TURNING COMMITMENTS INTO SOLID ACTIONS

UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage
In the last decade, much progress has been made towards ending child marriage globally. Twenty-five million child marriages have been prevented, owing to sustained global and national momentum to tackle this issue, amplified investments in prevention and protection systems and increased support for girls at risk. However, if this progress is not further accelerated, an additional 150 million girls will be married before their 18th birthday by 2030. This represents 12 million girls each year, or 1 in every 5 girls, who face an increased risk of dropping out of school, having early pregnancies with more complications and experiencing violence in relationships. Their rights — to be a child or an adolescent, to get an education, to be healthy and decide over their own sexual and reproductive health and to be safe — are taken away from them. Girls are disproportionately affected by the practice, about five times more than boys.1

Giving back hope to girls at risk by globally committing to end child marriage. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set a target of eliminating child marriage by 2030; multiple resolutions on ending child, early and forced marriage in the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights Council are evidence of an ongoing strong political will to end this practice globally.2 The 2018 Second African Union Girl Summit in Ghana — attended by African First Ladies, government officials, civil society organizations and youth advocates — led to reaffirmed commitments to scale up actions to end child marriage, and the President of Zambia at a high-level side meeting at the United Nations General Assembly in 2018 — together with representatives of governments and regional organizations engaged in eliminating this practice — pledged to increase efforts to this aim.

To keep the elimination target of child marriage on the global agenda and to accelerate and amplify the pace of change, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) launched the Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage in 2016. Its 15-year vision is to end child marriage by promoting the right of girls to not get married or pregnant as children,3 so they can achieve their aspirations through education and alternative pathways, helping to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty by allowing girls and women to participate more fully in society. When girls can be girls, we all win.

Ending child marriage requires that gender inequalities are addressed and harmful gender roles, norms and power relations transformed. The Global Programme empowers girls at risk of marriage or already married to choose and direct their own future, engages fathers, mothers and guardians for positive change in gender norms and strengthens systems that deliver preventive and protective services to adolescent girls to reduce structural inequalities. The Global Programme advocates national laws and policies that protect and promote the rights of girls and boys and emphasizes the use of robust data and evidence to inform policies and programming on child marriage.

To keep the elimination target of child marriage in mind, 

**ACCELERATING AND AMPLIFYING CHANGE - KEY RESULTS IN 2018**

In 2018, the Global Programme provided information and services to over 3 million adolescents in 12 programme countries in Africa, the Middle East and South Asia to end child marriage. With our support, 11 out of the 12 programme countries have developed national plans for action.

**Nigeria**
Through the Roving Boko programme, close to 62,000 disturbed adolescents and girls were reached in vulnerable communities. Key topics such as reproductive health, personal hygiene, gender-based violence, financial literacy and gender equality were introduced. As a result, 184 girls were referred to health centres by the Global Programme, 153 cases of child marriage were prevented, and 198 adolescents returned to school.

**Zambia**
Community dialogue to change gender norms in Zambia engaged over 30,000 people in 2016. Meetings with traditional leaders and community health workers helped to promote access to sexual and reproductive health services, including family planning.

**Mozambique**
The Roving Biz programme reached 215,000 girls with transitional support and/or vocational training and counselling on sexual and reproductive health. By persuading girls to delay getting married, the programme reached 34,000 girls and resulted in an additional 3,000 girls in their villages.

**Nepal**
In 2018, a Girl Summit was organized in Kathmandu, with youth activities at local, provincial and national levels. Child marriage dialogues were held in 72 municipalities, engaging over 1,000 women-owned social clubs to sensitize them to the National Strategy to End Child Marriage. As a result, more than half of girls in the municipality included activities to end child marriage in their annual work plans.

**Ethiopia**
Ethiopia is currently developing a new National Action Plan after expiration of their previous one.

**Burkina Faso**
A costed, multisectoral National Strategy to End Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy was launched in 2018 by the President. The implementation of this strategy brings together local, national and international stakeholders, with a focus on mobilizing resources and creating opportunities for girls in education, to be healthy and decide when and whom to marry.

**Ghana**
9,000 adolescent girls in 72 districts benefited from the Global Programme, reaching 1,13 sub-districts targeted by the 2015–2020 district budgets. Through advocacy, markets for girl children have been created, with girls using the platform increased from 4 to 6.5 million.

**Yemen**
Through 1,500 safe spaces, 2,000 people in their villages, to create a platform for girls to voice their opinions and promote dialogue on the benefits of avoiding marriage. In addition, young girls are being trained as mentors under the girls-led and community-owned Empowerment Programme Rapariga Biz, which is a digital empowerment programme to help young girls participate more fully in society.

**Bengaluru**
To create greater awareness on child marriage, the Global Programme spearheaded a transmedia campaign raising the issue of ending child marriage, and Nepal received national and international awards in 2018 and reached close to 20 million girls and young people. The Global Programme supports the UNICEF-founded “Every Last Girl” campaign to sensitize them to the National Strategy to End Child Marriage, and the President of Nepal, with various organizations and youth advocates based in Nepal, will present resolutions on ending child marriage at the United Nations General Assembly in 2019–2020 district budgets.

**Gl偏差he**
Up to 300 individuals engaged in community dialogues, facilitated by religious and community leaders at congregations and in villages, to change gender norms and behaviors. As a result, child marriage and polygamy are seen as unacceptable by 35 percent following the launch of the Children’s Change programme, which is an innovative approach for scaling up the platform.

**Kenya**
Over 60,000 people, of whom 20,000 are adolescents, were reached with awareness raising activities on the harms of child marriage during the year. In addition, nearly 6,000 community members participated in interactive theatre to change gender norms, and 970,000 people were reached through advocacy efforts to end child marriage.

**India**
Community awareness initiatives reached over 5.5 million people during 2018. To prevent pregnancies, with adolescents being some of the most vulnerable, a guidelines initiative where young girls are being taught demographics and digital literacy to be able to share their stories for greater visibility and impact.

**Gl偏差he**
Promoting the right of girls to delay marriage, addressing the conditions that keep the practice of child marriage in place and caring for girls already in marriage. To the 2018 Second African Union Girl Summit in Ghana — led to reaffirmed commitments globally.

**Global Programme**
In November 2018, the Global Programme launched the Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage in 2018–2020 by globally committing to end child marriage by 2030. A campaign to end child marriage has been held, engaging influential stakeholders worldwide, and the Global Programme to End Child Marriage in 2018–2020 was launched in the United Nations General Assembly on September 2018. As a result, the Global Programme has received several national and international awards in 2018 and has reached close to 20 million girls and young people across the country while engaging over 20 million people, mostly adolescents, through social media.

**Blindness**
The Global Programme supported over 16,000 adolescent girls in over 130 countries in 2018. In addition, the Global Programme is helping mobilize new and emerging donors to join the effort to end child marriage.

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Uniquely positioned, the Global Programme accelerates action to end child marriage. It builds on the well-established country and regional presence of UNFPA and UNICEF to leverage partnerships that are fundamental to achieve results on the ground, as well as scalable and meaningful change. Engaging key influencers and decision makers — such as the African Union and the South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children, governments, community leaders and civil society (members of the global network Girls Not Brides, faith-based organizations, academia and the private sector) — has been crucial to ensure a more harmonized, evidence-based action and accountability for increased impact. The Global Programme also influences other programmes to end child marriage beyond its direct scope, such as the regional programme to end child marriage in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Spotlight Initiative in Africa led by the African Union and the European Union.

Together, we are making a difference. Highlights from the evaluation of the Global Programme (first phase: 2016–2019) are:

- The programme is founded on the widespread acknowledgement that child marriage impinges on rights and welfare of children and adolescents.
- UNFPA and UNICEF have played key roles in maintaining forward momentum to end child marriage by positioning it on global, regional and national agendas, providing national policy and legislative support, and demonstrating innovative community action.
- The programme is on track to achieve its outputs, with aggregate tracking showing that the Global Programme is extending its reach and accelerating its approach.
- The programme has surpassed its targets, reaching millions of people in the 12 participating countries with proven and promising interventions designed to end child marriage, including education, health and protection services.
- The programme has fostered sustainability through advocacy, institutionalization, strengthening of national and subnational systems, developing capacities and mobilizing complementary funding.
- The programme has played a unique role in bringing together the combined capabilities of UNFPA and UNICEF to facilitate the multisectoral approach that is needed to handle the complex set of interrelated issues that perpetuate child marriage.

When Vester Mwale from Katete, Zambia, became pregnant in eighth grade, she dropped out of school to get married. She was only 13 years old. Despite her hopes, the marriage did not make her life better, as Vester’s husband used to drink and beat her, and they could barely provide for themselves. Now 19 years old, Vester is divorced and has returned to school. “When I decided to leave the marriage, my parents supported me, and they did the same when I later decided to go back to school.”

In Zambia, 31 per cent of women aged 20–24 years were married before they turned 18.6 The Global Programme supports the Ministry of Gender to implement a nationwide campaign and action plan to end child marriage and teenage pregnancy in the country, bringing together 15 ministries for increased coordination and enhanced impact.

“I KNOW NOW FROM EXPERIENCE THAT GETTING MARRIED AS A CHILD IS A BAD THING; YOU HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL YOU ARE AN ADULT BEFORE GETTING PREGNANT OR CONSIDERING MARRIAGE.”

– Vester Mwale, 13

The Global Programme takes a holistic approach to turn commitments into tangible action, through five strategic areas, to end child marriage:

**ADOLESCENTS: Empower adolescent girls at risk of child marriage or already married**

Girls must be fully informed about the consequences of child marriage and able to express their views and exercise their choices. Evidence shows that providing them with fundamental life skills and information about their rights, in addition to building their support networks and helping them remain in school, contributes to increased age at marriage. Confident and educated girls are better able to make informed decisions and live life on their own terms.

**ENGAGEMENT: Engage families, communities and leaders to protect girls from child marriage and uphold their rights**

Parents and community members are often the primary decision-makers on the fate of girls and whether they will be married as children. Transforming gender and power relations within families and communities through dialogue on the value of educating girls and the negative consequences of child marriage can change gender norms that promote child marriage.

**SERVICES: Strengthen the availability, accessibility, quality and responsiveness of services for adolescent girls**

Improved access to quality education, health (including sexual and reproductive health), child protection and social protection services leads to better outcomes for adolescent girls and boys and reduces structural inequalities. These services can expand families’ opportunities and support girls in preventing adolescent pregnancy, continuing their education and building their own future.

**LEGISLATION: Develop and implement national laws and policies that protect girls from child marriage**

Governments can protect girls from harmful practices by strengthening legal provisions, harmonizing statutory and customary law, and effectively enforcing laws. National strategies and plans are an opportunity to address multiple issues affecting adolescent girls and boys, including and beyond child marriage, and can support social norms change and gender transformation.

**DATA: Generate and use robust data and evidence to inform programmes and policies relating to adolescent girls and child marriage**

Investing in generation and dissemination of data and evidence on what works to prevent child marriage is essential to developing effective policies and programmes that can lead to large-scale change. Measurement of change in gender norms and relations can help to capture the wider impact of child marriage interventions.