

May 2021

ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

**Key Result for Children 6:
Ending Child Marriage**



unicef 
for every child

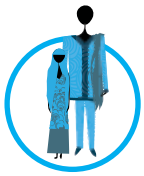
This document provides resources, guidelines and examples for country office communication specialists to produce tools and prepare and launch events and campaigns tailored for different audiences. However, it does not cover all audiences that may be reached through community-level communication for development (C4D) or partnerships.



“Girls in West and Central Africa face the highest risk in the world of marrying or entering into union prior to reaching 18 years of age.”

Acknowledgements

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Background



What is the purpose of this toolkit?

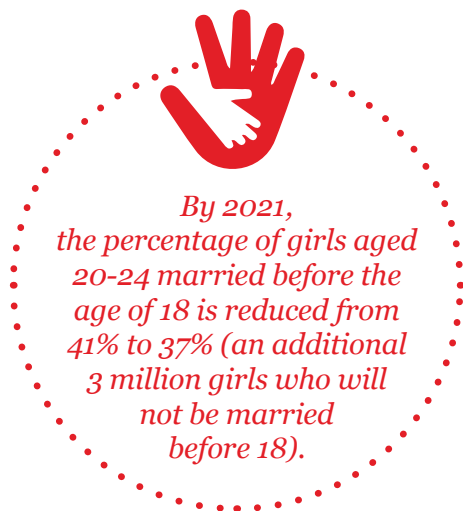
This toolkit was developed for country offices (COs) in UNICEF's West and Central Africa region and provides a brief overview of strategies and tools that can be applied to strengthen advocacy efforts for ending child marriage, the sixth Key Result for Children (KRC#6).

As a contribution to attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in its strategic plan for 2018–2021, UNICEF's West and Central Africa region has identified a set of Key Results for Children, the sixth of which is 'Reducing child marriage'.

This toolkit provides resources, guidelines and examples for UNICEF's child protection team and communications officers to produce tools and organize events and campaigns for different audiences. This is not meant to be a comprehensive document but aims to provide tools and guidance that COs can adapt to their needs. It is a living document to be updated as other promising practices emerge.

You can find all the resources and links in the UNICEF SharePoint: <https://unicef.sharepoint.com/sites/DOC>

What is at stake?



Child marriage is a human rights violation taking place on a vast scale in West and Central Africa, which disproportionately affects girls. Girls who marry young often drop out of school and face physical risks, especially during pregnancy. Its negative social, health and economic impacts make child marriage a major obstacle to sustainable development.

Girls in West and Central Africa face the highest risk in the world of marrying or entering into union before the age of 18. On average, four in ten young women in the region are married or in union before age 18, and 15 per cent before the age of 15. Evidence shows that in West and Central Africa, girls and young women from the lowest quintile households, residing in remote or rural parts of the country, and with low education attainment, are most likely to be married as children.

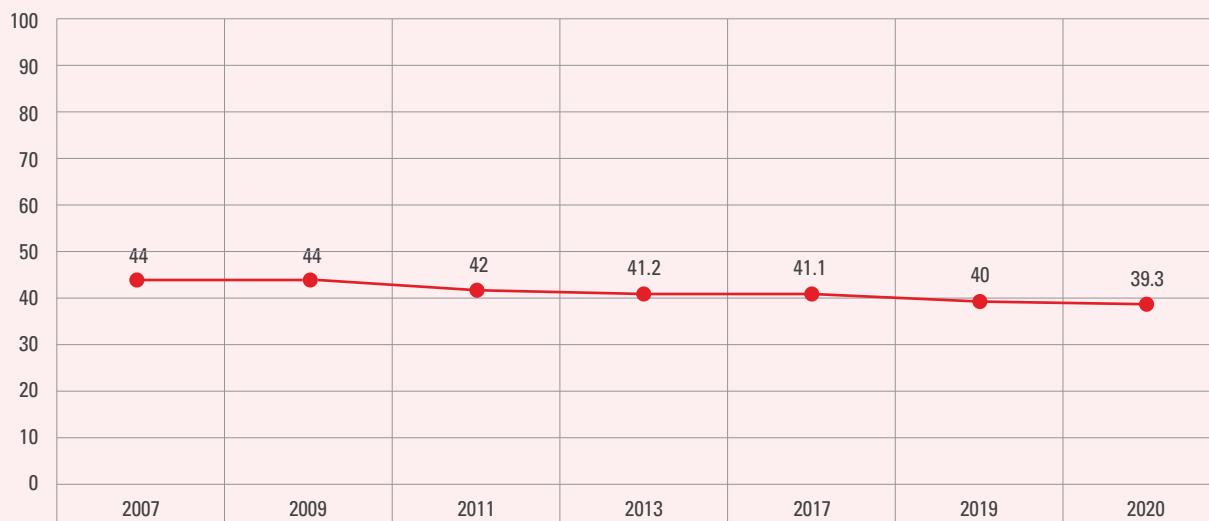
The region also has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in the world (28 per cent), and a large cohort of 19 million girls of primary and secondary school age, who are out of school.

Six of the world's ten countries with the highest rates of child marriage are in West and Central Africa. Despite gradually decreasing prevalence in the region, the number of child brides is projected to increase given the region's rapid population growth. Projections show that if the current prevalence persists, there will be 20.8 million child brides in West and Central

Africa by 2050. If, however, prevalence continues to decrease at the current rate, there will be 17.5 million child brides by 2050.

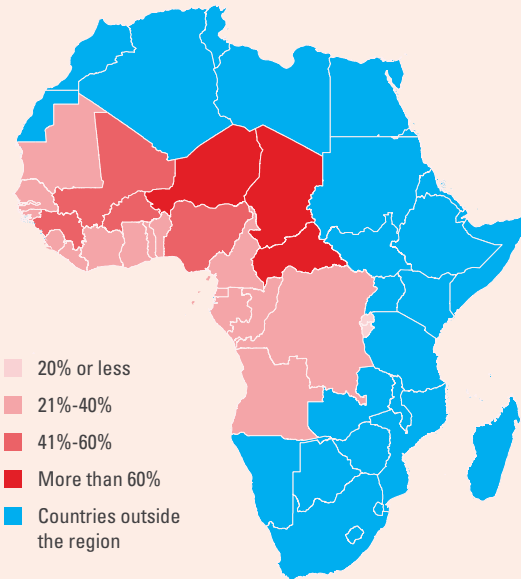
Even if countries can double the rate of decline, the region will still have 14.8 million child brides by 2050. Rapid growth of the child population in African countries makes it increasingly urgent that countries accelerate their work on child marriage. Ending this practice is essential to give millions of adolescent girls the opportunity to realize their full potential, while improving maternal and child health.

Figure 1. Percentage of women aged 20-24 married before age 18 in WCAR, 2007-2020



Source: UNICEF global databases, MICS/DHS 2010-2020, UNDESA 2020

Figure 2. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were married or in union before age 18



The elimination of all child marriage is one of the SDG targets. In West and Central Africa, there is growing momentum for ending child marriage. Several countries have developed and are implementing national strategies or action plans addressing child marriage. Member States of the African Union endorsed an *'African Common Position to End Child Marriage'* and a continental *'Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa'*. The Economic Commission of West African States has adopted a roadmap to accelerate efforts to end child marriage.

Call for action

Projection data and analyses clearly show that the fast-growing population in the region will lead to a larger number of child brides, offsetting any potential gains made through declines in the prevalence of child marriage. It clearly demonstrates the importance of addressing child marriage through large-scale, integrated, multi-sectoral and evidence-based responses.

Key actions needed at the regional and national levels are to:¹

- Ensure ending child marriage is a development priority, regionally and throughout Africa;
- Invest in improving the education and health of young people, particularly young girls; and
- Scale-up evidence-based models that work.

¹ UNFPA and UNICEF, *Child Marriage in West and Central Africa at a Glance*, 2018.

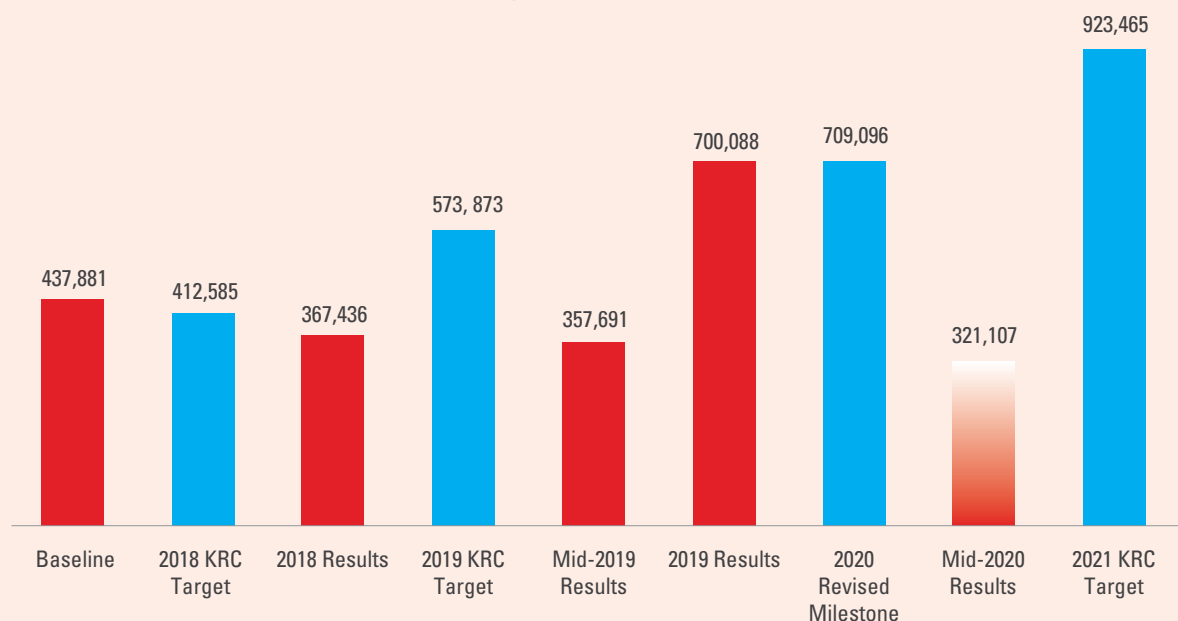
Impact of COVID-19 on child marriage

Women and girls are disproportionately at risk of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly due to the increased risk of gender-based violence and child marriage, which may be used as a protective or economic coping strategy. In a region where four in ten female citizens are married in childhood, women and girls are also likely to carry a disproportionate burden of household duties and care and to face an increased threat of domestic violence and sexual abuse.

As of March 2021, schools for more than 168 million children globally had been completely closed for almost a full year.² This will have long-term impacts on girls, particularly those from families with low incomes or living in remote areas, who are unable to return to school after a prolonged absence owing to added various challenges (e.g., economic difficulties that make education unaffordable, being married or becoming pregnant).

² UNICEF, Press release: COVID-19: Schools for more than 168 million children globally have been completely closed for almost a full year, says UNICEF, 2 March 2021.

Figure 3. Number of adolescent girls that received prevention or care interventions to address child marriage



Source: UNICEF RAM entries as of 30 June 2020, compiled September 2020

Response to COVID-19 and its negative effects on child marriage

UNICEF's child protection response, including interventions to address the increased risk of gender-based violence, aims to ensure the continuity of essential protection services, for children at high risk, in particular.

The following interventions are the priorities of the child-protection response, addressing child marriage, among other threats:

1. Supporting girls continued learning by supporting government investments in inclusive gender-responsive distance-education methods, such as radio broadcasts;
2. Community sensitization about distance learning to ensure that parents, leaders and other community members are aware of the importance of this form of education for girls;
3. Adapting life skills and empowerment programmes for girls when schools are closed, through distance learning that uses radio or digital platforms;
4. Supporting gender-responsive social protection interventions, such as grants or cash transfers, to prevent adolescent girls being married off for financial gain, a common economic coping strategy;
5. Supporting governments and partners to ensure access to health services for adolescent girls, especially the most vulnerable; and
6. Generating evidence of the negative impact of COVID-19 on child marriage, with a focus on increased financial stress in households and decreased education opportunities for adolescent girls.





Change strategies

Table 1. Main agents of positive change, and what should they do

Agents of change*	Desired actions
National and sub-national governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure ending child marriage is a national development priority • Facilitate supportive environments to change social norms • Promote national laws, policy frameworks and mechanisms to protect and promote adolescent girls' rights, and ensure that these are aligned with international standards and that adequate resources are available to implement them • Promote integrated strategies (birth registration, health, education, social protection) to end child marriage • Supporting adolescent girls at risk of, or affected by, child marriage to stay in school through the primary and the lower secondary cycles and acquire life skills, enabling them to make choices and exercise their rights
Parliamentary representatives, mayors, district presidents, local leaders and influencers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize ending child marriage at all levels for all populations • Promote public declarations of abandonment of child marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM) and violence against children, and mechanisms to protect and promote adolescent girls' rights; and ensure that these declarations and mechanisms are aligned with international standards and that adequate resources are available to act on or implement them • Ensure access to health services is granted to adolescent girls, especially the most vulnerable
Media leaders, celebrities, youth and influencers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote positive changes in behaviour and social norms against child marriage • Demand that governments, and other authorities, respect children's right to be protected from early marriage • Mobilize societies, including youth, to oppose child marriage • Promote community dialogue and social mobilization to ensure that households demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviours toward investing in adolescent girls • Support adolescent girls at risk of, or affected by, child marriage to stay in school through the primary and the lower secondary cycles and acquire life skills, enabling them to make choices and exercise their rights
Young worldwide public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness about the extent and negative impacts of child marriage • Support behaviour change • Advocate in favour of national laws, policy frameworks and mechanisms to protect and promote adolescent girls' rights; and ensure that these are aligned with international standards and implemented

* Note: The agents of change listed above do not include all audiences reached through Communication for Development (C4D) or partnerships with donors.

What are the key messages?



1. **The prevalence of child marriage in Africa has declined over the past two decades, but progress has not kept pace with rapid population growth, so the number of child brides is increasing.** Eight of the top ten countries in the world where child marriage is most common are in Africa, and six are in West and Central Africa.
2. **Child marriage before the age of 18 is a violation of human rights and a practice that is detrimental to a girl's well-being.** Girls who are married early are more likely to be out of school, have health problems, have an early and unwanted pregnancy, be a victim of violence, and live in poverty.
3. **Education is the most effective entry point for preventing child marriage, strengthening the agency of adolescents and transforming societies.** Getting girls to school, and keeping them there as long as possible, is one of the best strategies to delay child marriage, because educated girls are able to develop the skills, knowledge and

Child marriage threatens girls' health and lives, and limits their prospects

confidence they need to make decisions about their choices in life. The longer a girl stays in school, the less likely she is to be married before the age of 18 and have children as a teenager. Child marriage is directly linked to low levels of education among girls. In West and Central Africa, seven out of ten girls complete primary school, but only four out of ten complete lower secondary school.

4. **Invest in girls' education and ending child marriage in Africa for a positive impact on the continent and globally.** In West and Central Africa, the direct impact of a 1 per cent increase in women reaching secondary education is an economic growth increase of 0.3 per cent.³ If universal secondary education were achieved, child marriage would be virtually eliminated, and the prevalence of early childbearing would be reduced by up to 75 per cent.
5. **Listening to young people, including boys, and co-creating solutions with them is worthwhile. We need to mobilize boys and young men (tomorrow's fathers), brothers and husbands to end child marriage.** Men and boys should participate in targeted programmes and promote healthy relationships, as well as positive and alternative models of masculinity.

³ World Bank, 2017 Press release: [Child Marriage Will Cost Developing Countries Trillions of Dollars by 2030, Says World Bank/ICRW Report](#)

Communications toolkit: guidance, resources and inspiration

This section offers guidance, resources and inspiring examples for CO communications officers to develop materials and prepare for events and campaigns.

Map your audience

Before you act, map your audiences, then identify the best messages, assets and channels to engage them in your advocacy.

As you list your key audiences, it is useful to note the interests, influence and importance of each. Ask yourself: are they likely to be willing or reluctant to engage with you?; and what is each group's relative importance in terms of what you want to achieve?

Once you have done this, get more specific. For example, assess each audience's interest in your issue: what is its specific interest? Is it a primary or secondary audience? Is it made up of duty bearers and/or rights holders? When thinking about each

audience's support or opposition for ending child marriage, assess whether it is likely to be a strong ally, somewhat supportive, neutral, somewhat opposed or a strong opponent. As you consider the audience's level of influence in ending child marriage, ask yourself: does it have no influence, some influence, moderate influence, great influence, or is its level of influence unknown? Finally, estimate the importance of engaging with each specific audience: is this unimportant, of some importance, of moderate importance, very important, critical, or do you need further information to answer this question? For more information on mapping audiences, see the [UNICEF Advocacy Toolkit](#).

Table 2 offers ideas for engaging with different audiences.

Reaching key audiences: messages, assets and channels

Table 2. Overview of audiences and related messages, tools, assets and channels

Audience	Key messages	Evidence	Tools and assets	Channels & messengers
<p>National and sub-national governments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure ending child marriage is a national development priority • Facilitate supportive environments to change social norms • Promote national laws, policy frameworks and mechanisms to protect and promote adolescent girls' rights aligned with international standards and adequate resources available • Promote integrated strategies (birth registration, health, education, social protection) to end child marriage • Support adolescent girls at risk of, or affected by, child marriage, so they stay in school through the primary and the lower secondary cycles and acquire life skills that enable them to make choices and exercise their rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eight of the ten countries in the world with the highest prevalence of child marriage are in Africa, six of these in West and Central Africa • In West and Central Africa, the direct impact of a 1% increase in women reaching secondary education is an economic growth increase of 0.3% • If universal secondary education were achieved, child marriage would be virtually eliminated, and the prevalence of early childbearing would be reduced by up to 75% • Child marriage is directly linked to low levels of education among girls. In West and Central Africa, seven out of ten girls complete primary school, but only four out of ten complete lower secondary school • Member States of the African Union endorsed an '<i>African Common Position to End Child Marriage</i>' and a continental '<i>Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa</i>' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy narrative and short stories on 'Ending child marriage in the COVID-19 era' • Facts and figures sheet • Call to action to protect girls in the context of COVID-19 • Media releases or engagement: reinforce the political stakeholder's commitment with a statement in national media • Series of podcasts with testimony from girls • Scorecard maps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goodwill ambassadors and trusted personalities who support campaigns to end child marriage. For example, Smarty and his child-marriage protest song 'Ombre de la Nuit' • African Union commitments to end child marriage in Africa • Traditional print and broadcast media (newspapers, radio and TV) • Partnerships with United Nations agencies, such as UN Women, UNESCO and UNFPA, and women's associations • Windows of opportunity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - International Women's Day, 8 March - International Day of the African Child, 16 June - International Day of the Girl Child, 11 October - World Children's Day, 20 November

Audience	Key messages	Evidence	Tools and assets	Channels & messengers
Parliamentary representatives, mayors, district presidents and local leaders and influencers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize ending child marriage at all levels for all populations • Promote national laws, policy frameworks and mechanisms to protect and promote adolescent girls' rights, aligned with international standards and with adequate resources • Ensure access to health services for adolescent girls, especially the most vulnerable ones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eight of the ten countries in the world with the highest prevalence of child marriage are in Africa, and six of these are in West and Central Africa • Member States of the African Union endorsed an <i>'African Common Position to End Child Marriage'</i> and a continental <i>'Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa'</i> • If universal secondary education were achieved, child marriage would be virtually eliminated, and the prevalence of early childbearing would be reduced by up to 75% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-to-one approach with an advocacy brochure, outlining the facts • Call to action to end child marriage, including an award for promising or best practices and investments • Short, compelling quotes and testimonies on the benefits of ending child marriage • Scrollytelling report • Friendly challenges among districts and regions, with a publicized launch and a sunset clause • Close monitoring of achievements and publication of these via diverse popular channels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special campaigns targeting parliamentarians • Award event online, and offline, with relevant parliamentarians, district presidents or local government officials • Social media campaign
Media leaders, celebrities, youth and influencers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child marriage is a human rights violation. Despite laws against it, the practice remains widespread • Child marriage threatens girls' lives and health, and limits their prospects • Girls pressed into child marriage often become pregnant as adolescents, increasing the risk of complications in pregnancy or childbirth. These complications are the leading cause of death among older adolescent girls • Demand that governments, and other authorities, respect the child's right to be protected from early marriage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eight of the ten countries in the world with the highest prevalence of child marriage are in Africa, including six in West and Central Africa • In West and Central Africa, the direct impact of a 1% increase in women reaching secondary education is an economic growth increase of 0.3% • If universal secondary education were achieved, child marriage would be virtually eliminated, and the prevalence of early childbearing would be reduced by up to 75% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement kit and digital petition (e.g., #Endchildmarriage) • Script for celebrities to indicate their support for ending child marriage • Video testimonies campaign, or podcast series, highlighting the stories of girls • Media packages • Media webinars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital posters and social media cards • Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat posts: #Endchildmarriage • WhatsApp groups, blogs, campaign posters, leaflets, flyers against child marriage • Radio and TV announcements and interviews (for communities without internet access) • U-Report, UNICEF's social messaging tool and data collection system, to engage youth

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Audience	Key messages	Evidence	Tools and assets	Channels & messengers
Media leaders, celebrities, youth and influencers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote community dialogue and social mobilization to ensure that households demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviours toward investing in adolescent girls Support adolescent girls at risk of, or affected by, child marriage so they stay in school through the primary and the lower secondary cycles and acquire life skills, enabling them to make choices and exercise their rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child marriage is directly linked to lower levels of education among girls. In West and Central Africa, seven out of ten girls complete primary school, but only four out of ten complete lower secondary school Member States of the African Union endorsed an <i>'African Common Position to End Child Marriage'</i> and a continental <i>'Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa'</i> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community events to mobilize children and youth: sports events, theatre productions, stand-up comedy, etc.
Young worldwide public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness about the extent and negative impacts of child marriage Support behaviour change Advocate in favour of national laws, policy frameworks and mechanisms to protect and promote adolescent girls' rights, ensure that they are aligned with international standards and implemented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child marriage is a human rights violation Child marriage threatens girls' health and lives, and limits their prospects Girls pressed into child marriage often become pregnant as adolescents, increasing the risk of complications in pregnancy and childbirth. These complications are the leading cause of death among older adolescent girls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrollytelling, photo essays and videos on initiatives and testimonies from the field for ending child marriage Series of podcasts Engagement kit and digital petition (e.g., #Endchildmarriage) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goodwill ambassadors and trusted personalities to support the social media campaign #Endchildmarriage Other social media activation and campaigns Opinion piece (or commentary) in traditional media and online

Measure your outreach

Once you have identified your key audiences for each advocacy goal, it is time to design the activities best suited to reach them. Table 3 includes examples of indicators you can use to measure how successful you are in achieving your advocacy goals.

Table 3. Audiences, tactics and indicators

Target audience	Tactics	Sample indicators
National and sub-national governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage goodwill ambassadors and trusted personalities to support campaigns (e.g., Angélique Kidjo’s video support or Smarty’s protest song, ‘Ombre de la Nuit’) Celebrities join campaigns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of celebrities engaged; number of followers these celebrities have in social media Government’s statements to secure an end to child marriage
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> African Union’s commitment for Member States 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommendations made by institutions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek coverage in print and broadcast media (newspapers, radio and TV) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media coverage (articles, news stories, number of mentions and size of readership, audiences, etc.)
Parliamentary representatives, mayors, district presidents, local leaders and influencers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special campaign addressing parliamentarians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and importance of parliamentarians, deputies, mayors, etc. engaged
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call to action to end child marriage: award for promising or best practices and investments Stage, online and offline award events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interest of relevant ministers or other high-level government officials in supporting the call to action and participating in the award events Public declarations of support for ending child marriage by government officials
Media leaders, celebrities, youth and influencers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activate social networks, prepare radio clips and publicity or announcements for TV; seek other coverage and interviews on radio (for communities without access to the internet) Issue media releases alerts and statements Organize media webinars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analytics (metrics) from social media monitoring: number of followers, clicks, shares, etc. Number of mentions in media and outreach of these media Number of interviews and announcements and outreach of these media (size of readership and audiences)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobilize communities through events for children and youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance Evidence of children or youth taking action to end child marriage U-Report (UNICEF’s social messaging tool and data collection system)
General public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize social media campaign Share online petition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outreach in social media (through social media monitoring); number of followers, etc. Number of signatures

For more information on monitoring advocacy initiatives, see the [UNICEF Advocacy Toolkit](#).

Get inspired by champion countries and best practices

Global programme by UNICEF headquarters

In 2016, UNICEF, together with UNFPA, launched a global programme to tackle child marriage in 12 of the highest-prevalence or highest-burden countries: Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Yemen and Zambia. The programme highlights initiatives against child marriage around the world: [UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage](#)

Human interest stories

Stories featuring people, communities or workers can capture public attention. They can also engage local staff, who may be proud to be showcased. Some examples are given below.

Ghana: Project offers safe spaces for girls to learn

'I will deliver safely', the story of Ikamah, married too young, pregnant at 17, saved by the UNICEF's Safety Net Programme, is a powerful tool for advocacy aimed at ending child marriage: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1C3IH3XrPtie1i_VdfzEx9rSxvYnTW5M?usp=sharing



Through a project called Promoting Adolescent Safe Spaces (PASS), being implemented by Norsaac (a non-profit organization in Ghana) in the Northern, North East and Savannah regions of Ghana under the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, many vulnerable adolescent girls now have an opportunity to build networks of support, develop their life skills and be informed about their rights and how to access services important to them.

This story of 14-year-old Salmu and her enrolment in school with Ghana Education Service highlights the project's value: [Together, we are empowering adolescent girls in Ghana | UNICEF Ghana](#)

Initiatives from country offices

Burkina Faso: A campaign to accelerate the abandonment of child marriage

With one in ten women married or in union before the age of 15 and one in two women married before 18, Burkina Faso is among the countries with the highest prevalence of child marriage. To address this serious problem, UNICEF and the national government engaged in a wide-ranging campaign to raise public awareness. Elements included:

- « [Ne m'appellez pas Madame](#) »: [Une campagne contre le mariage d'enfants](#) ('Don't Call Me Madam': A Campaign Against Child Marriage, see poster image);
- More than 100 traditional chiefs from the 13 regions have [committed to accelerating action to abandon child marriage in their communities](#);
- Hip-hop artist Smarty becomes National Goodwill Ambassador for UNICEF in Burkina Faso. In 2019, the pop star crisscrossed Burkina Faso to public awareness about child marriage, particularly through his hit song '[Ombre de la Nuit](#)' ('Shadow of the Night'); and
- Other use of social media to raise awareness in Burkina Faso: examples include these posts on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).

Protecting girls in Burkina Faso and Cameroon

The International Bureau for Children's Rights is involved in the evaluation of child protection in Burkina Faso and Cameroon. This 10-month project, launched at the beginning of 2020, evaluates the effectiveness and impact of UNICEF initiatives related to FGM, violence against children and early marriage in Burkina Faso and Cameroon. For details, see these two internet posts:

- [Mariage d'enfants: Des hommes et femmes de médias s'engagent à promouvoir l'élimination de la pratique au Burkina Faso](#)
- [Evaluation des initiatives engagées par l'Unicef au Burkina Faso et au Cameroun contre les violences faites aux enfants](#)

Niger: Collaboration between girls and influential personalities from the community is changing old ways

In Niger, three out of four girls are married before the age of 18. Change is coming, however, and girls could be saved from child marriage thanks to the support of their friends and the engagement of influential personalities. Some links to stories about this work are listed here:

- [Friends against child marriage: teenage girls determined to prevent forced marriage](#) (story on UNICEF Niger website)
- [Mettre fin au mariage d'enfant](#) (End child marriage, UNICEF video on Facebook)
- [UNICEF #endchildmarriage video](#): A pandemic through a girl's eyes (based on mobile phone video from 16 girls in nine countries, including Niger; trailer and further information available [here](#)).

On International Day of the Girl Child, 11 October 2020, UNICEF posted a [video featuring Rahilatou](#), one of two teenage girls from Niger whose stories are part of the video series (mentioned above) about girls from nine countries and the heightened threat of child marriage during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Showcasing positive empowerment of girls in Niger

Check out this [article](#) about Niamey's *Centre de formation professionnelle en stylisme et modélisme*, where teenage girls are sewing face-masks and bibs: *Made in Niger*. Initially, there were 200 teenage girls being trained at the centre. However, restrictions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 reduced the cohort to about 30. The girls are part of the Niger-Ilmim Adolescent Girls Initiative, which launched in 2013 for girls aged 10 to 19, married and unmarried, providing modular education and literacy classes in a safe space.

After the modular education, the girls move into different streams of their choice, learning trades and becoming autonomous, able to participate fully in the development of their community and nation.

Sierra Leone: Framework and First Lady spearhead efforts to strengthen protection of girls

In 2016, Sierra Leone launched the African Union Campaign to end child marriage in Africa. As a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), in 2017 Sierra Leone adopted the Strategic Framework for Strengthening National Child Protection Systems, which prioritizes the protection of children from marriage. In Sierra Leone, almost 40 per cent of the girls are married before they reach 18. In 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the added risks it poses for adolescent girls

(loss of schooling, sexual violence, early marriage, etc.) UNICEF and UNFPA supported the government in issuing a document with guidelines and key messages. The First Lady is strongly engaged in this advocacy work. For details, see these documents:

- [Flyers with key messages on gender-based violence in the context of COVID-19](#), distributed with dignity kits, (containing menstrual pads, soap, underwear, etc.) for vulnerable women and girls
- [Key messages](#) on gender-based violence, teenage pregnancy and child protection in the context of COVID-19
- Videos on child marriage developed as part of the UNICEF ([video 1](#); [video 2](#))
- <https://www.unicef.org/end-violence>

Cameroon: Community network raises awareness about risks of child marriage

They want to end child marriage! Learn about this [beautiful example of community action](#) in Igawa, in the Far North region of Cameroon. Members of the Community Network for the Protection of Children (RECOPE) fight against child marriage through awareness-raising activities.



Communication Toolkit corner



Public relations with parliamentarians and mayors

As regional, district and local authorities are key stakeholders for change, advocates can make great strides by engaging with members of parliament and mayors (as well as government ministers and officials). This is what UNICEF Mali did to raise awareness and boost commitment on malnutrition. The country office convinced the leader of parliament to allow it to present on the issue during a short UNICEF session at the National Assembly. It then distributed a flyer to all members of the assembly, with key data and recommendations. Individual contacts were then taken, and UNICEF offered to take assembly members on field trips where local authorities were proud to showcase the benefits of their work on malnutrition.

This field trip can be a virtual one. With national media coverage, the achievements of deputies can be highlighted, and they can personally engage in supporting local initiatives and awarding their progress. This campaign work takes time and requires careful public relations, but can be efficient in engaging stakeholders at decentralized levels.



Quizzes, U-Report and other tools

Use a quiz to assess and increase knowledge on child marriage. UNICEF Benin, for example, used this quiz to [check knowledge on COVID-19](#).

Other platforms, such as U-Report, allow for the sharing of messages and engagement of young people in ending child marriage. Burkina Faso has recently started working with U-Reporters to engage them in efforts to end gender-based violence and child marriage. For details, go to [U-Report Burkina Faso](#).



Media engagement

National and local print and broadcast media (radio and television), as well as news sites on the internet and telecommunications companies, can be valuable allies in your advocacy and communication strategies. It is wise, therefore, to cultivate relationships with media executives, editors, producers, journalists and reporters with local radio and TV, cable TV stations and local newspapers, digital media platforms and mobile phone companies. To do this, you will need internal capacity to manage media relations, particularly your ability to:

- Prepare and execute a media plan;
- Gather key information and data on child marriage;
- Organize and conduct media briefings and media conferences;

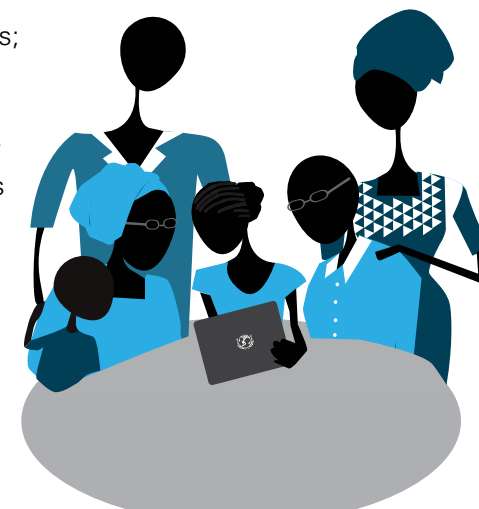
- Produce and distribute timely, accurate press statements and releases and other media materials;
- Coordinate prompt responses to media inquiries; and
- Support spokespersons with accurate messages and materials.



Media kits

The communication and advocacy team at WCARO can provide a media kit containing the following documents with clear, concise key messages:

- Frequently asked questions (FAQs);
- Fact sheets;
- Updates on recent progress made in the region and gaps to be filled;
- Graphs and charts;
- Photographs and illustrations; and
- Contact information for spokespersons and experts, available for interview.





Media webinars

Organizing a media webinar can be a good way to inform journalists about the need to end child marriage, as webinars are easy to promote, can be highly engaging and are not overly expensive. They can also allow you to strengthen relationships with receptive journalists so that you become one of their trusted sources of information.

Before sending out invitations, however, ascertain that the topic and material you wish to share is of interest to them. To do that, review questions you have received from journalists to understand their appetites for particular types of news and think about the types of media tools they find most useful. If, for example, you previously issued a press release on ending child marriage and no journalists showed interest, you might want to choose a different angle for your next news release or seek a different validator of your messages (e.g., a football star) and ask some media outlets what angle would be interesting for them.

You can seize the attention of media with a fact or a question that is new to them (e.g., how much child marriage costs a country each year). Your information may trigger immediate coverage, or simply raise the awareness of a reporter, prompting her to file a longer feature article or TV documentary on your issue, months or even a year later. It is also worth keeping notes on the questions reporters pose, and the topics that most interest them, so you can feed them answers as these become available.

When planning, remember that journalists are usually in a rush, so your webinar should not exceed an hour, and never overlap with their morning meetings with editors, afternoon deadlines for daily newspaper or TV news reporters: 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.

While developing the agenda, you can refer to the standard organization of webinars: to attract an audience, you need a newsworthy presentation, an expert to answer questions, and a moderator (it can be yourself).

For more tips on organizing a successful webinar, see this [ten-step process](#).



Video products and web stories

UNICEF's Digital Lab offers a wide range of guidelines and templates for video production and web stories. These include:

- How to record video portraits and statements from [smartphone, video visual and technical guidance](#) and a [shotlist template](#); and
- How to build a [visual story](#).

Digital Lab is a community of practice for external digital communications that brings together people, documents, information and ideas. The guidance available here is for country and regional offices, as well as for programmes and divisions at UNICEF headquarters. It is accessible via [UNICEF Sharepoint](#), and you can find many useful resources, trainings and guidelines.

Tips for video interviews in the field

- Since the COVID-19 pandemic has started, all videos must show respect for prevention measures: masks, social distances, etc.
- Take care in your choice of background: a worksite, farmer's field and streets are all fine, but avoid offices.
- Follow the basic rules and guidance, as mentioned on UNICEF SharePoint – DOC videos: <https://unicef.sharepoint.com/sites/DOC-DigitalLabs/SitePages/Video.aspx>.
- Make sure you have the proper spelling of the name and correct professional title of your interviewees.
- Use UNICEF ending video page.
- Ensure that interviewees look at your camera, and smile or appear confident.
- The interviewee can walk while talking and, if the ground underfoot is even and firm, move in a wheelchair or cart.
- She or he must not read or repeat a learned speech, however: but can repeat a few strong messages thought out in advance.
- Your video subject should avoid technical terms and use words that are understandable to most viewers in your target audiences.



Create a podcast series

Podcasts are becoming more and more popular, the technology is easier than ever, and there's still a lot of opportunity for new podcasters. Podcasts are basically made of sound, like radio, but can also be created with images. Podcasts are a great way to build a genuine connection with your audience. Instead of the fractured connection you make through social media, podcasts allow you to engage your audience with unique long-form content. Podcasts are more convenient than blog posts; people can listen to podcasts while driving, working out, or just doing chores around the house.

You have to define the subscribers you are targeting. The style of the podcast will depend on what you want to achieve, for instance, carrying an important message.

Here's Apple's advice for picking a good title for your show: *"Pay close attention to the title, author, and description tags at the level of your podcast. Apple Podcasts uses title, author, and description fields for search. The metadata for your podcast, along with your podcast artwork, is your product packaging and can affect whether your podcast shows up in relevant searches, and how likely users are to subscribe to it."*

Podcasts have a low barrier to entry; if you want to start a podcast, it's relatively easy to begin the process with little overhead or experience. You can start recording a podcast with just your iPhone and a pair of headphones. Remember, your content is the most crucial part.

To edit your podcast, open-source software, like GarageBand or Audacity, are easily available among many other free solutions that you can find online. You can also find many guidelines online. You can also use Zoom if you want to record long interviews.

The presentation of the podcast content is very important because it is what will give appetite to subscribers.

Watch (or listen) to this excellent series of eight podcasts produced by France Culture "Laisse parler les femmes" (let women speak out) to see how to build your own podcast: [Laisse parler les femmes : podcast à écouter sur France Culture](#).



UNICEF global radio service and podcasts

This is a new global radio service from UNICEF focusing on the health, education, equality and protection of children. It is hosted by radio broadcaster Blue Chevigny with UNICEF correspondents from around the globe.

[Watch this UNICEF podcast series](#) on gender-based violence prevention, response, and risk mitigation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

You may also wish to check out this UNICEF podcast on child marriage: <https://player.fm/series/unicef-podcast-1306144/podcast-65-international-day-of-the-girl-child-ending-child-marriage>



Popular media formats and use of social media

To help you choose the right channel for social media initiatives, UNICEF WCARO has produced an in-depth analysis on the impact of UNICEF on social media channels and the internet. Use this to tailor your strategy: [WCAR Digital Engagement Situation Analysis](#).

Table 4. Strengths and weaknesses of social network tools: A reference tool

SMS	Participatory Media	Community Mobilization
<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful in contexts where there is a high mobile phone ownership rate. • Can work in contexts with a relatively weak network signal or when a network is congested. • SMS have a predictable cost for the user. • Can disrupt routine activity, i.e. an SMS message tends to be read. • Information can be used again. • Appeals to youth and young adults. • Is timely, i.e. can be sent either as an advice, warning, emergency warning or behaviour change message. • Can be used for specific information addressed to specific risk groups. • Can generate dialogue (with text back services). 	<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes a wide range of communication methods, from song, dance, theatre, video and role-playing, and is designed to facilitate active involvement. • Useful method for identifying communally held problems and constraints, i.e. poor responses to emergencies. • Allows participants to work through a problem in an enjoyable way and identify a solution. • Enables communities to identify sensitive problems or problems that cause conflict and allows for conflict resolution. • Can be quick to undertake. 	<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases participatory decision-making. • Allows a wide range of stakeholders, including vulnerable and marginalized groups, to be involved. • Creates stronger relationships between communities and response organizations. • Helps to promote communities that are active in risk reduction. • Community dependence on external agencies and assistance can be reduced. • Communities are better able to identify problems and communicate their needs. • Creates dialogue around related issues, such as increases in violence and conflict.
<p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires a functioning mobile phone network. • Requires access/ownership of a mobile phone. • Can be shut down and/or susceptible to government control. • Requires literacy and technical knowledge to use effectively. • May not be useful for the visually impaired. • Requires a reliable power source to maintain charge. • Have cost implications for users who use SMS to communicate. • Have cost implications for emergency services, as well as for the user. • Evaluation of the impact of SMS at community-level is challenging. 	<p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires significant amount of facilitation and expertise. • Using participatory tools such as song or dance may be culturally inappropriate during an emergency. 	<p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires significant human resources to facilitate community dialogue and mobilization. • May exclude vulnerable or marginalized groups if not well facilitated. • Can support current negative power dynamics/gatekeepers. If incentivized, can also provide resources/inputs of significant value and create local social tensions.



Table 5. Popular media formats

<p>Announcements, spots and slogans</p>	<p>Public service announcements (PSAs), spots and slogans are short simple messages of between 30 seconds and 2 minutes that can feature a short dialogue, announcement or interview. Spots commonly air on national and community radio and television and are designed to address specific issues. In the context of emergencies they can convey important advice, warning, emergency warning and behaviour change messages. The speaker of the spot or announcement should be credible and trustworthy if the audience is to take notice of the communication.</p>
<p>Mini-dialogues and mini-dramas</p>	<p>Mini-dialogues and short dramas are used to convey one or two key emergency messages in the same communication. They are short in duration (i.e. between 2-5 minutes) and are useful in terms of communicating aspects. They can comprise a single dialogue or have several characters. They can be useful in terms of building a story over a series of dialogues or dramas, and characters can become highly familiar to audiences. Often humour is used to catch audience attention.</p>
<p>Storytelling and testimony</p>	<p>Stories and testimony from affected community members and humanitarian workers are used to contextualize the social and individual impacts. Testimony, often a monologue from a person affected, will be short in duration, but can have a high impact with the audience.</p>
<p>Magazine, talk show, phone-in formats</p>	<p>Magazines, talk shows and phone-ins are mainstays of radio broadcasting, health broadcasting included. Magazine formats provide an often-eclectic mix of features, interviews, competitions, music and drama and are designed to be fast paced and topical. Talk shows allow commentators and leaders to discuss the issue. Phone-ins provide an opportunity for the public to talk to officials and hold them accountable in terms of government responses.</p>
<p>News, documentary and journalism</p>	<p>News, from short items regarding health to documentary and investigative radio journalism, represent a mainstay of mass-media at all levels. Regular exposure to news is important in terms of raising awareness and shifting opinion because it can help hold an important eye.</p> <p>Source: UNICEF, <i>Communication for Humanitarian Action Toolkit</i>, UNICEF, 2015.</p>



Examples of video scripts for a series about frontline workers and local heroes

Frontline worker video script

My name is [NAME] and I have been working as a child protection specialist since [MONTH OR YEAR] in [COUNTRY, DISTRICT].

So far, I have contributed to raise awareness against child marriage for about [NUMBER] girls and help them to go back to school

Why did I choose this work?
I love my work because I know we can change the picture.

Child marriage is a severe human rights violation.

Child marriage threatens girls' lives and health, and it limits their prospects.

Girls pressed into child marriage often become pregnant while still adolescents, increasing the risk of complications in pregnancy or childbirth. These complications are the leading cause of death among older adolescent girls.

Every child has the right to be protected from sexual exploitation, including child marriage.

Access to schools, health centres and social protection can reduce child marriage.

We need everyone in the country to be aware that child marriage is a burden and causes loss of incomes.

And we have to convince parents. It is a battle for frontline workers like me.

But it is a battle that we have to win for the future of girls in Africa. I am proud to participate in this battle.

Everyone can participate and convince their neighbours and community leaders to commit to ending child marriage.

Like me, support **#Endchildmarriage.**

Local champion video script

My name is [NAME], and I live in [COUNTRY, DISTRICT].

I am a local hero. Why? Because I helped girls to escape child marriage.

It may not sound heroic, but it is: [NUMBER] girls in my country are married before turning 18.

Do you know that child marriage costs lost income to African countries?

Do you know that [NUMBER] girls drop out of school at primary level?

Do you know that early pregnancies damage the health of adolescent girls?

I want to be part of the change.

It is a battle that we must win for all children.

I am proud to participate in this battle.

Everyone can participate, and convince their neighbours, their community leaders, to engage and end child marriage.

Like me, support the **#Endchildmarriage**



Child marriage is a human rights violation

Scrollytelling allows a wide range of information in a single online document: videos, photos, written stories, figures, dashboards, icons. As it is online, it can be easily updated. It can thus be an efficient format for high-level political contacts and donors.

Examples include:
<http://everylastdrop.co.uk>
<http://letsfreecongress.org>
www.tinjutinja.com

Scorecard maps

These diagrams outline the logic of your strategy, including key performance indicators, audiences, processes and enablers. Scorecard maps allow you to quickly communicate big-picture objectives to audiences and stakeholders. Each objective in your map is represented by a shape. Keep the number of objectives as low as possible (no more than 20), and you stand a better chance of delivering a focused message. Many scorecard maps also have arrows between the objectives to underline causal relations and cause-and-effect chains. By following the arrows, one can see how the achievement of low-level objectives supports the success of higher ones. Examples of scorecard maps can be found [here](#).

Scrollytelling

Also called narrative visualization, scrollytelling consists of creating a logical sequence of related (data-driven) visualizations, or visual elements, needed to convey a message to an audience in an engaging and effective way. There exist several forms of this visual storytelling, depending on the genre (e.g., video, data-comics, partitioned poster), visual narrative

(e.g., highlighting, transition guidance), and narrative structure (e.g., ordering, interactivity, messaging).

The design is usually shaped by three factors:

- Data (content of the story);
- Audience (tone of the story); and
- Message (focus of the story).



Social media cards (animated or flat) and Instagram carousels, Twitter and Facebook posts

These social media tools highlight key facts and statistics and inspiring quotes and testimony about ending child marriage, along with photos or 30-second video clips filmed on location.

Figure 4. Example of what can be included in social media cards

Girls in West and Central Africa face the highest risk in the world of marrying or entering in union prior to reaching 18 years of age

Girls and young women from the lowest quintile households, residing in remote or rural parts of the country, and with low education attainment, are most likely to be married as children

Support
#Endchildmarriage

Every two seconds, a child is married in the world

On average, 40 per cent of young women in West and Central Africa are married or in union before age 18, and 15 per cent before the age of 15

No fewer than
28 million
girls of primary and secondary school age are out-of-school in West and Central Africa

Angélique Kidjo, UNICEF Ambassador, speaks out against child marriage

In his song 'Ombre de la nuit', the singer Smarty advocates against child marriage in Burkina Faso

#PourChaqueEnfant
#PasMadame
#ForEveryChild

At **28%**, West and Central Africa has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in the world

Figure 5. Sample YouTube post

With one in ten women married or in union before the age of 15 and one in two women married before 18, Burkina Faso is among the countries with the highest prevalence of child marriage.



In his song 'Ombre de la nuit', the singer Smarty advocates against child marriage in Burkina Faso.

**#PourChaqueEnfant #PasMadame
#ForEveryChild**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-cP7Qb8qPC8>

Figure 6. Sample Twitter post from UNICEF Niger



Tweet

UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme End Child Marriage @ · 4. Mai ...
We agree!

We need to #EndChildMarriage and ensure that all children and adolescents are in school and access quality learning 📖
#GenerationEquality ♀



7 19

Figure 7. Sample Instagram post UNICEF Burkina Faso



unicef_burkinafaso C'est la Journée internationale de la fille ! Rappelons haut et fort : « Madame », c'est pour les femmes, pas pour les enfants ! 🇸🇵🇦
Au #BurkinaFaso, 1 fille sur 2 est mariée avant l'âge de 18 ans et 1 sur 10 avant l'âge de 15 ans. Il faut que ça change !
#PasMadame #EndChildMarriage







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