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2025 ANNUAL RESULTS REPORT

Ghana

UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage



“

This programme helped me to see that even if school is not an option for me now, I still have choices. I can build a future.

”

Abena,
a 16-year-old Kayayei (head porter)
who started attending Safe Space sessions
and is now a dressmaking apprentice

COUNTRY SITUATION

Prevalence of child marriage

Child marriage has declined over the last several decades in Ghana. The prevalence of child marriage is now among the lowest in the West and Central Africa region, and half the prevalence rate for Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole. Currently, the prevalence of women aged 20 to 24 who were married before the age of 18 is 16 per cent¹ (down from 19 per cent in 2017/18²), and 3 per cent of women aged 20 to 24 married before age 15 (down from 5 per cent in 2017/18). However, regional disparities exist, and in Ghana, adolescent pregnancy is both a driver and consequence of child marriage.

Political and legal environment

A smooth political transition following the December 2024 elections brought new leadership to the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP). UNFPA and UNICEF strategically engaged the incoming Minister and senior officials to reinforce Ghana's commitments to ending harmful practices on global and regional platforms, including the sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York, the ARISE Africa Conference in Addis Ababa, and the Africa Girls Summit in Addis Ababa.

In 2025, Ghana continued to demonstrate its strong political commitment towards ending child marriage. The MoGCSP strengthened national efforts through a multi-sectoral coordination structure to implement the National Strategic Framework for Ending Child Marriage 2017-2026. The National Operational Monitoring and Evaluation Plan for Ending Child Marriage was updated for 2025-2026 and widely disseminated.

The policy environment also showed encouraging progress towards achieving gender equality and ensuring protection of children and adolescents. The Affirmative Action (Gender Equity) Act 2024 (Act 1121) is now fully in force, mandating at least 30 per cent female representation in decision-making by 2026. However, ongoing parliamentary

debate over the Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill poses a potential constraint to adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights programming.

Humanitarian and climate context

The Sahel crisis and its spillover into northern Ghana continued to create significant humanitarian pressures. Over 18,000 people have sought refuge in Ghana since 2022, with particular impacts on northern border communities. A violent land conflict in the Sawla-Tuna-Kalba district in August 2025 resulted in at least 34 deaths, displacement of up to 50,000 people, and cases of gender-based violence. School closures and movement restrictions disrupted service delivery to affected communities.

The volatile security situation has worsened with the increasing number of violent incidents in schools with use of small arms. It led to temporary school closures and hindered access to education, especially a safe learning environment for children.

Climate shocks, including floods, droughts and irregular rainfall, continued to erode household incomes and food security in rural and northern communities, increasing reliance on harmful coping mechanisms including child marriage.

16%

Prevalence

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

2.5 million

Absolute number

The total number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before age 18

Note: Prevalence rate and absolute numbers data from *Child Marriage Data Portal, Ghana country profile*

¹ Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), 2022.

² Ghana Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), 2017/18.

2025 GHANA GLOBAL PROGRAMME KEY RESULTS**9,348** adolescent girls

actively participated in Life Skills or CSE interventions supported by the Global Programme

**76,267** girls

(10-19) were supported by the Global Programme to enrol and/or remain in primary or secondary school

**16,675** boys and men

actively participated in group education and dialogues that address harmful masculinities and gender norms

**236,719** 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

over **1.3 MILLION** people

were reached with key messages and engaged in dialogues on child protection, including prevention from child marriage and adolescent pregnancy, through the Ghanaians Against Child Abuse (GACA) social drive across five regions

**1,445** local actors

(traditional, religious, community) were mobilized by the Global Programme to advocate for an end to child marriage

**606,664** girls and boys

accessed prevention and protection services

**27,256** of the poorest adolescent girls

benefited from social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes

PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

Table 1: Summary of output indicator performance in Phase III Year 1 (2024) and Year 2 (2025)

Indicator	Phase III Year	
	Year 1: 2024	Year 2: 2025
Indicator 1111: Number of adolescent girls (10-19) who actively participated in Life Skills or CSE interventions supported by the Global Programme	15,820	9,348
Indicator 1121: Number of girls (10-19) supported by the Global Programme to enrol and/or remain in primary or secondary school	12,170	76,267
Indicator 1211: Number of boys and men actively participating in group education/ dialogues that address harmful masculinities and gender norms which are supported by the Global Programme	16,866	16,675
Indicator 1221: Number of individuals who participate in group education/dialogue sessions on consequences of and alternatives to child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls, and gender equality	245,321	236,719
Indicator 1223: Number of local actors (traditional, religious, community) who have been mobilized by the Global Programme to advocate for an end to child marriage	1,353	1,445
Indicator 1231 (i): Number of women-led or youth-led CSOs supported financially by the Global Programme this year	6	3
Indicator 1231 (ii): Number of women-led or youth-led CSOs the Global Programme convened to support the ECM agenda this year (non-financial contribution)	(total mobilized)	4
Indicator 2111: Number of education institutions which were supported in the reporting year to provide quality gender-responsive education (including CSE)	0	0
Indicator 2121 (i): Number of health, child protection or GBV service delivery points which were supported in the reporting year to provide quality adolescent-responsive services	1,542	1,670
Indicator 2121 (ii) (old 2102): Number of girls and boys who accessed the services described in 2121 (i)	57,600	606,664
Indicator 2201: Number of poorest adolescent girls (10-19) benefiting from social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes supported by the Global Programme in the reporting year	4,216	27,256
Indicator 2211: Number of partnerships (formal and informal) to deliver adolescent- and gender-responsive social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes and services	21	12
Indicator 3101: Total number of national and sub-national Child Marriage Action Plans whose implementation the Global Programme supported this year	90	99
Indicator 3111: Total number of policies or legal instruments addressing child marriage whose development or adoption the Global Programme supported this year	1	1
Indicator 3122: Total number of budget analysis documents developed by the Global Programme this year	2	2
Indicator 3201: Total number of evidence or knowledge pieces developed this year in country	3	7

Note: Phase III of the Global Programme to End Child Marriage runs from 2024-2030; Indicators 1231, 2121 and 3101 were modified for 2025.



MAIN PROGRAMME ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2025

Empowering adolescent girls

The Promoting Adolescents Safe Spaces (PASS) initiative continued as the programme's flagship girl-empowerment intervention. In 2025, 9,348 adolescent girls, including out-of-school girls, girls with disabilities, pregnant girls and adolescent mothers, received intensive life skills and reproductive health education through safe spaces in five regions (Upper East, Northern, North East, Savannah and Central). Since 2019, over 37,200 adolescent girls have benefitted from PASS. A rigorous impact evaluation was launched in 2024 and is ongoing, with baseline data collection completed in 2025; impact-level results are expected in 2027. The PASS model was also adapted to address the Sahel crisis, extending to host communities sheltering displaced people from Burkina Faso.

In partnership with Purim African Youth Development Platform (PAYDP), the Judicial Service of Ghana and the Office of the Chief Justice, the Global Programme expanded the Chief Justice Junior Justice Clubs (CJJC) to three markets in the Ashanti Region, reaching 60 girls, most of them kayayei (female head porters) at heightened risk of sexual exploitation, unintended pregnancy and child marriage. The initiative equipped them with legal rights knowledge and leadership skills, while judges, lawyers and other qualified legal practitioners served as mentors and provided pro bono legal services to survivors of abuse.

By bringing rights-based education, mentorship and legal support directly into market spaces, the clubs reduced barriers such as distance, transport costs and fear of formal institutions, built trust, and improved vulnerable girls' access to justice, protection services and legal redress. This decentralized, community-based model strengthened protective environments for girls in both target and non-target areas.

In addition, the Ministry of Education's "Guidelines for Prevention of Pregnancy among School Girls and Facilitation of Re-Entry into School after Childbirth" were implemented at the Senior High Schools (SHS) level for the first time since the guidelines were issued in 2018, with support from the Global Programme, expanding implementation beyond primary and junior high schools. A total of 76,267 girls were supported to enrol and remain in formal and non-formal education at the primary or secondary school level, significantly exceeding the target (15,000) by 5 times and the 2024 result (12,170) by 6 times due to a change in the implementation approach from a circuit-level to a school-based approach. During a district-level engagement, the Ghana Education Service (GES) officers recommended this approach to scale-up reach and increase the number of beneficiaries.

Fostering a supportive family and community environment

The Global Programme in Ghana successfully leveraged a systems-strengthening approach to exceed its targets

for the engagement of men and boys and communities despite funding constraints. With the evidence generated by the gender analysis of social and behaviour change programming for ending child marriage, new content for the Child Protection Community Facilitation Toolkits (CP toolkits) was developed to address emerging needs, including strengthening and systematizing the engagement of men and boys to promote positive masculinities and healthy relationships. Complemented by key messages delivered on social and mass media through the Ghanaians Against Social Abuse (GACA) social drive/campaign, the Global Programme engaged a total of 236,719 parents and caregivers and community members as well as 16,675 men and boys across 210 districts (over 80 per cent of all districts) mainly through interpersonal dialogue using the CP Toolkits. The scale-up was made possible through integration of SBC and community engagement into a system-strengthening approach, namely the Integrated Social Service (ISS), as well as strategic partnerships with the private sector, civil society and development partners trained to expand community engagement in their own geographical areas with their own funding.

Scaling service delivery

The Global Programme further scaled up child protection and gender-based violence (GBV) service delivery through the Integrated Social Services (ISS) approach, which expanded from 180 to 210 districts in 2025, covering over 80 per cent of the country. With direct support from the Global Programme, ISS positively impacted the lives of 6,233 children across 99 districts through tailored social welfare case management and multi-sectoral referral services. By bringing together service providers across health, education, social protection, child protection, GBV,

law enforcement, and justice, the approach strengthened decentralized service delivery mechanisms, building on evidence from the ISS/LEAP midline assessment. The operation of the Social Welfare Information Management System (SWIMS), powered by Primero, was also strengthened, and joint training was delivered to social service providers, improving data quality, referral pathways, and survivor-centred care across child protection and GBV cases.

The Global Programme also achieved important gains in health service delivery, reflecting a stronger and more responsive system capable of reaching far more adolescents, despite only a modest increase in the number of health service delivery points since 2024. In 2025, the programme supported 1,485 health service delivery points, up from 1,374 in 2024. As a result, a total of 593,270 girls accessed health services (over 15 times the target). This success was possible by leveraging government-led large-scale initiatives, particularly the Safety Net Programme, and strengthening existing health systems. Through the Safety Net Programme, implemented by the Ghana Health Service with support from UNICEF Ghana, 589,093 adolescent girls, including 45,045 pregnant girls, married girls, and girls at risk of child marriage, received adolescent sexual and reproductive health services. Services included antenatal care, skilled delivery, postnatal care, home visits, and referrals to mental health, social welfare and education services. Complementing these efforts, UNFPA supported the implementation of the Ghana Health Service National Guidelines and Standards for Adolescent and Youth-Friendly Health Services across 200 service delivery points in four target regions, reaching 4,177 girls with essential health information and services, including education on bodily autonomy, menstrual hygiene management and contraceptive counselling and services.

Addressing poverty drivers

In 2025, the Global Programme in Ghana expanded adolescent girls' access to social protection and economic empowerment. 19,500 girls living in households enrolled in the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) cash transfer programme benefited from more gender-responsive service delivery, following the introduction of the Gender-Responsive Social Protection (GRSP) Roadmap. Additionally, 466 girls (259 aged 16–19 and 207 aged 20–21) in two districts in the North East and Upper East regions were enrolled in the Livelihood Empowerment and Productive Inclusion Programme (LEPIP), gaining access to vocational training, skills development, and livelihood opportunities. The Global Programme played a catalytic role in strengthening these systems and expanding their reach to vulnerable girls. For example, 45 national and district frontline service providers were trained on the design, delivery, and monitoring of gender-responsive



social protection services for at-risk adolescent girls. This capacity-building effort supported the operationalization of the GRSP Roadmap and contributed to making the LEAP programme more responsive to the specific needs of adolescent girls. In addition, 7,497 girls were reached through complementary interventions supported by the Global Programme.

USING EVIDENCE TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO INTEGRATED SOCIAL SERVICES

Evidence generated through the midline assessment of the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) cash transfer programme and the Integrated Social Service (ISS) approach indicated that key impacts included improvements in food security, educational outcomes, livelihood, wellbeing, empowerment among women and access to healthcare. Evidence generated through the study on social protection and child marriage highlighted that, while some key informants shared some examples of highly coordinated intersectoral teams that were effectively working together to deliver integrated social services for children, adolescents and their families, coordination still remains as a major challenge, including identification, insufficient resources, high turnover, lack of training and limited follow-up. Awareness of the range of social welfare services was low and community norms discourage use of such services and perceived or actual lack of need. Key findings and recommendations coming out of the midline assessment and the study will be used to strengthen LEAP and ISS, as well as LEPIP, in order to ensure coordinated, multi-sectoral service delivery for vulnerable adolescent girls in a way that removes the barriers to access services.

DOCUMENTING NORM CHANGE

An implementation review (assessment) of the Ministry of Education's Guidelines on Prevention of Pregnancy Among School Girls and Facilitation of Re-entry After Childbirth was conducted, showing positive impacts on adolescent girls. It included: increased number of adolescent girls, especially among pregnant girls and adolescent mothers, who continued and completed education; improved positive attitudes among adolescent girls and boys, teachers and communities about the girls' rights and education;



and enhanced skills to identify at-risk girls, provide peer-to-peer or mentoring support and seek more professional services when required.

Evidence generated through the gender analysis of social behaviour change programming for ending child marriage re-confirmed that the existing SBC and community engagement interventions (i.e. Ghanaians Against Child Abuse and Child Protection Community Facilitation Toolkits) have achieved remarkable coverage and high levels of public approval, however, there has been less of a change in attitudes towards child marriage in rural communities and among less educated families.

Leveraging on strategic partnership with traditional and religious leaders, the integration of child marriage and adolescent pregnancy into the "Akwasidae" traditional accountability framework³ marked a major milestone in shifting gender and social norms that perpetuate child marriage within the country context. For example, in one of the declared communities, Tagba in the Volta Region, girls are no longer compelled to marry or remain with men who impregnate them, a practice that previously existed. Similarly, within the Eastern Regional House of Chiefs, in

³ The Akwasidae Festival is dedicated to honouring ancestral spirits, revering the living, and renewing loyalty and allegiance to chiefs, who serve as custodians of the people, culture, and traditions. It is also a period of reflection, accountability, and thanksgiving. During the celebration, individuals, families, and communities render accounts to their chiefs on how they have governed their homes and communities, highlighting achievements, challenges, and aspirations while seeking wisdom, grace, and guidance for the future. The festival also serves as an important platform for community engagement, social cohesion, and intergenerational dialogue. It brings together traditional authorities, opinion leaders, families, and development partners to discuss issues affecting the wellbeing and progress of the community. To strengthen community accountability and promote social wellbeing, the general welfare of adolescent girls has been integrated into this traditional accountability system. This enables community leaders and stakeholders to report to the Paramount Chief, the highest traditional authority within a jurisdiction, on issues such as adolescent pregnancy, child marriage, and other harmful practices affecting young girls. By leveraging the influence of traditional leadership and cultural structures, communities are better positioned to promote the protection, empowerment, and development of adolescent girls while preserving the rich cultural heritage of the people.

one of the declared paramountcies, a chief was destooled after impregnating an adolescent girl⁴.

CHANGES TO PROGRAMME STRATEGY AND DESIGN

The 2025 aid crisis created an opportunity for UNFPA and UNICEF to reflect on Ghana's programme strategy for ending child marriage. The Global Programme in Ghana further prioritized strengthening evidence-based, high-impact interventions integrated into the relevant sectoral systems, which achieved a certain level of scale or have high potential for scale-up. The Global Programme in Ghana put a stronger emphasis on maximizing results with limited resources, by leveraging on convening power, strengthening partnerships with the public and private sectors, applying a multi-sectoral approach and influencing high-level policy advocacy.

For instance, the impact evaluation for PASS was being conducted to strengthen the implementation for the programme for the empowerment of adolescent girls and inform the national scale-up strategy by conducting a costing/budgetary analysis and integrating into systems and large-scale government-led interventions. Evidence-based social and behaviour change interventions were scaled-up, building on the reach, network and resources that public and private partners and civil society organizations have. The capacity building efforts were done in partnership with tertiary institutions through in- and pre-service training, such as integration of a gender transformative approach into the in-service training in partnership with the School of Social Work. It was agreed with the MoGCSP Child Marriage Unit that the National Strategic Framework for Ending Child Marriage will be costed for financing by the government. Timely generation of credible data and evidence continued to be a key priority to strengthen evidence-informed programming.



⁴ GhanaWeb, 'Traditional Boso Area Destools Amankrado for Impregnating and Defiling a 14-Year-Old JHS Student', 13 January 2025, <https://www.ghanaweb.com/blogs/spencerwan/Traditional-Boso-Area-Destools-Amankrado-for-Impregnating-and-Defiling-a-14-Year-Old-JHS-Student-7764>

COUNTRY PROFILE

Ghana

UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage