



COUNTRY SUMMARY

ETHIOPIA

2023 Annual Results and Phase II (2020-2023) Report

UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage

**end
child
marriage**

A voice. A chance. A future.



Co-funded by the European Union



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Situation of adolescent girls and child marriage

There are 18.6 million child brides in Ethiopia, 8.1 million of whom were married before the age of 15¹. Currently, the prevalence of child marriage among girls stands at 40 per cent; this is a 30 per cent reduction since 1991, showing that even in countries where the prevalence of child marriage is high, progress is possible.² However, in order to meet the SDG target to end child marriage by 2030, progress would have to be greatly accelerated from where it is now. If the rate of reduction remains at current levels, the prevalence will be 9 per cent by 2050 and if the reduction rate is doubled the prevalence will reach 2 per cent by 2050.

The Global Programme's trend analysis revealed a significant increase in child marriage during the

2022 drought onset and a decrease in 2023 after implementing tailored interventions. From January to April of 2022, the onset of drought saw a 119 per cent increase on 2021 levels in child marriage in drought-affected regions. Child marriage increased by an average of 131 per cent across some areas from January to June 2021 compared to the same period in 2022. Overall, child marriage increased by 14 per cent in drought-affected regions in 2022 compared to the same periods in 2021.

Emergencies, both natural and man-made, have displaced thousands, reduced community interventions and focused efforts on the basic and essential task of simply saving lives. Political instability in Amhara and Oromia, home to 75 per cent of the population, hinders programme implementation. Ongoing conflict in Amhara has closed 3,139 schools, leaving nearly 2.6 million children out of school. However, 7,160 schools have resumed services for about 3.7 million children.

2023 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Reached **201,955** girls with life skills and comprehensive sexuality education.



Supported **49,705** girls to enrol in, return to, or remain in school.



Annulled or cancelled **4,596** arranged child marriages, including **3,755** in development settings and **841** in drought-affected regions from the 8,848 child marriage cases reported.



Reached over **4.1 million** people through media with key messages about child marriage, girls' rights, and gender equality.



Engaged close to **1 million** community members in dialogues and consensus-building on gender equality and alternatives to child marriage.



Engaged **37,886** local gatekeepers, including traditional, religious and community leaders, in dialogues and consensus-building to end child marriage. A 2023 survey showed that 70 per cent of religious leaders understand the harmful effects of child marriage, indicating increased awareness.



Supported **1,806** service delivery points to provide quality health, education, and protection services for girls. Supported the reactivation of 43 Child Protection Communities Committees.



Developed a national empowerment manual for out-of-school girls aged 10–19, addressing their increased vulnerability due to limited information access and support mechanisms.

The Global Programme's Phase II (2020–2023) vision is for adolescent girls, especially the most marginalized, to fully enjoy their childhood free from the risk of child marriage, and experience healthier, safer, and more empowered life transitions, including making choices about their education, sexuality, relationships, marriage, and childbearing. The Global Programme supports governments and civil society partners, including women- and youth-led organizations and feminist movements, to accelerate action to end child marriage. At the heart of the theory of change is an adolescent

girl-centred approach that empowers individual adolescent girls to make decisions about if, when and whom to marry, within a web of support that involves her family, the community (including boys and men), service providers, society and public structures, institutions, systems and services, laws, and policies.

Phase II was implemented guided by programme principles, core approaches and key strategies as follows:

Principles and approaches

- ⌵ Human rights-based approach.
- ⌵ Gender transformation and the rights of women and girls.
- ⌵ Leave no one behind and an intersectional approach.
- ⌵ Adolescent girl-centred approach to development, empowerment, and protection.
- ⌵ Systems strengthening and community mobilization.

Aims from Phase II programme document

- ⌵ Use the demonstration and catalytic power of (i) strengthened systems; (ii) mobilized communities; and (iii) empowered girls to further accelerate progress at significantly large scale.
- ⌵ Scale up interventions and strengthen systems to reach more girls, locations and countries.
- ⌵ Increase political and social support to end child marriage.
- ⌵ Engage more governments, donors and actors.
- ⌵ Finance and implement budgeted plans.
- ⌵ Achieve demonstrable change in some significant locations of considerable size.

Strategies from Phase II theory of change

- ⌵ Create and expand opportunities for the empowerment of adolescent girls.
- ⌵ Promote a supportive and gender equal family and community environment.
- ⌵ Strengthen governance to prevent child marriage.
- ⌵ Enhance sustainability and impact of child marriage programmes.
- ⌵ Build partnerships and leverage additional resources and co-investments.

OVERALL PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

Table 1: Summary of output indicator performance for 2023 and Phase II (2020-2023)

Indicator	2023		PHASE II (2020-2023)	
	Targets	Results	Targets	Results
Indicator 1111: Number of adolescent girls (aged 10-19) who actively participated in life skills or comprehensive sexuality education interventions in programme areas	200,000	201,955	508,071	549,601
Indicator 1121: Number of girls (aged 10-19) supported by the programme to enrol and/or remain in primary or secondary school	46,000	49,705	167,321	90,792
Indicator 1211: Number of boys and men actively participating in group education/dialogues that address harmful masculinities and gender norms	95,000	174,814	190,955	466,781
Indicator 1221: Number of individuals (boys, girls, women and men) who participate in group education/dialogue sessions on consequences of and alternatives to child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls and gender equality	764,820	996,481	2,550,099	2,599,792
Indicator 1222: Number of individuals (boys, girls, women and men) reached by mass media (traditional and social media) messaging on child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls and gender equality	3,563,000	4,129,340	20,791,266	9,399,458
Indicator 1223: Number of local actors (e.g., traditional, religious and community leaders) with meaningful participation in dialogues and consensus-building to end child marriage	11,000	37,886	15,584	218,048
Indicator 1231: Number of civil society organizations newly mobilized in support of challenging social norms and promoting gender equality by the Global Programme (cumulative)	46	37	105	70
Indicator 2121: Number of primary/secondary/non-formal schools in programme areas providing quality gender-friendly education that meets minimum standards	314	774	840	1,448
Indicator 2131: Number of service delivery points in programme areas providing quality adolescent-responsive services (health, child protection/ gender-based violence) that meet minimum standards	120	199	344	475
Indicator 2211: Number of partnerships (both formal and informal) established to deliver adolescent-responsive social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes and services	700	833	2,508	2,382
Indicator 3111: Number of policies or legal instruments addressing child marriage drafted, proposed or adopted at national and subnational level with Global Programme support (cumulative)	6	6	14	14
Indicator 3121: Number of subnational plans with evidence informed interventions to address child marriage	4	7	9	13
Indicator 3211: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that focus on what works to end child marriage (cumulative)	11	10	33	35
Indicator 3212: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that apply a gender analysis (cumulative)	10	15	27	26
Indicator 3221: Number of South-to-South cooperation (conferences, expert visits, peer consultations, study tours, communities of practice) supported	10	15	27	26

Providing intensive support to marginalized girls

The Global Programme has effectively empowered girls to make informed decisions about marriage and their sexual and reproductive health, thereby transforming their knowledge, context, and environment. The 2023 Phase II independent evaluation concluded that the Global Programme increased the knowledge and skills of targeted adolescent girls at risk of, and affected by, child marriage, equipping them to make informed decisions and choices regarding marriage, education, and sexual and reproductive health. The Global Programme facilitated access to comprehensive sexuality education and life skills education for both in- and out-of-school girls. In some cases, this was combined with economic empowerment interventions designed to mitigate poverty drivers of child marriage.

In 2023, the Global Programme in Ethiopia effectively enhanced the agency and efficacy of girls through age-appropriate, gender-transformative capacity-building and engagement strategies. A comprehensive life skills education was provided to 201,955 adolescent girls, of whom 56,894 are currently in school and 145,061 are out of school.

A significant 76 per cent of girls reported an increase in self-efficacy and confidence in their ability to negotiate and delay child marriage.

Among girls aged 15–18, 97 per cent are making informed decisions about sexual relations, contraceptive use, and reproductive health. Furthermore, 97 per cent of girls aged 15–18 and 84 per cent of girls aged 10–14 possess comprehensive knowledge about sexual and reproductive health.

Awareness of modern contraceptive methods and access to modern family planning services was reported by 78 per cent of respondents. A majority of 82 per cent of out-of-school girls said they viewed the ideal age of marriage as at least 17 years or older; 38 per cent of the total said they felt marriage was appropriate at 21 years or above.

The detrimental impact of child marriage on girls' education was emphasized by 92 per cent of girls, and 74 per cent believe that girls who marry early are likely to drop out of school and limit their earning potential. Encouragingly, 77 per cent of girls affirmed their right to refuse marriage proposals, with girls reporting more than 60 per cent of the cancelled cases of child marriage.

The Global Programme supported 49,705 girls, providing them with scholastic materials, dignity kits, hygiene and sanitation materials, psychosocial support, and small cash amounts to cover their costs. However, with 78 per cent of girls aged 15–18 enrolled in lower secondary school, there is a need for further reinforcement. In communities like Oromia, 69 out-of-school girls were re-enrolled in school, and parents/guardians pledged to sustainably support their daughters' education.



Enhancing the family and community environment

The 2023 Phase II independent evaluation found that the Global Programme mobilized community stakeholders to contribute to changing the social and gender norms that perpetuate harmful practices. This has included the engagement of traditional and religious leaders – and increasingly, parents and caregivers – as agents of change. An important priority of the Global Programme in Phase II was the engagement of boys and men to promote healthy relationships, positive masculinities and gender equality, and countries designed and initiated interventions accordingly. Engagement with extended families has however been more limited, despite their important role in decisions related to child marriage in many contexts.

The Global Programme in Ethiopia has made significant strides in fostering a shift in attitudes and behaviours towards supporting girls' rights. Using a structured engagement manual and delivery method, the programme targeted a diverse range of community groups. It reached 996,481 individuals through reflective and gender-transformative community conversations and engaged 174,814 men and boys through structured training and dialogue sessions.

The 2023 Social and Behaviour Change survey revealed that 77 per cent of respondents endorsed gender equality, and 70 per cent do not support intimate partner violence. In regions like Oromia and SNNPR/Sidama, over 96 per cent of participants endorsed gender equality, as did 52 per cent in Gambella and 96 per cent in Amhara.

A significant 93 per cent of respondents are aware of the drivers and consequences of child marriage. Encouragingly, 94 per cent said they will not marry their daughters off as children, and 95 per cent feel confident in their ability to delay their daughters' marriages despite social pressure.

The programme engaged 37,886 religious leaders across the target regions through partnerships with the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia and other strategic government partners. It supported the development of a communication manual on child marriage and female genital

mutilation (FGM) for use by Christian faith leaders in training and awareness-raising initiatives.

In the 2023 Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) survey, 82 per cent of religious leaders strongly believe that they have a significant role in stopping child marriage. Furthermore, 86 per cent of the religious leaders' respondents are prepared to take a strong stance against child marriage.

The programme reached 4,129,340 community members through media using both national, subnational, and faith-affiliated media houses. The media formats used include panel discussions, serial dramas and magazine-style talk shows produced in the target regions.

These concerted efforts have contributed to a shift in community attitudes and practices towards gender equality and the rights of girls.

Enhancing sustainability of interventions by building resilient systems and expanding partnerships

The 2023 Phase II independent evaluation found that, by design, the Global Programme embeds ownership and sustainability elements through four of its outcomes aimed at strengthening government systems and community structures. This approach is demonstrating positive signs, particularly in countries with strong commitment, leadership, national and subnational government and local structures. With some increased capacity from the sectoral systems, Global Programme interventions are delivering in the areas of education, health, gender-based violence (GBV), child protection and, to a lesser extent, social protection services.

In 2023, the Global Programme significantly enhanced the school environment through gender-responsive budgeting training, revisions to the code of conduct, and the strengthening of School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV) handling mechanisms. The programme trained 833 primary schools on gender-responsive pedagogy and SRGBV-handling mechanisms. A national code of conduct for SRGBV prevention and response



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was developed, with a particular focus on child marriage. Four training modules were rolled out to schools, reaching 126 education system experts and 414 teachers in the Amhara and Afar regions.

The Global Programme strengthened gender clubs in 560 primary schools, benefiting an estimated 250,000 children. It improved student access and retention, benefiting 151,600 students (60,640 girls and 90,960 boys). Furthermore, it empowered 56,894 adolescent girls to resist child marriage and build resilience against humanitarian crises. In the same year, the Global Programme supported health facilities to provide gender-responsive sexual reproductive health services to 190,240 adolescents.

The Global Programme also strengthened preventive and response efforts, delivering gender-responsive and compassionate services to 552,091 children. It rolled out a case management framework, leading to an increase in the number of reported and prevented cases of child marriage. Collaborative efforts led to the reporting of 8,848 child marriage arrangements and the cancellation of 4,596 such arrangements, including 841 prevented in the humanitarian assistance

context. The Global Programme supported 1,032 child protection, GBV, and health service delivery points at various levels, building their capacity and actively tracking and reporting child protection concerns.

Expanding partnerships

The 2023 Phase II evaluation highlighted the Global Programme's success in catalysing efforts at all levels to end child marriage. This was achieved through joint programming, partnerships, advocacy, and knowledge-sharing. The Global Programme worked with other initiatives, expanding reach, coverage, and funding. It used evidence and tools to raise awareness and inform advocacy and programming. The Global Programme capitalized on the momentum of the SDG agenda which prioritizes the elimination of harmful practices, including child marriage. Since 2015, ending child marriage has been prioritized by UN agencies' country programmes. The Global Programme fostered partnerships with

CSOs, aiding their national expansion. All countries established strong partnerships with governments and CSOs, and to a lesser extent, feminist organizations and the private sector. However, mobilizing new CSOs was a challenge, and this was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic which forced many CSOs to downsize or shut down.

In 2023, the Global Programme enhanced partnerships with youth networks in Afar (12), Amhara (20), Oromia (24), and Sidama (12) regions. Comprehensive training was provided on the gender-transformative approach, gender equality, child marriage, FGM, violence against children, community mobilization and platform management. Youth representatives were also trained in social media use and digital engagement for peer interaction. This led to a series of 12 youth-led advocacy meetings targeting policymakers, community leaders, and others. The training and capacity-building support resulted in strengthened youth networks.

The Global Programme backed a platform that has over 40 members from diverse sectors, offering support via knowledge sharing, technical expertise, and collective advocacy. It partnered with GIZ, NCA, and GAGE on initiatives that promoted a shared agenda, emphasized cross-border and religious leaders' engagement, fortified the role of faith actors in eradicating child marriage and FGM, and generated evidence on adolescent and youth well-being, including issues of child marriage and FGM.

Addressing poverty

Poverty and lack of economic opportunities are key drivers of child marriage. The 2023 Phase II evaluation found that Global Programme countries have linked with social protection and economic empowerment interventions to tackle poverty-driven child marriage. Yet, in most countries, and especially in polycrisis contexts, these linkages remain limited, despite economic insecurity being a significant driver of child marriage. The Global Programme has shown some successful examples of partnerships with government-led programmes, but social protection or economic empowerment opportunities that could benefit girls and mitigate poverty-driven child marriage have not been fully explored. Successes include school subsidies,

incentives, vocational training, and start-up funds. However, these interventions often have a limited focus on economic empowerment and income-generating activities, with little connection to social protection schemes.

In conflict and emergency-affected areas, humanitarian cash support is increasingly prioritized and means more girls receive economic aid. In 2023, the Global Programme provided humanitarian cash support to 26,504 adolescent girls in conflict zones, easing familial pressure to arrange early marriages. Additionally, 1,237,268 adolescent girls benefited from the National Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP)'s cash support. This aid has been instrumental in mitigating vulnerability to child marriage as a way of alleviating family economic hardships caused by successive emergencies. The PSNP programme also persistently raised awareness about the multi-faceted impacts of child marriage, the prevailing legal framework and accessible services.

Facilitating supportive laws and policies

The 2023 Phase II evaluation revealed that the Global Programme's partnerships and advocacy played a key role in renewing commitments to combat child marriage globally, regionally, and nationally. The Programme aided governments in formulating laws, policies, strategies, and costed action plans. However, the adoption of these measures has been slow, and government funding for these plans remains limited. Moreover, in some countries, enforcing age-limit laws for marriage can unintentionally heighten the vulnerability of adolescent girls and their families.

Ethiopia pledged to increase its budget for ending child marriage and FGM by 10%. An expenditure tracking exercise for the first year of the National Costed Roadmap to End Child Marriage and FGM/C (2020-2024) showed an overall allocation increase of over 10%, despite high inflation affecting the budget's net worth. Some regions demonstrated positive trends by allocating a dedicated budget for the roadmap, while others shifted priorities due to conflicts and emergencies. MoWSA, with support from the Global Programme, and the National Alliance, conducted similar budget tracking across eight regions. Initial findings indicate varied commitment levels across these regions.

Ethiopia has a functional legal framework, including the EFDRE Constitution (1995), Criminal Code (2004), and Family Code (2000), which mandates 18 years as the minimum marriage age and requires consent. All regions, except Afar and Somali, have adopted a Family Code aligned with the federal one. Law enforcement bodies are increasingly conducting legal literacy sessions, providing free legal aid to vulnerable populations, and improving demand for legal services. This has led to an increase in reported and cancelled child marriages, with over 20,000 arrangements identified and more than 10,000 cases cancelled during the programme's second phase. Despite child marriage being a social norm, the enforcement of the law has improved. The KAP survey conducted by the Global Programme and IRCE revealed that over 71% of religious leaders in the seven participating regions are aware that child marriage is illegal. Legal literacy sessions are integrated across various interventions, creating an environment conducive to improved law implementation.

Building a new generation of data and evidence

The 2023 Phase II evaluation revealed that the Global Programme has produced significant evidence on effective strategies to end child marriage, especially during COVID-19. This evidence has informed understanding, advocacy, policy, and strategic direction. The programme has boosted investment in research partnerships at global and regional levels to identify and fill evidence gaps,

produce new evidence, and build research capacity at the country level. Despite these advancements, there are still country-level gaps in the evidence that indicate a need for continued investment.

The use of data and evidence in programming and advocacy is now standard and supports both government and non-governmental agencies' programmes. This includes qualitative data such as human-interest stories and testimonies. The data and evidence generated by the Global Programme have influenced policy discussions, providing solid evidence for CSOs to advocate at various levels.

The capacity for data and evidence generation has increased among partners, with key initiatives led by MoWSA and managed by the Global Programme CSO partners. The country office's data generation has provided critical data, including a trend analysis on child marriage. Several data generation efforts were managed by the country office, including a social and gender norms survey, a flagship evaluation of the programme's effectiveness, and the publication of two journal articles.

In 2023, assessments were conducted as part of the testing of a newly developed manual for out-of-school adolescents, informing its revision and finalization. These action-oriented assessments have improved intervention and programming. The Ending Child Marriage flagship evaluation identified areas of improvement, such as the potential of married adolescents to educate unmarried girls and expanding the engagement of boys and men, which has been considered in the design of the Global Programme's third phase.



Programme challenges

- Ongoing conflict in parts of the country limits access to target areas and interrupts programme implementation. Security issues in Amhara, part of Oromia, and other emergencies shifted priority to emergency response activities.
- Conflict and drought in certain administrative woredas (districts of Ethiopia) have led to displacement of families seeking essential resources, causing household insecurity and burdening school-going children. Teachers lack incentives and there is a shortage of safe space facilitators.
- There is no specific component for adolescent girls in the social protection programme. Adolescent girls are directly targeted only if they are pregnant or lactating mothers. There is also a shortage of service workers to meet the needs of PSNP beneficiaries.
- Partnering with women-led and youth-led organizations presents a resource gap. Grassroots organizations often have limited capacity and lack technical expertise, institutional strength and capacity for development.

Lessons learned

- Life skills education tools must be tailored to the humanitarian context. Back-to-school camping will be strengthened in targeted locations, and a concept note on providing economic support will be explored.
- Engaging the support of men and boys to oppose child marriage is critical. Implementing the new manual and tracking progress in real time is a priority. Partnerships with local entities such as universities for monitoring and mentorship are essential.
- There is a need to leverage regular national initiatives and initiate fundraising to make child marriage a key issue. In communities that have community service workers, the level of service demand and access is higher.

- A fragile programme implementation landscape due to conflict and climate change events makes it crucial to set adjustable and realistic timeframes for interventions.
- Supporting platforms for youth, men and boys mobilizes communities and challenges gender inequality. Community structures and platforms are essential for maintaining interventions during humanitarian crises and protecting girls at risk.

Priorities for the way forward

- The Global Programme intends to collaborate with women-led organizations to foster a movement against child marriage, empower women, and advocate for gender equality.
- The Global Programme seeks to fortify alliances and networks of men, boys, and youth, established via partnerships with CSO partners.
- Advocacy initiatives will focus on families with adolescents and devise a support package specifically for girls. A concept note for a pilot income and economic strengthening component is in the pipeline.
- The Global Programme will support the ongoing expenditure tracking and implementation assessment by the Ministry and members of the National Alliance. Advocacy and lobbying to allocate budget to programme implementation will continue, with an emphasis on strengthening the accountability of key sectors.

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