

SUDAN Country Brief

UNICEF Regional Study on Child Marriage
In the Middle East and North Africa



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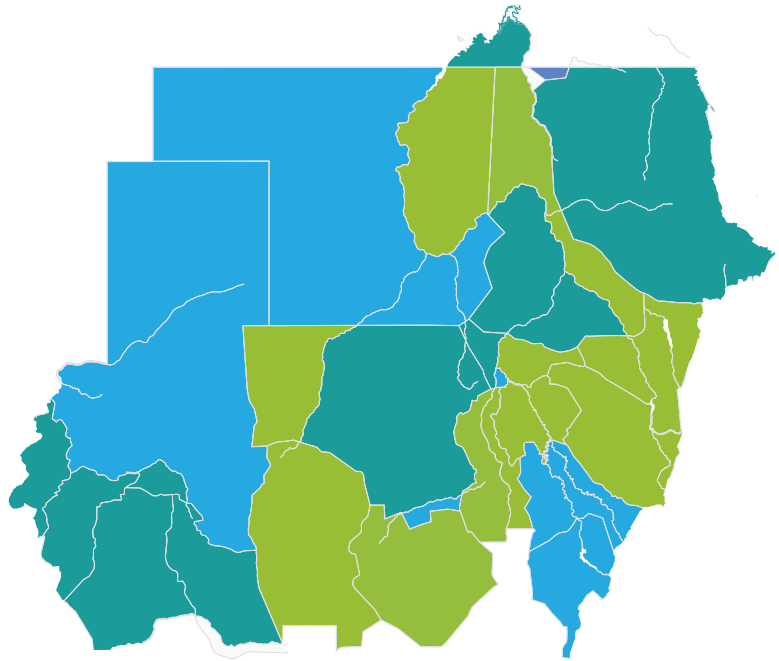
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SUDAN

Regional Study on Child Marriage



Key Recommendations

Girls' Voice and Agency

Provide financial incentives for sending girls to school through conditional cash transfers.

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Household and Community Attitudes and Behaviours

Engage receptive religious leaders through dialogue and awareness workshops, and link them to other organizations working on child marriage, such as the Medical Council, CEVAW and academic institutions.

Implement holistic community programming using UNICEF Communication for Development approaches.

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Service Delivery

Develop a law enforcement plan, to include advocacy, training, and sensitization of all stakeholders to ensure the implementation of the revised Personal Status Law and the National strategy, upon approval.

Increase coordination between stakeholders to ensure that progress on ending child marriage in Sudan presses forward and to avoid duplication of efforts.

Build capacity of women parliamentarians to effectively raise and defend women-related issues in the parliament.

Increase funding to NGOs for child marriage-specific programming.

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Legal Context

Coordinate advocacy efforts to end child marriage to ensure the National Strategy is endorsed by the government, and the Ministry of Justice completes its revisions of the 1991 Personal Status Laws.

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Evidence Generation

Provide technical and financial support to the National Bureau of Statistics' new Gender Unit.

Establish strong M&E systems using UNICEF's global monitoring framework, Monitoring Results for Equity Systems (MoRES), to monitor child marriage programme activities.

Strengthen and standardize key indicators. Wherever possible, data on the sex of respondents should be captured to allow gender disaggregation of all statistics.

Commission a study on social norms perpetuating child marriage in Sudan.

POLITICAL & ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Since gaining independence in 1956, much of Sudan's history has been characterized by conflict. Whilst the July 2011 succession of the southern states decreased levels of violence, South Sudan's ongoing struggles continue to affect Sudan. Over 100,000 South Sudanese have fled to Sudan since 2011, with an additional 7,000 crossing the border following the outbreak of violence in Juba in July 2016.¹

These sustained conflicts have limited Sudan's opportunities for economic and social development, and increased poverty across the country.² According to the National Baseline Household Survey 2010, 46.5 per cent of the population are impoverished, with 57.6 per cent of the rural population living below the poverty line.³ The country's weak economic development has also affected the Sudanese government budgets for health and social services – both budgets decreased significantly between 2011 and 2014, although the government expenditure on education increased between 2003 and 2013.⁴

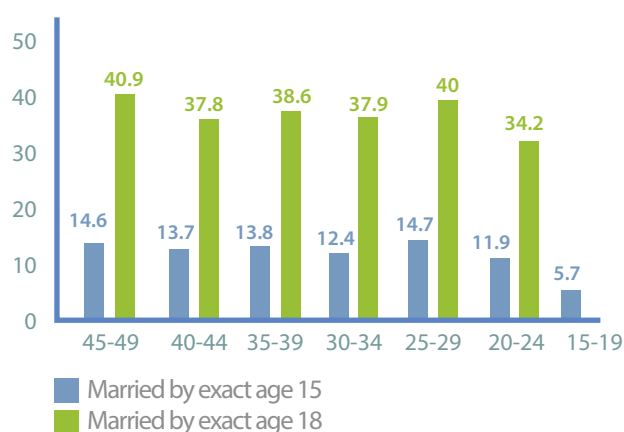
In 1990, Sudan became one of the first countries to sign the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).⁵ Since then Sudan has worked on a comprehensive Child Act that was enacted in 2010. The Child Act "supports the implementation of international treaties at national level, and ensures that national child-related legislation conforms to the CRC." It also establishes a comprehensive Justice for Children System, and defines a child as "every person who is not above 18 years old."⁶ Significantly, the Child Act did not include any mention of child marriage, which is largely legal in Sudan. The only legislation that addresses child marriage is Article 40 of the 1991 Muslim Personal Status law, which states that girls can marry once they reach puberty and that judges can approve the marriage of girls who are as young as 10 years old.

Notably, Sudan also submitted reservations to Article 10 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child 2008, which requires signatories to ban child marriage, and to guarantee that pregnant girls will have access to education. Sudan also did not sign the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). However, as of 2013, the Sudanese Ministry of Justice was reviewing CEDAW, with plans of conducting a study and submitting it to the Council of Ministers for their consideration.⁷

PREVALENCE OF CHILD MARRIAGE

The Sudan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)⁸ 2014 found that amongst women ages 20 to 24, 11.9 per cent had married before age 15 and 34.2 per cent had married before age 18.⁹ When comparing the percentage of women and girls married by exact age, 15 or 18, by their age cohort (see Figure 1), there is no consistent change in child marriage over time. However, there does appear to be a slight decrease in the two youngest age cohorts, providing some evidence that child marriage has recently begun to decrease.

Figure 1: Percent married by exact age 15 and 18, by 5-year age cohort, Sudan:

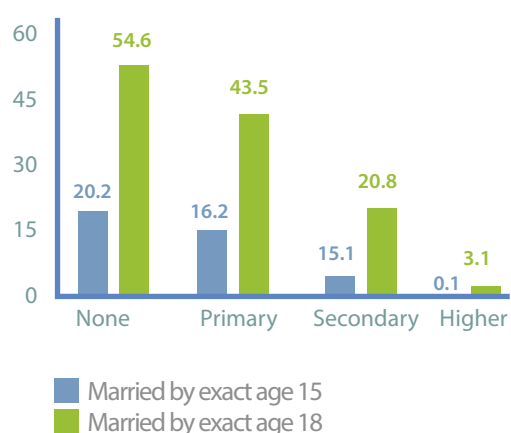


Source: MICS 2014¹⁰

Note that the percent married by age 18 cannot be calculated for the youngest age cohort, since it includes girls who are not yet 18.

As shown in Figure 2, educational attainment is associated with child marriage. Amongst all women 20-49, the percentage married by exact age 15 and 18 consistently decreases for each increase in level of educational attainment. For example, less than 1 in 20 (3.1 per cent) women who completed higher education married before age 18, compared to over half (54.6 per cent) of women with no education.¹¹

Figure 2: Percentage of women 20-49 married by exact age 15 & 18, by level of education, Sudan:



Source: MICS 2014 METHODOLOGY¹²

METHODOLOGY¹³

The data presented here was collected via desk review and key informant interviews with staff in two governmental institutions, three UN agencies, two donors, and six non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Interviews were conducted in person from November 12-25, 2016. All interviews were coded independently by two researchers, using NVivo 11 to distil key themes which were then organized through thematic content analysis. The findings were then aligned with the Global Platform's five outcomes (described below) and cross-checked with the local researchers to ensure that the data were consistent with their overall impressions during the field missions.

Table 1: Key Informant Interviews

Government

National Taskforce to End Child Marriage in Sudan, including:

Representatives from the National Council on Child Welfare (NCCW)
Ministry of Justice and its Human Rights and National Laws Department
Ministry of Social Welfare
Federal Ministry of Health
Ministry of Guidance and Endowment
Ministry of Education

UN

UNICEF	UN Women	UNFPA
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Donors

Embassy of Sweden in Khartoum
European Union

NGOs

Plan International
Sudanese Organisation for Research and Development (SORD)
Babiker Badri Scientific Association for Women's Studies (BBSAWS)
Regional Institute of Gender Diversity
Peace and Rights - Ahfad University for Women (AUW)
Development Studies and Research Institute - University of Khartoum
Gender Centre

LIMITATIONS

This report presents the main findings strictly based on the interviews and one focus group conducted in Khartoum, and are therefore, limited to those categories of respondents which included experts from the Government, UN agencies, and NGO/Service Providers/Donors. Considering the study's goals and focus

on scaling up promising programmatic approaches, the study focused on service providers, government officials, multilateral agencies, and donors—all of whom would be able to identify ‘best practices’ to end child marriage. As a result, the findings are only representative of these respondent’s views of promising approaches to end child marriage in Sudan.

KEY FINDINGS

The key findings are outlined within the framework of the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme’s five outcomes:¹⁴

- Adolescent girls at risk of and affected by child marriage are better able to express and exercise their choices.
- Households demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviours regarding gender equality and equity.
- Relevant sectoral systems deliver quality and cost-effective services to meet the needs of adolescent girls.
- National laws, policy frameworks and mechanisms to protect and promote adolescent girls’ rights are in line with international standards and properly resourced.
- Governments support and promote the generation and use of robust data and evidence to inform programme design, track progress and document lessons.

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Girls’ Voice and Agency

Discussions with key informants on issues of girls’ voice and agency in Sudan mainly focused on girls’ education and economic empowerment. Unlike the other MENA countries included in the study, there was limited

discussion of women’s mobility within their communities, and little consideration of how to change intra-household bargaining and decision-making dynamics.

■ Poverty and gender inequity restricts girls’ access to education and drives child marriage

Access to school and particularly secondary education is an important deterrent to child marriage around the world, as demonstrated in several studies. However, key informants noted that for families with limited resources, opportunity costs can often justify not sending their daughters to school. High unemployment rates in Sudan limit the value parents place on giving their daughters quality education. One key informant noted that

“

“The value for girl’s education in terms of contribution to the household and family income is very low, especially with the high levels of unemployment.”

”

Thus, girls are often perceived as better able to support her family when a husband pays a bride price for her marriage.

Separate from issues of cost, key informants noted that the quality of education in Sudan is relatively poor, especially in public schools. The curricula are not gender sensitive, and as one key informant noted,

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“Educational curriculums have stereotyping that feeds the concepts of early marriage and identify marriage as the ultimate goal for girls.”

”

The school infrastructure is relatively poor, with old buildings that frequently lack latrines. When latrines are available, they are often not hygienic. Key informants highlighted that the compilation of these challenges can lead girls to drop out of schools, leaving child marriage as the best option for many families.

Despite these difficulties, key informants highlighted the provision of services available to women and girls outside the formal education system. NGOs provide literacy classes, life skills training, and even micro-credit to at-risk and already married girls and women. These programmes aim to ensure that girls have alternate opportunities to support themselves

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Household and Community Attitudes and Behaviours

■ Social norms and tradition perpetuate child marriage

Findings pointed to culture, social norms and tradition as being key factors perpetuating community support for child marriage. Key informants identified two key perceptions that reinforce child marriage:

- Child marriage as offering physical and economic protection to girls, especially in areas that have experienced high levels of conflict.
- Girls should give birth whilst they are young because the birth will be easier and younger women make better mothers.

The majority of key informants identified the importance and difficulty of changing social norms at the household and community levels. A key informant from an international NGO highlighted that their main challenge is:



"...the mind-set of the people; whether they are ordinary people in the villages, or high political decision makers, or even people who work in the field, including our own staff."



Similarly, a government official worried that because child marriage is so integrated into

communities with high poverty levels, that "even if the law was passed the biggest problem will be how to enforce this law to be implemented and respected."

■ Economic hardship reinforces social norms

A deteriorating economy, increasing poverty, and skyrocketing inflation rates make surviving in Sudan very hard, especially for poor families. Two key informants noted that child marriage had previously been abandoned in certain areas, but had returned due to increased poverty and conflict. As in other countries, marrying a young daughter off provides both an alleviation of household expenses previously spent on the daughter, and can be a source of income if the husband pays the family a bride price. There is also the potential, if the husband has a stronger financial status, that he will also be able to provide regular financial support for the bride's family. This feeds into the perception that a girl will be more secure if she marries young.

■ Child marriage perceived to be rooted in Islam

In Sudan, child marriage is assumed to be deeply rooted in Islamic principles. One government official noted that:



"The problem is whenever we start criticizing child marriage, people think we are criticizing Islam because there is a deep-rooted belief that Islam is sponsoring child marriage."



An NGO expert also said that:



"Many religious leaders believe that child marriage is part of Islamic principles, and they resist any idea prohibiting child marriage...this is why the National Strategy is still in draft and the endorsement is delayed."



Key informants believe that the main reason for this perception is that the Prophet Mohammed was reported to have married a nine-year-old girl. However, one key informant reported that a religious scholar recently completed a study that:



“Did a calculation, went back to history, and proved that he [Prophet Mohammed] married her [his wife] when she was 17 or 18 years old not 9 years as some of stories report.”



The National Taskforce to End Child Marriage in Sudan is advocating for this study to be adopted and for a fatwa to be written recognising this new information. Additionally, there is a specific strategy within the National Taskforce to engage with religious leaders on these child marriage issues. Almost all key informants noted the importance of working with religious leaders to change the social norms around child marriage in Sudan.

3 Service Delivery

■ NGOs face regulatory and funding issues

NGOs face many obstacles in Sudan whilst working on child marriage prevention. Several key informants noted the gap in funding which they see as a key barrier to effectively addressing child marriage. An NGO expert believed that it is due to “country policies [that] make Sudan less attractive for many donors,” and because child marriage prevention itself is not an attractive issue. This lack of funding has led to situations where NGOs are only able to support around 1000 cases per year compared to more than 30,000 demands per year, as one NGO key informant noted.

Other respondents said that the legal and regulatory environment made their work more difficult. Key informants reported that NGOs working on gender issues often experience long hold-ups when registering with the government. Additionally, many informants cited that the policies of Sudan’s Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) has restrictive guidance for NGOs working on gender issues which often limits the type of interventions they can implement, which partners they work with, and the geographic areas in which they operate. Additionally, one key informant reported that there was very little transparency or civil society engagement when these regulations were developed. The effect of these restrictions is illustrated in one NGO’s current predicament:



“We are still working through the offices of the lawyers volunteering with us and using their licenses. We are not a legal institute and do not have the official recognition to provide services because the government does not recognize civil society as a legal body.”



■ Lack of technical capacity and coordination are barriers to service provision

In addition to lacking funding and financial resources, service providers also frequently noted their lack of technical capacity to provide effective services. Key informants at the National Taskforce to End Child Marriage in Sudan (National Taskforce) believed that training was needed for all actors working on child marriage, especially since coordinated efforts to end child marriage are still just starting.

A UN official noted that:



“Civil society can act more effectively...they have the potential but they do not have the capacity, they need exposure and information sharing.”



This comment points to the need for better coordination between all stakeholders working on child marriage. Strong linkages and partnerships need to be built between civil society and different government entities to ensure that progress on ending child marriage in Sudan presses forward. As an NGO expert said, “coordination is key” – if the work is coordinated with other efforts, programmes can complement rather than duplicate each other’s work.

This need to build capacity and coordination goes beyond services providers, and extends to other stakeholders, such as law enforcement officials and parliamentarians. Key informants explained that the National Taskforce to End Child Marriage has attempted to implement trainings and awareness sessions on child marriage with members of the police and military, but due to regular transfers to other areas, there is frequent turnover. To mitigate this problem, the Taskforce is calling for regular training for Family and Child Protection Units (FCPU).

Additionally, several key informants called for capacity building of women parliamentarians. A respondent from an International NGO said that an article criminalising female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), originally developed as part of the Rights of the Child Act in 2010, was dropped because the women parliamentarians did not have the skills to defend it. Other key informants cited that these women do not have adequate skills to tackle women’s problems at the policy level, and need training on how to raise and defend women’s issues in the parliament.

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Legal Context

Currently, religious law determines the minimum age of marriage

The Personal Status Law of Muslims 1991 permits the marriage of a girl once she reaches

puberty. This law allows girls as young as 10 years to be married with guardian approval and judge permission. According to some respondents, the Personal Status Law discriminates against women and girls in all aspects including divorce, custody and inheritance, and is considered to be the personal status law with the most severe gender gaps when compared with other Islamic countries. Specifically, key informants took issue with article 40 of the law:



“[The] law sets age of adulthood as 18 years old, so if a girl who got married at 10 gets divorced or becomes a widow, she will not be entitled to custody or inheritance till she reaches 18 years, which is very contradictory.”



Legality perpetuates child marriage

When child marriage is legal in a country, it is difficult to end the practice. NGO key informants cited that the lack of legislation setting a minimum age of marriage and criminalising the practice hinders efforts to end child marriage in Sudan. The one NGO expert said they frequently receive reports of children at risk of child marriage:



“Then we have our volunteers who go and talk to the family and try to convince them to delay that marriage...Yet, because there are no laws that criminalize child marriage there is nothing to be done.”



This begs the question: is it best to change the law and hope that social norms will follow, or should the law follow the social norms? The majority of key informants asserted that in order to end child marriage in Sudan, the legal age of marriage had to be established at 18. However, international experience shows that introducing marriage laws before communities are ready may lead to limited enforcement of the law through illegal marriages and increased vulnerability of at-risk and already-married girls.¹⁶

Thus, advocacy efforts and community norm change programmes should work in tandem to end child marriage both de jure and de facto. However, there was a strong consensus across key informants that until Sudanese leaders made child marriage illegal, efforts to end the practice would only make limited progress. Indeed, one NGO expert said that:



“I believe in the law; once we have the law in place we will gain the support of the religious leaders and media as well because they can’t resist the law. The first priority to end child marriage in Sudan is to set a minimum age of marriage. It will be very easy to do the anti-child marriage awareness raising campaign after.”



■ National efforts to end child marriage are ongoing

The majority of key informants agreed that during the past four years the political commitment to addressing child marriage in Sudan has increased significantly.

In 2012, UNICEF and the National Council of Childhood Welfare (NCCW) conducted a Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) survey in six states with the highest prevalence of child marriage. These survey results found that 54 per cent of the girls in these six states were married before age 18, whilst the 2010 MICS found a 37.8 per cent rate of marriage before age 18 nationally, galvanizing civil society and government leaders and leading to the drafting of the first National Strategy in 2014. In 2015, the first lady of Sudan officially sponsored the National Strategy and launched the First Lady Campaign to End Child Marriage in Sudan. As of November 2016, key informants at the National Taskforce to End Child Marriage in Sudan said that the National Strategy was still awaiting endorsement from the government, and

was being reviewed by the Islamic Religious Council. Then it is expected to be endorsed by the Minister of Social Welfare and the NCCW.

Additionally, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) is working on revising the 1991 Personal Status Law. A key informant at the MoJ reported that the review has been a collaborative process with other government entities and civil society organizations. They expect to make several important changes, including: setting the minimum age of marriage for girls to 16 or 18 years of age, revising the definition of marriage, changing the age of child custody for mothers, and modifying the procedures needed in case of divorce.

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Evidence Generation

■ Need for research on child marriage in Sudan

The UNICEF 2012 KAP survey indicated an overall lack of studies on child marriage in Sudan, particularly those that take into account the cultural variations within tribal communities and between nomadic and non-nomadic groups in the country.¹⁷ This 2012 KAP survey, which focused on the six states with the highest prevalence in Sudan, is the only substantial research looking at child marriage in Sudan. Some researchers have also conducted secondary analyses of the 2014 UNICEF Multiple Indicators Cluster Surveys (MICS) and the 2010 Sudan Household Health Surveys.¹⁸ However, these have their limitations—AUW cited that there is a problem in the disaggregation of the age groups in the Sudan Household Survey (SHHS). The age groups are divided to children and 15+ year’s women as one age group, rendering the data inadequate to analyse factors surrounding child marriage. To date, there are also no qualitative studies exploring the drivers of child marriage in Sudan.

■ Efforts to produce quality evidence

Recently, there have been significant efforts to produce quality evidence on child marriage in Sudan. These include:

- The Chief of Justice of Sudan commissioned the Combatting Violence Against Women Unit (CVAW)

to conduct 3 studies: a religion study to prove that the Prophet Mohamed did not marry a nine-year-old girl; a medical study showing the complication of early motherhood on a girl's health and development; a social study explaining the limited contributions young mothers are able to make to their communities, and the side effects of those limitations.

- The Gender Centre is writing a proposal to get funding for a baseline survey that will be used to explore the drivers of child marriage in Sudan, and to propose interventions accordingly.
- Sudanese Organisation for Research and Development (SORO) recently started a database where they are attempting to identify links between different variables, for example between divorce rates and child marriage.
- The National Taskforce is coordinating between different partners to conduct a medical study that shows the impact of early marriage on a girls' health and development. They are working with OB/GYNs, paediatric doctors, and the midwifery union to get expert opinions, and are reviewing scientific papers on the issue.
- The National Taskforce plans to present the findings to religious leaders, with the hopes they will then endorse the National Strategy and agree to set minimum age of marriage.
- The National Bureau of Statistics recently established a gender unit, and is starting to include gender related questions in their upcoming surveys.
- One key informant noted that the M&E system at the Ministry of Education is a great source of information because it can give good information on the average age of marriage by monitoring schools' dropouts. It is unclear if the Ministry of Education is already collecting these statistics, or if this is something they are planning on doing in the future.

- The Development Studies and Research Institute (DSRI) is planning a qualitative study to explore the causes and drivers of child marriage. The study is being designed around an analysis of the 2014 MICS results in order to explicate its findings.
- The National Council of Childhood Welfare (NCCW) is currently conducting a qualitative study with girls ages 9-13 in order to understand their perception of child marriage.

These efforts point to a strong commitment by the government and NGOs to start considering gender issues in their research and government programmes.

PROMISING APPROACHES IDENTIFIED BY KEY INFORMANTS

As there are almost no specific programmes devoted to child marriage in Sudan, and no evidence on effectiveness, it was difficult for key informants to identify promising programmatic approaches to ending child marriage. Instead, several key informants highlighted creating child marriage specific programming as the most promising way to begin addressing child marriage in Sudan.

■ Create child marriage specific programming

Child marriage is frequently addressed in concert with other gender related issues such as FGM/C and gender-based violence in Sudan. Until recently, this made sense – there was significant funding for FGM/C activities and buy-in from both political and religious leaders. Child marriage, on the other hand, was not seen as a priority issue, and was a cause of tension with religious leaders. However, the key informant interviews resoundingly stated that the Sudanese government is showing strong commitment to addressing child marriage. The government is coordinating studies, gathering gender disaggregated data, pushing forward a national strategy, and conducting a review of the discriminatory 1991 personal status law.

A UN official hypothesized that the efforts to end FGM/C in Sudan are what prepared the ground for action

on child marriage. This key informant cited that since the approaches and the target populations are very similar, efforts to end child marriage will be able to build on the networks and partnerships built through FGM/C interventions. Currently however, child marriage interventions are diluted across many different programmes—this situation makes it very difficult to receive adequate resources and funding. It also makes it challenging to measure progress towards ending child marriage.

Promisingly, another UN official reported that key donors are enthusiastic about Sudan's National Strategy, and are showing an interest in funding relevant programming once the National Strategy is endorsed. To ensure that efforts to end child marriage get the attention and funding they deserve, interventions specific to child marriage need to be developed.

Whilst there is not yet evidence that separating out child marriage programming will be effective, it was identified as an immediate way to garner funding and support for these programmes. Having child marriage specific interventions will also make it easier to understand what methods and programming are most effective in addressing and preventing child marriage in Sudan.

■ **Increase religious, political and social discourse around child marriage based upon shared positive values**

In addition to information provided by key informants, later input to this report from UNICEF's Sudan Country Office staff indicated that they perceived the social reform initiative *Almawada wa Alrahma* as another promising approach to addressing child marriage in Sudan. The initiative was launched in the end of 2012 and is led by the Ministry of Guidance and Endowment (MoGE) in partnership with a wide variety of other organizations including government institutions, civil society organizations, academia, media, and UNFPA.¹⁹

According to a 2016 assessment, "*Almawada wa Alrahma* has been implemented since 2013 through a 3-pillar multi-discourse communication campaign: religious discourse, policy dialogue/legal reform, and social discourse and dialogue at the national, state and community levels. The overarching goal is to reduce physical violence and violation of human rights through revival of positive values of *Almawada wa Alrahma* and the social value systems."²⁰ According to the same assessment, one of the initiative's achievements was the formal involvement of religious institutions, including the training of more than 1,700 religious leaders and imams. However, the same assessment cautioned that some religious leaders, though supportive of FGM/C abandonment, are still supporters of child marriage on religious grounds, requiring careful coordination and selection of participants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations emerging from this study are grouped under the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme's five outcomes:

Girls' Voice & Agency

■ **Provide financial incentives for sending girls to school**

A 2016 systematic review of interventions to prevent child marriage in low and middle-income countries found that cash-transfer programmes and programmes to decrease school-associated costs "had a significant impact on decreasing the rate of child marriage or increasing age at marriage in the intervention group."²¹

The Sudanese Government and international donors should increase funding to NGOs to provide these incentives, and/or provide public social transfers for school attendance. Incentives can range from covering transportation costs, to covering school fees, to giving cash transfers for attendance, to providing hot meals. It should be noted that although cash incentives are a promising stop-gap measure to keep girls in school and delay age of marriage, these programmes may be unsustainable in terms of cost, and should be

coupled with community norm-changing interventions.²²

Girls' continued school attendance and education is a key factor in preventing child marriage, and should be incentivized appropriately. As one key informant said:



"if we focus on education, we will achieve further results on ending child marriage."



Household and Community Attitudes and Behaviours

Engage receptive religious leaders

Engaging religious leaders through dialogue and awareness workshops is key to addressing child marriage in Sudan. Making religious leaders aware of the consequences of child marriage, and supporting them to become vocal advocates can have a powerful impact on the way community members view child marriage. As a recent report by PLAN noted:



"By speaking out against child marriage and identifying and championing community led strategies for ending the practice, they [religious leaders] can create environments where parents who decide not to marry their daughters early are supported."²³



However, caution must be exercised to ensure that religious leaders are promoting evidence-based messages and not reinforcing harmful ideas. Therefore, this type of intervention requires careful selection of receptive religious leaders and large amounts of training and oversight. Valuable lessons can be taken from the earlier successful efforts to engage religious leaders on FGM-related issues.

Implement holistic community programming

Whether that takes the form of an awareness campaign, health services or dialogue workshops, child marriage programming is more likely to be successful when it is engaging a variety of community actors. Because girls have limited voice and agency, only engaging with girls on child marriage issues will have limited efficacy – it is imperative to engage their families and community leaders if norms around child marriage are to change. Any behaviour change strategy intended to address the norms around child marriage needs to mobilize the entire community. Programmes should use UNICEF's Communication for Development (C4D) strategies to work with both adults and children in the community to identify problems, propose solutions and act upon them.

As discussed earlier, key informants reported that child marriage is perpetuated by the perception of child marriage as protecting girls from financial and physical instability. To address this, C4D strategies should be used to support public education programmes that raise awareness of the negative consequences of child marriage on a girl's health and that of her children, in order to reinforce the perceived duties of parents and communities to protect at-risk girls.

Service Delivery

Develop a law enforcement plan

This would include advocacy, training, and sensitization of all stakeholders to ensure the implementation of the revised Personal Status Law and the National Strategy after their approval. Guidelines on the process of reporting child marriage cases and the required steps needed to manage those cases will be crucial for all stakeholders. Increasing resources and training to government officials, NGO workers, and law enforcement personnel will be critical to enact any legislation related to child marriage prevention.

Increase coordination between stakeholders

Strong linkages and partnerships need to be built between civil society and government entities to ensure that progress on ending child marriage in Sudan continues to press forward. Coordination is key— stakeholders work in partnership with one another,

service delivery can be harmonized to ensure that programmes complement rather than duplicate each other's work. Specific efforts should be devoted to linking identified receptive religious leaders with other sectors such as the Medical Council, CEVAW and academic institutions. The networks and partnerships formed around ending FGM should be used as a reference point on effective co-ordination in Sudan.

■ Capacity building for women parliamentarians

Training needs to be provided for women parliamentarians on how to raise and defend women-related issues in the parliament. A 2006 report by UNICEF showed that there is strong evidence that suggests that women in politics are:



“...especially effective advocates for children at all levels, sponsoring legislation and fostering tangible changes in policy outcomes that reflect the rights, priorities, experiences and contributions of women, children and families.”²⁴



The programme could be modelled upon the Women's Initiative for Learning and Leadership (WILL)'s Strengthening Women's Political Participation and Leadership for Effective Democratic Governance in Pakistan initiative, which, since 2011, has provided training events and leadership forums for female Members of Parliament in Pakistan and resulted in their increased ability to network within and across party lines and engage the media on their priority issues, whilst increasing their visibility as female leaders.²⁵

■ Increase funding to NGOs for child marriage-specific programming

Many key informants identified the gap in financial resources as a key challenge to of-

fering more comprehensive and expansive child marriage prevention and response services to their communities. This gap is reinforced by the lack of donor awareness/interest in the issue. The UN should work to garner attention and funding to child marriage issues and programming in Sudan, highlighting the Government of Sudan's recent steps towards action on child marriage.

Legal Context

■ Coordinate advocacy efforts to end child marriage

Weak coordination and collaboration amongst organizations and government entities advocating to end child marriage in Sudan was a serious concern cited by many key informants. Although it does seem to be improving, further strategizing and coordinating of resources is needed to ensure the National Strategy is endorsed by the government, and the Ministry of Justice is able to complete its revisions of the 1991 Personal Status Laws. As one NGO expert said:



“[Organizations] need to join forces at the national level to reinforce the change of the mind-set because until now there are some people who believe in child marriage, even at very high levels in the government.”



Evidence Generation

■ Support the National Bureau of Statistics' Gender Unit

Adding a gender unit indicates a commitment to begin gathering data on women's issues. It will be important to provide technical and financial support to the Bureau to ensure that they include the information needed for child marriage as part of the national surveys. Adding a couple of questions to those surveys will provide more robust data that can guide the planning and implementation process. It will also be important to revise the age categories to reflect current situation and depth of child marriage.

■ **Strengthen and standardize key indicators**

Wherever possible, data on the sex of respondents should be captured to allow gender disaggregation of all statistics. For more complex indicators, coordination and standardization should be ensured across existing data collection bodies such as the National Council of Child Welfare's Information Management System (IMS) and the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS).

■ **Establish strong M&E systems**

If the National Strategy is endorsed and the Ministry of Justice revises the Personal Status law to establish a legal age of marriage, efforts to end child marriage will increase in Sudan. It will be imperative to monitor and evaluate child marriage programmes both at the government and NGO level. This will increase knowledge of the effectiveness and sustainability of various programmatic approaches to ending child marriage in Sudan.

Future monitoring and evaluation efforts should refer to the lessons learned and best practices emerging from the level 3 monitoring approach (L3M) pilot for child marriage activities in Bangladesh. This pilot was the first attempt to use UNICEF's global monitoring framework, Monitoring Results for Equity Systems (MoRES), to monitor child marriage programme activities. The L3M monitored two of UNICEF's child marriage activities in Bangladesh – adolescent stipends and conditional cash transfers – to assess their effectiveness in addressing social norms, financial access, and legislation/policy. The results from this pilot document the successes and challenges in changing social norms through multi-faceted community-based programming, and could form the basis for an improved monitoring framework of child marriage activities in Sudan.

■ **Study social norms**

Stakeholders have expressed interest in conducting a social norms study in 10 states of Sudan. Such a study would be timely given the respondent's perception that norms related to both the role of women and girls in society and those related to Islamic religious law may be contributing to child marriage in Sudan.

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United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa
16 Abdel Qader Al-Abed Street
P.O. Box 1551
Amman 11821 Jordan

Tel: +962-550-2400
www.unicef.org/mena
menaro@unicef.org

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