held during 2021, led by 71 community leaders and with 50,854 community members participating. Alongside these dialogue events 239 cases of child marriage and abuse were identified and reported to local authorities for resolution, and 215 child marriages were cancelled and the perpetrators sanctioned by the community.
Girls and young women in Mozambique are change agents in ending child marriage

“My mum kept telling me ‘I do not have the means to keep you in school. You need to get married to have a man who will take care of you’”, shared Marta*, an adolescent girl participating in the interventions of the Global Programme in Mozambique.

Marta is not the only adolescent in Mozambique that has heard a similar statement from family members. Mozambique is home to 4.4 million child brides. Of these, 1.6 million were married before age 15. Marta would have been one of these girls as her mother attempted to have her married off at the age of 13. However, Marta had heard from the Rapariga Biz programme that child marriage is a crime and she refused to go along with her mother’s plans, knowing that the law, community leaders and the government were on her side. She was subsequently ejected from her house.

The Rapariga Biz programme is a girls empowerment programme receiving catalytic funds from the Global Programme with mentorship at the heart of its approach to reducing child marriage and unwanted teenage pregnancy in the two most affected provinces of Mozambique, Nampula and Zambezia.

On the night she was ejected, Marta went to her mentor Marieta’s house for help. As a trained mentor, Marieta knew to present Marta’s case to their community leader who then took the girl to the District Women, Child and Social Action Offices. Through the intervention, Marta’s parents were convinced to drop their attempts to marry their daughter off.

Because of the support she received through the Rapariga Biz programme in terms of increased knowledge, skills and agency, Marta is now a 17-year-old unmarried student. “We helped her mother understand it was not right to marry a 13-year-old girl to a 73-year-old man. Her mother agreed, and [Marta] is still in school today”, stated Suraia Ministro, also a mentor within the programme. “I have seen the difficulties they face now because of the lack of education. I do not want other girls to fall into this trap,” says 20-year-old Shreya, who witnessed her two elder sisters being married off when they were minors.

* Name changed to protect her identity.
The Global Programme support towards the dissemination of community engagement guides and capacity building of 330 community leaders from 81 communities to mobilize families resulted in 13,807 families being declared as model families in communities on issues related to child marriage and civic engagement. Additionally, the programme’s capacity building efforts of 175 religious leaders and 158 traditional leaders resulted in dialogues with close to 140,000 individuals. Through the use of multiple platforms that included live talk shows, participatory community theatres, engagement of key influencers, SMS Biz/U-Report, youth engagement and social media more than 2 million individuals were also reached. The integrated messaging centred on essential family practices with a specific focus on ending child marriage.

The Global Programme funded the production of 20 storylines of the popular entertainment-education radio drama Ouro Negro targeting adolescents with messaging related to child marriage, sexual abuse, HIV prevention, adolescent sexual and reproductive health, teenage pregnancies, nutrition, gender-based violence as well as specific content on young people living with disabilities. The episodes were broadcast twice a week through 115 radio stations in Portuguese and several local languages. In addition, a new live radio talk show Ouro Negro da Malta, produced by adolescents, was launched to increase discussions and exchange of information among teenagers and young people on themes addressed in the radio drama.

CHALLENGES

The programme faces resistance from communities and local leaders to host the boys’ mentorship programme. The mentorship programme involves several individuals and areas of interest as mentors must be selected based on a previously designed and existing profile. One of the key criteria for the successful selection of mentors is the involvement of community leaders from where these boys are involved. Unfortunately, in some of the districts there was interference from local governments in the selection of mentors, thus not complying with the established criteria. As a result, there was some resistance from the communities in welcoming the programme as well as in recognizing its benefits.

There are also trust issues among parents and community members towards programmes that target boys due to the ongoing insecurity in Northern Mozambique, where boys and young people are being recruited to be part of the conflict. At the community level parents, guardians as well as community leaders are resistant to allow their children to be part of mentorship groups. Furthermore, the current security situation does not provide a conducive environment for mentored youth at the family level. Mentoring sessions were initiated prior to community engagements and dialogues with community leaders and parents, and as a consequence, boys did not initially find a welcoming environment within families to implement the lessons learned from the sessions, let alone any ability to influence their parents in behaviours showing positive masculinities.

Strengthening systems

UNICEF’s approach to creating a conducive environment for gender-responsive education includes supporting the Ministry of Education to disseminate the violence against children in schools operational plan. This was done by enhancing the capacity of provincial and district level officials to coordinate implementation of referral mechanisms for cases of violence against children in schools. Training to develop gender and school health focal points on the violence against children referral mechanism and operational plan to provide skills and knowledge to implement these tools at a school level was also supported.

Overall, 165 gender and school health focal points (111 female) from 90 schools were trained and supported to establish criteria and methodologies for the creation, revitalization and standardization of school clubs in all three target districts in the Zambezi province. In addition, supervision visits were conducted within district services and twelve schools to monitor and evaluate the status of
gender-related activities (based on indicators, such as girls’ retention in school, early unions, gender-based violence and the role of School Councils). The objective as to stimulate the involvement and participation of children of both sexes in the prevention and fight against child marriage, violence in schools and the so called ‘silence culture’.

UNFPA and UNICEF supported the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Action in improving the infrastructure of service delivery points for integrated service delivery including health, child protection and gender-based violence services and the multi-sectoral coordination mechanism at the district level. During 2021, 18 service delivery points were established to provide gender-based violence services targeting in- and out-of-school adolescents. UNICEF continue to support the child helpline with the opening of a new office and call centre in Cabo Delgado to facilitate easier access for children in the north of the country and by providing technical and financial support to the Linha Fala Criança. This was done with the aim of responding to children in need of care and protection with over 114,530 calls received through the centre; a significant increase from 85,737 in the previous year.

UNICEF in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) continued to make major steps in strengthening a multi-sectoral response mechanism for violence against children and child marriage nationally and in the targeted provinces of the Global Programme and of the European Union-United Nations Spotlight Initiative on ending violence against women and girls. The reference group’s coordination mechanism at national and subnational levels is chaired by the prosecution office and co-chaired by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Action. During 2021, 27 (ten female) members of the reference groups were trained on the operations and responsibilities of the groups. Following the training four coaching and mentoring visits were conducted. In addition, the approval of reference group protocols (which included violence against children, child marriage and child trafficking) and Trainer of Trainers packages were finalized and sessions were conducted, reaching 50 (23 female) members of the reference groups.

An innovative approach: Unstructured Supplementary Service Data application

UNFPA and UNICEF, together with the Ministry of Gender and two non-governmental organizations (Fundação para o Desenvolvimento da Comunidade and Kamba) started in 2021 a partnership to develop a mobile network Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) application for reporting and referral of child marriage cases. The USSD application is an award winning solution. It was identified in a national Child Marriage Hackathon organized in 2020 with Global Programme support. The idea behind the USSD application was first showcased in the Ministry of Gender’s technical coordination meeting and received clearance to proceed to piloting. This USSD system is to be used by the general public and survivors for reporting child marriages cases, and, at the same time, it will link survivors with relevant service providers. The aim is to have the USSD fully developed and up and running by mid-2022.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Mozambique went through many challenges at the beginning of the year, including natural disasters (cyclone Eloise), the ongoing conflict in the northern provinces of the country and COVID-19 and the restrictions that came with the pandemic. This has led to an increase in violence against children and an increase in vulnerabilities faced by adolescent girls. UNICEF strengthened the capacity of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Action to reach the most marginalized children through fostering the coordination of child protection partners and by establishing a monitoring and reporting system. These actions were taken specifically so that it would be possible to follow up identified cases of harmful practices, especially girls at risk of child marriage.
It is clearly necessary to strengthen coordination among all other actors working to end child marriage. The lack of coordination amongst various actors shows that even though there has been an increase in awareness with more people coming forward to report cases. However, the lack of coordination between civil society organizations has been causing overlaps that are making it difficult to unify key messages, for example through the creation of a joint database. It is also important to understand how institutions advocate amongst themselves to foster better coordination among the different groups.

It is crucial to carry out comparative research on the efficiency of shelters for girls at risk of child marriages or rescued survivors, to analyze whether shelters constitute an advantage or a risk for the girls, further explore where shelters should be located and roll out mechanisms needed to make them sustainable.

**Facilitating supportive laws and policies**

During the year, UNFPA and UNICEF jointly supported the government in the evaluation of the National Strategy to Prevent and Eliminate Child Marriage 2016-2019 and in the drafting of the Terms of Reference for the development of the next strategy that builds on the lessons learnt and achievements of the current strategy. Furthermore, UNICEF supported the development of district plans to include child marriage and violence against children as priority areas in six districts in two provinces.

UNFPA and UNICEF together with the Ministry of Gender and Girls Not Brides in Mozambique (CECAP) hosted a national high-level round table conference on the dissemination and legal enforcement of the child marriage law. The conference convened in May 2021, with high-level government and regional representation, reviewed the analysis of progress and challenges encountered in implementing the child marriage law and the prioritization of actions leading to effective operationalization of the law, including the compilation of a national mapping of child marriage interventions. The conference included speakers such as Mama Graca Machel, UNFPA and UNICEF representatives, Silvia Comissário, a judge at the Judicial Court of Maputo City and Ernesto Mueha, Chief Judge of the Judicial Court of Manica Province.

Additionally, the Global Programme provided technical and financial support to two national conferences on child marriage on the International Day of the Girl on 11th of October, one in each Global Programme province. One event was hosted in Zambezia by the State Secretariat of Youth and Employment together with the National Youth Council, while the second event was hosted in Nampula by Fundação para o Desenvolvimento da Comunidade.
CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The evaluation of the national strategy to end child marriage has been delayed on the side of government, partly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and subsequently, the Ministry of Gender and Social Affairs is also facing a delay in the development of a new strategy to end child marriage that the Global Programme has planned to support.

The perception that civil society partners should be the ones responsible for the monitoring of the child marriage, violence against children and gender-based violence indicators is a challenge to the enforcement of laws. The district dialogue is supposed to empower local authorities to have more control over perpetrators that are harmful to children and young girls in order to prevent these issues from happening. However, the district government’s ownership of this new approach remains a challenge.

Generating and applying data and evidence

In 2021, Mozambique was part of the countries within the Global Programme that rolled out the Gender-Transformative Accelerator (GTA) tool. A GTA workshop was held in May 2021 with the active participation and engagement of technical staff from UNFPA, UNICEF, the government and civil society organizations. The tool assessment reviewed six elements of the Mozambique programme including girls’ skills, agency and empowerment, addressing masculinities and engaging men and boys, enabling environment and community mobilization, information and services, structural change and institutional partnerships and gender norms. Five levels of the socio-ecological model (i.e., individual, interpersonal, community, systems/institutions and policies/legislative) were used when assessing the extent to which the programme interventions are being implemented in a gender-transformative manner.

Three priority focus areas were identified for the Mozambique Global Programme namely girls’ agency, skills and empowerment, masculinities and engaging men and boys and enabling environment and community mobilization. For example, a lot of work has been done through community dialogues and forums discussing sexual and reproductive health and rights and involving parents, boys, girls and leaders. Nevertheless, the work done so far has not been challenging the harmful masculinities and power dynamics in gender relations and, therefore, has not contributed to an enabling environment for girls to fully exercise their rights at the community level.41

UNICEF supported a study on violence against children in Mozambique that found that 3 in 10 females and 4 in 10 males aged 18 to 24 years experienced violence while growing up. In response to the study findings Global Programme funding was used for the development of district level plans of action to respond to violence against children and child marriage. Furthermore, support was provided towards the review and revision of protocols and procedures used by social workers in management of cases of child marriage and violence against children.

“I think many initiatives that we have been doing for years now are thought to be gender-transformative, also we started with male engagement and positive masculinities work... but on this last issue, we do not have much experience, so we need support to start the initiative on male engagement through a gender-transformative approach from the beginning. Also, at the level of services this is work in progress.”

Mozambique GTA workshop participant

end child marriage