

2024 ANNUAL RESULTS REPORT

 **Towards 2030:  
Driving Urgent Action  
to End Child Marriage**



UNFPA-UNICEF  
Global Programme to End Child Marriage

2024 ANNUAL RESULTS REPORT



# Towards 2030: Driving Urgent Action to End Child Marriage

---

UNFPA-UNICEF  
Global Programme to End Child Marriage

---

The UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage is generously funded by the Governments of Canada, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom, and Zonta International.

Front cover: © UNICEF/UNI308004/Schermbrucker  
Back cover: © UNICEF/UNI522932/Rooftop Productions

© United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

July 2025

# Table of Contents

<b>List of Tables</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>List of Figures</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Acronyms and Abbreviations</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Chapter 1: The Global Situation</b>	<b>15</b>
1.1 Child marriage trends	16
1.2 Global challenges to ending child marriage by 2030	17
<b>Chapter 2: Global Programme Achievements</b>	<b>22</b>
2.1 Launching Phase III (2024–2030)	23
2.2 Advancing gender-transformative approaches	24
2.2.1 Gender-transformative approaches	24
2.2.2 Social and behaviour change	29
2.3 Leading evidence-based advocacy	30
2.4 Generating and applying evidence for impact	34
2.5 Regional highlights	36
2.5.1 Arab States / Middle East and North Africa	36
2.5.2 Asia Pacific / South Asia	37
2.5.3 Eastern and Southern Africa	38
2.5.4 West and Central Africa	38
2.5.5 Cross-regional initiatives	39
<b>Chapter 3: Global Programme Performance</b>	<b>41</b>
3.1 Empowering adolescent girls	42
3.1.1 Intensively supporting the most marginalized girls	43
3.1.2 Fostering a supportive family and community environment	48
3.2 Building resilient and responsive systems	51
3.2.1 Strengthening systems	51
3.2.2 Addressing poverty drivers	53
3.3 Enabling environment, legal and policy response	55
3.3.1 Implementing laws and policies	55
3.3.2 Strengthening and using data and evidence	57
3.4 Challenges to effective programming	60
3.5 Adaptive and innovative approaches across the development and humanitarian continuum	61
3.6 Lessons learned	63
<b>Chapter 4: Programme Governance</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Chapter 5: Looking Ahead</b>	<b>68</b>
5.1 Global priorities	69
5.2 Country Office priorities	72
<b>References</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Annex: Global Programme results framework</b>	<b>77</b>

## List of Tables

**Table 1:** Summary of output indicators performance for 2024

**Table 2:** Number of adolescent girls (aged 10–19) who actively participated in life skills or CSE interventions in programme areas

**Table 3:** Number of adolescent girls (aged 10–19) supported by the Global Programme to enrol and/or remain in primary or secondary school

**Table 4:** Number of service delivery points in programme areas providing quality adolescent-responsive services (health, child protection/GBV) that meet minimum standards

**Table 5:** Number of adolescent girls (aged 10–19) benefiting from social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes

**Table 6:** Global Programme contribution to global and regional level evidence generation and cross-learning activities in 2024

**Table 7:** Contributions received by the Global Programme in 2024 (US\$)

**Table 8:** Global Programme allocations and expenditures in 2024 (US\$)

---

## List of Figures

**Figure 1:** Global distribution of girls and women first married or in union before age 18, by region

**Figure 2:** Global Programme Phase III Vision



# Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>CEFM</b>	Child, early, and forced marriage
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus Disease 2019
<b>CO</b>	Country Office
<b>CSE</b>	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>CRANK</b>	Child Marriage Research to Action Network
<b>CSW</b>	Commission on the Status of Women
<b>DHS</b>	Demographic and Health Survey
<b>FGM</b>	Female Genital Mutilation
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
<b>Global Programme</b>	UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage
<b>GPSU</b>	Global Programme Support Unit
<b>GTA</b>	Gender-Transformative Approaches
<b>HQ</b>	Headquarters
<b>ICDP</b>	International Child Development Programme
<b>ICPD</b>	International Conference on Population and Development
<b>JPFGM</b>	UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation
<b>RO</b>	Regional Office
<b>SAARC</b>	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
<b>SAIEVAC</b>	South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children
<b>SBC</b>	Social and Behaviour Change
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SRHR</b>	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
<b>STAR</b>	Strategic Technical Assistance for Research
<b>SVRI</b>	Sexual Violence Research Initiative
<b>ToC</b>	Theory of Change
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>WLO</b>	Women-Led Organization
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>YLO</b>	Youth-Led Organization

# Executive Summary





## ABOUT THE GLOBAL PROGRAMME

The UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage (referred to in this report as the Global Programme), designed as a 15-year programme (2016–2030), aims to contribute to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 5.3, which calls for the elimination of harmful practices against women and girls, including child marriage. The Global Programme focuses on adolescent girls aged 10–19 who are at risk of, or already affected by, child marriage across 12 high-prevalence or high-burden countries: Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Yemen and Zambia. Beyond country-level programming, the Global Programme is also a global advocate for girls and a leading voice in advancing efforts to end child marriage worldwide.

The programme promotes the rights of adolescent girls to avert child marriage and prevent adolescent pregnancy, empowering them to pursue their aspirations through life skills, comprehensive sexuality education, access to education, support for re-enrolment and retention, and creating alternative pathways to their future. The Global Programme fosters changes in attitudes, values, expectations and behaviours in households and communities and strengthens the quality and uptake of services such as sexual and reproductive healthcare and social protection. The Global Programme also advocates for laws and policies protecting adolescent girls' rights, emphasizing the use of robust data and evidence for policy formulation and implementation.

The Global Programme's strong focus on prioritizing girls has delivered important results across a range of sectors including education, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), social protection, child protection, gender-based violence (GBV), adolescent health and development, and community responsibility to protect girls while promoting an enabling legal and policy environment that protects girls'

rights and choices. The programme has also served as an incubator, catalyst and model of United Nations system-wide joint initiatives that put girls and women at the centre, not just in advocacy, but also in evidence-based programming that meets their comprehensive needs across regions.

## ABOUT THIS RESULTS REPORT

This 2024 results report is organized into five chapters.

**Chapter 1: The Global Situation** provides an overview of the latest child marriage trends and patterns, and the main challenges to ending child marriage.

**Chapter 2: Global Programme Achievements** presents an account of programme achievements in 2024, including the launch of Phase III, the advancement of gender-transformative approaches, advocacy and influence on global, regional and country policies, strengthened global research on child marriage, and regional highlights—with Regional Offices playing a significant role throughout.

**Chapter 3: Programme Performance** presents key Global Programme results for 2024 in the 12 focus countries in four regions. The results are organized by three intermediate and six immediate outcomes. The main challenges to programme implementation, lessons learned, and innovative approaches are also discussed.

**Chapter 4: Programme Governance** highlights achievements and challenges related to financial resource mobilization and expenditure.

**Chapter 5: Looking Ahead** provides an overview of the Global Programme's priorities for 2025 and beyond.

The Annex presents the detailed **Results Framework**.

## GLOBAL SITUATION

### Child marriage trends

Globally, child marriage is declining, with the prevalence among women aged 20–24 who married before age 18 dropping from 22 per cent to 19 per cent over the past decade<sup>1</sup>. Worldwide, 68 million child marriages have been averted in the last 25 years<sup>2</sup>. Despite this progress, to which the Global Programme has contributed since 2016, 650 million women and girls alive today were married as children.<sup>3</sup> Efforts to end child marriage by 2030 must continue and intensify.

Regional trends show South Asia has the highest number of child brides (with India alone accounting for one third of the world's brides) but the region has also seen the most significant reduction in the prevalence of child marriage in the last decade, falling from 39 per cent to 26 per cent today. Despite some progress, Sub-Saharan Africa now has the highest prevalence of child marriage in the world (31 per cent, down from 38 per cent 10 years ago) and its share of the world's child brides is projected to grow due to slow progress and rapid population growth, particularly in poor quintiles. In the Middle East and North Africa, one in six young women marry before age 18, but most countries in the region have seen progress over the past 25 years and it has the most equitable progress between rich and poor populations. In Latin America and the Caribbean, where nine per cent of the world's child brides live, child marriage has remained stagnant for decades and the region is projected to have the second-highest prevalence globally by 2030. Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and East Asia have low but persistent levels, with girls from disadvantaged populations still at risk.

Key factors that exacerbate the risk of child marriage include poverty, lack of education and limited livelihood opportunities. Girls from poor, rural households and those with little or no education are among the most vulnerable to child marriage. Secondary education is strongly protective against child marriage: girls with at least a secondary education are significantly less likely to marry early, and if all girls completed secondary school, child marriage could decrease by approximately 66 per cent.

Despite global progress, current rates of decline in child marriage are too slow to meet SDG target 5.3 by 2030; over nine million girls are projected to marry that year unless efforts accelerate significantly, especially in high-burden countries.

### Challenges to ending child marriage

A number of factors hinder faster progress towards ending child marriage. A global backlash against gender equality and human rights, with conservative narratives being increasingly adopted, is contributing to legal and political rollbacks and shrinking space for civil society. Simultaneously, humanitarian crises – such as the protracted conflict in Yemen and climate-related shocks in Africa and South Asia – are increasing girls' vulnerability, with families resorting to child marriage in many cases as a negative coping mechanism. Climate change acts as a threat multiplier, exacerbating poverty and instability. Meanwhile, a decline in funding for programming focused on adolescent girls<sup>4</sup> further restricts the reach and impact of prevention efforts. Urgent, context-specific and adequately funded action is essential to reach the most vulnerable girls and accelerate progress. The Global Programme prioritizes investments in evidence-based policies and scalable solutions that maximize its impact. It has identified what interventions work to end child marriage, and efforts must scale those interventions to reach more girls, faster, ensuring that no one is left behind.

Effective solutions include:

- ◆ Income and economic strengthening to support girls' schooling and address poverty;
- ◆ Empowering adolescent girls' transition from school to secure and safe employment;
- ◆ Challenging gender norms to create lasting change; and
- ◆ Strengthening systems and services across health, education, and child protection.



<sup>1</sup> Source of prevalence data in this report: UNICEF global databases, 2025.

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF, *Is an End to Child Marriage Within Reach? Latest trends and future prospects, May 2023 update*. <https://data.unicef.org/resources/is-an-end-to-child-marriage-within-reach/>

<sup>3</sup> Child marriage data portal, *Are we on track to end child marriage by 2030?* <https://childmarriagedata.org/global-trends/>

<sup>4</sup> GAGE Report: Investing in adolescent girls, 2024. <https://gage.odi.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Investing-in-Girls-Report-WEB.pdf>



## 2024 KEY RESULTS ACROSS PROGRAMME COUNTRIES



**7,427,785** adolescent girls aged 10-19 were empowered through life skills or comprehensive sexuality education interventions



**280,391,495** individuals (boys, girls, women and men) were reached by mass media (traditional and social media) messaging on child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls, and gender equality



**8,474,725** adolescent girls aged 10-19 were supported to enrol in, return to, or remain in school



**2,532,021** boys and girls in programme areas accessed prevention and protection services



**4,772,254** boys and men actively participated in group education and dialogues that address harmful masculinities and gender norms



**3,548,215** adolescent girls benefited from social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes



**29,570,565** individuals (boys, girls, women and men) were engaged in group education/ dialogue sessions on consequences of and alternatives to child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls, and gender equality



**133** women-led organizations partnered with the Global Programme in 2024, a significant rise from 74 in 2023<sup>5</sup>



**1,361** youth-led organizations partnered with the Global Programme, both formal and informal, in 2024<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, *Engagement with women-led organizations*, 2024. [www.unicef.org/documents/engagement-women-led-organizations](https://www.unicef.org/documents/engagement-women-led-organizations)

<sup>6</sup> This number includes 1,261 youth networks in Ethiopia, which are non-formal structures (not formally registered groups) at the community level.



## 2024 KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

**Launching Phase III:** The Global Programme's Phase III (2024–2030) emphasizes a gender-transformative, multisectoral approach to shifting harmful attitudes and norms that perpetuate child marriage, while strengthening the government and civil society commitments needed to create protective and enabling environments for girls. Central to Phase III is building partnerships with youth-led, women-led, survivors and feminist organizations to collectively advocate for gender equality and ending child marriage, and sustain progress. The programme also prioritizes greater investment in sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), and protection services for adolescent girls.

The new phase was globally launched in March 2024 at the Sixty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68) in New York, where several Member States renewed commitments to ending child marriage. Country-level launches reinforced government buy-in and commitment to ending child marriage.

**Providing intensive support to the most marginalized adolescent girls to prevent child marriage:** In 2024, the Global Programme empowered over 7.4 million vulnerable adolescent girls (including already married and parenting adolescents) through life skills and CSE interventions. Over 8.4 million vulnerable girls were also supported to enrol in, return to, or remain in school – a key strategy to effectively end child marriage.

**Addressing poverty drivers of child marriage:** In 2024, over 3.5 million adolescent girls benefited from social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment

programmes – another consistently proven strategy to end child marriage.

**Enhancing the capacity of education, health, GBV prevention and response, social protection, and child protection systems to deliver gender-responsive services:** In 2024, over 2.5 million boys and girls in programme areas accessed prevention and protection services. This is mainly achieved by leveraging existing government and civil society initiatives, to amplify reach and lead to more sustainable results through stronger national systems.

**Advancing gender-transformative approaches:** The Global Programme empowers adolescent girls by providing direct service provision to them combined with gender-transformative and social and behaviour change interventions, fostering families and communities where girls are valued, protected, and able to thrive.

In 2024, the Global Programme continued its investment in gender-transformative approaches (GTAs) to address harmful gender norms and redistribute power, resources, and services more equally. A cornerstone of its strategy was providing technical support and offering the integrated [Gender Transformative Accelerator](#) (also known as the [GTA Tool](#)) and values clarification trainings to programme implementers, advocates, and technical staff.

The Global Programme also integrated GTAs in government programmes to leverage resources at scale. The GTA Tool was also adapted for use in the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation (JPFGM), with implementation in six JPFGM countries.<sup>7</sup> This cross-programme collaboration demonstrates the complementarity of both initiatives and a shared commitment to addressing

<sup>7</sup> Senegal, Mauritania, Uganda, Kenya, The Gambia, Djibouti.

gender inequality as the root cause of harmful practices. It reflects a strategic effort to maximize resources, foster cross-learning, and drive gender-transformative change.

In addition, the Global Programme expanded partnerships with women-led organizations from 74 in 2023 to 133 in 2024 to promote the right of girls and advocate for ending child marriage and gender equality<sup>8</sup>, and to strengthen their capacities in gender-transformative programming. Notably, the Global Programme and Girls Not Brides jointly developed the Regional Guidance on Partnering with Women-Led Organizations to Address Child Marriage in South Asia<sup>9</sup>, co-created with grassroots organizations. The guidance emphasizes feminist, community-rooted strategies and draws attention to promising practices for sustainable, rights-based interventions amid shrinking civic space.

To strengthen the role of adolescent girls and young people in advancing sustainable, gender-transformative change, the Global Programme collaborated with 1,361 formal and informal youth-led organizations in 2024.

In most programme countries, a major focus was on systematically promoting male engagement and positive masculinities, with over 4.7 million men and boys reached globally through dialogues that challenged patriarchy and promoted gender equality.

The Global Programme continued to develop tools to assess qualitative indicators of transformative change<sup>10</sup> and build the evidence base on what works, as outlined in its 2024 evidence paper<sup>11</sup>, with integrated approaches – combining gender and social norms change with education and economic empowerment – showing the strongest impact.

People-centred SBC is vital to the Global Programme's gender-transformative approach, driving community-led solutions that challenge harmful norms and promote gender equality. By engaging key influencers, SBC fosters collective action to create protective environments for girls. In 2024, the Global Programme advanced its SBC work with key tools and partnerships. It finalized a behavioural survey to identify drivers of child marriage and tailor interventions, to be launched in 2025. In addition, the Global Programme finalized and launched the SBC Co-Creation Playbook in 2024 – a participatory, user-led toolkit that guides a listen-first, people-centred process to gather community insights and co-create solutions that go

beyond traditional communication approaches. Engaging faith leaders has been a cornerstone of SBC in the Global Programme, recognizing their powerful influence in many communities. In 2024, a partnership with Religions for Peace and the African Council of Religious Leaders fostered inter-faith platforms and training in Mali and The Gambia, equipping leaders to address harmful practices. A desk review on effective faith engagement was also launched, with findings shared and a full report to follow in 2025. To address rising pushback on child rights, a social and community listening exercise was conducted across 29 African countries, helping reframe community dialogue and identify allies. Another social and community listening (SCL) round is planned for 2025 to track narrative shifts.

The combined efforts of GTAs and SBC work reflect a systems-level shift towards sustainable gender equality, positioning the transformation of gender and social norms as essential to ending child marriage and empowering adolescent girls worldwide.

**Leading evidence-based action:** In 2024, the Global Programme continued to lead evidence-based advocacy to end child marriage at the global, continental, regional, and national levels. Global highlights include participation in the Seventy-ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly, and support for the sixth United Nations resolution on child, early, and forced marriage. Regionally, the Global Programme advanced the domestication of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Model Law in 16 countries and developed its Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning framework. South Asia's regional action plan on addressing adolescent pregnancy was supported. Nationally, Sierra Leone passed landmark legislation to end child marriage, and Zambia launched a major advocacy campaign with support from its First Lady. Notably, India's Supreme Court issued one of its most progressive rulings on child marriage, citing the Global Programme's 'What Works' evidence paper.

The Global Programme also strengthened its leadership in evidence generation and uptake, supported by the Strategic Technical Assistance for Research (STAR) Initiative to end Harmful Practices at UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti and the Child Marriage Research to Action Network (CRANK) with Girls Not Brides. A key milestone was the publication of a synthesis paper informing Phase III programming, emphasizing effective approaches such as income strengthening, social

<sup>8</sup> See 5

<sup>9</sup> UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, *Partnering with women-led organisations to address child marriage in South Asia*, 2024. [www.unicef.org/rosa/reports/partnering-women-led-organisations-address-child-marriage-south-asia](http://www.unicef.org/rosa/reports/partnering-women-led-organisations-address-child-marriage-south-asia)

<sup>10</sup> UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, *Qualitative indicators and approaches for assessing progress on ending child, early and forced marriage and unions*, 2024. [www.unicef.org/documents/qualitative-indicators-and-approaches-assessing-progress-ending-CEFMU](http://www.unicef.org/documents/qualitative-indicators-and-approaches-assessing-progress-ending-CEFMU)

<sup>11</sup> UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, *A synthesis of what we know works to prevent and respond to child marriage*, 2024. [www.unicef.org/documents/synthesis-what-we-know-works-prevent-and-respond-child-marriage](http://www.unicef.org/documents/synthesis-what-we-know-works-prevent-and-respond-child-marriage)

protection, education, life skills, and SRHR, including CSE. STAR provided technical support to 19 research projects in 10 countries. The Global Programme convened global knowledge exchanges to promote evidence uptake through the CRANK in partnership with Girls Not Brides, including a symposium on the mental health impacts of child marriage, and dialogues on child marriage laws and prevention strategies. Similarly, the CRANK developed research spotlights based on systematic reviews commissioned by UNFPA in partnership with the Population Council, Girls Not Brides and WHO. Another major achievement was the launch of a collaborative process with WHO, UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti, and Girls Not Brides to steer a consultative research priority-setting process to strengthen the global evidence-to-action ecosystem towards ending child marriage.

## CATALYSING CHANGE BEYOND FOCUS COUNTRIES

The Global Programme continues to serve as a catalyst, extending its impact beyond the 12 focus countries through global influence, advocacy, and technical support. Highlights of the efforts spearheaded by Regional Offices are presented in Chapter 2.5.

In 2024, the Global Programme's new Rising Stars Initiative was launched, providing technical support to 18 additional countries, including Malawi, which launched a national strategy, and Colombia, which passed a landmark law banning child marriage. The Global Programme's expertise helped shape international discourse, including contributions to the United Nations Secretary-General's report on Child, Early and Forced Marriage submitted to the General Assembly in August 2024. It also inspired the design of the TUSIP<sup>12</sup> programme in Southeast Asia, strengthening regional collaboration. By leveraging data, sharing evidence, and shaping policy, the Global Programme accelerates global efforts to end child marriage by 2030.

## ADAPTING TO PROGRAMME CHALLENGES

In addition to the global pushback against gender equality, humanitarian crises, climate shocks, and funding constraints, in 2024 the Global Programme faced several more country-specific challenges to implementing its activities, which are detailed in Chapter 3.4. Political transitions and instability in Bangladesh and Ghana disrupted programme implementation, requiring continuous adaptation to shifting

priorities, leadership changes, and stakeholder engagement. The Global Programme responded by realigning strategies and strengthening advocacy to maintain momentum and rebuild institutional support. Security crises in countries like Burkina Faso, Yemen, and Niger disrupted access to communities. In Nepal and Mozambique, limited government human resources and frequent leadership changes undermined timely service delivery and weakened programme implementation, with gaps in staffing, funding, and coordination within key ministries posing persistent challenges. The Global Programme's efforts to strengthen multisectoral coordination helped mitigate some of these constraints, but capacity shortfalls remained a major barrier. In Assam, India, the state's punitive approach criminalizing child marriage discouraged community reporting and restricted access to essential services, underscoring the risks of neglecting human rights-based strategies. In many Global Programme countries, challenges such as remoteness, insecurity, and limited staff capacity hinder the collection of accurate, timely data, affecting monitoring and adaptation of interventions. Despite efforts to improve reporting tools, gaps remain in understanding key drivers and trends of child marriage and related issues, with delayed or outdated datasets further complicating effective programming and advocacy. Furthermore, weak coordination among partners at the national and subnational level hindered progress.

Despite these obstacles, which are described in further detail in the report, the Global Programme adapted by leveraging stronger and more strategic partnerships and linkages with large-scale programmes, enhancing advocacy and outreach for improved funding, strengthening multi-stakeholder coordination, and focusing on evidence-based and multisectoral interventions. It also focused on adaptive and innovative approaches such as addressing ending child marriage in humanitarian settings, developing digital solutions to ensure no one is left behind, and integrating climate change adaptation strategies with efforts to prevent child marriage.



<sup>12</sup> Towards Universal SRHR in the Indo-Pacific.

## LOOKING AHEAD

### Strategic priorities for 2025 and beyond

In 2025 and beyond, the Global Programme will continue to implement Phase III informed by the evidence base on what works to end child marriage. The Global Programme will prioritize evidence-based, high-impact interventions to maximize the greatest value for money and achievement of at-scale results, particularly in the context of growing financial uncertainty in the aid and development landscape.

**A holistic, multisectoral approach:** Integrated across education, health, child protection, GBV prevention and response, sexual and reproductive health, and social protection – will remain central to the programme’s strategy. Scaling through government-led and sustainable systems will be a key priority.

### Unlocking more financing towards ending child marriage:

The Global Programme will play a critical role in catalysing commitments – for instance, government pledges to increase budget allocations, new donors pledging multi-year support, and foundations/high net value investors that indicate interest in specific elements of ending child marriage.

Strategic priorities include:

- ◆ Scaling up partnerships with governments, financial institutions, civil society organizations, and the private sector;
- ◆ Addressing the funding gap by diversifying funding including efforts to unlock domestic finances to support efforts to end child marriage;
- ◆ Strengthening coalitions to counter the global backlash on gender equality and children’s and women’s rights; and
- ◆ Increasing support for women-led and feminist organizations, and youth-led organizations.

In 2025, the Global Programme will also deepen its commitment to GTAs<sup>13</sup>, expand digital strategies, and share technical guidance and knowledge beyond the focus countries to leverage the catalytic potential of the programme across and beyond programme countries. It will advance a localized, needs-driven research agenda that bridges evidence to accelerated action.



<sup>13</sup> UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, *Phase III programme document*, 2023. [www.unicef.org/media/145651/file/Programme%20document%20.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/media/145651/file/Programme%20document%20.pdf)

Table 1: Summary of output indicators performance for 2024

Indicator	2024		
	Target	Result	% Achieved
<b>Indicator 1111:</b> Number of adolescent girls (aged 10–19) who actively participated in life skills or comprehensive sexuality education interventions in programme areas	4,013,838	7,427,785	185%
<b>Indicator 1121:</b> Number of girls (aged 10–19) supported by the Programme to enrol and/or remain in primary or secondary school	2,608,075	8,474,725	325%
<b>Indicator 1211:</b> Number of boys and men actively participating in group education/dialogues that address harmful masculinities and gender norms	3,719,557	4,772,254	128%
<b>Indicator 1221:</b> Number of individuals (boys, girls, women and men) who participate in group education/dialogue sessions on consequences of and alternatives to child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls and gender equality	7,039,672	29,570,565	420%
<b>Indicator 1222:</b> Number of individuals (boys, girls, women and men) reached by mass media (traditional and social media) messaging on child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls and gender equality	86,072,096	280,391,495	326%
<b>Indicator 1223:</b> Number of local actors (e.g., traditional, religious and community leaders) with meaningful participation in dialogues and consensus-building to end child marriage	1,247,761	2,984,336	239%
<b>Indicator 1231:</b> Number of women-led and youth-led, feminist organizations, networks and coalitions of CSOs mobilized by the Global Programme this year in support of challenging social norms, mitigating the pushback and setbacks and promoting gender equality through advocacy, community mobilisation and capacity-building efforts	5,681	8,482	149%
<b>Indicator 2102:</b> Number of girls and boys in programme areas who accessed prevention and protection services	1,176,359	2,532,021	215%
<b>Indicator 2111:</b> Number of primary/ secondary/ non-formal schools in programme areas providing quality gender-friendly education that meets minimum standards	2,881	3,578	124%
<b>Indicator 2121:</b> Number of service delivery points in programme areas providing quality adolescent-responsive services (health, child protection/ gender-based violence) that meet minimum standards	7,343	7,007	95%
<b>Indicator 2201:</b> Number of girls (10-19) benefiting from social protection, poverty reduction and economic empowerment programmes	4,159,928	3,548,215	85%
<b>Indicator 2211:</b> Number of partnerships (both formal and informal) established to deliver adolescent-responsive social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes and services	596	282	47%
<b>Indicator 3111:</b> Number of policies or legal instruments addressing child marriage drafted, proposed or adopted at national and subnational level with Global Programme support	56	81	145%
<b>Indicator 3121:</b> Number of subnational plans with evidence-informed interventions to address child marriage implemented	103	301	292%
<b>Indicator 3122:</b> Number of policy and budget analysis documents developed and disseminated to inform budgeted multisectoral gender-responsive planning to address child marriage	16	9	56%
<b>Indicator 3201:</b> Number of evidence and knowledge products addressing child marriage which have been used in policy decisions, programme design and advocacy	32	35	109%

CHAPTER 1

# The Global Situation



## 1.1 CHILD MARRIAGE TRENDS

Globally, the practice of child marriage continues to decline. Today, the global prevalence of women aged 20 to 24 who were married before age 18 stands at 19 per cent, down from 22 per cent<sup>14</sup> a decade ago. Worldwide, 68 million child marriages have been averted in the last 25 years<sup>15</sup>.

Since its inception in 2016, the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme, currently in its third phase of implementation, has contributed to this remarkable progress. Working in partnership with governments, other influencers, parents, adolescents – especially girls – and civil society organizations, the Global Programme has enabled millions of girls across 12 high-prevalence and high-burden countries and beyond to shape their futures free from the harmful effects of child marriage and equipping girls with education and life skills; education, health, legal, and economic support; and transforming the gender unequal norms at the root of the practice.

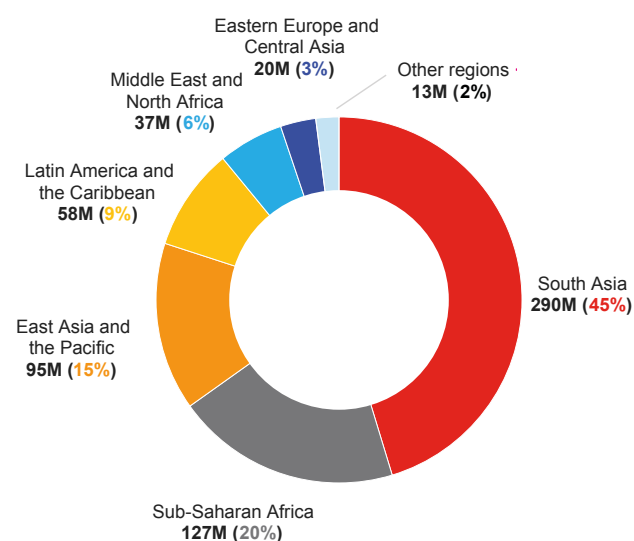
Despite global advances, there are still an estimated 650 million girls and women alive today who were married as children (before age 18)<sup>16</sup>, while an estimated 115 million boys and men around the world were married as children<sup>17</sup>. The global distribution of child brides by region is shown in Figure 1. Progress has been uneven across regions.

- ◆ Nearly half of all child brides (45 per cent) live in South Asia, with India alone accounting for one third of the world's child brides. Despite carrying the highest burden, it is also the region where progress has been most significant: the prevalence of child marriage in this region fell from 39 per cent to 26 per cent over the past decade.
- ◆ The next largest share of child brides lives in Sub-Saharan Africa (20 per cent), a region of growing concern. While some progress is evident – with prevalence declining from 38 per cent to 31 per cent over the past decade – it is now the region with the highest prevalence of child marriage worldwide. Moreover, Sub-Saharan Africa is predicted to account for a growing share of the world's child brides, and a steadily increasing absolute number, due to relatively slow progress and rapid population growth in the region, and in particular in poor quintiles.
- ◆ In Latin America and the Caribbean, where 9 per cent of the world's child brides live, 1 in 5 girls marry in childhood, most often through informal unions. Child marriage levels

in the region have remained stagnant for several decades. By 2030, the region is expected to have the second-highest prevalence of child marriage, after Sub-Saharan Africa.

- ◆ In the Middle East and North Africa, where one in six young women are married before the age of 18, some progress has been made, with most countries experiencing a decline in prevalence over the past 25 years. The region is notable for achieving more equitable progress between rich and poor populations than other parts of the world.
- ◆ Levels of child marriage in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific remain low but stagnant, with girls from disadvantaged populations still at risk<sup>18</sup>.

**Figure 1: Global distribution of girls and women first married or in union before age 18, by region**



**Note:** Values do not sum to total due to rounding.

**Source:** United Nations Children's Fund, *Is an End to Child Marriage within Reach? Latest trends and future prospects*. 2023 edition, UNICEF New York, 2023

<sup>14</sup> Source of prevalence data in this report: UNICEF global databases, 2025

<sup>15</sup> See 2

<sup>16</sup> See 3

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/115-million-boys-and-men-around-world-married-children-unicef>

<sup>18</sup> See 2

In light of these broader trends, evidence shows that India, Bangladesh, and Ethiopia are among those driving the global decline in child marriage. Newly released data also point to recent gains in other implementing countries. For instance, the latest data from Ghana (DHS 2022) indicate a continued long-term decline in prevalence, now standing at 16 per cent – half the prevalence for Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole. Declines are also continuing in Nepal, where the national prevalence now stands at 35 per cent (DHS 2022). While still high, this represents a halving of the prevalence over the past 40 years.

An expanding body of literature and research indicates that the main factors that place girls at greatest risk of child marriage across all regions of the world<sup>19</sup> are:

- ◆ **Poverty:** Girls from the poorest families face the highest risk of marrying in childhood, and poverty is commonly recognized as a driving factor encouraging families to marry daughters at a young age. At the national level, countries with lower gross domestic products per capita are home to higher levels of child marriage. In countries which have made progress in reducing levels of child marriage, evidence indicates that progress has primarily benefited girls from wealthier families. Girls from the richest households represent three times as many of the averted cases of child marriage in the past 25 years as girls from the poorest households. Girls living in rural areas – where most of those experiencing poverty are located – are often up to twice as likely to be married in childhood compared to those living in urban areas.
- ◆ **Lack of education:** In many countries, schooling and marriage are viewed as incompatible, and decisions about removing a girl from school and marrying her at a young age are often made at the same time. The girls most at risk of becoming child brides are those with little or no education, while girls with at least a secondary education are often spared early marriage. If all girls completed secondary education, child marriage could potentially decrease by approximately two-thirds (66 per cent), and it would drop by more than 80 per cent if all girls continued on to higher education.<sup>20</sup>
- ◆ **Access to livelihood opportunities:** Access to stable, skilled jobs in the formal sector drives lower child marriage rates by offering adolescent girls a viable path to economic independence.<sup>21</sup>

In some contexts, teenage pregnancy can act as a driver of child marriage, often as a response to social stigma, economic pressures, or cultural expectations. However, most childbearing (76 per cent) among girls under age 18 occurs within the context of marriage, illustrating that child marriage is a major pathway towards early pregnancy.<sup>22</sup> Data from 54 countries shows that the majority of first births to girls aged 17 years and younger occur within marriage or cohabiting unions.<sup>23</sup>

## 1.2 GLOBAL CHALLENGES TO ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE BY 2030

Despite global, regional, and national declines in child marriage, progress is insufficient to meet SDG target 5.3 which aims to eliminate harmful practices, including child marriage and female genital mutilation, by 2030. At the current rate, over nine million girls will still marry in the year 2030. Most countries with a high prevalence or burden of child marriage would need significantly speeded-up decline in the practice to meet the 2030 target.

Faster progress in ending child marriage is hindered by several factors, many of which are gaining in importance and complexity. The most prominent factors include the pushback against gender equality, humanitarian crises, climate shocks, and funding constraints.

**Pushback against gender equality** remains a persistent barrier to ending child marriage – manifesting through political, social, and cultural opposition – and there is growing evidence that this resistance is increasing globally. According to a comprehensive review of progress and barriers to gender equality, drawing on global, regional and national reviews of 159 countries, a quarter of countries reported backlash on women's rights<sup>24</sup>. The women's and children's rights agenda is often perceived as a threat to existing power structures, prompting resistance from those who feel their authority or status is being challenged. Girls' rights are especially under threat, as their agency, autonomy, and participation are often viewed as disruptive to traditional family and societal structures. This resistance often undermines the transformative agenda needed to empower girls and dismantle harmful gender norms, leading to the rollback of legal protections for women, girls, and other vulnerable groups, while also restricting access to healthcare – particularly sexual and reproductive health information and services – and education

<sup>19</sup> UNICEF, *Towards Ending Child Marriage*, 2021. <https://data.unicef.org/resources/towards-ending-child-marriage/>

<sup>20</sup> UNICEF, *The power of education to end child marriage*, 2022. <https://data.unicef.org/resources/child-marriage-and-education-data-brief/>

<sup>21</sup> UNFPA, *Adolescent empowerment at scale*, 2023. [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/BRAC-UNFPA\\_Adolescent%20Empowerment%20at%20Scale-Feb2023.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/BRAC-UNFPA_Adolescent%20Empowerment%20at%20Scale-Feb2023.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> See <sup>5</sup>

<sup>23</sup> UNFPA, *Motherhood in Childhood: the untold story*, 2022. <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/motherhood-childhood-untold-story>

<sup>24</sup> UN Women, *Women's rights in review 30 years after Beijing*, 2025. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2025/03/womens-rights-in-review-30-years-after-beijing>

and economic opportunities. Some of the main consequences of this pushback are:

- ◆ Legal and policy rollbacks and resistance: Efforts to weaken legal protections for girls and women are intensifying in various parts of the world. This legislative pushback is part of an observed broader trend of conservative leaders and politicians using legal frameworks to roll back protections for women and girls in order to maintain or revert to a more patriarchal status quo. Proposed changes to laws often seek to lower the legal age of marriage or weaken safeguards against harmful practices, for example:
  - ◇ In Iraq, in 2024, proposed amendments to Iraq's 1959 Personal Status Law – which sets the legal age of marriage at 18, or 15 with a judge's approval based on the child's 'maturity and physical capacity' – threatened to lower the age to as young as nine for girls, sparking widespread outrage among human rights activists and international community<sup>25</sup>.
  - ◇ In Afghanistan, bans on girls' education, restrictions on women's right to work, and restrictions on their freedom of movement have completely stifled opportunities for adolescent girls.
  - ◇ In The Gambia, religious and conservative actors actively challenged the national ban on FGM, threatening hard-won progress. This threat was successfully countered, including through support provided by UNFPA and UNICEF Regional Offices.
  - ◇ In Sierra Leone, the passage of the Child Rights Act of 2024 continues to face resistance – despite strong lobbying and advocacy<sup>26</sup> – primarily due to its clause banning female genital mutilation (FGM) for girls under 18. As FGM remains a deeply rooted social norm and a politically sensitive issue, some parliamentarians raised concerns about the language of the proposed ban, preventing consensus and ultimately stalling the bill.
  - ◇ In Burkina Faso, where the security situation has been perilous, implementing partners report a resurgence of harmful practices in certain localities. In addition, in March 2024, the Burkina Faso Council of Ministers declared May 15 to be Customs and Traditions Day. Certain (often very influential) community members have interpreted this public holiday as a justification to promote the return to harmful practices such as
- child marriage and FGM. With support from the Global Programme, implementing partners and civil society have initiated discussions with national authorities to assess the potential implications of such a celebration and explore appropriate mitigation measures.
- ◇ In Ghana, the controversial Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values bill passed through parliament in February 2024, and was a major topic during the 2024 general elections, negatively affecting advocacy against gender discriminatory norms and stereotypes. The bill has been criticized for its potential to further marginalize and discriminate against women and girls, and further complicate efforts to ensure the realization of SRHR rights in Ghana. Parents' support of activities promoting gender equality decreased as they became uncomfortable with their daughters participating in these activities.
- ◆ Restrictions on comprehensive sexuality education (CSE): Tighter government regulations on CSE in Pakistan and Bangladesh are hindering access to vital knowledge, life skills, and health information and services for young people. In Niger, the CSE curriculum has been withdrawn from schools under the pretext of requiring revision.
- ◆ Shrinking civic spaces: Civil society organizations – including women-led and youth-led organizations that are key partners in ending child marriage – face an increasingly coordinated backlash across much of the world, leading to shrinking civic space, and reversing years of progress and limiting advocacy efforts and programming. For instance, in India, state and national compliance requirements for CSOs have tightened, particularly in relation to their funding and registration status, and particularly in areas involving public advocacy. Similarly, in Uganda, legislation such as the Public Order Management Act and the amended NGO Act has restricted the ability and commitment of CSOs to advance the rights of women and girls. A recent report by the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women (VAW) identifies three major forms of backlash against CSOs – systemic exclusion, 'deny, distort, distract' tactics, and repression or violence – that are severely undermining progress by defunding services, spreading misinformation, and criminalizing feminist activists<sup>27</sup>.

The rollback of progress in gender equality highlights the urgent need to intensify systemic monitoring of potential

<sup>25</sup> Relief Web, *Iraq: Personal Status Law Amendment Sets Back Women's Rights*, 2025. <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/iraq-personal-status-law-amendment-sets-back-womens-rights-enar>

<sup>26</sup> FGM in Sierra Leone: What can be done to end it? 2024. <https://www.dw.com/en/fgm-in-sierra-leone-what-can-be-done-to-end-it/a-68176524>

<sup>27</sup> UN Trust Fund to End VAW, *Beyond Backlash: Advancing Movements to End Violence Against Women*, 2025. [https://untf.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-03/untf\\_backlash\\_paper\\_v4\\_final.pdf](https://untf.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-03/untf_backlash_paper_v4_final.pdf)

pushbacks, implement prevention and mitigation measures, and continue to advocate for gender equality in collaboration with women's rights organizations and feminist networks and movements. The need for context-specific, culturally sensitive advocacy and intentional support to CSOs cannot be over-emphasized. Advocacy will also be critical at the global level to maintain focus and donor commitment to gender equality and girls' rights. Without urgent action, girls worldwide are likely to face greater challenges in exercising their rights by 2030 than in previous decades.



**Humanitarian crises**, whether triggered by conflict, displacement, natural disasters, climate shocks, or public health crises – often prompt families and communities facing severe threats to their livelihoods to resort to harmful coping strategies. Marrying off a girl may provide life-saving income and a sense of security – particularly against sexual violence – or serve as a way to uphold traditional values when a community feels under external threat. Disrupted services and restricted humanitarian assistance leave girls more vulnerable to harmful practices and GBV. Additionally, the implementation of programming that addresses the needs of adolescent girls, including ending child marriage, is challenged by a weaker service structure, especially when multiple, overlapping crises create what is often referred to as a ‘polycrisis’. Different types of crisis present specific challenges to progress in the fight against child marriage.

- ◆ **Conflict and displacement:** The prevalence of child marriage in unstable countries with weak governance and/or conflict is twice the global average. The ongoing conflict in Yemen has severely constrained the Global Programme’s access to the north of the country. Nearly one third of young Yemeni women aged 20 to 24 were married before age 18<sup>28</sup>, and reaching them with meaningful interventions remains a severe challenge. Conflict in northern Ethiopia has also intensified the risks faced by adolescent girls. Assessments reveal that women and girls in these regions face increased risks of violence, including sexual violence<sup>29</sup>. Adolescent girls and young people face significant challenges related to livelihoods and food security, conflict-related violence and psychosocial well-being, education and sexual and reproductive health<sup>30</sup>. Ongoing conflict and violence in Burkina Faso have displaced over 2 million people, with women and children making up the majority. The closure of over 6,000 schools and limited access to services have heightened vulnerabilities, driving families to resort to child marriage as a coping mechanism. In Mozambique, the insurgency in Cabo Delgado coupled with recurring natural disasters has forced over a million people from their homes. The Global Programme chose to intervene in Cabo Delgado in 2024 in response to the emergency situation, but access is difficult and service provision is weak. Displaced girls are at heightened risk of child marriage (Cabo Delgado has the highest prevalence of child marriage in Mozambique), trafficking, and exploitation. The Rohingya refugee crisis in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, remains one of the world’s largest and most protracted humanitarian emergencies, with nearly one million Rohingya refugees living in camps.
- ◆ **Disasters and climate shocks:** The accelerating climate crisis is a major threat multiplier, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and disproportionately affecting poorer countries, marginalized communities, and adolescent girls. Extreme weather events, environmental degradation, and resource scarcity are becoming a regular feature of life on Earth, placing immense pressure on populations with the least access to resources and opportunities – especially those in rural areas who depend heavily on their local environments for survival. Natural disasters and climate shocks are hitting vulnerable regions particularly hard:
  - ◆ South Asia remains one of the most disaster-prone regions in the world, frequently experiencing cyclones, floods, and earthquakes. In 2024, severe monsoon flooding in Bangladesh and India displaced

<sup>28</sup> Child marriage data portal, Yemen country profile: <https://childmarriagedata.org/country-profiles/yemen/> and Yemen Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), 2023.

<sup>29</sup> UNFPA Ethiopia news item, 7 July 2022. <https://ethiopia.unfpa.org/en/news/hidden-plain-sight-conflicts-fueling-sexual-violence-northern-ethiopia>

<sup>30</sup> GAGE Policy Brief, *The impacts of the northern Ethiopia conflict on adolescents in Tigray*, 2024. <https://www.gage.odi.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/GAGE-Tigray-Brief-WEB.pdf>

millions, disrupted education and healthcare systems, and likely increased the risk of child marriage.

- ◇ Across the MENA region, extreme weather conditions – including droughts, floods, heatwaves, and rising sea levels – are intensifying, compounding existing social, political, and economic challenges. The region is now the most water-stressed globally, with 11 of the world’s 17 most water-scarce countries
- ◇ In Eastern and Southern Africa, the impacts of climate change were also severe in 2024. Prolonged droughts in Zambia, Malawi, and Zimbabwe triggered national disaster declarations, while El Niño-driven floods in Kenya, Somalia, and Tanzania caused widespread destruction, displacement, and loss of life.
- ◇ In West and Central Africa, climate shocks such as historic floods and extended droughts are becoming increasingly frequent, further intensifying regional instability.

These environmental crises have specific and severe consequences for adolescent girls. Disrupted education, limited access to essential health services, and heightened risks of early marriage are among the many challenges they face. Evidence shows that child marriage is more prevalent among those with the fewest resources – particularly in rural areas deeply affected by environmental change. In interviews with families and civil society organizations in Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe, economic hardship linked to climate shocks was repeatedly cited as a driver of child marriage<sup>31</sup>.

To better understand and respond to these threats, the Global Programme is supporting research into the linkages between climate shocks and child marriage. Ongoing studies are underway in Ethiopia and Madagascar, while research in Kenya (already published) and West and Central Africa (soon to be published) has been completed. These efforts aim to generate evidence that can inform effective, adaptive strategies to protect at-risk girls in a changing climate.

- ◆ **Public health emergencies:** Evidence highlights the role public health crises have in heightening girls’ risk of and vulnerability to child marriage, as families face economic hardship, disrupted health and education services, and weakened protection systems. In 2024, Eastern and Southern Africa faced several major public health

emergencies. In Zambia, a cholera outbreak during the rainy season, following intense rainfall after a prolonged drought – was the worst in four decades. These crises disrupted education, health and social services, including placing economic strain on families and potentially leaving girls more exposed to harmful coping strategies such as child marriage.

**Funding constraints** around child marriage prevention and response programmes is a major impediment to progress. Funding cuts across the board of traditional bilateral donors have continued and will undo some progress made in recent decades. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 20 of the 32 Development Assistance Committee members focused less on gender equality in their aid programmes in 2021–22 than they did in 2019–20<sup>32</sup>. Funding to the Global Programme slowed dramatically in 2024, with reduced resources affecting activities and results, especially in countries where coverage was expanded or where overall needs remain very high. As a result, Global Programme countries which had leaned strongly into scaling up their interventions have been faced with the challenge of having to withdraw or scale down in new or existing programme intervention areas.

- ◆ In Zambia, the Global Programme expanded to four new districts and new partnerships were developed with adolescent, women and faith-based organizations. However, insufficient resources to take programmes to scale, especially in regions with a high prevalence of child marriage and adolescent pregnancy will continue to undermine national progress towards ending child marriage. To mitigate the resource gap, the Global Programme will continue to advocate for increased government budgeting and engagement with more partners to leverage resources. Other sources of funding for child marriage programming in Zambia will also be explored.
- ◆ In Ethiopia, resource limitations have posed significant challenges in scaling up the programme beyond the current target areas, despite the high demand for interventions. This constraint has particularly affected the education component, which could not be implemented in all districts and communities where the social and behaviour change and child protection components are active. Innovative initiatives, such as using mobile phone-based Interactive Voice Response training and mentorship, have also been halted due to insufficient funding. Although the Global Programme partnered with the Network of

<sup>31</sup> UNFPA, *Child Marriage and Environmental Crises: An evidence brief*, 2021. [https://esaro.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/child\\_marriage\\_and\\_environmental\\_crises\\_an\\_evidence\\_brief\\_final.pdf](https://esaro.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/child_marriage_and_environmental_crises_an_evidence_brief_final.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> OECD, *Development finance for gender equality*, 2024. [https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/development-finance-for-gender-equality-2024\\_e340afbf-en.html](https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/development-finance-for-gender-equality-2024_e340afbf-en.html)

Ethiopian Women's Association (NEWA), a women-led umbrella organization with 37 local women's rights-focused organizations, the focus remains limited to five regions and the federal level due to budget constraints. Resource constraints have hindered the programme's expansion and the inclusion of more innovative components and interventions.

As resources are stretched thin, programmes face difficulties in scaling up interventions, sustaining operations, and reaching the most vulnerable girls. This funding gap is particularly concerning in the context of humanitarian crises, where child protection and gender-based violence prevention efforts are often deprioritized.

Funding gaps thus underscore the need for more diversified financing sources (for example new government pledges, private sector contributions, foundations and high-net-worth individuals). Efforts should aim to unlock domestic financing rooted in sustainable resources and multisectoral alignment, while also securing funding deliberately directed towards

the well-being of adolescent girls. This ensures the principle of *leaving no one behind* is put into practice by prioritizing support for the most marginalized girls<sup>33</sup> – those who are poor, pregnant, already married, widowed or divorced, adolescent mothers, living with disabilities, or affected by humanitarian crises that further deepen their vulnerabilities. The Global Programme is working to ensure a more systematic focus on evidence-based interventions to end child marriage at scale. It leverages other large-scale initiatives to support this goal such as established, government-owned social protection programmes in countries including Bangladesh, Ghana, Malawi, and Zambia. Collaboration between the Global Programme and UNICEF's Social Policy and Social Protection teams is essential to accelerating efforts to end child marriage.

In light of the increasingly complex context and mounting challenges, the Global Programme must intensify its efforts to ensure that progress to end child marriage is both accelerated and sustained to meet SDG Target 5.3 by 2030.



<sup>33</sup> UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, *Phase III Summary Narrative*, 2023. <https://www.unicef.org/media/143861/file/Phase-III-Summary.pdf>

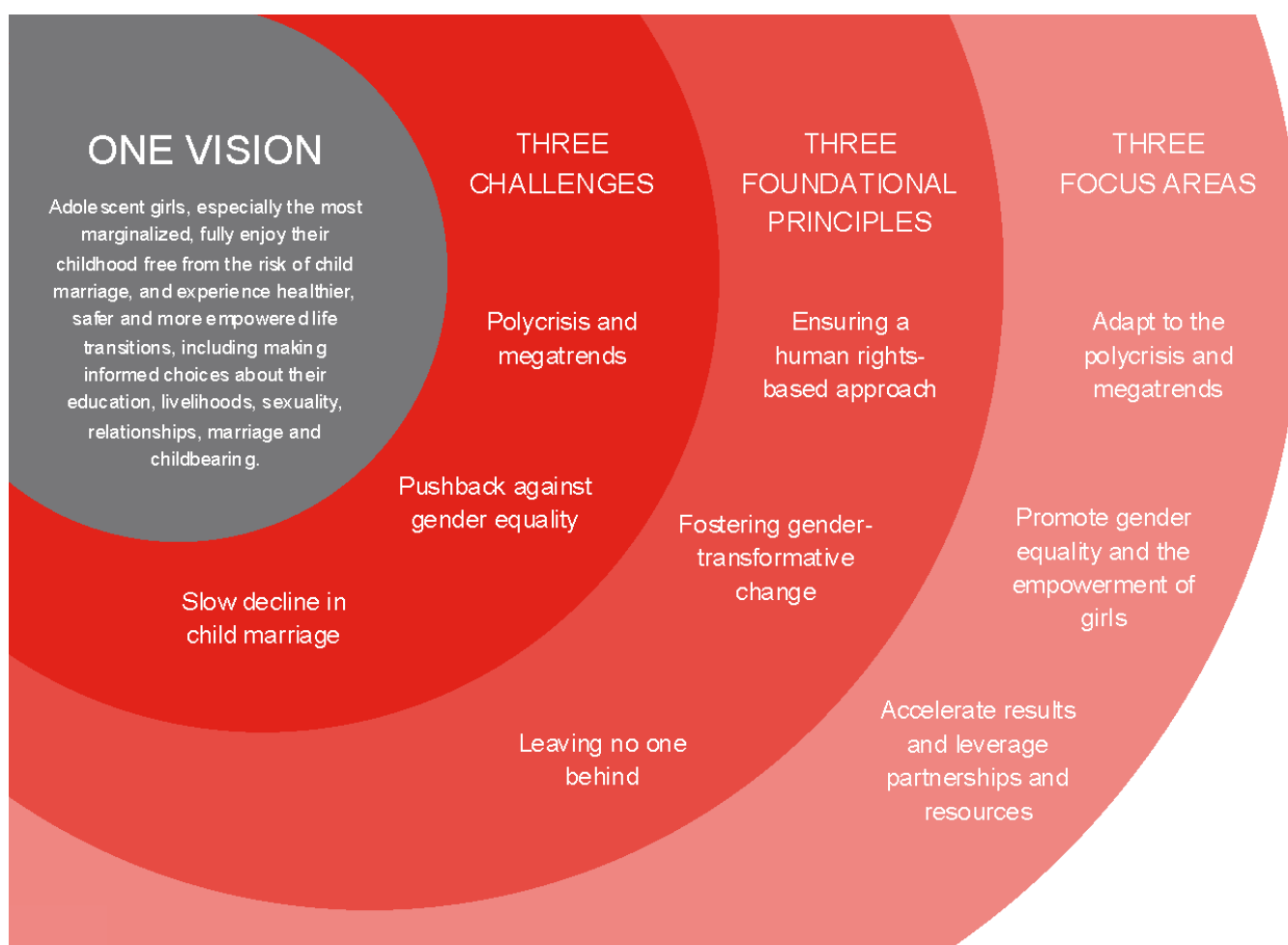
CHAPTER 2

# Global Programme Achievements



## 2.1 LAUNCHING PHASE III (2024–2030)

Figure 2: Global Programme Phase III vision



In its third phase (2024–2030), the Global Programme identifies six immediate outcomes within its Theory of Change (ToC) to accelerate progress towards ending child marriage.

These outcomes are:

- ◆ Intensively supporting marginalized girls
- ◆ Enabling family and community environment
- ◆ Strengthening systems for girls
- ◆ Addressing poverty drivers
- ◆ Implementing laws and policies, and
- ◆ Strengthening and using data and evidence

All Global Programme countries have designed their own contextually localized ToC which draws on the global model. The Phase III ToC remains focused on GTAs and multisectoral and cross-sectoral efforts. It also acknowledges the shift in attitudes and the growing opposition to gender equality, human rights and democracy. Moreover, it emphasizes partnerships with youth and women-led and feminist organizations, through movement and coalition-building perspectives to counter the pushback, and on partnerships that promote investment in SRHR, CSE and protection services for adolescent girls.

Underscoring a renewed commitment to ending child marriage, Phase III of the Global Programme was launched at the beginning of 2024, with planning and launch events taking place at the global, regional and country level.

## GLIMPSES FROM THE GLOBAL LAUNCH OF PHASE III AT CSW68

At the global level, Phase III of the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage was officially launched on 14 March 2024 in New York, during the Sixty-eighth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68). This milestone event was co-convened by the governments of Canada and the United States. The launch was a strategic moment to garner commitments from various partners including member states.



© Global Programme/2024

At the country level, countries implementing the Global Programme held their own Phase III launch events, demonstrating strong government buy-in and solid partnerships with development and CSO partners.

In [Mozambique](#), the Government reinforced its commitment to ending child marriage by launching Phase III on June 6, 2024, in collaboration with the Global Programme. As humanitarian emergencies and climate change threaten progress towards ending child marriage, the Global Programme expanded its reach to include the conflict-ridden Cabo Delgado province.

In [Sierra Leone](#), Phase III of the programme was successfully launched by the Minister of Gender and Children's Affairs, on 10 October 2024, in collaboration with the Ministers of Social Welfare and Basic and Senior Secondary Education. This initiative reinforced government leadership and ownership, ensuring the programme's sustainability, as government commitment is central to its long-term success. An ambition for the Global Programme going forward will be to leverage social protection systems including social safety nets and empower youth to reduce child marriage and adolescent pregnancy.

## 2.2 ADVANCING GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES

The empowerment of adolescent girls requires not only directly supporting them, but also creating a supportive family and community environment in which they are valued, protected, enabled to enjoy and exercise their rights, contribute meaningfully to society, and lead fulfilled lives. The Global Programme does this through gender-transformative programming and social and behaviour change interventions in communities, and with partners.

### 2.2.1 Gender-transformative approaches

Gender-transformative approaches (GTAs) aim to address the root causes of gender inequality by transforming harmful gender roles, norms, and power dynamics, while working towards redistributing power, resources, and services more equally. GTAs have been a cornerstone of the Global Programme since its inception. Interventions aimed at transforming gender norms involve diverse efforts to engage institutions, communities, families, and individuals in challenging harmful practices and advancing gender equality. These efforts may include life skills education for adolescent girls, caregiver discussion groups, community dialogues, initiatives to engage men and boys and promote positive masculinities, the use of media and communication strategies, and training in GTAs.

## GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE ACCELERATOR TOOL WORKSHOPS



©UNICEF/Zambia/2024. Participants at a GTA Tool workshop in Zambia

The Gender Transformative Accelerator Tool (also known as GTA Tool) workshop is designed as a process of rapid programmatic review that brings together staff, government representatives, CSOs and other implementing partners. Originally launched in 2021 during Phase II, a second edition of the facilitator guide was released in April 2024<sup>34</sup>. The vision of the workshop has now been revised to integrate values clarification exercises<sup>35</sup> addressing the internal gender biases of staff and implementing partners. The process starts with a priority-setting conversation; it is then followed by an immersive in-person workshop over three to five days that focuses on the core elements of a gender-transformative approach and reflection on personal and organizational values. The workshop reviews key concepts around gender through an iterative process that helps participants to analyse their work. The main intended outcome is that staff and partners co-create a prioritized road map that helps them identify a set of actions needed to integrate gender-transformative approaches into their work that align with the Global Programme's contextualized ToC.

In Phase III, the Global Programme is deepening its commitment to scale up and invest in both system-level and sustainable structural changes to achieve gender equality. In 2024, the Global Programme promoted gender-transformative approaches by:

**Providing technical support and building capacities of staff, partners and service providers:** Technical support to enhance personnel capacity has been a main avenue to foster gender-transformative change across all programme countries. In 2024, Ethiopia, Ghana and India held values clarification workshops primarily for civil society partners. These workshops employed participatory and interactive methodologies to help participants explore their values, biases and assumptions and build shared understanding, collaboration and alliance among CSO partners to advance gender-transformative approaches in their programmes. In Sierra Leone, an integrated Gender Transformative Accelerator and values clarifications workshop<sup>36</sup> was held in April 2024 with support from the GPSU in HQ. The training brought together 32 participants, including representatives from government ministries, implementing partners, and staff from UNFPA and UNICEF. This influenced gender-transformative interventions such as the cascading of

GTA trainings to the Sierra Leone Police Family Support Unit, positive parenting training to front-line workers (social workers, police, paralegals, and safe home staff) and the adoption of a revised gender-transformative Life Skills curriculum and updated standard operating procedures for Safe Spaces. By deepening participants' understanding and commitment, the workshop also helped lay the groundwork for Phase III. This supported the integration of GTAs into the implementation of key national frameworks, including the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act (2022), and the forthcoming National Strategy for the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancy and Ending Child Marriage (2025–2030).

**Integrating gender-transformative approaches in government programmes in order to leverage resources at scale:**

In Ghana, the Global Programme worked with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection to strengthen gender and shock responsiveness of social protection programmes and services to address the needs of the poorest adolescent girls and their families through the development, finalization and launching of the Gender Roadmap for Social Protection Sector, and the Social Protection Shock Response Assessment Report. The objective of these two documents is to help main-

<sup>34</sup> UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, *GTA Tool workshop facilitation guide*, 2024. [www.unicef.org/media/160301/file/ECM%20GTA%20Workshop%20Facilitation%20Guide%20\(Second%20Edition\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/media/160301/file/ECM%20GTA%20Workshop%20Facilitation%20Guide%20(Second%20Edition).pdf)

<sup>35</sup> UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage and UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation, *Advancing Gender-Transformative*, 2024. [www.unicef.org/documents/GTA-VCAT-facilitation-guide](http://www.unicef.org/documents/GTA-VCAT-facilitation-guide)

<sup>36</sup> UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, *Advancing Gender-Transformative Approaches in the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage: Exploring gender, power, and resources*, 2024. [www.unicef.org/documents/ECM%20GTA%20BVCAT](http://www.unicef.org/documents/ECM%20GTA%20BVCAT)

stream and integrate a gender-transformative approach and shock responsiveness into social protection service delivery for women and girls in Ghana. Also in Ghana, support from the Global Programme enabled the institutionalization of the new seven-week certified in-service training into the School of Social Work, in which a gender-transformative approach has been incorporated as one of the key topics. This will equip the social service workforce at the decentralized level with the skills needed to provide gender-transformative solutions to different cases, including child marriage and adolescent pregnancy.

**Expanding the use of the Gender-Transformative Accelerator Tool beyond Global Programme countries:** In 2024, the GTA tool was adapted for use in the Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation (JPFGM) through the development of an Integrated Gender-Transformative Accelerator and Values Clarification Workshop Facilitation Guide.<sup>37</sup> It was implemented in six JPFGM countries: Senegal, Mauritania, Uganda, Kenya, The Gambia, Djibouti. This demonstrates the complementarity of both initiatives, showcasing cross-learning and a collaborative effort to maximize resources and enhance results. The Global Programme and JPFGM share a common focus on addressing gender inequality as a root cause of the problem, acknowledging that gender transformative change is essential for eliminating the harmful practices.

**Increasing support for youth, feminist and women-led organizations and movements to redistribute resources and mitigate pushback against gender equality:** With a view to amplifying impact and achieving sustainable change, the Global Programme expanded its partnership with women-led organizations from 74 in 2023 to 133 in 2024<sup>38</sup>, strengthening their capacities in gender-transformative programming and advocacy to end child marriage and promote gender equality. In addition, the Regional Guidance on Partnering with Women-Led Organizations to Address Child Marriage in South Asia<sup>39</sup> was jointly developed by the Global Programme and Girls Not Brides and co-created with grassroots organizations. The guidance explores strategies adopted by women-led organizations to prevent child marriage amid shrinking civic space in South Asia. It emphasizes holistic alliances with diverse stakeholders, grounded in feminist principles. It also highlights promising practices and strengthens the resource base for sustainable interventions. In East Africa, a GPECM-funded workshop brought together 36 WLOs from Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda, and Zambia to promote shared learning, strengthen leadership, and build a network of WLOs in the region. This

built on a similar movement-building workshop in 2023 and will be continued in 2025.

To cross pollinate the capacity of WLOs, UNICEF ROSA hosted a regional webinar, *Shaping Futures: Women-led organizations pioneering child marriage prevention and response in South Asia*, in which over 50 local CSOs from South Asia participated. The webinar addressed key challenges in the progress to end child marriage, and spotlighted good practices and strategies from three women-led organizations in India, Bangladesh and Zambia. Key takeaways from the webinar include: (1) women-led organizations remain key to ending child marriage programmes; (2) women-led organizations are also critical in changing gender norms at the community level, including playing a critical role in community and policy advocacy around child marriage; (3) UNFPA and UNICEF should invest in fostering networks and sharing key gender-transformative approaches across women-led organizations in ending child marriage; and (4) UNICEF and UNFPA should invest more in supporting capacity building/cross-learning among grassroots women-led organizations (capacity building and resourcing).



© UNICEF/UN0684380/Dejongh

<sup>37</sup> UNFPA-UNICEF *Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation, Integrated Gender-Transformative Accelerator and Values Clarification Workshop Facilitation Guide*, 2024. [www.unfpa.org/resources/integrated-gender-transformative-accelerator-and-values-clarification-workshop](http://www.unfpa.org/resources/integrated-gender-transformative-accelerator-and-values-clarification-workshop)

<sup>38</sup> See 5

<sup>39</sup> See 8

To amplify the voices of adolescent girls and young people in driving sustainable, gender-transformative change, the Global Programme partnered with 1,361 youth-led organizations – both formal and informal – in 2024, actively involving them in programme design and implementation.<sup>40</sup>

**Systematically promoting male engagement and positive masculinities for gender equality:** In 2024, the Global Programme engaged 4,772,254 men and boys across all programme countries, with the biggest share of these in India, followed by Bangladesh. Below are some country-specific examples:

- ◆ In Ethiopia, 84,583 men and boys participated in structured dialogue sessions led by trained facilitators using a specialized manual, *Empowering Allies: A Manual For Male Engagement to Promote Gender Equality, End Child Marriage and FGM*, for age groups 10-14<sup>41</sup>, 15-19<sup>42</sup>, and 20 and above<sup>43</sup> (published in 2024). The dialogues covered topics such as power, masculinity, patriarchy, gender equality, GBV, child marriage and FGM. Participants actively applied their knowledge to create a protective environment for girls by reporting child marriage

and FGM arrangements, negotiating to delay marriages, and declining marriage requests for their daughters.

- ◆ In Ghana, 13,250 boys and men participated in group education using Child Protection Community Facilitation Toolkits to address harmful masculinities and promote gender equality for girls. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, with Global Programme support, developed additional toolkit content including a facilitator's manual, flashcards, and activities. Adapted from international examples such as Equimundo's Program H and MenCare 50:50, this content encourages dialogue among men and boys to promote positive masculinities. The development process centred on communities and service providers to ensure contextualization. Similarly, 5,298 boys and men were engaged in group sessions through safe spaces and mass messaging to promote positive masculinities and address discriminatory gender norms. This was done through the Promoting Adolescent Safe Spaces (PASS) initiative, in partnership with the NGOs NORSAAC, Purim African Youth Development Platform, and International Needs Ghana, and the Regional Coordination Councils.



© UNICEF/UN0535906/Dejongh

<sup>40</sup> This number includes 1,261 youth networks in Ethiopia, which are non-formal structures (not formally registered groups) at the community level.

<sup>41</sup> UNICEF Ethiopia, *Empowering Allies: A Manual for Male Engagement to Promote Gender Equality, End Child Marriage and FGM*. [www.unicef.org/ethiopia/media/11556/file/Empowering%20Allies:%20A%20Manual%20for%20Male%20Engagement%20to%20Promote%20Gender%20Equality,%20End%20Child%20Marriage%20and%20FGM%20Boys%20Ages%2010-14.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/media/11556/file/Empowering%20Allies:%20A%20Manual%20for%20Male%20Engagement%20to%20Promote%20Gender%20Equality,%20End%20Child%20Marriage%20and%20FGM%20Boys%20Ages%2010-14.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> UNICEF Ethiopia, *Empowering Allies: A Manual for Male Engagement to Promote Gender Equality, End Child Marriage and FGM Boys Ages 15-19*, 2024. [www.unicef.org/ethiopia/reports/empowering-allies-0](http://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/reports/empowering-allies-0)

<sup>43</sup> UNICEF Ethiopia, *Empowering Allies: A Manual For Male Engagement to Promote Gender Equality, End Child Marriage and FGM Aged 20 and Above*, 2024. [www.unicef.org/ethiopia/reports/empowering-allies-1](http://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/reports/empowering-allies-1)

## COMMUNITY ROLE MODELS: MALE MENTORS IN MOZAMBIQUE



© UNFPA Mozambique/2024/Mbuto Machili

In Mozambique, community dialogue sessions on positive masculinities reached 64,376 men and boys. Notably, the Global Programme is carrying out peer-to-peer mentorship of boys and young men aged 10–24 at the community level, through Kutenga in Nampula and Rede Hopem (The Men for Change Network) in Zambézia. Each mentor leads mentorship sessions of 25–30 mentees in groups divided by age. The male mentorship started in 2022 as part of the GTA roadmap.

The male mentorship sessions have encouraged boys and young men to adopt healthy/positive masculinity models, including a change in mentality and behaviour among boys concerning their partners and society at large. In 2024, 525 male mentors (225 in Nampula and 300 in Zambézia) received refresher training. It led to peer-to-peer mentorship sessions for boys and young men in safe spaces at the community level. There, they addressed transformative issues of gender, positive masculinities and adolescent and youth rights. Through the mentorship sessions, the male mentors reached 18,750 boys and young men, of whom 11,015 were boys aged 10–18 and 7,735 were young men aged 18–24. The male mentors become role models in their communities, influencing their peers, families and community members to collectively challenge prevailing harmful norms and practices, including all forms of gender-based violence. The male engagement activities with young boys and men are complemented with work with parents and caregivers who are reached through gender-transformative messaging.



© UNFPA Mozambique/2024/Mbuto Machili

“

The rooster is the one who rules the house, and the hen obeys: This is how we have been taught since we were born, that the man should always be the superior, the one who makes the decisions in the family, and the woman should be submissive and obedient.

But after this training, I was sensitized, and today, I am certain that this practice is harmful because we are violating women's rights. Both have the same rights, and when there is gender equality, there are more gains; we do not oppress women, and together, we fight for the development of our community. There must be equality and gender equity between men and women.

A young mentee in Zambézia ”

”

### Continuing to build the evidence base on what works for gender-transformative change:

In 2024, the Global Programme published a synthesis paper on what works to end child marriage<sup>44</sup>. The paper highlighted that a significant body of literature indicates a strong connection between child marriage and prevailing social and gender norms. It also noted that interventions focused on gender norm change have been found to be promising, but need more research. The strongest evidence for the impact of gender norms programming emerges when it is thoughtfully integrated with other strategies, such as economic empowerment, education, and vocational training. Similarly, the Global Programme, in partnership with Girls Not Brides, developed two CRANK Research Spotlights leveraging the systematic review conducted by UNFPA and the Population Council to inform the WHO guideline on adolescent pregnancy. They discuss (1) the evidence on [girls' empowerment interventions](#); (2) [education interventions](#) to end child marriage and address the need of married girls; (3) [economic empowerment interventions](#) to end child marriage; and (4) [cash and asset incentive schemes](#) to address child marriage and support married girls. The Spotlights present the most recent available evidence and additional resources for practitioners.

### Fine-tuning quantitative and qualitative measurements of gender-transformative change:

In 2024, the Global Programme finalized a validated quantitative survey on behavioural drivers of child marriage. In addition, the Global Programme also developed a report and toolkit on tracking qualitative indicators and approaches for assessing gender transformative change to prevent child marriage.<sup>45</sup> Moving forward, the Global Programme aims to strengthen the capacity of country programmes to utilize qualitative measures for tracking progress towards gender equality and shifting norms that support child marriage. Qualitative measurements provide insights into the social, cultural and economic factors influencing child marriage, enabling corrective actions when needed.

#### 2.2.2 Social and behaviour change

People-centred social and behaviour change (SBC) approaches enable the programme to unpack what drives behaviour in different contexts, understand what matters to communities, and develop interventions that speak to both the heart and mind – while addressing the root causes of child marriage. SBC activities create spaces for meaningful reflection on the norms that perpetuate child marriage, challenge existing power imbalances – including gender inequalities – promote new, positive norms, and foster commitment to creating a protective environment for girls. By engaging with key

gatekeepers and groups in the community – including faith and traditional leaders, men, women, and youth – SBC approaches help create new norms that support gender equality, value boys and girls equally, and foster actions needed to end child marriage, such as speaking out against the practice, keeping girls in school, encouraging girls to enter the job market, discussing the benefits of delaying marriage, and increasing SRHR service uptake. As such, SBC is also an important approach for gender transformation and for countering the pushback against gender equality. High-lights of SBC work conducted in 2024 include the following.

- ◆ In 2024, the Global Programme finalized the child marriage behavioural survey, which contains a series of cognitive-tested and validated indicators, piloted and tested in six countries. The survey is designed to capture drivers of child marriage across the individual, social and environmental level to design tailored interventions that address the determinants of behaviour. The validated survey will be launched and made available to countries – including those beyond the Global Programme – in 2025. It will serve as an additional tool to tailor interventions to the specific factors shown to be most critical in driving the practice, while also enabling the tracking of progress towards the desired outcomes.
- ◆ The SBC Co-Creation Playbook was finalized and launched in 2024. This participatory, user-led toolkit guides users through a people-centred, listen-first approach designed to gather community insights and co-create solutions with the community that go beyond communication. In Ghana, the tool enabled implementing partners to understand what really matters to the communities they work with, with the well-being of girls and pregnancy prevention being their number one priority. Through the co-creation process, the partners co-designed and prototyped two solutions with the communities in the Cape Coast Region. One solution focused on making SRHR services more girl-friendly by adding spaces for games and social interaction, while the second involved engaging 'Queen Mothers' – recognized by the community as key influencers – to facilitate SRHR dialogues with young women and their mothers through theatre. The two prototypes will be further tested and implemented in 2025.
- ◆ Given the influence of faith leaders in many communities, engaging them has been a cornerstone of SBC in the Global Programme. In 2024, a partnership with Religions for Peace and the African Council of Religious Leaders allowed for a coordinated approach to messaging and

<sup>44</sup> See <sup>11</sup>

<sup>45</sup> See <sup>10</sup>

advocacy from faith communities around child marriage. In Mali and The Gambia, the partnership led to the creation of an interfaith platform that brings together religious leaders, including women in faith, from different faiths, to discuss harmful practices, debate on how best to advocate for change, while seeking allies in ending child marriage. In addition, Religions for Peace conducted the Faith for Positive Change for Children training in both Mali and The Gambia, which equipped faith leaders with key skills and tools to engage in discussions and debates around harmful practices with their faith communities. In 2025, a new training package tailored specifically to harmful practices will be co-designed with faith leaders.

Recognizing the importance of engagement for the Global Programme, a desk review was initiated to understand what works in faith engagement for ending harmful practices. The lessons learned from this review were shared with country offices and partners through a series of webinars, while the full report will be published in 2025.

- ◆ Recognizing the increasing pushback against child rights, the Global Programme also invested in a social and community listening (SCL) exercise across 29 African countries. SCL consists in gathering real-time data from publicly available online and traditional media sources, to monitor sentiment, narratives and discourses around specific topics. By monitoring this, the Global Programme is able to pick up on trends, misinformation and rumours, and adjust activities accordingly. The SCL report helped countries to identify allies for partnership, such as certain faith leaders, and to reframe community dialogue to address the dominant narratives circulating online. Another SCL exercise will be conducted in 2025 to determine if and how narratives have shifted.

### 2.3 LEADING EVIDENCE-BASED ADVOCACY

Evidence-based advocacy aimed at engaging the support and commitment of governments to end child marriage is pivotal for accelerating action and ensuring the success of the Global Programme. In 2024, in addition to the launch of Phase III at the global and country levels, the Global Programme led and coordinated several other high-level advocacy events at the global, regional and country levels, mostly leveraging key international days and moments. These key advocacy moments provided an opportunity to influence the ending child marriage agenda and to highlight the success and impact of the Global Programme's work at the global, regional and country levels.

#### Global and continental advocacy and influencing

##### ICPD30 Global Youth Dialogue:

The Governments of Benin, Denmark and the Netherlands, together with UNFPA, hosted the ICPD30 Global Youth Dialogue with the theme *A new generation's vision for the future*. The event took place on 4-5 April 2024 in Cotonou, Benin. The dialogue created a platform for solutions-focused discussions with young people on the continuing implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. The 400 youth delegates from around the world reaffirmed the pivotal and active role young people in every corner of the world have played in promoting, protecting and delivering the promise of ICPD and called for urgent accelerated action through the Cotonou Youth Action Agenda which includes demands on gender equality and ending child marriage. The GPSU directly supported the sessions related to gender-transformative education, human rights and radical inclusion.

##### The Fifty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD), New York:

In May 2024, the CPD adopted by consensus the Declaration on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development, reaffirming the ICPD Programme of Action and key actions for its further implementation. The occasion strengthened member states' commitments to advance SRHR and to ending child marriage.



**end child marriage**  
A voice. A chance. A future.

**DAY OF THE AFRICAN CHILD**  
**16 JUNE 2024**

**1 IN 5** young women worldwide were married before their 18th birthday.

**640M** girls and women worldwide were married in childhood

**AFRICA** is home to the highest prevalence of child marriage

**OVER 130M** girls and women were married before 18 in Africa

Particularly in **Sub-Saharan Africa** where **32%** of girls were married before 18

**None** of the top **5** countries for child marriage has a secondary completion rate for girls above **15%**

**STATISTICS**

**66%** Child marriage could potentially decrease by approximately **two-thirds (66%)** if all girls completed secondary education.

If all girls continued on to **higher education**, the level of child marriage would drop by more than **80%**.

Resources:  
1. The Child Marriage Data Portal: <https://childmarriage-data.org/>  
2. The power of education to end child marriage: <https://data.unicef.org/resources/child-marriage-and-education-data-brief/>

**UNFPA-UNICEF GLOBAL PROGRAMME TO END CHILD MARRIAGE**



**Day of the African Child:** On the Day of the African Child (16 June), the Global Programme launched a social media campaign to emphasize the urgent need to end child marriage. This initiative aligned with this year’s theme, *Education for All Children in Africa*. The campaign highlighted the crucial role of education in combating child marriage, garnering 11,840 impressions on X alone. The effort was well-received and shared by UNICEF Education and the UN Girls’ Education Initiative, further amplifying the message.

**High-level event during the seventy-ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly:** On 24 September, the Governments of Canada and Zambia, in partnership with Child Marriage Monitoring Mechanism and the Global Programme, hosted a high-level side event during the Seventy-Ninth Session of the United Nations General Assembly. The event, titled *Charting Brighter Futures: Utilizing Data for Accelerated Action to End Child Marriage and Achieve SDG 5.3*, brought together key stakeholders from around the world, all committed to one common goal: ending child marriage.



© UNICEF/Child Marriage Monitoring Mechanism/2024

**International Day of the Girl:** On 11 October, a series of impactful activities was held, mobilizing efforts at the country, regional, and global levels – both within UNICEF, UNFPA and in partnership with others – to focus on ending child marriage. In New York, the flagship side event Girls’ Speak Out at the United Nations Headquarters provided an opportunity for girls to hold direct dialogue with Member States and United Nations Agencies through a girl-led town hall discussion hosted by the Working Group on Girls and Sponsoring Partners – The Permanent Missions of Canada, Türkiye and Perú, UNFPA, UNICEF, and UN Women.

### Adoption of United Nations General Assembly's 6th Resolution on child, early and forced marriage (CEFM):

The Global Programme played a crucial role in shaping the UN General Assembly's [sixth resolution on ending child, early, and forced marriage](#), adopted on 18 November 2024. This is the tenth anniversary of Canada and Zambia's partnership leading this resolution together (as co-penholders). The Global Programme provided consultations and technical support, especially around definition/terminology and data during rounds of negotiations.

**12th African Humanitarian Symposium:** On 19 November, the Global Programme, together with the Humanitarian Division of the African Union Commission and UNICEF Innocenti, presented a session at the 12th African Humanitarian Symposium (which was held in Nairobi, Kenya from 18-21 November). The session [explored lessons from evidence and practice of child marriage and FGM in humanitarian settings](#), contributing to reinforced collective commitment to eliminating harmful practices in humanitarian crises and beyond.

### Regional advocacy and influencing

**SADC Model Law:** From 20 to 22 August, a regional meeting in Lusaka, Zambia reviewed progress on implementing the SADC Model Law to end child marriage, adopted in 2016. The event was co-hosted by the SADC Parliamentary Forum, Girls Not Brides, HIVOS, UNFPA, East and Southern Africa Regional Office, UNICEF and Plan International's Southern Africa Programme, bringing together stakeholders to accelerate efforts to protect children and ensure the Model Law's effective adoption across 16 SADC countries.

**Regional webinar on the cost of child marriage in the Arab Region:** On the occasion of the International Day of the Girl Child, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), in collaboration with UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women Regional Offices and the Regional Action Forum on Ending Child Marriage held a webinar to launch three reports addressing the economic cost estimates of child marriage in the Arab region. The reports cover evidence from 13 countries and the webinar provided policy recommendations to key stakeholders including governments, advocates and academics.

**South Asia Regional Plan:** In November 2024, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) jointly with the Global Programme, WHO and member states launched the [South Asia regional action plan \(2024-2030\)](#) to prevent adolescent pregnancies and provide better care for married, pregnant and parenting adolescents in South Asia.

### Country advocacy and influencing

In 2024, Global Programme focus countries demonstrated their commitment to ending child marriage through high-level advocacy events at the national level. Some key highlights are outlined below:

**Sierra Leone:** The First Lady's ongoing ['Hands Off Our Girls' campaign, first launched in 2018](#), has been instrumental in driving advocacy to end child marriage. As a result, in July 2024, Sierra Leone took a giant leap towards gender equality and child protection by unanimously passing the Prohibition of Child Marriage Law. Championed by the First Lady, this landmark legislation outlaws child marriage and aims to empower girls for a brighter future. This milestone also paves the way for other African nations to repeal laws that permit child marriage and to ensure girls can complete both primary and secondary education.

**Uganda:** On 11 June, Uganda launched [the Parliamentary Forum to end Child Marriages and Teenage Pregnancies in Uganda](#), calling for action to prevent pregnancies and ending child marriages together with parents and religious leaders

**Zambia:** In Zambia, the First Lady led a [conference](#) against child marriage in March 2024, and in June 2024, launched the [#EndChildMarriage advocacy campaign](#) with an accompanying advocacy strategy developed by the GPECM.

Leveraging the Steering Committee's field visit to [Bangladesh](#) (see [The Steering Committee visits Bangladesh](#)), national advocacy activities were held in many other countries, while in Bangladesh, subnational and national efforts promoted accelerated action to end child marriage.



## THE STEERING COMMITTEE VISIT TO BANGLADESH



© UNICEF/Bangladesh/2024

The Global Programme Steering Committee visited Bangladesh from 8-12 December 2024, as part of its annual field visit to implementing countries. The objective of the Steering Committee field visit was to deepen understanding of ongoing efforts to end child marriage and empower girls, and to engage directly with national and local stakeholders navigating implementation challenges. These challenges include entrenched poverty, harmful social norms, climate-induced shocks, and, in the particular case of Bangladesh, the transition to a new Government rebuilding and reforming institutions from the ground up, with the support of UNFPA and UNICEF.

The visit allowed Steering Committee members to engage with government officials, civil society organizations, local leaders, communities and adolescent girls including survivors of child marriage, across high-prevalence districts, to learn about successes and challenges in addressing child marriage. Site visits highlighted key interventions aimed at empowering girls, including married girls and young mothers, through education, life skills and comprehensive sexuality education, social protection, employability skills, and protection mechanisms both in development and in humanitarian settings.

The Steering Committee's visit was critical to garner a renewed commitment<sup>46</sup> from the Government of Bangladesh to address systemic drivers of child marriage, empower adolescent girls, and strengthen social and child protection systems. Ms. Sharmeen Murshid, the Advisor to the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and Ministry of Social Welfare (Interim Government of Bangladesh) called on policymakers, civil society, communities, and individuals to work together to end child marriage and ensure every Bangladeshi girl can thrive.



© UNICEF/Bangladesh/2024

“

Child marriage is not inevitable – it is a practice rooted in inequality that can and must end. By strengthening child protection systems, empowering social workers, and challenging harmful norms, we can create a future where every child in Bangladesh enjoys the right to a safe, healthy, and empowered life

Ms. Sharmeen Murshid  
Advisor to the Ministry of Women  
and Children Affairs and Ministry of Social  
Welfare, Interim Government of Bangladesh

”

<sup>46</sup> Dhaka Tribune, *Breaking the chains*, 9 December 2024. [www.dhakatribune.com/opinion/op-ed/367597/breaking-the-chains](http://www.dhakatribune.com/opinion/op-ed/367597/breaking-the-chains)

## BEYOND PROGRAMME COUNTRIES: THE GLOBAL PROGRAMME'S CATALYTIC APPROACH

The Global Programme acts as a catalytic programme, extending its positive impact beyond its 12 focus countries through global and regional influence, advocacy, and technical support. The Global Programme wields considerable influence over the entire child marriage ecosystem, thanks to its extensive experience in 12 countries and its commitment to data and evidence, fostering wider learning. By establishing a strong international presence, the programme not only shares effective strategies and best practices but also shapes global discourse and normative frameworks on child marriage. This influence is evident for instance in the Secretary-General's Report on Child, Early and Forced Marriage submitted to the General Assembly in August 2024, where the Global Programme's data and achievements was widely referenced.

Launched in Phase III, the Global Programme's Rising Stars Initiative aims to accelerate global action to end child marriage by 2030 in 18 additional countries across regions. The initiative enables additional countries to leverage the Global Programme's catalytic support, including resource mobilization efforts, knowledge management and technical support to accelerate actions to end child marriage. In 2024, the Global Programme successfully supported Malawi and Colombia – two Rising Stars countries – on their journey to end child marriage.

- ◆ Malawi: With technical and advocacy support from Regional Offices, Malawi launched its [National Strategy to End Child Marriage on 18 October 2024](#). The strategy was unveiled in Lilongwe by the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare, in partnership with UNFPA.
- ◆ Colombia: UNICEF and UNFPA, in collaboration with UN Women, provided sustained technical leadership and inter-agency advocacy that contributed to the Colombian Congress passing the 'Girls, Not Wives' law, after nine previous failed attempts. They convened two high-level meetings with congressional representatives and senators, presenting country-specific evidence to deepen understanding of harmful practices and align legislative efforts with international standards. In parallel, UNICEF, civil society organizations, and other UN agencies developed two policy briefs and a joint communication strategy to bolster support for the bill. As a result, in November 2024, the Colombian Congress took a historic step by approving one of the most [comprehensive laws](#) in Latin America to ban child marriage and early unions. This landmark legislation prohibits all marriages under age 18 without exceptions and places education at the centre of efforts to address the root causes of child marriage.

The Global Programme has also been instrumental in inspiring East Asia to design a UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Ending Child Marriage in South East Asia (TUSIP programme) with support from Australia's Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade. Global Programme teams supported South Asia during ToC and Result framework development based on

programme experiences. The Global Programme and TUSIP programme continue to exchange updates and explore opportunities for collaboration and synergies to maximize resources and impact.

## 2.4 GENERATING AND APPLYING EVIDENCE FOR IMPACT

In 2024, the Global Programme made significant strides in generating and applying evidence to guide its efforts in preventing child marriage. These achievements were supported by the Global Programme's technical support mechanism, the Strategic Technical Assistance for Research (STAR) Initiative to End Harmful Practices housed at UNICEF Innocenti and the Child Marriage Research to Action Network (CRANK) in partnership with Girls Not Brides.

### Driving programmatic shifts through evidence on 'what works'

A key milestone was the publication of a synthesis paper<sup>47</sup> produced by the Global Programme and the STAR Initiative at UNICEF Innocenti which identified interventions showing effective, promising, or mixed results in preventing child marriage. The initial findings had shaped the programme's strategic direction for Phase III (2024–2030), with an increased focus on high-impact approaches, especially income strengthening, education and SRHR.

More than 10 global and national level evidence-sharing events ensured broad dissemination of the synthesis paper across implementers, donors, and partners both within and beyond the Global Programme to inform prevention and response efforts at the local and global levels. This growing evidence base has helped catalyse programmatic shifts in countries such as Ghana, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, and India, which are now exploring how social protection schemes can be leveraged to support girls at risk of child marriage.

### Technical support and capacity building for evidence-based action

<sup>47</sup> See 11

In 2024, STAR provided essential technical support, underpinned by the Global Programme's evidence-based programming and policy work, across three interconnected pillars:

- ◆ Generation of high-quality, context-specific evidence on harmful practices;
- ◆ Capacity-building in countries to identify research gaps, design interventions, and evaluate impact;
- ◆ Promotion of a vibrant research-to-use ecosystem, connecting evidence producers and users via databases, translation tools, and brokering platforms.

STAR provided intensive technical support to 19 projects across 10 countries – including Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Nepal, and Sierra Leone – and Regional Offices. This support ensured methodological rigour and practical utility, enhancing the impact of child marriage research in both stable and humanitarian settings.

In Burkina Faso, an integrated approach aligned research and programming from the outset, embedding data collection of programme indicators into a large-scale research initiative to maximize both efficiency and impact.

In Ghana, a mixed methods study on the impact of social protection programming on child marriage leveraged partnerships with the STAR Initiative and UNICEF Innocenti's Social Protection team. Integral to this partnership is reaching partners in local contexts to support evidence-based programme design, implementation, and delivery. Combining insights from existing survey data and newly collected primary data, the preliminary results indicated that the social protection programmes, Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) and the integrated social services work to alleviate some factors that exacerbate drivers of child marriage. For instance, cash that caregivers receive from LEAP allows them to support the education of their children and meet their basic needs, thus attenuating the drivers of child marriage.

In Mozambique, an implementation study of after-school programmes that integrated life skills and child marriage prevention found that while these programmes were widely implemented, they were not well known within the community. The study also identified gaps in staff capacity, highlighting the need for additional training to strengthen delivery. The STAR Initiative provided technical support throughout the process – from research design and conceptualization to recruitment and report drafting – helping to ensure that the study's findings and recommendations were high quality. The final report offered practical recommendations for strengthening programme delivery to improve girls' well-being and

contribute to reductions in child marriage.

**Promoting uptake of research by policymakers and practitioners:** The Global Programme with Girls Not Brides coordinates the Child Marriage Research to Action Network (CRANK) – a joint initiative and platform for a coordinated global research agenda on child marriage, and to encourage the uptake of research by policymakers and practitioners.

In 2024, the CRANK partnered with the University College London and the Global Network on Mental Health and Child Marriage to co-convene the [Global Symposium What's known and what's next – Charting future action on the mental health consequences of child marriage](#). The CRANK continued to convene quarterly research meetings to promote evidence and research uptake among policymakers and practitioners, particularly from the Global South, including:

- ◆ Learning from the [latest evidence on child marriage prevention laws and their implications](#) – Considering context, challenges and opportunities
- ◆ The intersections of child marriage – [Strengthening holistic and cross-sectoral solutions](#)

Through CRANK, research spotlights were developed by leveraging systematic reviews commissioned by UNFPA in partnership with the Population Council and WHO, namely:

- ◆ [Education interventions](#) to address child marriage and support married girls
- ◆ [Economic empowerment](#) interventions to end child marriage
- ◆ [Cash and asset incentive schemes](#) to address child marriage and support married girls
- ◆ [Girls' empowerment interventions](#) to address child marriage and support married girls

The Global Programme and Girls Not Brides continued to manage the CRANK's Research Tracker, as a curated resource with details of ongoing and upcoming research by CRANK members, particularly from the Global South. Use it to avoid duplicating research, and to identify priority research areas.

### Influencing policies

The Global Programme's research on effective approaches to address child marriage influenced an important policy milestone in India. The ruling by India's Supreme Court on 18 October 2024 was hailed as one of the most progressive

legal decisions on child marriage in India, and explicitly cited the 'what works' evidence paper produced by the Global Programme and UNICEF Innocenti. This example underscores the power of rigorous research to influence national policies.

### A global agenda shaping research investments

The Global Programme alongside key partners including UNICEF Innocenti, Girls Not Brides, and WHO designed and launched a multi-phased global research priority-setting process at the Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) forum. The process, which will be carried out through 2025–2026 will take stock of evidence progress, identify current and pressing research needs and priorities, strategically target key decisionmakers to ensure linkages between research and policy impact, and continue to build momentum for evidence-based action towards preventing and responding to child marriage. It will involve consultative exercises through participatory mechanisms to ensure the global agenda reflects regional and national needs and priorities.

### Moving forward

In 2025 and beyond, the Global Programme will continue to prioritize the generation, dissemination, and uptake of high-quality evidence to guide national, regional and global efforts. With systems in place to align evidence with programming and policy, the focus will shift towards:

- ◆ **Guiding the scale-up of effective social protection interventions** to address child marriage through the production of technical guidance, the synthesis of evidence on effective programmatic adaptations and components, and technical support delivery;
- ◆ **Strengthen robust evidence generation** to fill global, regional and national evidence gaps and shape programming
- ◆ **Promote evidence uptake for policy implementation of evidence-based sexual and reproductive health interventions**, including comprehensive sexuality education and the prevention of adolescent pregnancy and child marriage;
- ◆ **Strengthening national and local research capacity and ownership** to identify research needs and priorities to inform the global and regional research agendas through consultative processes;

- ◆ **Shaping evidence-based programming in humanitarian settings**, offering guidance on implementation barriers, facilitators, tailoring approaches and intervention design; and
- ◆ **Sustaining engagement with policymakers, donors, and practitioners** by strategically leveraging existing platforms to ensure evidence informs change.

## 2.5 REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Regional Offices play an important role in overseeing programme implementation and expanding the Global Programme's influence beyond the 12 initial countries, for example through building regional partnerships, evidence generation, advocacy, technical support and knowledge sharing. This section presents some regional office highlights in 2024.

### 2.5.1 Arab States / Middle East and North Africa

- ◆ In the Arab States/MENA region, the concepts of gender equality and women's rights carry the risk of being perceived as foreign concepts and a threat to traditional cultural values. In countries like Yemen, the term 'gender equality' was replaced with 'social justice' in an attempt to avoid such perceptions and allow interventions to succeed. Local adaptation has been possible thanks to the close work with local actors who are better positioned to lead, engage with and influence their communities, being respectful of their cultures and avoiding stigmatization.



- ◆ In 2024, the Global Programme launched the regional study on estimating the economic cost of child marriage in the Arab Region, in partnership with the United Nations' ESCWA. The report includes an analysis of 13 out of 22 Arab States and provides policy recommendations for action. The webinar reached out to governments, advocates from civil society organizations and academics.
- ◆ In 2024, the Global Programme finalized a study on child marriage in humanitarian settings, focusing on protracted conflict settings, including Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, and Yemen. The study examines patterns of child marriage in these fragile environments, maps out the distinct factors driving child marriage which are exacerbated in these settings, and offered guidance on programmatic adaptations to address the heightened risks faced by adolescent girls. Following a validation workshop on the study findings and recommendations, held in May, the Global Programme in collaboration with the Regional Action Forum to End Child Marriage (RAF) will officially launch the final study and start the dissemination of the findings early 2025.

### 2.5.2 Asia Pacific / South Asia

- ◆ In July, the Regional Offices in South Asia (UNICEF ROSA and UNFPA APRO) partnered with SAARC, WHO and CSO partners to convene a regional dialogue on adolescent pregnancy. The dialogue produced a technical brief on key trends, challenges, and policy gaps, leading to a first-ever regional multisectoral action plan (2024–2030) launched during the Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on Beijing +30 review. The plan emphasizes policy reform, enhanced programme implementation, tailored health services, and multiplatform outreach, promoting a coordinated approach to prevent child marriage and sustain joint efforts in South Asia.
- ◆ In December, the Global Programme released a landmark regional study – Meta-synthesis and meta-analysis of evidence on child marriage in South Asia – analysing child marriage interventions across South Asia (2010–2024). The report highlighted the success of integrating economic, educational, and empowerment components with social norm change efforts, alongside strengthened legal enforcement and SRH services. These findings have been pivotal in shaping evidence-based policies and programmes, offering a roadmap for sustainable strategies to end child marriage and empower girls across the region. Over 100 United Nations Staff and partners, including Regional Directors from UNICEF ROSA and UNFPA APRO and headquarters staff joined the online launch of the report.
- ◆ The Regional Offices also provided remote and in-country technical support to Pakistan and Afghanistan that resulted in the development of a joint Global Programme UNICEF-UNFPA programme concept note, ToC, and results frameworks for ending child marriage in the respective countries. This demonstrates how the ROs are using Global Programme technical resources to support countries that are not directly funded by the Global Programme.
- ◆ The Regional Platform to End Child Marriage was enhanced to improve data and evidence sharing for advocacy and programming. Partnerships with regional coordination platforms like the South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC), SAARC and regional CSOs, ensured alignment with broader regional goals, strengthening the collective impact of child marriage prevention efforts. Contributions to the review of the Regional Action Plan to End Child Marriage (RAP) in South Asia have been made, and the update of the RAP is currently underway.
- ◆ The Regional Guidance on Partnering with Women-Led Organizations to Address Child Marriage in South Asia was jointly developed by the Global Programme and Girls Not Brides and launched during the Association for Women's Rights in Development forum in December 2024.
- ◆ The Regional Offices also contributed significantly to the success of the GPECM Steering Committee visit to Bangladesh from 8-12 December 2024 through close coordination with Headquarters and Country Offices. UNFPA APRO and UNICEF ROSA provided technical guidance, facilitated regional knowledge-sharing, and ensured the integration of regional insights and priorities throughout the mission.





### 2.5.3 Eastern and Southern Africa

- ◆ In 2024, the Global Programme collaborated with Child Frontiers to conduct a study examining the impact of climate change on child marriage, teenage pregnancy and FGM in Kenya. Focusing on Kajiado, Turkana, and Kisumu counties, the research highlighted how climate-induced challenges – such as prolonged droughts and floods – exacerbate existing vulnerabilities for adolescent girls. These environmental disruptions have led to increased poverty, food insecurity, school dropouts, and displacement, driving higher rates of teenage pregnancy and informal unions. The breakdown of community support systems and the loss of traditional livelihoods, particularly livestock farming, have further intensified girls' exposure to transactional sex and early marriage as coping strategies for economic survival. In 2025, the same study will be conducted in Ethiopia and Madagascar, leading to important opportunities for the Regional Office to share this knowledge with other countries.
- ◆ Key interventions of the Global Programme continued to address GTA as a key component of empowerment and skill-building interventions. Specifically, in- and out-of-school CSE that is being implemented in all Global Programme countries in the region, interventions around boys' and men's engagement in positive masculinities and advocacy at all levels have been instrumental in materializing GTA. Moreover, members of parliament and experts from the Ministries of Health and Education of 11 countries were offered training on gender-responsive budgeting and GTA refresher training was provided for all Global Programme countries, leveraging the annual UNFPA's Safeguard Young People programme coordination meeting. This aims to ensure gender considerations are integrated into policy development, programme design, and implementation. The Global Programme, jointly with other regional programmes, will intensify these efforts in 2025 to ensure that a gender-transformative approach is adopted at all levels.

### 2.5.4 West and Central Africa

UNFPA and UNICEF Regional Offices have played a pivotal role in extending the resources of the Global Programme to the region, supporting countries outside the programme's coverage. Benin and Mali, for instance, have received customized institutional support to develop child marriage strategies tailored to their specific contexts. These strategies identified vital key investments based on local drivers, dynamics, and opportunities. Additionally, the Regional Offices jointly supported the development of Rising Star concept note submissions from the country offices of Chad, Guinea, and Nigeria. The ROs also supported the development and finalization of national strategies on Ending Child Marriage in the Central African Republic and Nigeria.

- ◆ A thematic brief on the contribution of the child protection sector to ending child marriage and a discussion paper on child marriage programming with/for very young adolescent girls (both to be launched in early 2025) both re-emphasize the need for multisectoral collaboration between the child protection, social protection, health and education sectors to achieve impact at scale.
- ◆ Interlinkages between child marriage and food insecurity: UNFPA WCARO partnered with the World Food Programme (WFP) to develop a [technical brief on the interlinkages of child marriage and food insecurity](#) which aims to improve programming within UNFPA, WFP, the broader United Nations system, and other development partners in addressing child marriage in the West and Central Africa (WCA) sub-region by supporting the design of appropriate response to child marriage by protection actors in the region and the development of measures to track progress. The technical brief was launched during the 16 Days of Activism through a webinar on population



dynamics, child marriage and food insecurity, highlighting the importance of implementing multisectoral interventions and reaching the most marginalized girls.

- ◆ UNFPA and UNICEF jointly started, in 2024, a rapid data mapping exercise to review publicly available financial information of government programmes that respond to and prevent GBV, child marriage and FGM across West and Central Africa. The objective was to identify what types of analytics can be produced to support regional advocacy to strengthen national budgets for prevention and response services for girls and women, and to provide technical assistance to optimize government spending. Following this mapping exercise, a methodology to measure public investment in GBV, child marriage and FGM services will be developed and a financial benchmark for services that protect girls and women from risk to well-being in Sub-Saharan Africa will be tested in at least 10 countries in the region. This initiative seeks to address some of the major challenges, including the low level and inefficient use of resources to end GBV and harmful practices in the region. The African Union Commission and Regional Economic Communities will be engaged from the outset noting their role in influence and advocacy. This area of work aligns with Africa 2063 and Africa 2040 priorities for empowered girls and women.
- ◆ In March, following 1.5 years of cooperation between the Global Programme and UNFPA and UNICEF country teams from Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Niger, Nigeria and Liberia, the Regional Offices launched a new resource package on community engagement for child marriage and FGM through human-centred design. This resource supports deeper understanding of the drivers of FGM and child marriage in programme areas, and facilitates the development of community-owned solutions. Available in English, French, and Portuguese, the package includes a comprehensive workbook containing all the tools, a 'playbook' offering step-by-step guidance on applying the human-centred design process, and a selection of case studies from the countries where it was piloted.
- ◆ In 2024, the Global Programme published a scoping study on climate change and child protection in West and Central Africa. This study highlights the impact of climate change on children's rights, identifying child marriage as one of the most significant consequences in the region.

### 2.5.5 Cross-regional initiatives

In 2024, Regional Offices collaborated on several cross-regional initiatives:

- ◆ Regional synthesis of child marriage strategies: UNFPA and UNICEF regional offices developed country and regional strategy notes<sup>48</sup> to share key learnings from strategies and programme implementation for prevention and response to child marriage across 13 Sub-Saharan African countries (six countries in Eastern and Southern Africa, seven in Western and Central Africa). The purpose of these strategy notes is to inform the design of effective country strategies by analysing child marriage trends, drivers, and high-impact areas for investment. The notes also facilitate a platform for south-to-south knowledge exchange on child marriage issues across West, Central, Eastern, and Southern Africa. The publication will be launched in early 2025. This report was also disseminated and discussed with country teams and partners across the region during webinar on 15 February 2024.
- ◆ Partnership with faith-based organizations to address the pushback against gender and child rights: To enhance the ecosystem's capacity to effectively respond to the increasing pushback against child – notably girls' – and women's rights, the Global Programme, through a collaboration between HQ, and involved Regional Offices (ES-ARO, WCARO and MENARO) continued to support an expansion of the Faith for Positive Change Initiative<sup>49</sup>. This initiative encompasses evidence synthesis and generation, interfaith dialogue and advocacy, and support for community engagement (implemented by country offices and local partners). The Global Programme partners with the African Council of Religious Leaders, an interfaith organization under the Faith for Positive Change Initiative. This collaboration seeks to engage faith-based organizations, religious leaders, including women in faith, and youth in faith on children's rights, with a particular focus on gender equality and the elimination of harmful practices. By strengthening interfaith coordination at both regional and national levels, the partnership promotes unified advocacy and action. Additionally, ACRL supports capacity-building for community engagement on sensitive issues through the Heart, Mind, and Dialogue methodology.<sup>50</sup>

As part of this initiative, in 2024 the Global Programme conducted a snapshot analysis in 17 countries<sup>51</sup> to assess

<sup>48</sup> The Faith and Positive Change for Children, Families, and Communities, *Partners*. [www.faith4positivechange.org/partner](http://www.faith4positivechange.org/partner)

<sup>49</sup> The Faith and Positive Change for Children, Families, and Communities. [www.faith4positivechange.org](http://www.faith4positivechange.org)

<sup>50</sup> The Faith and Positive Change for Children, Families, and Communities, *Global Resources & Guides*. [www.faith4positivechange.org/mind-amp-heart-dialogue-resource-guide](http://www.faith4positivechange.org/mind-amp-heart-dialogue-resource-guide)

<sup>51</sup> Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, Sudan, Somalia, Uganda and Yemen.

the risk and likelihood of pushback against ending child marriage and FGM. The analysis aimed to identify the main narratives (both supporting and opposing child rights), the key proponents of these narratives, and the role of faith leaders in either promoting or countering pushback. This information will help countries identify key players to engage with in preparation for potential pushback.

- ◆ The Global Programme, through a collaboration between the ESARO and WCARO Regional Offices and UNICEF Innocenti, is conducting an ongoing operational research study on child marriage and FGM programmes in humanitarian contexts across Sub-Saharan Africa. The study

aims to generate technical guidance for improving programming for adolescent girls in humanitarian settings and to strengthen the technical support provided by UNFPA and UNICEF in this area.

- ◆ The Global Programme, in collaboration with UNFPA APRO, ASRO, ESARO and WCARO is supporting the development of a new module on harmful practices for the kNOwVAWdata<sup>52</sup> curriculum – an initiative aimed at enhancing regional and national capacity to measure violence against women. Both the curriculum and the new module are expected to be finalized in 2025.



<sup>52</sup> kNOwVAWdata, know the data: end violence against women. <https://knowvawdata.com/>

CHAPTER 3

# Global Programme Performance





The Global Programme's overall performance is measured against its Phase III ToC, based on progress in three intermediate outcome areas that contribute to ending child marriage:

- ◆ Empowering adolescent girls ('Intermediate Outcome 1000')
- ◆ Building resilient and responsive systems ('Intermediate Outcome 2000')
- ◆ Enhancing legal and policy response ('Intermediate Outcome 3000')

Detailed results across the 12 implementing countries are presented in the Global Programme 2024 Results Framework in Annex 1. Overall, the results for 2024 are very satisfactory and point to a mature programme capable of delivering results at scale. Country offices have been proficient at reporting output indicator results in 2024 and analysing programme performance from them. However, no outcome indicators were reported by Global Programme countries in 2024. These indicators are informed by household surveys which typically are held every 5 years. In the absence of prevalence data, we use extrapolations and trends to understand how child marriage is evolving in a country. While output-level results

allow for the assessment of programme performance at the country level, they provide limited insight into whether the Programme's interventions have led to sustainable, long-term change. While this is a challenge, it is neither new, nor unique to child marriage programmes, but the Global Programme will work on ways to improve the performance management of its interventions and implement a new results framework, subject to approval from country counterparts and the Programme's Steering Committee, in 2026.

### 3.1 EMPOWERING ADOLESCENT GIRLS

Under this intermediate outcome area, adolescent girls at risk of and affected by child marriage are effectively making their own informed decisions and choices regarding marriage, sexual and reproductive health (including childbearing), education and livelihoods. Achieving change in this area requires:

- ◆ Intensively supporting the most marginalized girls with life skills and comprehensive sexuality education
- ◆ Fostering a supportive family and community environment

### 3.1.1 Intensively supporting the most marginalized girls

**Table 2: Number of adolescent girls (aged 10–19) who actively participated in life skills or comprehensive sexuality education interventions**

**Indicator 1111: Number of adolescent girls (aged 10–19) who actively participated in life skills or CSE interventions**

Country	2023 Results	2024 Targets	2024 Results
Bangladesh	378,237	65,500	120,646
Burkina Faso	88,641	110,000	123,729
Ethiopia	201,955	122,849	129,354
Ghana	21,934	17,300	15,820
India	5,772,130	2,919,100	6,655,438
Mozambique	50,455	50,580	57,878
Nepal	14,076	60,000	34,967
Niger	26,420	108,500	90,951
Sierra Leone	13,066	6,780	7,942
Uganda	306,846	398,613	33,308
Yemen	42,222	30,000	18,294
Zambia	206,707	124,616	139,458
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,122,689</b>	<b>4,013,838</b>	<b>7,427,785</b>

**Participation in life skills and CSE programmes:** In 2024, a total of 7,427,785 underserved/ marginalized adolescent girls (aged 10–19) who are at risk of child marriage or who are pregnant, married, divorced or widowed participated in gender-transformative life skills and comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) programmes that build their knowledge, skills, awareness of their rights, develop their agency, and connect them to services. The majority of the results for this indicator have been achieved in India, where strong systems and domestic contributions have allowed the Global Programme to reach girls at significant scale.<sup>53</sup>

In other countries, the Global Programme delivers life skills and CSE programmes through civil society and decentralized authorities. Despite this being a costlier approach with

typically more limited reach, the programme has been able to deliver these interventions successfully. For example, in Ghana, the Global Programme expanded opportunities to empower the most marginalized adolescent girls through partnerships with NGO and CSO partners. This included the joint UNFPA-UNICEF Promoting Adolescent Safe Spaces (PASS) initiative – a flagship programme supporting out-of-school girls, including young mothers, pregnant students, and girls with disabilities – and other safe space programming such as SISTAs Clubs and the Orange Girls Network. With the direct support from the Global Programme, 15,820 adolescent girls between the ages of 10–19 in 23 districts of four regions were engaged in life skills and CSE. These girls were equipped with knowledge and skills to make informed decisions and choices on matters affecting them, such as girls' rights, relationships,

<sup>53</sup> For Indicator 1111 and 1121 in India, the Global Programme's engagement with national and state schemes on life skills and cash transfers, supported by highly successful programme initiatives like SHWP (national), Kanyashree (West Bengal), Advika (Odisha), Jyotika Phule Yojana (Jharkhand), and Mukhyamantri Kanya Utthan Yojna (Bihar), has increased reach exponentially.

SRH, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) and financial literacy. Many of these girls (including adolescent mothers) have overcome significant challenges – some have returned to school, while others have launched their own small businesses. The success of safe space programming in Ghana is illustrated through Nafisa’s story, who dropped out of school at the age of 14 following an unintended pregnancy. She did not have appropriate support or guidance from her mother and community. However, with direct support from PASS, Nafisa’s case was closely monitored and followed up by the Model Gendered Household initiative<sup>54</sup> and community referral point. She went back to senior high school to continue her education and improved her knowledge with her peers on child marriage, adolescent pregnancy, gender norms through ‘Am-A-Girl’ group, a girls’ safe space, thus becoming an agent of change in her community. It is important to note that the PASS initiative is currently the subject of an impact evaluation from UNICEF’s Evaluation Office through the Impact Catalyst Fund, with results to come in 2026. The evaluation will tell us just how effective the PASS initiative has been at affecting child marriage rates in intervention zones.

In Bangladesh, the Global Programme developed and customized the Alternative Learning Pathway model<sup>55</sup> – an existing approach aimed at equipping marginalized, out-of-school adolescent boys and girls with skills – for child marriage sur-

vivors, with 1,500 young women identified as learners and 350 beginning skills training through informal apprenticeships. The success of this approach led to many participants subsequently sustaining employment and business ventures. This demonstrates that with targeted, well-structured interventions, it is possible to empower this population to lead dignified and independent lives.

In India, the Global Programme is enhancing learning and engagement for adolescents with disabilities. UNFPA, in collaboration with the Department of Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, established the Disability Innovation and Experience Lab at the Integrated Infrastructure Centre, Jatni, Odisha. This state-of-the-art facility, equipped with assistive technologies, played a pivotal role in enhancing learning and engagement for adolescents with disabilities in developing their life skills, including critical thinking, communication, collaboration and comprehensive sexuality education. Through the lab, experience and exposure camps were successfully conducted for over 150 adolescents with disabilities (hearing impairment, visual impairment and intellectual disability), including 50 girls from selected schools. These camps introduced participants to assistive technologies and provided opportunities for transformative life skills education sessions tailored to their needs.



<sup>54</sup> The Modeled Gendered Household initiative by NORSAAC promotes equal participation among parents and siblings of all genders, contributing to more balanced gender roles within the household. It also encourages intergenerational dialogue between adolescents and elders, helping to create a supportive environment where young people can freely discuss issues related to their growth and well-being: <https://norsaac.org/2024/03/01/pass-project-and-unicef-impact-evaluation-visit-in-tolon-district>

<sup>55</sup> UNICEF Bangladesh, *The overview of the Alternative Learning Programme (ALP)*. <https://alprtm.com/about>

## THE GIRL WHO SAID NO: FIGHTING AGAINST CHILD MARRIAGE IN GUJARAT, INDIA

In India, training on child rights and gender equality is empowering girls like Gopi to make their own choices. At the age of 19, Gopi, a girl from Gujarat who had dropped out of school and was unhappily engaged to be married, met Sejal Ben, a facilitator from the Institute of Social Action and Research (ISAR), a feminist organization. She attended a two-day training programme on child rights and gender equality, which left a lasting impression. Following the training, she understood she had to speak up about her forthcoming marriage to her parents. Her father stood by her side, her engagement was cancelled and she re-enrolled in school. She now talks to her peers about the importance of making their own choices and selecting their own partners. At 21, she is married to someone of her own choice. Moreover, education remains Gopi's prime objective. Having completed 10th Grade, she wants to complete her 11th and 12th grade exams as well. With her support, Gopi's sisters are now enrolled in secondary and higher secondary education. Her actions have also inspired many of her peers to return to school despite facing transportation difficulties



© UNICEF/India/2024

“

The best thing I liked about the training was identifying my own self - who I am, and what I want to achieve

”

Gopi  
A 21-year-old from Gujarat, transformed her life after attending a child rights and gender equality training, choosing her own partner, re-enrolling in school, and inspiring other girls to pursue education and autonomy.

In Ethiopia, the programme empowered 129,354 adolescent girls with gender-transformative life skills training and CSE, implemented in collaboration with Government and CSO partners across the 10 regions of the country. These capacity development interventions were carried out using evidence-based and age-appropriate manuals and implementation guides developed by the Global Programme, the Ministry of Education, and CARE. These include Girls Power: Comprehensive Capacity Building Manual for Out-Of-School Adolescent Girls, the Life Skills Education Manual developed by the Ministry of Education with support from UNICEF's Learning and Education section, and the comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) manual developed by UNFPA.

## MIHRET YATHEY SAVES A YOUNG GIRL'S LIFE



© UNICEF Ethiopia/2023/Nahom Tesfaye

When a fellow student was abducted on her way home - to force her into marriage - Mihret, an 18-year-old leader of a girls' club in Ethiopia, immediately rallied her peers, school staff, and community members. This led to collective interventions by social workers and law enforcement bodies. Together, they secured the girl's safe return, averting the child marriage. Mihret's courage and quick action demonstrates the power of youth-led initiatives. Her story, along with her relentless efforts to guide other students away from harmful traditions, serves as a powerful reminder: young people, when empowered, can change lives!

Life skills and CSE remain critical pillars of effective child marriage programming. The target for reaching girls was exceeded in 2024 overall, and by most countries, although Ghana, Nepal, Uganda, and Yemen were not able to meet their targets. In Ghana, the target was not fully met because the implementation of the PASS initiative was affected by delays in data collection to set the baseline for the ongoing impact evaluation of the initiative. The baseline survey is expected to take place in early 2025, and the implementation, which was on hold, will proceed accordingly. In Uganda, the country office attributed the results to reduced funding and delayed fund disbursement which hindered the timely implementation of programme activities. Additionally, some targets were identified as overambitious; these will be reviewed and adjusted in 2025 with support from headquarters. In Nepal,

the target of 60,000 adolescent girls included 45,000 that were expected to be reached through the new digital Rupan-taran app, intended to broaden the programme's outreach. Although the digital app was completed and launched in 2024, its implementation began in early 2025, leading to only 34,967 girls reached with life skills and CSE through in-person sessions, which remain an integral part of the programme to ensure direct engagement with marginalized and vulnerable adolescent girls particularly from rural areas, where digital access may be limited. In Yemen, the target for indicators 1111 and 1121 were not fully reached due to the restrictions<sup>56</sup> imposed on the implementation of programme activities as of July 2024, following the arrest of United Nations staff and funding shortages.

**Table 3: Number of girls (aged 10–19) supported by the Global Programme to enrol and/or remain in primary or secondary school**

**Indicator 1121: Number of girls (10–19) supported by the programme to enrol and/or remain in primary or secondary school**

Country	2023 Results	2024 Targets	2024 Results
Bangladesh	N/A	55,000	129,036
Burkina Faso	12,089	5,000	7,038
Ethiopia	49,705	59,362	61,691
Ghana	1,096	10,000	12,170
India	2,348,227	2,381,118	8,215,181
Mozambique	4,006	14,850	2,234
Nepal	12,027	2,250	3,042
Niger	13,941	11,600	10,678
Sierra Leone	1,277	5,385	3,395
Uganda	31,461	38,310	18,914
Yemen	2,064	200	132
Zambia	13,158	25,000	11,214
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,489,051</b>	<b>2,608,075</b>	<b>8,474,725</b>

<sup>56</sup> The restrictions in Yemen are due to UN focus in the north on life saving and life sustaining interventions and these do not include ending child marriage. The sensitivity of the authorities in the north on certain programming issues, including those relating to GBV, discourage the active involvement of many partners. To mitigate such difficulties, the Global Programme's focus is more on child marriage in the south where authorities are more welcoming.

**Keeping girls in school:** Robust evidence supports the importance of education for adolescent girls as a key intervention. Keeping girls in school, particularly at the secondary level, has demonstrated significant and lasting positive effects for adolescent girls including delaying marriage, sexual debut and pregnancy, improved health behaviours and a stronger sense of self-efficacy and agency. Enrolling and keeping girls in school, and supporting their continued learning are key, scalable strategies. Such goals can be achieved by simple interventions, such as providing free menstrual hygiene materials or schoolbooks, or delivering meaningful community advocacy on the importance of educating girls. For this reason, cross-country comparisons of costs and reach are often not feasible, since the type of intervention to keep a girl in school can change from one country to another, or even from one region to another in the same country. Among all evaluated approaches, supporting girls' schooling through cash and in-kind transfers has the strongest evidence of effectiveness of any evaluated programme to prevent child marriage.<sup>57</sup>

In 2024, the Global Programme supported 8,474,725 girls to enrol in and/or remain in primary or secondary school, with India once again contributing the largest share to this achievement by achieving over three times its annual target<sup>58</sup>. At the same time, countries with smaller targets also demonstrated significant success. In Niger, for instance, 10,678 adolescent girls were supported to return to school, thanks to interventions supported by the Global Programme and additional funding mobilized by the education sector. This was made possible through mentorship programmes and the efforts of village child protection committees. Complementing the mentorship support, these girls also receive scholarships, either from the State or from partners such as UNICEF. In addition, the country has recently received funding from the Global Partnership for Education, of which 25 million USD will be allocated to girls' schooling, thus helping to accelerate progress towards ending child marriage in the country. Niger met 92 per cent of its target despite the late start of activities in the villages and delays in the school year caused by flooding which affected more than 1 million people.

In Ethiopia, the programme has been supporting girls to continue their education and improve their performance by providing need-based support. This includes school materials, sanitary materials, and support for older adolescents or their families to participate in income-generating activities. This effort is further supported by back-to-school campaigns implemented by schools and education offices in collaboration with women and social affairs offices, parent-teacher

associations, and Women's Development Groups and Unions. These initiatives have not only helped girls to continue their education, but also contributed to bringing more than 6,000 girls back to school after dropping out for various reasons. The active engagement of gender clubs, for both in-school and out-of-school boys and girls, also plays an important role in building the capacity of their members through exchanges and discussions, and providing timely support to girls at risk of child marriage, school dropouts, or irregular attendance.

The Global Programme in Zambia contributed to the prioritization of education as a key intervention in preventing child marriage. The Government's free basic education policy increased school enrolment and retention, an opportunity that the Global Programme continues to leverage, coupled with access to reproductive health information and services, to enable adolescents to delay marriage and pregnancy. The six districts where the programme is being implemented have reported an increasing trend where more learners are enrolling and remaining in school due to multisectoral interventions connecting schools, communities, and health facilities. For instance, in Katete District, school enrolment increased from 63,818 (36,148 girls and 27,670 boys) in 2023 to 69,376 (38,920 girls and 30,456 boys) in 2024, marking an 8 per cent increase. Similarly, Chama District reported a 6.5 per cent increase in girls' enrolment, rising from 23,584 girls enrolled in school in 2023 to 25,249 girls in 2024. Among all interventions, the school-based Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) programme has significantly contributed to reducing girls' absenteeism and dropout. With GPECM support, adolescent girls have also formed MHM clubs and are diversifying means



<sup>57</sup> Malhotra & Elnakib, 2021. '20 Years of the Evidence Base on What Works to Prevent Child Marriage: A Systematic Review', *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 68(5), 2021, pp. 847–862.

<sup>58</sup> It is worth noting that the Phase II (2020–2023) consolidated results of over 2.9 million reached for this indicator were also mostly driven by India's results in 2023 alone (over 2.3 million), an example of successful focus and scaling up of evidence-based interventions.

of sustaining the provision of reusable MHM materials and reaching adolescents in school and out of schools but not members of the MHM club. The girls are for instance selling the reusable pads for 10 Zambian Kwacha (approximately 0.4 US\$) to both in-school and out-of-school girls. The income is helping the MHM clubs to replenish materials to sustain the production of pads.

In Mozambique, Uganda and Zambia, the 2024 target for this output was not reached, due in part to issues with setting realistic targets. In the case of Zambia, the anticipated release of the 2024 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) findings on child marriage – supported by UNFPA, UNICEF and other partners through technical and financial contributions – has been postponed to 2025. This data would have informed the review of the ToC and indicators to identify necessary adjustments<sup>59</sup>. Zambia will wait for the release of the DHS 2024 dataset before reviewing the programme strategy. In Sierra Leone, the target for this indicator was also not reached, due to delays in recruiting new partners. Consequently, programme implementation only began after schools reopened in September 2024. In Yemen, the previously mentioned restrictions also prevented the Global Programme from meeting its target for this indicator.

### 3.1.2 Fostering a supportive family and community environment

**Engaging boys and men in positive masculinities:** Engaging men and boys through gender-transformative programmes (including CSE for boys) that promote healthy relationships and positive masculinities and gender equality is a vital component to ending child marriage. It challenges harmful norms and creates a supportive environment for girls to pursue education and personal development, breaking the cycle of gender inequality. In 2024, a total of 4,772,254 men and boys actively participated in group education and dialogues that address harmful masculinities and gender norms, with most results coming from India (over 2.8 million) and Bangladesh (over 1.4 million).

In Yemen, engaging men and boys is one of the key strategies adopted by the Global Programme to advocate for and support the realization of women and girls' rights, development and access to life-saving protection, education and health services. Through the Yemen Women Union, one of the Global Programme implementing partners, in 2024, a total of 17,125 people (11,621 men and 5,504 boys including 300 influential leaders) were mobilized and actively participated in awareness raising, group education and dialogue to address gender-based violence, child marriage and other

harmful practices. Their active participation as agents of change contributed to averting a total of 33 child marriages and having 85 girls return to school.

In Zambia, the key platforms for engaging boys include the Coaching Boys to Men forums and safe spaces. In 2024, a total of 4,115 boys aged 10–19 years participated in at least five sessions on consequences of and alternatives to child marriage, the rights of girls, and gender equality. Additionally, 1,430 men aged 20 years and above participated in community dialogue sessions to address harmful masculinity and encourage men and boys to be at the forefront of gender-transformative initiatives to end child marriage in their communities. The boys' mentorship had a positive impact on their resolve to re-enrol in school and delay marriage, and on their receptiveness to supporting female siblings and peers to delay marriage by attending school. For instance, in Senanga District, a 12-year-old boy re-enrolled in school following his participation in the Coaching Boys to Men sessions. He had previously dropped out of school in Grade 2, after his parents insisted that he look after the family cattle. He is currently in Grade 3.

**Community dialogues and advocacy:** The Global Programme engaged families, traditional and religious leaders, community members (girls, women, boys and men), community groups, and other influencers, including youth and feminist advocates, in gender-transformative dialogues, advocacy and consensus-building on alternatives to child marriage (including education), the rights of adolescent girls, and gender equality. In 2024:

- ◆ 29,570,565 individuals participated in education and dialogue sessions on the consequences of and alternatives to child marriage.
- ◆ 2,984,336 traditional, religious and community leaders participated in dialogues and consensus-building.
- ◆ 280,391,495 individuals were reached by mass media (traditional and social media) messaging.

While it is not always possible to attribute direct outcomes to mass communication activities alone, these efforts are strategically delivered alongside more intensive adolescent girls empowerment and community engagement interventions. Together, they contribute to a long-term ToC focused on gradually shifting harmful social norms and promoting gender-equitable attitudes and behaviours. In Ethiopia, 570,151 community members (320,479 women and girls and 249,672 men and boys) across 10 regions were engaged in gender-transformative and reflective community conversa-

<sup>59</sup> The Global Programme in Zambia has had to rely on data from the 2018 DHS survey due to the delay in releasing the 2024 DHS dataset.

tions. These dialogues, facilitated by trained individuals using the Role Model Academy Community Conversation Toolkits<sup>60</sup> and the Safe Space for Change toolkit, are pivotal in changing social and gender norms. They enable community members to critically examine the drivers and consequences of child marriage and build consensus on the benefits of abandoning the practice. The dialogues led to the development of action plans, pledges, and regulations that serve as accountability mechanisms for community decisions.

The redesigned community conversation toolkits address key concepts such as purity, maturity, success, and being a role model, redefining them to support girls in prioritizing their personal development. They also encourage families to adopt new characteristics of a model family and community, including delaying marriage, supporting girls' education, and protecting girls from GBV, FGM, and other harmful practices.

When it comes to creating social change, mobile theatre can be a powerful form of community intervention (as the Global Programme Steering Committee witnessed firsthand in Khulna, Bangladesh). In collaboration with the Centre for National Culture, a total of 31,853 community members in Ghana in nine regions were engaged via mobile theatres using the power of drama and storytelling to mobilize communities, particularly traditional leaders, to take action to end child marriage and adolescent pregnancies. The mobile theatre sought to challenge norms, beliefs, attitudes, practices and behaviours that contribute to child marriage, adolescent pregnancy, SGBV, child labour, neglect and other child protection concerns. It also sought to drive community action to prevent and respond to these child protection violations.

Community dialogues were also important to engage and leverage faith leaders' support to end child marriage in countries within and outside the programme. In Yemen, for instance, the Global Programme used community dialogues to create a network of 68 mosque preachers advocating against child marriage. The faith leaders engaged by the programme are now using their Friday sermons to raise awareness within their communities on the negative impacts of child marriage. The Global Programme also leveraged a global partnership with Religions for Peace to engage the African Council of Religious Leaders to work with faith leaders in Mali and The Gambia. Through dialogues with religious and traditional leaders in those countries, reflective exercises and experiential trainings, 20 faith leaders were equipped with the tools and skills to discuss harmful practices with community members. In addition, a multi-faith platform was established in both countries, acting as a central location to strengthen advoca-

cacy, train more faith leaders, develop common narratives around religion and harmful practices, and debate concerns and challenges as they arise.

#### **Investing in and supporting Civil Society Organizations:**

Community engagement through the mobilization of CSOs, including women-led and youth-led organizations, plays a vital role in driving social change and ending child marriage. Partnering with women-led organizations is crucial for promoting gender equality and tackling the issue of child marriage because:

- ◆ WLOs can have a deep understanding of the unique challenges faced by women and girls in their communities and can tailor interventions to address these effectively.
- ◆ WLOs are often more trusted by local communities, which can lead to higher ownership, participation and more sustainable impacts.
- ◆ Engaging WLOs ensures that the voices of women and girls are included in decision-making processes.
- ◆ WLOs are also adaptable, responding quickly to emergencies, and play a key role in advocacy and policy influence, pushing for legal protections and systemic change.
- ◆ The engagement of WLOs aligns with global commitments of gender equality and the localization agenda (Grand Bargain).



<sup>60</sup> UNICEF Ethiopia, *Eradicating Harmful Practices Community Conversations Toolkits*. [www.unicef.org/ethiopia/documents/eradicating-harmful-practices](http://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/documents/eradicating-harmful-practices)

These benefits are weighed against financial and administrative risks, as grassroots WLO and YLO often have weaker fund management and reporting capacities compared to larger NGOs or INGOs. The Global Programme is making efforts to be more flexible and adaptable in order to leverage the strengths of grassroots organizations, recognizing their unique proximity to and trust within communities.

In 2024, a total of 8,482 women-led and youth-led, feminist organizations, networks and coalitions of CSOs<sup>61</sup> were mobilized by the Global Programme in support of challenging social norms, mitigating the pushback and setbacks and promoting gender equality through advocacy, community mobilization and capacity building efforts, with a majority of results coming from Ethiopia and India.

In Bangladesh, the programme strategically invested in and provided direct capacity building support to 284 grassroots NGOs (including 48 women-led, youth-led, and/or feminist

organizations) equipping them with the skills and resources to effectively address child marriage within their communities. This collaborative network strengthens community-level interventions, provides crucial support services, and amplifies the voices of girls and women in advocating for change.

In Burkina Faso, the Global Programme maintained a partnership with the *Coalition Nationale contre le Mariage d'Enfant au Burkina Faso* (CONAMEB), which brings together 77 organizations working towards this goal, including eight youth-led organizations and 37 women-led organizations. Support is provided through a dynamic partnership that includes technical and financial assistance in the planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation processes of interventions that promote the rights of girls and women. In addition to CONAMEB, two women's organizations were also supported through training on data collection tools and the gender transformative approach. A total of 140 members, including two women's organizations working in the areas of gender equality, human rights, and the fight against gender-based violence and harmful practices, such as child marriage and FGM, were identified and trained. Furthermore, the Global Programme, through the implementing partner *Voix de Femmes*, engaged with two new organizations led by young women, namely the *Association Mousso News and Association des Jeunes Leaders pour la Paix et pour le Développement* (AJLPD).

In Sierra Leone, a total of 180 community stakeholders in Moyamba and Bombali Districts were engaged in community dialogues with local and national leaders through the Global Programme's partner Defence for Children International (DCI) under the SHE LEADS Consortium. Discussions focused on issues affecting and limiting the participation of adolescent girls and young women in governance and decision-making processes. DCI runs safe spaces to build life and competency skills among girls and young women, preparing them to take leadership positions reaching at least 200 adolescent girls with skill-building and promoting their participation in decision-making.

In Yemen, the Global Programme has expanded its partnership with community-based, women-led, and youth-led grassroots organizations. Two main partners are the Al Zahraa Development Foundation, a youth and women-led CSO, and the Yemen Women Union, a women-led CSO that has 22 branches and 132 sub-branches nationwide. Both organizations have deep community ties with women and girls at the grassroots level and have played a crucial role in advocating for the rights of girls and women at higher policy and decision-making levels, including amplifying their evolving needs in an increasingly complex and fragile environment.



<sup>61</sup> This figure includes informal partnerships and nationwide grassroots organisations/CSO collectives reported by Ethiopia and India.

## 3.2 BUILDING RESILIENT AND RESPONSIVE SYSTEMS

Intermediate Outcome 2000 acknowledges that empowering adolescents and engaging families and communities leads to more lasting behaviour change when girls have opportunities to learn and build skills through both formal and non-formal education – including comprehensive sexuality education (CSE). These efforts are further strengthened when key systems (such as health, education, GBV prevention and response, social protection, and child protection) are equipped to deliver quality services, and when adolescents are empowered to access and use those services effectively.

### 3.2.1 Strengthening systems

This immediate outcome area focuses on enhancing the capacity of education, health, GBV prevention and response, social protection, and child protection systems – across both development and humanitarian settings – to deliver gender-responsive services to adolescent girls. To deliver on this outcome, the Global Programme leverages existing government and civil society initiatives, which not only amplifies reach but also leads to more sustainable results through stronger national systems.

**Access to prevention and protection services:** In 2024, a total of 2,532,021 girls and boys in programme areas accessed prevention and protection services, achieving over twice the target (Output Indicator 2102, a new indicator for Phase III). This result was mainly driven by India (925,825 girls and boys reached), and Mozambique (839,337 girls and boys reached). The reach in India reflects the work across the different states towards strengthening child protection systems and services; high reach contributing states include West Bengal, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh.

In the educational sector, the Global Programme increased the capabilities of 3,578 primary, secondary and non-formal educational institutions through various measures that enabled them to foster a gender-responsive environment.

In Nepal, the Global Programme advocated for CSE to be incorporated into the School Education Sector Plan, which is being implemented by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology. Key components of CSE have been integrated into the curriculum for grades 4 to 12 within subjects such as Health, Physical Education, and Creative Arts, and the curriculum has been rolled out nationwide. Furthermore, a standardized five-day training was developed and officially endorsed by the Government. Furthermore, the Global Pro-

gramme is supporting the training of schoolteachers in CSE, particularly in schools where sessions of the flagship Rupan-taran programme<sup>62</sup> are conducted for adolescent girls and boys. In 2024, a total of 110 teachers from 55 schools were trained in CSE, who, in turn, have facilitated CSE orientation sessions for both their fellow educators and students. Beneficiaries of the programme, and the national and local NGOs and CSOs engaged in efforts to prevent child marriage and uphold child rights. Additionally, the Global Programme has collaborated with youth-led and women's rights organizations to strengthen their role as accountability agents, ensuring that the voices of those vulnerable to and affected by child marriage are meaningfully represented in decision-making processes.

In 2024, the Global Programme significantly enhanced the capacities of 7,007 service delivery points to improve access to adolescent sexual and reproductive health, child protection and GBV response services.



<sup>62</sup> For more information on the Rupan-taran programme, visit: [www.unicefusa.org/stories/building-brighter-futures-girls-nepal](http://www.unicefusa.org/stories/building-brighter-futures-girls-nepal)

Table 4: Number of service delivery points in programme areas providing quality adolescent-responsive services (health, child protection/GBV) that meet minimum standards

**Indicator 2121 : Number of service delivery points in programme areas providing quality adolescent-responsive services (health, child protection/GBV) that meet minimum standards**

Country	2023 Results	2024 Targets	2024 Results
Bangladesh	313	2,189	2,105
Burkina Faso	62	15	21
Ethiopia	1,032	2,919	1,668
Ghana	2,071	740	1,542
India	769	750	1,086
Mozambique	97	107	107
Nepal	254	283	292
Niger	N/A	70	13
Sierra Leone	17	21	1
Uganda	873	160	67
Yemen	18	44	42
Zambia	12	45	63
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,518</b>	<b>7,343</b>	<b>7,007</b>

In Mozambique, 839,337 adolescents (469,637 girls and 369,700 boys) were reached with prevention and protection interventions. The Global Programme, in partnership with the International Child Development Programme (ICDP), achieved excellent results in narrowing the gaps between community-based structures and formal child protection services, while contributing to strengthening linkages between prevention and response to violence against children and child marriage. ICDP provided practical skills training to community-based structures (called Child Protection Community Committees) to identify and refer cases to relevant services. A total of 46 Child Protection Community Committees were reactivated, counting 1,074 members; a total of 3,656 cases were identified (of which 2,943 cases were child marriage and 713 were violence against children (VAC), including eight children with disability) and referred to services in Nampula and Zambézia provinces. Among those, 648 participated in self-help groups led by a psychologist, 914 (797 girls and 117 boys) participated in Capoeira (an Afro-Brazilian cultural expression of musical

elements, dance, and martial arts), and 259 were supported to be reintegrated into school and with school materials. One of the girls rescued from child marriage shared: *“I’ve returned to school and will continue studying. The sessions with the psychologist have helped me a lot.”* (Adelaide, Monapo district).

In Nepal, the Global Programme continued to improve the capacity of multisectoral service providers of GBV response, legal support, and protection, ensuring the delivery of well-coordinated, survivor-centred services. Through initiatives like the GBV Prevention and Response programme and the Empowering Women Prosperous Nepal programme, 18 One Stop Crisis Management Centres (OCMCs) and 16 safe houses have been supported across Nepal. In 2024, these centres provided healthcare, psychosocial support, and case management services to GBV survivors including those married as children. Recognizing the importance of supporting the children of GBV survivors, the programme has taken additional steps to ensure their well-being. Child-friendly spaces within OCMCs

and safe houses are equipped with toys, colouring books, and recreational materials, providing a safe and nurturing environment for children while their mothers receive support. In addition, the Global Programme supported the certification of seven new adolescent-friendly service centres (which can be health posts or hospitals) and strengthened 10 others to improve community operations.

In Uganda, the Global Programme improved access to reproductive health services for adolescents by setting up adolescent-friendly service delivery points in 38 health facilities and implementing community activations and outreach initiatives, reaching over 59,286 adolescents with comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services. These services included providing age-appropriate information, counselling, awareness raising and treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs). This reach is also attributed to the orientation of 110 health workers across target districts on SRHR services and harmful practices of child marriage and FGM led by the Ministry of Health. One success story illustrates the empowering effect of providing adolescent-responsive health services: Sarah, a 17-year-old girl from Kitgum, in the Acholi region, accessed reproductive health services at one of the programme's health centres. She received counselling and contraceptives, which helped her avoid an unintended pregnancy and stay in school. Sarah is now a peer educator, helping other girls in her community access the services they need.

### 3.2.2 Addressing poverty drivers

Poverty and limited economic opportunities are key drivers of child marriage. Gender-responsive social protection, (e.g., cash, cash plus, insurance, care policies, health, education opportunities) can help girls and their families meet basic needs and cover education costs, and has consistently proven effective in reducing the risk of child marriage. Addressing poverty drivers can be achieved at scale by leveraging government programmes and establishing formal and informal partnerships to deliver adolescent-responsive social protection and economic empowerment.

In 2024, a total of 3,548,215 adolescent girls (10–19) benefited from social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes, representing 85 per cent of the annual target. This figure is below the 2023 baseline, when over 6.3 million girls were reached. The overall decline can be explained by the fact that social protection programmes targeting girls in Ghana and Uganda were designed and planned, but not launched or reported in the reporting period. The Global Programme has also observed a downturn in the number and scale of social protection programmes supporting adolescent girls, and that meant that programme advocacy and focus turned to this critical pillar in 2024.



**Table 5: Number of girls (aged 10–19) benefiting from social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes****Indicator 2201 : Number of girls (10–19) benefiting from social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes**

Country	2023 Results	2024 Targets	2024 Results
Bangladesh		N/A	N/A
Burkina Faso		3,000	2,804
Ethiopia		1,205,000	1,237,268
Ghana		32,500	4,216
India		2,876,500	2,288,749
Mozambique		9,257	9,421
Nepal		500	555
Niger		4,050	2,480
Sierra Leone		N/A	0
Uganda		27,921	232
Yemen		200	250
Zambia		1,000	2,240
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,312,689 (8 countries)<sup>63</sup></b>	<b>4,159,928</b>	<b>3,548,215</b>

The majority of the girls reported under this indicator live in India, where over 2.2 million girls in eight states were provided with cash transfers and other social protection schemes to prevent child marriage and continue their education; while in Ethiopia, over 1.2 million girls were reached.

In the Indian State of Madhya Pradesh, the Global Programme leveraged funding from government flagship programmes to enable impactful interventions, benefiting millions of girls through education, cash assistance, life skills programmes, and community engagement. In 15 districts, 46 per cent of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme's<sup>64</sup> budget was aligned with Global Programme activities. Over \$33,340 was leveraged for information, education and communication activities to achieve the outcomes of these programmes, and 4.9 million

girls registered under the Ladli Laxmi Yojna scheme, with 1.2 million girls currently benefiting from cash assistance.

In Ethiopia the Global Programme collaborated with government partners to successfully reach 17,189 adolescent girls in drought and conflict-affected areas with humanitarian cash interventions supporting their basic needs, including food. Field observations demonstrated that while the menstrual health needs of some women and girls were satisfied through in-kind support in the form of dignity kits, many girls required cash assistance to address other urgent needs; in response, the Global Programme adapted its approach by reallocating resources from dignity kits to cash-based interventions, offering greater flexibility. As a result, among the total reached, 8,794 adolescent girls and women received cash support to

<sup>63</sup> Between 2023 and 2024, the Global Programme shifted phase, indicators were revised, and some new ones introduced. This explains why there was no country-specific target and result for this indicator for 2023.

<sup>64</sup> The Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme is a Government of India initiative launched in 2015 to address gender discrimination and promote women's empowerment. Translating to 'Save the Girl Child, Educate the Girl Child', the scheme aims to raise awareness about gender bias and improve the effectiveness of welfare services for girls. More information at [www.ibef.org/government-schemes/beti-bachao-beti-padhao](http://www.ibef.org/government-schemes/beti-bachao-beti-padhao)

support their basic needs, including for menstrual health. This is a good example of the Global Programme's ability to adapt programming and its capacity to leverage existing humanitarian interventions.

These interventions significantly reduced the burden on families, preventing the need to marry off adolescent girls to cover basic needs. In addition, over 1 million households with girls are benefiting from the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), which continues to provide SBC sessions on ending child marriage and FGM. Prioritizing humanitarian cash support in response interventions for drought, conflict, and other emergency-affected areas has led to an increase in the number of girls benefiting from economic support due to expanded coverage for economically challenged families.

In Niger, important work to strengthen linkages with social policy and cash transfers has also begun, with plans to continue in 2025, through the development of collaboration protocols between key sectors (health, education, justice, security, and social protection).

In 2024, the Global Programme established 282 partnerships (both formal and informal) to deliver adolescent-responsive social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes and services. This was below the target of 594, and such an underachievement is largely explained by the reduced budget that all Global Programme Country Offices received in 2024.

In Nepal, the Global Programme established partnerships with women's cooperatives, which play a vital role in enhancing adolescent girls' socioeconomic status through self-governance and financial services. These cooperatives encouraged girls from the programme to participate in savings schemes, financial literacy classes, skill development training, and awareness programmes. By offering low-interest credit for income-generating activities, the cooperatives help them achieve financial independence, which in turn supports their ability to resist harmful practices like child marriage. Additionally, some cooperatives have implemented the Rupantaran social and financial skills training package using their own resources, further supporting vulnerable girls in their communities.

Engaging the private sector is another potential partnership avenue to tackle the drivers of poverty. In Uganda, the Global Programme started advocating with private sector companies (especially those that take local government construction contracts) to provide apprenticeships and jobs for young mothers who have dropped out of schools and cannot continue with education, so that they can earn a living and support

their children while gaining some vocational skills. These partnerships with local businesses helped create internships and job placements, empowering girls economically and reducing the likelihood of early marriage, but more importantly serving to raise the private sector's interest in ending child marriage and teenage pregnancies, as these two issues impact the skilled human resources needed for the development of the local and national economy.

### 3.3 ENABLING ENVIRONMENT, LEGAL AND POLICY RESPONSE

#### 3.3.1 Implementing laws and policies

The Global Programme has played an important role in developing and strengthening the policy and legislative environment around the issue of child marriage in multiple settings.

In 2024, 81 policies or legal instruments directly addressing child marriage were drafted, proposed, or adopted at national and sub-national level with Global Programme support, with India and Nepal carrying the largest share, likely due to the number of sub-national policies (province, districts, and palikas<sup>65</sup> in Nepal, and states and districts in India).

In Niger, strengthening the legislative and policy framework to end child marriage was a priority for the Global Programme. Despite the challenges of fragile governance, a new National Strategic Plan to End Child Marriage was finalized and launched by Niger's military regime, and supported by a UK-hosted dialogue with donors. In 2024, the Global Programme supported the Government in validating the costed 2024–2028 National Strategic Plan, and participated in its official launch on October 11 on the occasion of the International Day of the Girl. Member organizations of the National Platform to End Child Marriage, which include UNFPA and UNICEF, played an important role in successfully concluding this process. With support from the Global Programme, the National Platform to End Child Marriage has been reactivated with strong engagement from women and youth-led civil society organizations, government, United Nations agencies and donors, to serve as a platform for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the 2024–2028 Strategic Plan. UNICEF now co-leads this platform in collaboration with CARE International, an NGO led by girl activists *Association des Jeunes Filles pour la Santé de la Reproduction*, and a coalition of youth organizations.

In Sierra Leone, considerable progress was made in 2024 towards developing a comprehensive and protective legal,

<sup>65</sup> Palikas are municipalities.

policy and institutional framework for children and the realization of their rights. The government has prioritized child protection and child rights in national development planning with the new Child Rights Bill (2024) that seeks to repeal and replace the Child Rights Act of 2007, addressing gaps in the previous legislation. Key aspects of the bill include alignment with international standards, prohibition of child marriage, prohibition of FGM and public participation. Sierra Leone also made a significant stride by passing the Prohibition of Child Marriage Bill (2024). The passing of this landmark legislation criminalizes marriage for anyone under the age of 18 and enforces penalties on offenders. The law not only protects children's rights, particularly the rights of girls, but also establishes a framework for multisectoral services for affected children. The enforcement of this law is expected to reduce child marriages, protect girls' educational opportunities, and enable them to reach their full potential. The long-term impact will contribute to a decrease in harmful practices and greater opportunities for girls across Sierra Leone.

In Zambia, the Government has made significant progress in harmonizing the legal and policy framework to end child marriage. Following the enactment of the Children's Code Act in August 2022 (which explicitly prohibits child marriage and FGM), the Government amended the Marriage Act (1918) in December 2023, voiding the provision that permitted marrying of children aged 16–18 years subject to the endorsement of the court, and therefore raising the minimum age of marriage to 18, whether for statutory or customary marriage (under different customs, that may vary from tribe to tribe). This amendment ensured the harmonization of these two critical legal instruments. In 2024, the Global Programme, in partnership with the



National Prosecution Authority and the Population Council developed a validated policy brief on ending child marriage<sup>66</sup> to ensure that information on the changes to the legal age of marriage is clearly stated and shared with the community. A child-friendly version of the brief is also being developed. In addition, the Global Programme led the initiative on sensitizing and engaging the traditional leadership in understanding and supporting the implementation of the revised age of marriage laws. This initiative recognized the important role that traditional leadership plays in preventing child marriage and adolescent pregnancy, as acknowledged by those legal instruments. The engagement also led to the House of Chiefs endorsing the development of a national guideline to help chiefdoms develop customary by-laws aligned with statutory law, while reflecting local cultures and practices. The guideline is set to be finalized and launched in 2025.

In 2024, a total of 301 sub-national plans with evidence-informed interventions to address child marriage were implemented across all 12 countries.

In Ghana, for instance, the Global Programme supported the Child Marriage Unit of the Ministry of Children, Gender and Social Protection to coordinate the implementation of the National Strategic Framework for Ending Child Marriage 2017–2026, and of its National Operational Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan 2023–2024. An Operational and M&E Plan (2025–2026) has been drafted and expected to be finalized and disseminated by the end of the first quarter of 2025. In addition, 90 Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies received direct technical and financial support, to develop, implement, and report on sub-national action plans to



<sup>66</sup> UNFPA Zambia, *Policy Brief\_Ending Child Marriage*, 2024. <https://zambia.unfpa.org/en/publications/policy-brief-ending-child-marriage>

address child marriage and deliver integrated social services as part of the broader Integrated Social Service (ISS) initiative.

In 2024, nine policy and budget analysis documents were developed and disseminated to inform budgeted multisectoral gender-responsive planning to address child marriage.

Ethiopia, for instance, implemented the National Costed Roadmap to End Child Marriage and FGM/C (2020–2024) both at federal and regional levels. The roadmap, which ended in December 2024, included action and budget plans of the 10 regions and two City Administrations. The Global Programme provided technical and financial support to the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs and the National Alliance for the implementation, endline assessment, and expenditure tracking of the roadmap. This included organizing training, developing tools, and providing financial support for fieldwork. As part of the 2025 workplan, the Global Programme will support the development of the next iteration of the roadmap (2025–2030), drawing on findings from ongoing endline assessments and other evidence. This effort will be co-financed by both the Global Programme and the JPFM.

In India, the Global Programme has created a primer on the Annulment of Child Marriage under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 and created popularized tools<sup>67</sup> with illustrations aimed at supporting CSOs and other actors who engage closely with young people especially adolescent girls who may be vulnerable to the risk of child marriage. It unpacks the provision on annulment of child marriage within the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, in simple, easy to understand terms, and seeks to uphold the agency of young people affected by child marriage.

### 3.3.2 Strengthening and using data and evidence

In 2024, Global Programme focus countries, Regional Offices, and headquarters produced 65 evidence and knowledge products addressing child marriage, driving global thought leadership and informing policy decisions, programme design, standards setting, and advocacy efforts worldwide.

The Global Programme in India alone contributed with 20 of these products. For example, India country offices conducted a deep dive study on socio-economic drivers of child marriage in West Bengal (one of the states in India with the highest prevalence of child marriage) at the state government's request. The aim of the study was to identify the reasons for the state's stagnant child marriage prevalence, despite the implementation of multiple state flagship schemes, including

the Kanyashree scheme (a cash transfer scheme implemented across the state). Using household surveys and focus group discussions, the study identified economic hardship as a major driver of child marriages. Contributing factors include waning interest in education, lower dowry costs for less-educated brides, self-initiated marriages influenced by social media, and limited employment opportunities for women.

In addition to the work done by country offices to support country-level evidence-based policy and advocacy, Global Programme HQ, the STAR Initiative and Regional Offices played a leading role in evidence generation on child marriage, producing a total of 20 regional- and global-level research and evidence products (research briefs, research reports, working papers, and journal articles), knowledge products (blogs, think pieces, presentations, videos, interviews, and conference papers), and methodologies and tools (technical guidance and toolkits) in 2024.

The Global Programme also plays an active role in supporting cross-learning activities on what works to end child marriage, through technical assistance, conferences, expert visits, peer consultation, study tours, and communities of practice. In 2024, 10 cross-learning activities were supported by the Global Programme.

Table 6 summarizes the Global Programme's contribution to global and regional level evidence generation and cross-learning in 2024.



<sup>67</sup> UNFPA India, *Primer on Annulment of Child Marriages: Enfold Proactive Health Trust with support from UNFPA*, 2024. <https://india.unfpa.org/en/publications/primer-annulment-child-marriages-enfold-proactive-health-trust-support-unfpa-2024>

Table 6: Global Programme contribution to global and regional level evidence generation and cross-learning activities in 2024

Type	Description	2024 Products	Total No.
<b>Research and evidence products</b>	Research briefs, research reports, working papers, journal articles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Global (HQ + STAR):</b> <u>A synthesis of what we know works to prevent and respond to child marriage</u></li> <li>• <b>Global (HQ + CRANK):</b> 4 Research Spotlights produced on education, economic empower, cash and asset incentive schemes and girls' empowerment interventions by leveraging the systematic reviews commissioned to inform the WHO guideline on adolescent pregnancy prevention and poor reproductive outcomes; one thematic brief on what's known on child marriage and mental health.</li> <li>• <b>Regional (ROSA):</b> <u>Meta-analysis and meta-synthesis of evidence on child marriage in South Asia</u></li> <li>• <b>Regional (WCARO):</b> Scoping study on climate change and child protection in West and Central Africa</li> <li>• <b>Regional (ESARO)</b> Research on the impact of climate change on child marriage, FGM, and teenage pregnancy in the Eastern and Southern Africa Region (Ongoing, focus countries – Ethiopia, Kenya and Madagascar). <u>Kenya completed</u></li> </ul>	9
<b>Knowledge products/ events</b>	Blogs, think pieces, presentations, videos, interviews, conference papers	<p><i>Presentations on the What Works paper</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Global (STAR):</b> UNICEF Sudan Country Office – Oct. 2024</li> <li>• <b>Global (STAR):</b> UNICEF MENARO Gender Network meeting – April 2024</li> <li>• <b>Global (STAR):</b> UNFPA and UNICEF Workshop in Morocco focused on child marriage prevention in MENA – June 2024</li> <li>• <b>Global (STAR)</b> Africa Union Humanitarian Symposium – Nov. 2024</li> <li>• <b>Global (STAR &amp; CRANK):</b> UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme, UNICEF Innocenti, Girls Not Brides, and WHO/HRP Launch of Global Evidence-to-Action Priority Setting Process at the SVRI Forum – Oct 2024</li> </ul>	5

Type	Description	2024 Products	Total No.
<b>Methodologies/ Tools</b>	Technical Guidance, toolkits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Global (HQ):</b> ODI Report: Qualitative indicators and approaches for assessing progress on ending CEFMU</li> <li>• <b>Global (HQ):</b> ECM GTA Facilitation Guide</li> <li>• <b>Regional (South Asia):</b> Partnering with women-led organizations to address child marriage in South Asia</li> <li>• <b>Global (HQ):</b> <u>ECM Integrated VCAT and GTA Facilitation Guide</u></li> <li>• <b>Global (HQ):</b> <u>GTA Values Clarification Workshop Facilitation Guide.</u></li> <li>• <b>Regional (WCAR)</b> <u>Technical Brief Technical Brief Interlinkages of Child Marriage and Food Insecurity</u></li> </ul>	6
<b>Other cross-learning activities</b>	Technical Assistance, conferences, peer consultation, study tours, communities of practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Global (STAR):</b> STAR Research Capacity Workshops delivered to Ghana CO, Zambia CO and to the MENA region.</li> <li>• <b>Global (CRANK):</b> One global symposium on mental health and child marriage (March 2024), two quarterly research meetings conducted (June and November 2024)</li> <li>• <b>Regional (WCAR):</b> <u>Workshop with women-led organizations on addressing GBV and harmful practices:</u></li> <li>• <b>Regional (WCAR/ESAR):</b> Child Marriage Strategies Regional synthesis and lessons learned webinar (15 February 2024) – ESARO/WCARO</li> <li>• <b>Regional (WCAR) Child Marriage and FGM:</b> Social and Community Listening Webinar</li> <li>• <b>Regional (WCAR):</b> Regional Launch webinar of the human-centred design playbook for child marriage and FGM – WCARO</li> </ul>	10

### 3.4 CHALLENGES TO EFFECTIVE PROGRAMMING

In addition to the main global challenges to ending child marriage mentioned in Chapter 1 including the global pushback against gender equality, humanitarian crises, and funding constraints, Global Programme countries face other more country-specific challenges to effective programme implementation, including:

**Political transitions and instability:** In 2024, political turmoil followed by changes in government posed significant challenges to programme implementation in Bangladesh. This unprecedented movement reshaped the country's political landscape. These shifts have required continuous adaptation and realignment of strategies to maintain engagement with key government stakeholders and ensure momentum amid evolving priorities and staff turning over. Delays in appointing new leadership and uncertainty around the continuity of policy commitments have further complicated efforts to scale up interventions. In Ghana, 2024 was an election year, making the engagement of policymakers a challenge. With the country's focus on elections, additional efforts were required to get policymakers to prioritize and commit to the programme activity implementation. The election cycle led to changes in government personnel, resulting in a loss of institutional memory and momentum. The Global Programme in Ghana adapted its advocacy strategies to navigate these challenges, investing time and resources in building relationships with new policymakers and stakeholders.

**Limited government human resources:** In Nepal, a persistent human resource gap across all tiers of government, combined with frequent leadership changes, hindered the timely delivery of services. For example, the delay in finalizing the revised national strategy and the establishment of child rights committees in all 756 municipalities were direct consequences of this leadership gap. Similarly, in Mozambique, one of the most significant roadblocks was the lack of adequate funding and capacity within line ministries to prevent and respond to child marriage. The gap in the Government's human resources among social workers and the inadequate capacity of Government structures impacted the effectiveness of the programme's implementation. This was exacerbated by weak multisectoral coordination, which, despite improvements supported by the Global Programme's investment and other initiatives, continued to impact the ability to deliver effective and efficient service provision.

**Punitive approaches to addressing child marriage:** In India, efforts from the police forces of the State of Assam to prosecute child marriage were seen to discourage community reporting of those cases due to concerns over human rights

violations. For instance, fear of legal repercussions may have deterred married or pregnant girls from accessing essential sexual and reproductive health services, including obstetric care. The Global Programme continued its advocacy with the state departments and the Assam Police for a preventive and multisectoral approach to address child marriage comprehensively. The Global Programme provided technical assistance to the implementation of the state and district action plans on ending child marriage and to the formulation of related standard operational procedures. Subsequently the state government, taking a preventive approach, launched a financial assistance scheme *Nijut Moina* to encourage girls and their families to pursue higher education.

**Lack of recent data and monitoring:** In many of the Global Programme countries, accurate and timely data collection is a challenge due to geographic remoteness, insecurity, access and lack of internet connectivity, and the capacity of staff and partners to collect reliable data especially at outcome level. Measuring any change in norms and behaviours requires time and resources. This affects the programme's ability to monitor performance and adapt interventions effectively, although the Global Programme has taken steps to adapt reporting tools to address these challenges. In Sierra Leone, innovative data management systems are underutilized, due to a lack of capacity among partners and necessary funds. Furthermore, there is a research gap in understanding the specific drivers and data trends related to adolescent pregnancy, child marriage, GBV, and other harmful practices, and how these issues are influenced by the broader institutional and social context. The limited availability of up-to-date, population-level data on child marriage further complicates programming and advocacy efforts. In Zambia, the delays in releasing the 2024 DHS datasets on prevalence of child marriage impacted programme design. The Global Programme in Zambia primarily relies on the 2018 DHS survey for baseline and target setting. In the meantime, available data on proxy indicators such as school enrolment, retention and transition rates, adolescent deliveries in health facilities and adolescent HIV infection rates are used for targeted engagement with government and stakeholders.

**Weak coordination between partners:** The Global Programme recognizes that enhanced coordination between partners must be achieved, particularly to face all the other underlying challenges. Therefore, a focus of Phase III is on improving multi-stakeholder dialogue and coordination space. In Zambia, for instance, there are numerous partners working on ending child marriage in different districts across the country, but coordination remains limited. To address this challenge, the Global Programme is supporting the Government to finalize a national strategy for ending child marriage with strengthening coordination being one of its priorities. The development of



UNICEF/UN0318040/Dejongh

the strategy started in 2024, and will be finalized and launched in 2025. The Global Programme also supported the Zambian Government to develop a Social Behaviour Change Plan which will contribute to a more coordinated approach to tackling child marriage with standardized multimedia materials and community dialogue tools for use by all partners.

**Humanitarian emergencies and security constraints:** Several Global Programme countries are experiencing large-scale humanitarian emergencies, making girls more vulnerable and complicating efforts and programming to end child marriage. These emergencies stem from factors such as climate change, in countries like Bangladesh, Ghana, Zambia and Nepal, or more complex security crises such as in Burkina Faso, Niger, and Yemen, and have significantly hindered programme implementation and results. In Burkina Faso, the Global Programme could not conduct mass awareness-raising activities in villages facing major security challenges due to repeated terrorist attacks. Villages covered by the programme were deserted due to attacks and threats. The constant mobility of target populations in search of safer destinations resulted in difficulties in providing assistance, monitoring and collecting data on internally displaced people. The difficult access to certain localities affected by security challenges compromises the provision of HIV screening tests and kits for the treatment of STIs for adolescent girls participating in safe space activities who are referred to health centres. The displacement of many adolescents and young people in the main towns of the communes has increased demand for services, highlighting

the need to continue supporting health structures in these three towns to adequately respond to the needs of this group.

In Yemen, the ongoing conflict, particularly in northern governorates, limits the ability of NGOs and INGOs to operate effectively and access the intended programme beneficiaries. Security concerns hinder the reach of awareness campaigns and programmes to support GBV survivors and those at risk of child marriage.

In Niger, the security situation has had a negative impact on funding and on the programme's reach, as in order to access certain areas, a government escort is required, the cost of which has an impact on the budget. Therefore fewer villages can be accessed.

### 3.5 ADAPTIVE AND INNOVATIVE APPROACHES ACROSS THE DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN CONTINUUM

The Global Programme has been innovating and adapting to continue reaching the most marginalized girls. Being flexible, creative and responsive to changes is especially important in the context of the global polycrisis, where girls are becoming more vulnerable and at greater risk of child marriage.

For example, the Global Programme has successfully integrated child marriage prevention in humanitarian and emergency settings, when the focus of interventions mainly turns to providing other forms of life-saving support such as food, shelter and medical care (see text box: Addressing child marriage in humanitarian settings).



© UNICEF/UN0535941/Dejongh

## ADDRESSING CHILD MARRIAGE IN HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS

Emergency funding in humanitarian settings often overlooks child marriage and the broader needs of adolescent girls, prioritizing immediate life-saving needs such as water, sanitation, nutrition, and health. To address this gap, the Global Programme has supported the integration of child marriage prevention and response into humanitarian interventions by leveraging existing humanitarian architecture, investments, and areas of responsibility. It has also expanded activities to new sites and prioritized conflict-affected, internally displaced adolescent girls, who face heightened vulnerability during crises.



© UNICEF/UN0824301/Map

In 2024, the Global Programme intensified inclusion efforts across the Sahel (Burkina Faso and Niger) to reach displaced populations affected by the region's prolonged security and humanitarian crisis by prioritizing community-based strategies to locate displaced families in host areas. Collaboration with social services responsible for registering internally displaced persons ensured continued access to quality services. For vulnerable groups inaccessible due to government or armed group restrictions, mentors and community relays were trained to deliver local interventions, while localization strategies were strengthened. In Burkina Faso, the Global Programme expanded intervention areas, reaching more than 10,681 internally displaced adolescent girls through awareness raising activities focused on SRH, GBV, self-esteem, decision-making, and resilience in conflict settings. 4,397 displaced boys and men also took part in gender-transformative dialogues through 1,488 adolescent boys' clubs and 60 youth networks. Finally, the programme supported the education of 959 internally displaced girls by covering school fees, providing kits, and distributing bicycles to those living far from schools.

The Global Programme also extended its interventions to the conflict-affected province of Cabo Delgado in Mozambique, where more than 850,000 people – nearly half of them children – have been displaced. The heightened risk of child marriage in this region is underscored by the fact that 15 per cent of all child marriage cases reported nationally through Mozambique's Child Helpline originate from Cabo Delgado. In response to this growing vulnerability, the programme prioritized support for internally displaced persons and returnees, with a particular focus on adolescent girls. Initial interventions have focused on system strengthening through the training of social workers and the reinforcement of the Child Helpline's capacity. In addition, the programme initiated the training of male mentors and partnered with the Provincial Health Directorate to rehabilitate youth-friendly health services, aiming to improve access to quality care for adolescent girls in the province.

In Bangladesh, the Global Programme expanded its integration of child marriage prevention into emergency response efforts, focusing on disaster-affected areas not previously covered, such as Noakhali and Feni. Following the flash floods of 2024, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs deployed additional human resources and mobilized community and local volunteer groups to support protection efforts. The Child Protection in Emergencies cluster was activated, chaired by the Deputy Director of the Department of Women Affairs, to coordinate child protection activities. Additionally, 50 child-friendly spaces were established in emergency shelters, providing safe environments for children and adolescents, along with psychosocial support and child marriage prevention messaging. The programme also expanded partnerships with humanitarian actors, leading to a shared understanding among 23 key GBV and health cluster member organizations of the critical need to address child marriage in humanitarian settings. Consequently, around 40,000 women and girls affected by the crisis benefited from integrated GBV and health services in Bangladesh in 2024, improving their access to protection and essential support during emergencies.

## DIGITAL SOLUTIONS

In April 2024, the Global Programme in Nepal launched the digital Rupantaran learning tool. With technical support from UNICEF Regional Office South Asia, the Rupantaran digital content has been hosted on the Learning Passport platform. The digitalization of the Rupantaran curriculum is a significant step in increasing accessibility and scale. The e-learning platform allows participants to engage with the content at their own pace, regardless of location, overcoming physical barriers to access. The digital Rupantaran app also has accessibility features for adolescents with disabilities, bridging the information divide and extending the Global Programme's reach. The Global Programme adapts its strategies to Nepal's geographic and cultural diversity, addressing regional variations in child marriage prevalence. The implementation of this digital tool will begin in the first quarter of 2025.

An important and innovative approach, particularly in the context of intensifying climate shocks driving child marriage, is the integration of climate change adaptation strategies with efforts to prevent child marriage. In Nepal, the Global Programme continues to prioritize integration of environmental sustainability and climate action in programme planned activities. This involves enhancing the capacities of young people in child-centred climate adaptation, mitigation, and disaster risk reduction. The Rupantaran Life Skills Programme includes a specialized module on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation, equipping adolescent girls and boys with crucial knowledge on climate change, disaster preparedness, and sustainable livelihoods. This module empowers young people and adolescent girls by enhancing their resilience to climate-related challenges, thereby reducing their vulnerability to harmful practices such as child marriage. Furthermore, the Global Programme has provided technical support in shaping national policies - National Child Protection Policy and the Humanitarian Response Framework. These efforts have ensured the integration of child marriage prevention and gender-based violence mitigation into disaster and crisis response strategies. As a result, child protection remains a central focus in emergency interventions, safeguarding at-risk adolescents from the increased threats posed by climate change and humanitarian crises.

Leveraging the technological developments that accelerated in Phase II due to the COVID-19 context (see text box: Digital solutions) has helped to scale up results by reaching more people and ensuring no one gets left behind, including people living in remote areas, and those living with disabilities. Digital innovations have been used by the Global Programme to provide information, education and awareness, and facilitate more efficient reporting, case management and referral systems.

In Yemen, about 26.2 per cent of the population uses the internet. While this is below the global average, it is an important means of contacting populations otherwise cut off by insecurity. To leverage this existing platform, in 2024 the Global Programme adopted the use of social media and developed five videos focusing on GBV issues that were shared on YouTube, Facebook and TikTok. The videos reached 209,300 persons (50,000 girls, 50,300 boys, 30,000 women & 79,000 men), which represents 70 per cent of the target.

The use of social media in such a context has potential for scalability and can be a game changer in creating awareness on the prevention of child marriage.

In Sierra Leone, girls in girl clubs are provided with gender-transformative life skills using the National Life Skills Manual and digitalized life skills audios based on the manual. In 2025, the life skills manuals and digitalized content will be upgraded in collaboration with the UNICEF Innovation team to make them more interactive and accessible.

At the global level, the Global Programme has been developing in partnership with Rutgers International and in collaboration with UNFPA's global CSE Unit, the Global CSE Academy, a series of open source digital courses on CSE for young people, particularly adolescent girls, with content providing basic knowledge, intermediate and advanced topics based on evidence and international standards.

## 3.6 LESSONS LEARNED

Addressing poverty or economic challenges for girls and their families can significantly contribute to the Global Programme's success by comprehensively tackling key drivers of child marriage. This is a key learning from the What Works paper in 2024. Supporting girls in developing income-generating activities is an effective strategy, as it helps to improve their status and their access to education. Providing them with vocational training also creates opportunities for them to set personal goals and gain the skills and confidence needed to influence their parents' decisions regarding early marriage.

In addition, contextualizing social protection programmes to meet the specific needs of adolescent girls, such as by incorporating life skills training and mentoring, enhances their economic empowerment and resilience.

Strengthening systems through capacity-building creates new allies. The elimination of child marriage requires multisectoral interventions at all levels. While community-level interventions are crucial, stakeholders also need to act at the service and systems level to ensure that service providers and institutions - and the individuals working within them - are gender-sensi-

tive and committed to ending harmful practices. The Global Programme in Burkina Faso observed that service providers such as teachers and health workers will typically fulfil their duties within the limits of their time and resources. However, those who have received capacity building on gender and related topics are more likely to develop a deeper commitment to addressing child marriage, frequently demonstrating exceptional dedication and taking proactive steps to support girls and promote change. In 2024, having health workers as allies – alongside community leaders – helped intensify awareness-raising efforts, reaching a significant number of adolescents, youth, and their families. In 2025, the Global Programme will place greater emphasis on this approach.

Engaging community leaders promotes positive behaviours and attitudes. When community leaders (village chiefs, religious leaders, influential men and women) understand and support the goals of an intervention, they become important strategic allies. Exploring the experiences of other countries with comparable sociocultural and religious contexts can be an effective strategy to persuade community leaders and address resistance to change. The Global Programme in Ghana noted the importance of engaging community leaders and influencers in promoting behavioural change among marginalized adolescent girls, observing that girls who received support from community leaders were more likely to adopt positive behaviours and attitudes. To build on this success, in 2025, the Global Programme plans to strengthen partnerships with community and religious leaders and provide them with training and resources to amplify their impact.

Partnering with women-led organizations is essential across all regions, especially in more conservative contexts. In Yemen, working with women-led organizations with well-established community structures such as women and girls' safe spaces facilitated easier access to vulnerable girls at risk of child marriage and to the community at large. These partnerships enabled the delivery of educational, awareness interventions, identification and response to child marriage and GBV cases, and their referrals to specialized protection, legal and health services.

Strong multisectoral collaboration is required. Effectively addressing drivers of child marriage requires the collaboration of different sectors. In Niger, ending child marriage has been elevated as a national priority to address maternal mortality and infant malnutrition. The development of a Child Marriage Programming Strategy Note provided the basis for renewed collaboration particularly with the Education Sector, to ensure that adolescent girls have access to quality schooling, and the Health and Nutrition sectors, to strengthen integrated responses that support their overall well-being. In India, multisectoral collaboration, adolescent-friendly policies, and critical

government actions have enabled better institutionalization of programmes targeting adolescent empowerment and gender equality. In addition, the multisectoral approach adopted by the district administration through the development of district action plans and its implementation overseen by the District Task Force has helped identify teenage mothers, out-of-school girls and other girls at risk of child marriage.

Government engagement ensures sustainability and drives change. Fostering robust partnerships with local institutions and governments ensures the sustainability and scalability of interventions. Programmes with strong local partnerships demonstrate enhanced effectiveness and efficiency in addressing the unique needs of adolescent girls and their families. By leveraging local expertise, resources, and networks, interventions are tailored to the specific contexts, ultimately amplifying impact and fostering long-term change. The engagement of authorities is also critical to shape policy and programmes to end child marriage in early states of the intervention. Their leadership strengthens coordination across sectors and reinforces community action. In contrast, neutrality or lack of interest can hamper coordination, weaken accountability, and create confusion or hesitation within communities.



CHAPTER 4

# Programme Governance



The Global Programme's comparative advantage lies in its ability to leverage the benefits of joint programming at global, regional, and country levels. Funds received for the Global Programme at the global level are distributed among implementing entities (Country Offices, Regional Offices, or HQ Offices) according to twice-yearly work plans approved by the Global Programme's Steering Committee. This approach promotes joint collaboration, which improves results across the board. A flexible approach is exercised wherever possible, to ensure that the available resources are positioned where they can have the greatest impact.

### Global Programme income 2024

Each year, depending on the rates of execution from implementing entities from the previous year, a certain amount of funds will be carried through to the new financial year. In addition, the following table shows the income which the Global Programme received in 2024.

**Table 7: Contributions received by the Global Programme in 2024 (in US\$)**

Donor	Contribution received in 2024 (US\$)
Canada	5,227,781.93
Netherlands	4,875,406.28
Norway	2,512,111.97
United Kingdom	8,507,816.61
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21,123,116.79</b>

After removing the Administrative Agent fee and agency cost recovery, the total Global Programme budget for 2024, including donor funds carried forward from previous years, was US\$34,588,949, against a Phase III planned budget of US\$37,010,175.

The Global Programme was able to use unspent funds from Phase II to supplement budgets for 2024 and as a result, most implementing entities (COs, ROs, HQ) were able to receive up to 90 per cent of what had been planned and approved by the Global Programme Steering Committee (see Table 8).



Table 8: Global programme allocations and expenditures in 2024 (US\$)

Country / Entity	Planned allocation 2024		Funds received		Funds spent			
	UNICEF	UNFPA	UNICEF	UNFPA	UNICEF	%	UNFPA	%
Bangladesh	2,300,000	1,562,500	1,808,290	1,050,683	1,206,632.92	67	1,054,130	100
Burkina Faso	1,300,000	743,750	1,215,779	618,103	1,177,288.27	97	485,291	79
Ethiopia	2,100,000	1,312,500	2,035,479	979,773	1,835,520.88	90	899,713	92
Ghana	1,140,000	943,750	1,082,537	703,394	1,070,241.74	99	491,665	70
India	2,317,000	1,312,500	2,017,527	1,021,748	1,559,974.85	77	984,319	96
Mozambique	850,000	743,750	782,983	604,036	422,336.31	54	473,294	78
Nepal	800,000	943,750	797,263	704,451	569,824.33	71	687,331	98
Niger	790,084	743,750	711,227	585,221	710,446.80	100	538,273	92
Sierra Leone	980,000	743,750	928,350	604,721	569,836.83	61	310,081	51
Uganda	980,000	943,750	862,257	691,045	834,623.16	97	621,597	90
Yemen	740,000	802,120	699,915	483,750	659,583.32	94	469,021	97
Zambia	720,000	987,563	679,664	666,318	419,302.46	62	601,902	90
ASRO/ MENARO	549,930	323,750	488,541	283,748	1,053,639.22	216	158,661	55
APRO/ROSA	400,000	323,750	381,079	352,056	391,431.48	103	110,255	54
ESARO	585,000	323,750	1,041,286	210,459	798,133.88	77	195,108	93
WCARO	550,000	323,750	331,502	120,024.70	333,235.31	101	101,745	85
HQ	2,900,000	1,479,513	2,782,021	3,200,925	1,555,714.17	56	1,771,911	54
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,002,014</b>	<b>14,586,935</b>	<b>18,645,701</b>	<b>12,880,458</b>	<b>15,167,765.93</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>9,954,296</b>	<b>80</b>

Note: where Global Programme Country Offices (COs) spent more than 100 per cent of their received allocation, it is because they spent funds which had been brought forward from previous years.

We see lower levels of fund execution in some countries, for instance, in Yemen (in the case of UNICEF), Sierra Leone (in the case of UNFPA), and in some of the Regional Offices.

The lower levels of execution are sometimes due to:

- ◆ delays in receiving funds, unpredictability of disbursements and gaps in communication about when to expect them; or
- ◆ the country context: for example, programming was halted in Bangladesh following the civil uprising, and, in Burkina Faso and Niger, due to operational security constraints.

In some cases, the capacity of the Global Programme partners to absorb and account for funds can slow implementation – this is often the case with local NGOs, decentralized govern-

ment partners, and other typical implementing partners of the Global Programme.

Overall, the financial performance of the Global Programme in 2024 was satisfactory. There will be challenges ahead as the programme's funding pipeline through 2028 remains weak. For 2025 it seems very unlikely that the Global Programme will come anywhere near the Phase III planned budget of \$41 million. To address these challenges, the programme has been making significant efforts to expand and deepen the donor base. The Global Programme will also look more closely at what alternative funding streams for child marriage programming have been unlocked at country level, with a view to being more efficient and impactful with the funds which are available.

CHAPTER 5

# Looking Ahead



## 5.1 GLOBAL PRIORITIES

In 2025 and beyond, the Global Programme will continue to implement Phase III informed by the evidence base on what works to end child marriage. The Global Programme will prioritize evidence-based, high-impact interventions to maximize the greatest value for money and achievement of at-scale results – particularly in the context of growing financial uncertainty in the aid and development landscape – and to catalyse the impact of partners' contributions and governments' commitments.

A holistic, multisectoral approach – integrated across education, health, child protection, gender-based violence prevention and response, sexual and reproductive health, and social protection – will remain central to the Global Programme's strategy. Scaling through government-led and sustainable systems will be a key priority.

Below are some specific global priorities:

◆ **Prioritizing the application of what works to end child marriage:** with just five years until 2030, prioritizing global action in the areas of intervention that have been consistently proven to be most effective at ending child marriage is an important strategy to accelerate progress towards SDG 5.3, especially in a context of budget cuts. As demonstrated by the 2024 research piece on what works to prevent child marriage<sup>68</sup>, the three areas with the most impact are:

- ◆ Income and economic strengthening (cash transfers, vocational training, favourable job markets) to address poverty drivers of child marriage
- ◆ Education and life skills delivered through schools and/or school-adjacent programmes (cash and in-kind transfers for schooling, targeted and tailored life skills) to ensure girls receive secondary education
- ◆ SRHR (comprehensive sexuality education, adolescent-responsive sexual and reproductive health services), to empower girls with knowledge and access to services that protect their rights and health.

Amid growing international aid funding gaps, accelerating results can be achieved by scaling up and leveraging existing large-scale programmes – such as health, education, and social protection schemes – particularly those linked to government systems capable of delivering at scale. Government-led cash transfers that are part of social pro-

tection systems offer the greatest potential for addressing key drivers of child marriage sustainably and at scale. Adding other 'plus' components (complementary interventions and/or access to services) to social protection schemes, such as sexual and reproductive health support, access to health services, skills training, case management, and community engagement on social and gender norms, can mitigate other drivers of child marriage.

In addition, establishing and supporting more partnerships with governments, civil society organizations, the private sector, social protection networks and other implementers working on economic empowerment is vital to addressing poverty drivers and reaching the poorest adolescent girls and their families.



◆ **Unlocking more financing towards ending child marriage and diversifying resource mobilization strategies:**

Increased resource mobilization continues to be essential to sustain and scale the Global Programme, ensuring its impact reaches the most marginalized communities and drives lasting systemic change. As the global financing landscape evolves, the Global Programme has already begun adapting to these shifts by expanding and diversifying its funding base, ensuring the programme remains responsive, relevant, and resilient. The Global Programme will play a critical role in catalysing commitments – for instance, government pledges to increase budget allocations, new donors pledging multi-year support, and foundations/high-net-worth investors indicating interest in specific elements of ending child marriage. More specifically:

<sup>68</sup> See 11

- ◇ The Global Programme is already actively engaging a range of partners, including multi-stakeholder mechanisms like the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative, which has proven catalytic in addressing gender-based violence and harmful practices. At the same time, UNICEF's National Committees and philanthropists remain pivotal in generating flexible resources and galvanizing public support – particularly in high-income countries. In parallel, the Global Programme is strengthening its collaboration with private sector foundations, corporate actors, and high-net-worth individuals, developing compelling value propositions and co-investment opportunities that align with their commitments to gender equality and social impact.
- ◇ The Global Programme is also leveraging and integrating global initiatives, such as EmpowerED, UNFPA's flagship programme on comprehensive sexuality education, funded by the Government of Canada. This initiative complements and reinforces child marriage prevention efforts by equipping adolescent girls with the knowledge, skills, and agency they need to navigate risks and make informed choices. By positioning EmpowerED within the broader ending child marriage agenda, the Global Programme is enhancing cross-sectoral coherence and broadening the programme's appeal to donors working across education, health, and protection.
- ◇ The Global Programme will continue to play a catalytic role in supporting in-country efforts to mobilize resources for ECM programmes to fill the resource gaps, as has been the case in Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Bangladesh in 2024, which successfully secured parallel resources to complement Global Programme activities. In the current global environment, advocacy and technical support to countries to unlock domestic financing must be a key area of work for the Global Programme.

While the Global Programme is undertaking resource mobilization efforts, it is important to recognize that it is a long-term investment. Building donor trust, negotiating new partnerships, and aligning institutional priorities with diverse funding partners takes time – often months or even years. Momentum is essential: when political will, community engagement, and programmatic success converge – as is currently the case – failing to capitalize on this window risks losing traction and undermining hard-won progress. To sustain momentum and ensure long-term impact, the Global Programme must continue to pursue a robust, forward-looking financing strategy. This includes deepening pooled funding mechanisms,

exploring results-based and blended finance models, and fostering south-to-south cooperation. Ultimately, ending child marriage requires not only vision and commitment, but also the sustained investment and strategic foresight to drive change at scale – until every girl, everywhere, is free to choose her own future.

- ◆ **Strengthening alliances to counter the global pushback against gender equality:** In order to address the challenges of the global pushback phenomenon and its implications on ending child marriage by 2030, the Global Programme will continuously monitor the risks of pushback on gender equality and rollback on gains made against child marriage through mechanisms such as social listening, media monitoring and political scanning. Robust preventive and mitigation measures will be advanced in collaboration with women's rights organizations, youth-led organizations and feminist movements, along with continuous advocacy engagements, not only to sustain gains but to accelerate results towards the SDG targets. This requires the creation of new coalitions, the expansion and support of existing alliances, and the effective collaboration and the coordination of collective efforts to create more impact. Evidence-based advocacy and action through these coalitions is a priority. The Global Programme will increase its engagement with women and youth-led organizations, feminist networks, and movements to amplify the voices of adolescent girls and strengthen collective advocacy for gender equality and the elimination of child marriage, with a particular focus on coalition building. Despite funding constraints, the Global Programme remains committed to empowering WLOs and strengthening international solidarity in advocating for gender equality, while continuing to champion a girl-centred approach.



- ◆ **Advancing gender transformative approaches:** In 2025, there will be an increased focus on tracking progress against country GTA roadmaps and building evidence on the gender-transformative shifts occurring in the Global Programme, such as the increased engagement of men and boys as advocates and agents of change towards ending child marriage.
- ◆ **Knowledge sharing and cross-learning:** To accelerate progress to end child marriage, the Global Programme will expand its reach and document and share good practices with countries beyond the 12 implementing countries, such as the Rising Star countries, TUSIP programme in East Asia, UNFPA's Regional Programme to End Child Marriage in Latin America and the Caribbean and all other countries with high burden. Intentional learning and knowledge sharing will cover the entire child marriage ecosystem.
- ◆ **Adapting the research agenda:** Effective evidence-informed advocacy, policies, and action and interventions require that the Global Programme continue to prioritize research. However, in order to ensure research is relevant to programme implementation and contributes directly to progress in the field, the Global Programme research agenda is evolving from an expert-centred global approach to a more operational and field-driven model. The UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage will continue its collaboration with UNICEF Innocenti, Girls Not Brides, and WHO/HRP to define a global research agenda that addresses current evidence gaps and emerging needs – particularly by strengthening the link between evidence generation and policy uptake.
- ◆ **Expanding the digital strategy:** The Global Programme, together with the Joint Programme to End FGM (JPFGM), will support existing digital innovations as a way to reach more girls. The focus will be on scaling proven, girl-centred digital solutions already operating in focused and other countries, rather than piloting new initiatives. OKY, an application developed by UNICEF initially as an offline period tracker, but now expanded to many facets of girls' health, has been identified as a potential solution for scale in 2025. Similarly, the Global Programme will leverage investments in comprehensive sexuality education to offer open courses for young people, including adolescent girls, through the forthcoming UNFPA's CSE Academy.
- ◆ **Thought leadership in the child marriage ecosystem:** The Global Programme will continue to play the thought leadership role in influencing programme strategies and priorities to accelerate elimination of child marriage worldwide as the UN flagship programme in this field

and coordinate efforts and resources to maximize impact across the ending child marriage ecosystem. This includes guiding investment decisions based on the Global Programme's technical public goods and evidence of what works, and through the global Child Marriage Monitoring Mechanism and knowledge sharing platforms.

- ◆ **Sustaining and influencing child marriage accountability through regional bodies and institutions:** With a view to influencing accountability and sustaining change, the Global Programme will accelerate engagement with various regional actors, including the African Union and the League of Arab States; with regional economic commissions, such as the Economic Community of West African States and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia; and with other regional mechanisms, such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Organisation of Africa First Ladies and other influential champions.
- ◆ **A critical review of the Global Programme results framework:** The Global Programme will commit to reviewing its results framework to better assess impact. Following this exercise, and in recognition of the reporting burden created by a complex framework, it will develop a more user-friendly matrix to more effectively demonstrate programme results and adapt to the current funding landscape.



## 5.2 COUNTRY OFFICE PRIORITIES

To accelerate results, the Global Programme has adopted an intentional approach to implementing differentiated and localized programming across its focus countries. This strategy is tailored to each country's context and guided by evidence-based prioritization of interventions. Some examples of country-specific priorities follow.

- ◆ In Bangladesh, the Global Programme's priority is girls' secondary school completion. This includes supporting 1,093 schools and madrasas to prevent dropout among adolescent girls vulnerable to child marriage. The Global Programme will disseminate findings from studies on the Multiplier Effects of Child-Focused Social Protection and Alternative Financing for Social Protection conducted in 2024, and design and conduct a study on the effectiveness of current social protection programmes in addressing child marriage and will conclude a scoping review of climate change and child marriage. With the ongoing upstream engagement in social protection, the next strategic priority is to support the Government – specifically the Ministry of Cabinet Affairs – in informing the development of the Second National Social Protection Strategy in 2026. A key focus will be the integration of child marriage prevention within this strategy. In 2026, the Global Programme will also collaborate with the Department of Women Affairs to design and scale up the cash-plus interventions under the Mother and Child Benefit Programme (MCBP). These interventions have strong potential to reach communities at risk, particularly adolescent family members of MCBP beneficiary households. Special attention will be given to adolescent girls, who are especially vulnerable to child marriage. The Global Programme will continue to provide technical assistance to the Ministry of Social Welfare and Department of Social Service to strengthen the capacity of the social service workforce including social workers, and to enhance interministerial collaboration. These efforts aim to ensure coordinated, comprehensive, community-based support – delivered at the doorstep – for adolescent girls and children at risk, with a particular focus on preventing child marriage. The Global Programme will also provide technical support for the reform of the Law on Child Marriage and Marriage Registration to create a robust legal framework against child marriage.
- ◆ In Burkina Faso, the Global Programme plans to scale up interventions to cover all regions of the country, using additional funds raised in parallel. The Global Programme will continue to advocate for the adoption of the revised version of the Personal and Family Code which, among other things, raises the age of marriage to 18 for both boys and girls (prior to the revision of the code, the minimum legal age of marriage for girls was set at 17 years, with a judicial exception allowing marriage at 15 years of age). The revised version was adopted by the Council of Ministers on 10 July 2024, and advocacy is continuing for its adoption by the Transitional Legislative Assembly.
- ◆ In Ethiopia, advocacy efforts will continue to ensure that having adolescents in the family qualifies for economic support under the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) and to include a girls-specific support package. The Global Programme will develop a concept note to guide the implementation of a pilot income and economic strengthening component. Crisis-adaptive programming and targeted interventions will be undertaken to reach the most marginalized, including targeted outreach to young people in humanitarian contexts. Engagement will continue to ensure the meaningful integration of child marriage prevention in SRH and protection services and humanitarian response. The Global Programme will support the finalization of the Endline Assessment of the National Costed Roadmap to End Child Marriage and FGM/C (2020–2024) and the development of the second iteration of the costed roadmap, supporting the rollout of the toolkits developed by the programme such as the out-of-school girls empowerment manuals, men and boys engagement manuals, community conversation manuals, and communication manuals for religious leaders at scale across the country.
- ◆ In Ghana, following the launch of the Livelihood Empowerment and Productive Inclusion programme, the first batch of 300 beneficiary girls are expected to receive their full benefit package starting from January 2025. The second batch of 300 girls will be enrolled into the programme by mid-2025. An operational assessment is expected to be carried out in 2025 to ascertain the challenges and strengths of programme implementation. In addition, the gender-related provisions for the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) cash transfer programme will be implemented in selected districts and is expected to benefit all LEAP households in these areas. The Global Programme is supporting the development of the social protection shock response strategy, building on the shock response assessment. This will also contribute to further strengthening gender and shock responsiveness of social protection service delivery within the LEAP programme.
- ◆ In India, the Global Programme will continue to provide technical assistance to priority states, ensuring the effective implementation of adolescent health and wellness initiatives. This includes pilot testing and documenting health and wellness messenger-led sessions to enhance

peer engagement. The Global Programme will also support the rollout of a technology-based Management Information System for real-time reporting and monitoring, strengthening programme oversight and data-driven decision-making. Capacity-building efforts will focus on training state and district trainers to provide ongoing mentoring and supportive supervision to teachers, ensuring the quality of life skills education in schools. Technical support will also be extended to finalize and roll out a new training module and activity book for peer educators under the Rashtriya Kishore Swasthya Karyakaram (RKSK, a health programme for adolescents), equipping them with the tools needed to engage adolescents effectively.

- ◆ In Mozambique, the Global Programme will prioritize school reintegration. In Phase II, school reintegration support was focused on the prevention of child marriage, supporting primarily girls at risk of child marriage. While the programme wants to also keep the focus on prevention in Phase III, it will scale up the response side of this component to include more girls rescued from child marriage. This requires even stronger coordination between different programme implementing partners, including Coalizao, the implementing partner responsible for school reintegration, and International Child Development Programme (ICDP), the implementing partner that tracks and follows up on the identification of cases together with relevant government entities. Greater care will also be taken to develop tools that will track school retention rates among girls supported to re-enrol and to track school completion rates.
- ◆ In Nepal, the Global Programme has initiated preparatory work for an impact assessment of the flagship Rupantaran social and financial training package, and collaborated in drafting a ToR with support from the regional office and STAR Initiative. In 2025, this assessment will be completed in joint coordination to provide robust evidence on the programme's results and impacts. The findings will enhance understanding of what works effectively to achieve the programme's outcomes. This assessment will also help identify areas for improvement and guide future programmatic decisions to maximize the impact of Rupantaran.
- ◆ In Niger, the Global Programme will focus on the scale-up of a prevention package for adolescent girls, including increased socioeconomic development, financial literacy, and school reintegration. Support will also be provided to adolescent girls who have experienced child marriage or gender-based violence, to help them return to school – with a particular focus on access to vocational education. A strong focus in 2025 will be on continuing to build multisectoral collaborations: a multisectoral approach focused on adolescent girls will address gaps in access to adolescent-friendly services, including by strengthening the economic empowerment component to enable girls to have greater decision-making power within their communities. The multisectoral approach will be further strengthened through the development of collaboration protocols among key sectors (health, education, justice, security, and social protection), and the establishment of a multisectoral coordination framework.
- ◆ In Sierra Leone, the Global Programme will support the Government in the nationwide implementation of the newly passed Prohibition of Child Marriage law. This will involve raising awareness across communities and ensuring effective enforcement of the law at all levels. In addition, the Global Programme will continue advocacy efforts to ensure the passage of the Child Rights bill in 2025, addressing gaps in child protection and reinforcing the legal framework for children's rights.
- ◆ In Uganda, the Global Programme will strengthen multisectoral collaboration between the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, the Ministry of Education and Sports, and the Ministry of Health in order to effectively leverage resources and systems to protect and, due to the cross-cutting nature of their needs, respond to the needs of adolescent girls. The Global Programme will also leverage other initiatives, such as the assessment of youth-friendly services in health facilities and support identified gaps.
- ◆ In Yemen, the Global Programme will prioritize access to social protection and economic empowerment programmes to support adolescent girls at risk or survivors of child marriage. A community needs assessment will be conducted through focus group discussions in each targeted governorate to identify community needs and priorities related to child marriage prevention. The Response and Support Services will provide case management services in collaboration with social affairs offices for children at risk of or affected by child marriage; vocational training programmes for survivors of child marriage and FGM; and on-the-job training opportunities to enhance employability skills piloted with eight survivors. Finally, empowerment kits will be provided to graduates of vocational and on-the-job training programmes to support their economic independence. It will also continue to advocate with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, the Ministry of Human Rights, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Endowments and Guidance to draft a national action plan to end child marriage and other harmful practices.
- ◆ In Zambia, the Global Programme will support the finalization, launch and implementation of the National ECM

strategy. The programme will also contribute to strengthening community engagement and adolescent-led initiatives to end child marriage by working with adolescent girls as champions, including provision of life skills and marketable skills for adolescents who may not be able to return to school. Furthermore, the Global Programme will scale up engagement with faith-led and women-led organizations in driving gender-transformative engagement with communities, and will partner with the Zambia Interfaith Network (ZINGO) to strengthen the role of

religious leaders in influencing and advocating with their congregants to end child marriage. The programme will finalize the development of the guideline for chiefdoms in their development of customary bylaws for addressing violence against children and harmful practices and facilitate its roll out in various chiefdoms. Additionally, the Global Programme will provide coordinated technical support to the government to develop standardized multimedia materials and dialogue tools for use across subnational and national levels including communities.



# References

BRAC and UNFPA, *Adolescent Empowerment at Scale*, 2023, [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/BRAC-UNFPA\\_Adolescent%20Empowerment%20at%20Scale-Feb2023.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/BRAC-UNFPA_Adolescent%20Empowerment%20at%20Scale-Feb2023.pdf)

GAGE Policy Brief, *The impacts of the northern Ethiopia conflict on adolescents in Tigray*, 2024, <https://www.gage.odi.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/GAGE-Tigray-Brief-WEB.pdf>

Girls not Brides and UNICEF ROSA, *Partnering with women-led organisations to address child marriage in South Asia: A guidance note*, 2024, <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/reports/partnering-women-led-organisations-address-child-marriage-south-asia>

Malhotra, Anju, & Shatha Elnakib, '20 years of the evidence base on what works to prevent child marriage: A systematic review', *The Journal Of Adolescent Health*, Vol. 68, No.5, pp. 847-862, 2021.

OECD, *Development Finance for Gender Equality*, 2024, [https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/development-finance-for-gender-equality-2024\\_e340afbf-en.html](https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/development-finance-for-gender-equality-2024_e340afbf-en.html)

*The Child Marriage Data Portal*, UNICEF, online at <https://childmarriedata.org/>

UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, *Phase III Programme Document (2024-2030)*, 2023, <https://www.unicef.org/media/145651/file/Programme%20document%20.pdf>

UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, *Phase III Summary Narrative*, 2023, <https://www.unicef.org/media/143861/file/Phase-III-Summary.pdf>

UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, *Global Programme Evidence Paper: A synthesis of what we know works to prevent and respond to child marriage*, 2024, <https://www.unicef.org/media/162796/file/A%20synthesis%20of%20what%20we%20know%20works%20to%20prevent%20and%20respond%20to%20child%20marriage.pdf.pdf>

UNICEF, *Is an End to Child Marriage Within Reach? Latest trends and future prospects: May 2023 update*, online at <https://data.unicef.org/resources/is-an-end-to-child-marriage-within-reach/>

UNICEF, *Engagement with women-led organizations*, UNICEF Brief, 2025: <https://www.unicef.org/documents/engagement-women-led-organizations>

UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women, *Beyond Backlash: Advancing movements to end violence against women*, UN Women, New York, 2025, [https://untf.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-03/untf\\_backlash\\_paper\\_v4\\_final.pdf](https://untf.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-03/untf_backlash_paper_v4_final.pdf)

UNICEF, *The power of education to end child marriage*, UNICEF Data Brief, 2022, <https://data.unicef.org/resources/child-marriage-and-education-data-brief/>

UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, *Qualitative Indicators and Approaches for assessing progress on ending child, early and forced marriage and unions*, 2024, <https://www.unicef.org/documents/qualitative-indicators-and-approaches-assessing-progress-endingCEFMU>

UNFPA, *Child Marriage and Environmental Crises: An evidence brief*, UNFPA, Johannesburg, 2021, [https://esaro.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/child\\_marriage\\_and\\_environmental\\_crises\\_an\\_evidence\\_brief\\_final.pdf](https://esaro.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/child_marriage_and_environmental_crises_an_evidence_brief_final.pdf)

UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, *Advancing gender-transformative approaches in the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage: Exploring gender, power, and resources*, Integrated Gender-

Transformative Accelerator and Values Clarification workshop facilitation guide (GTA+), 2024, <https://www.unicef.org/documents/ECM%20GTA%20BVCAT>

UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, *Advancing Gender-Transformative Approaches in the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage and the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation*, Values Clarification Workshop Facilitation Guide, 2024, <https://www.unicef.org/documents/GTA-VCAT-facilitation-guide>

UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, *Gender-Transformative Accelerator Tool*, workshop facilitation guide (Second Edition), 2024, [https://www.unicef.org/media/160301/file/ECM%20GTA%20Workshop%20Facilitation%20Guide%20\(Second%20Edition\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/160301/file/ECM%20GTA%20Workshop%20Facilitation%20Guide%20(Second%20Edition).pdf)

UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation, *Integrated Gender-Transformative Accelerator and Values Clarification, workshop facilitation guide*, 2024, <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/integrated-gender-transformative-accelerator-and-values-clarification-workshop>

UNFPA, *Hidden in Plain Sight: Conflicts fueling sexual violence in northern Ethiopia*, UNFPA Ethiopia portal, news item, 7 July 2022, <https://ethiopia.unfpa.org/en/news/hidden-plain-sight-conflicts-fueling-sexual-violence-northern-ethiopia>

UNFPA, *Motherhood In Childhood: The untold story*, UNFPA, New York, 2022, <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/motherhood-childhood-untold-story>

UN Women, *Women's rights in review 30 years after Beijing*, UN Women, New York, 2025, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2025/03/womens-rights-in-review-30-years-after-beijing>

UNICEF, *Towards Ending Child Marriage: Global trends and profiles of progress*, UNICEF, New York, 2021, <https://data.unicef.org/resources/towards-ending-child-marriage/>

## Annex: Global Programme results framework

Indicator	Means of Verification	Periodicity	2024		
			Target	Achieved	
<b>INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME 1000:</b> Adolescent girls at risk of and affected by child marriage are effectively making their own informed decisions and choices regarding marriage, education, sexual and reproductive health					
<b>Immediate Outcome 1100:</b> Enhanced knowledge, education and life skills, and attitudes of marginalized adolescent girls on matters such as their rights, relationships, sexual and reproductive health, and financial literacy, including in humanitarian contexts					
<b>Output 1110:</b> Underserved/ marginalized adolescent girls (aged 10–19) who are at risk of child marriage or who are pregnant, married, divorced or widowed are engaged in gender-transformative life skills and CSE programmes that build their knowledge, skills, awareness of their rights, and connect them to services.					
1111	Number of adolescent girls (aged 10–19) who actively participated in life skills or CSE interventions in programme areas	Programme/ NGO records and relevant administrative data	Annual	4,013,838	7,427,785
<b>Output 1120:</b> Underserved/marginalized adolescent girls supported to enrol and remain in formal and non-formal education, including through the transition from primary to secondary school					
1121	Number of girls (aged 10–19) supported by the programme to enrol and/or remain in primary or secondary school	Programme records	Annual	2,608,075	8,474,725
<b>Immediate Outcome 1200:</b> Adolescent boys, families, traditional and religious leaders, community groups, and other influencers demonstrate more gender-equitable attitudes and support for girls' rights					
<b>Output 1210:</b> Boys and men are engaged in gender-transformative programmes (including CSE for boys) that promote healthy relationships and positive masculinities and gender equality					
1211	Number of boys and men actively participating in group education/dialogues that address harmful masculinities and gender norms	Programme records	Annual	3,719,557	4,772,254
<b>Output 1220:</b> Families, traditional and religious leaders, community members (girls, women, boys and men), community groups, and other influencers (e.g., youth, women, and feminist advocates) are engaged in gender-transformative dialogues, advocacy and consensus-building on alternatives to child marriage (including education), the rights of adolescent girls, and gender equality					
1221	Number of individuals (boys, girls, women and men) who participate in group education/dialogue sessions on consequences of and alternatives to child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls and gender equality	Programme records	Annual	7,039,672	29,570,565
1222	Number of individuals (boys, girls, women and men) reached by mass media (traditional and social media) messaging on child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls and gender equality	Programme records	Annual	86,072,096	280,391,495
1223	Number of local actors (e.g. traditional, religious and community leaders) with meaningful participation in dialogues and consensus-building to end child marriage	Programme records	Annual	1,247,761	2,984,336

Indicator	Means of Verification	Periodicity	2024		
			Target	Achieved	
<b>Output 1230:</b> Women's organizations and youth-led organizations are included and supported to mobilize the voices of the marginalized (particularly girls), challenge harmful social norms, and promote gender equality					
1231	Number of women-led and youth-led, feminist organizations, networks and coalitions of CSOs mobilized by the Global Programme this year in support of challenging social norms, mitigating the pushback and setbacks and promoting gender equality through advocacy, community mobilization and capacity building efforts	Programme records	Annual	5,681	8,482
<b>INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME 2000:</b> Increased capacity of education, health, child protection and GBV systems to deliver coordinated, quality programmes and services that meet the needs of adolescent girls and their families, including in humanitarian contexts					
<b>Immediate Outcome 2100:</b> Relevant sectoral systems and institutions effectively respond to the needs of adolescent girls and their families in targeted Global Programme areas					
2102	Number of girls and boys in Programme areas who accessed prevention and protection services	Programme records, survey of girls	2-3 years	1,176,359	2,532,021
<b>Output 2110:</b> Formal (primary and secondary) and non-formal schools supported to provide quality, gender-responsive education for adolescent girls, including comprehensive sexuality education					
2111	Number of primary/secondary/non-formal schools in programme areas providing quality gender-friendly education that meets minimum standards	School survey, supervision records	Annual	2,881	3,578
<b>Output 2120:</b> Health (including sexual and reproductive health), GBV and child protection systems supported to implement guidelines, protocols and standards for adolescent-friendly and gender-responsive coordinated, quality services for unmarried, married, divorced and widowed adolescent girls, adolescent girls who are pregnant or already have children					
2121	Number of service delivery points in programme areas providing quality adolescent-responsive services (health, child protection/gender-based violence) that meet minimum standards	Site surveys, supervision records	Annual	7,343	7,007
<b>Immediate Outcome 2200:</b> Increased capacity of national and sub-national social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes and services to respond to the needs of the poorest adolescent girls and their families, including in humanitarian contexts					
2201	Number of girls (aged 10-19) benefiting from social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes	Programme records	2-3 years	4,159,928	3,548,215

Indicator	Means of Verification	Periodicity	2024		
			Target	Achieved	
<b>Output 2210:</b> Partnerships with governments, civil society organizations and other implementers supported to ensure that social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes and services are adolescent-friendly, gender-responsive and reaching the poorest adolescent girls and their families.					
2211	Number of partnerships (both formal and informal) established to deliver adolescent-responsive social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes and services	Programme records	Annual	596	282
<b>INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME 3000:</b> Enhanced legal and political response to prevent child marriage and to support pregnant, married, divorced or widowed adolescent girls					
<b>Immediate Outcome 3100:</b> Enhanced capacity of governments to fund, coordinate and implement national, and sub-national action plans and systems to end child marriage					
<b>Output 3110:</b> Capacity building and technical support provided to government to enact, enforce and uphold laws and policies, in line with international human rights standards, aimed at preventing child marriage, protecting those at risk and addressing the needs of those affected					
3111	Number of policies or legal instruments addressing child marriage drafted, proposed or adopted at national and subnational level with Global Programme support	Annual reviews of policies and laws	Annual	56	81
<b>Output 3120:</b> Capacity building and technical support provided to government to implement a budgeted multisectoral gender-transformative plan on ending child marriage across ministries and departments at sub-national levels					
3121	Number of sub-national plans with evidence-informed interventions to address child marriage implemented	Sub-national policy document reviews	Annual	103	301
3122	Number of policy and budget analysis documents developed and disseminated to inform budgeted multisectoral gender-responsive planning to address child marriage			16	9
<b>Immediate Outcome 3200:</b> Increased capacity of governments and non-government organizations, to generate, disseminate and use quality and timely evidence to inform policy and programme design, track progress and document lessons					
3201	Number of country-level evidence and knowledge products addressing child marriage which have been used in policy decisions, programme design and advocacy	Programme records and policy documents	Annual	32	35

end  
child  
marriage

A voice. A chance. A future.

2024 ANNUAL RESULTS REPORT



# Towards 2030: Driving Urgent Action to End Child Marriage



UNFPA-UNICEF  
Global Programme to End Child Marriage



Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
and International Cooperation



Government of the Netherlands



from the British people



BUILD A BETTER WORLD  
FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS



for every child