*Secretary-General Report on Child Marriage: Input from the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage*

1. **What measures have been taken to implement the recommendations of the last report of the Secretary General on the issue of child, early and forced marriage?** [**(A/73/257)**](https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/73/257)
   * ***a)*** *Dedicate more efforts to ensuring reporting on and the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 5.3*
     + Global monitoring mechanism, led by the Global Programme, to monitor progress towards SDG 5.3 will be launched by the end of 2020.
   * ***c)*** *Develop evidence-based holistic and cross-sectoral strategies and action plans, combined with monitoring and accountability mechanisms (and identification of and data-gathering on informal unions and marriage ceremonies without registration)…*
     + Phase II of the Global Programme will promote a more nuanced and inclusive perspective of the various forms of child marriage and early, informal unions within and across regions.
   * ***g)*** *Address the intersecting factors of discrimination in the adoption and implementation of national strategies and policies to address child, early and forced marriage, including through meaningful consultation with affected groups*
     + Phase II of the Global Programme will recognize the multifaceted drivers of child marriage and embrace the variations in early marriage and early unions in different parts of the world. It will focus on transforming structural gender inequalities, including discriminatory gender based social norms and practices, and promote a range of opportunities for adolescent girls (education, health, protection, livelihoods).
     + Phase II of the Global Programme will step up efforts to ensure policies, services and investments are inclusive of the most marginalised and disadvantaged adolescent girls and the most vulnerable populations. This means the design, funding, staffing and delivery of education, health and protection services must be appropriate and adequate for reaching adolescent girls who are pregnant, married or divorced, those who are out-of-school, with disabilities or otherwise marginalized and disadvantaged.
   * ***h)*** *Dedicate more attention to the situation of married girls and boys in terms of access to education, employment and vocational training*
     + Phase II of The Global Programme will more explicitly include pregnant, married and divorced adolescent girls and adolescent mothers and continue efforts to remove and replace laws, policies and rules that prevent pregnant and married girls from attending school.
     + In 2019, UNICEF released the first ever analysis of child grooms. Globally, 115 million boys and men were married before age 18. The practice appears most common among respondents living in the poorest households and in rural areas, and with no education or only primary schooling. While child grooms are less numerous than child brides, they too experience rights violations that cut short their childhood.
   * ***i)*** *Assess and implement accurately costed and funded national strategies in disaster risk reduction planning, and provide responses to humanitarian situations…*
     + Phase II of the Global Programme will further clarify the challenges and approaches needed to prevent and respond to child marriage in humanitarian settings, including conflicts and natural disasters. To do this, a global expert consultation was arranged in February 2020 to address child marriage programming in humanitarian settings. Based on available guidance from related fields and the outcomes from the consultation, the Global Programme is developing a technical guidance on addressing and preventing child marriage in humanitarian settings.
   * ***j)*** *Promote the use of technology for information exchange and the development of programmes that address child and forced marriage, including in humanitarian contexts (mobile phones and applications to provide open and distance learning and to gather data and report on the practice in remote areas)…*
     + In Bangladesh, UNICEF supported innovative technology-based tools that make data available, reliable and timely and strengthened the government’s capacity to monitor, evaluate and take responsive actions to enhance basic social services that include child marriage practices.
     + Media campaigns are enabling countries to reach large numbers of people at low cost. In areas affected by insecurity, radio broadcasts bring the programme to people who could otherwise not be reached.
     + In Mozambique, The entertainment-education (EE) radio drama Ouro Negro has continued to be a transmedia (technique of telling a single story across multiple platforms) initiative, comprising a long-running EE radio drama on issues related to adolescents, weekly live radio shows in local languages, stories adapted for community theatre performances and social media presence. Ouro Negro, together with the U-report online platform, have reached an estimated 11 million listeners with culturally sensitive messages in local languages aimed at delaying and ending child marriage and raising the awareness of the listeners about the existence of global and national initiatives to end child marriage.
     + In Uttar Pradesh, India, over 1,500 adolescent girls have been trained as digital champions (‘sathis’) and produced 103 short videos covering positive stories of resistance to or avoidance of child marriage.
     + Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Uganda have used the U-Report mobile text messaging platform to reach more than 200,000 adolescents with adolescent-friendly health information and to dialogue on child marriage.
     + In Ghana, the Girlz Girlz Power TV Show has been jointly supported by UNFPA and UNICEF to create public awareness on various topics that relate to the development of adolescent girls, recording high TV viewership estimated over 400,000. The talk show is used as an opportunity to raise awareness of the existence and support from global and national initiatives to end child marriage.
   * ***k)*** *Continue working to change attitudes and social norms…*
     + Countries have improved, diversified and expanded approaches for gender-based social norms change, by raising public awareness and mobilizing communities for the prevention of child marriage and the empowerment of adolescent girls. Community-level interventions include creative approaches to engage all community members and gatekeepers, including women, men, boys and community leaders.
     + The Global Programme produced a technical note on gender norms to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and good practices to promote change in gender norms as well as providing practical guidance on the application of key concepts and effective programming approaches on social norms change related to ending child marriage.
   * ***l)*** *Invest in services and programmes that help remove the structural barriers (education, the provision of adolescent friendly health services, etc.)…*
     + In Ghana, the Global Programme identified communities benefiting from the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty 1000, a government-run unconditional cash transfer programme targeted to pregnant women and women with children under the age of 15 months in extremely poor households, aimed at reducing poverty, increasing consumption and improving child nutrition. The Global Programme set up safe spaces in these communities targeting marginalized girls and providing life skills training and adolescent sexual and reproductive health information.
     + Phase II of the Global Programme will put increased emphasis on skill-building for livelihood and social protection through partnerships.
     + In Phase II, the Global Programme will leverage Generation Unlimited, among other UN initiatives, and youth training and livelihood initiatives to facilitate the transition of adolescent graduates into vocational skills building and employability programmes. The programme will also support national advocacy for investment in such programmes in order to harness the demographic dividend (countries with high child marriage prevalence are also the ones with the opportunity for such a bonus of economic growth).
   * ***o)*** *Strengthen accountability frameworks at the national and international levels (human rights institutions etc.) and* ***p)*** *Develop collaboration and cooperation between national, regional and global human rights mechanisms*
     + The Global Programme has continuously elevated the issue of child marriage by organizing and providing support to global and regional political and partnership dialogues.
     + The Regional Accountability Framework of Action to End Child Marriage (RAF) in the Middle East and North Africa and the Arab States was developed to strengthen, guide and accelerate joint programming, advocacy and results for girls and women on ending child marriage.
     + The Global Programme strengthened regional and sub-regional partnerships in Africa to end child marriage at country level through the Global Programme. Partners include the AU, Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), East Africa Community (EAC) and the SADC Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF) and ECOWAS.
     + The UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia and the UNFPA Asia and the Pacific Regional Office engaged with SAARC and its institutions, including as co-chairs of the South Asian Coordinating Group on Violence Against Children (SACG) as well as with SAIEVAC. This has included supporting implementation and monitoring of the first five-year Regional Action Plan on Child Marriage, a high-level conference on the SDGs and violence against children, and meetings of the South Asian Network of Human Rights Institutions on ending child marriage. The Global Programme has supported engagement with South East Asian countries and regional bodies, including ASEAN, to ensure efforts to end child marriage are adapted to regional and country contexts and different patterns of adolescent pregnancy, child marriage and early union. In addition, the Global Programme has worked with the Asia-Pacific Regional Steering Committee for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) to promote the use of civil registration to end child marriage within the Framework for Action to Improve CRVS.
2. **What type of measures are in place to end child, early and forced marriage, including laws and policies as well as national and subnational action plans and programmes? What measures have been taken to ensure adequate budget allocations for the implementation of these plans and programmes?**
   * Eleven[[1]](#footnote-2) of the twelve Global Programme countries have developed national action plans, nine have costed these plans and seven countries have allocated public resources for the implementation of the plans.
   * In addition to national action plans on ending child marriage, in other countries and regions, such as in the Latin America and the Caribbean, policy actions to end child marriage have been included in national development plans, plans for the prevention of adolescent pregnancy, and gender-based violence strategies at the national and subnational level (e.g. Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru).
   * The Global Programme works in close partnership with government ministries and national parliaments, sharing the latest evidence and best practices, supporting the shaping of policies, and ensuring that policy commitments on ending child marriage are enshrined and enacted at all levels.
     + Policies and strategies: Supported multisectoral national and sub-national action plans on child marriage and ensuring child marriage is reflected in sectoral policies like Gender, Youth or Health strategies.
     + Public financing and budgeting: Advocated for domestic investments to address child marriage and identified pathways for sectoral investments to drive change for those most at risk. UNFPA and UNICEF advocacy linking child marriage to the National Development Plan resulted in abudget allocation to end child marriage in Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zambia. In India, Bihar and Rajasthan allocated budgets for the costed state action plans. In Burkina Faso, the government is providing budgetary support for child marriage interventions through the First Lady’s Office.
     + Coalition building: By supporting civil society coalitions advocating for the human rights of adolescents, the Global Programme has contributed to a more positive socio-political environment for ending child marriage.
   * In Ghana, the Global Programme engaged strategically in planning and budgetary dialogues at decentralized levels to support an increase in resource allocations for service provision relating to child marriage, child protection and sexual and gender-based violence cases.
   * Several countries have succeeded in changing legislation to end child marriage and policies that discriminate against married and pregnant girls, especially in respect to their continued access to education. See more under question 9 below.
   * The Global Programme, in partnership with the UNICEF USA National Committee, supported Bill S427 that was passed with overwhelming bipartisan support, which set the minimum age of marriage for girls in the US state of New Jersey at 18.
3. **Please provide information on promising practices relating to the development and implementation of holistic, comprehensive and coordinated responses and strategies to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriage.**
   * The Global Programme has made significant contributions to enhancing inter-sectoral and complementary collaboration on child marriage at all levels of operation. The Programme has developed a technical note on convergent programmes to provide additional guidance to country programmes. The complementarity of the capabilities of UNFPA and UNICEF supports the convergence of a multi-sectoral approach that is vital to tackling the complex issue of child marriage.
   * Both agencies promoted multi-sectoral collaboration at regional and country level, for example through the East Africa informal partners forum on child marriage and with Girls Not Brides for the implementation of SADC Model Law guide.
   * In Burkina Faso, theMulti-Sectoral Platform for Implementing the National Strategyand Triennial Action Plan 2016-2018 were finalised in November 2015. A multi-sectoral committee was launched in June 2016 to coordinate the implementation of the strategy at the national level, with responsibilities shared across 13 ministries, technical and financial partners, and civil society organisations. Chaired by the Ministry of Social Action and National Solidarity, the Ministry of Education as vice-chair and the Ministry of Gender as the secretariat also play key roles in the platform.
   * In Ethiopia, Uganda and Zambia, the funding and implementation of the national action plans on ending child marriage have been progressively decentralized to sub-national levels.
4. **What measures are in place to support already married girls and women affected by child, early and forced marriage, including targeted programmes aiming at addressing their specific needs and promoting gender equality in all aspects of marriage and its dissolution?**
   * In Ghana, the Global Programme integrated messaging on child marriage and early unions into existing work with the Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana. The integration of child marriage and early unions as issues not only introduced new messaging into programming but also enhanced a focus on contraceptive access for younger females, such as unmarried girls to prevent pregnancy and subsequent union, and married girls to delay second and even first births.
   * Work with married adolescent girls in India have indicated high rates of gender-based violence within marriage and highlighted the need to integrate GBV prevention and redressal in programming to end child marriage.
5. **Please provide information on promising practices concerning measures that promote the meaningful participation of and active consultation with children and adolescents, including already married girls, on all issues affecting them and to raise awareness about their rights?**
   * The Global Programme supports evidence-based interventions to end child marriage as a harmful practice that violates human rights, such as programmes centered on girls’ empowerment, engaging families and communities, strengthening health, education and protection systems, and transforming discriminatory laws and policies. With this, the Global Programme  contributes to guaranteeing the right to development, the right to education, the right to health ‒ including sexual and reproductive health and rights – the right to protection under the law, the right to a life free of violence ‒ particularly gender-based violence and violence against children ‒ and the right to participation, particularly of young people in matters that affect them.
   * One way of promoting meaningful participation of children and adolescents are protective asset-building programmes, equipping adolescent girls with social, health, cognitive and economic assets, using a mentorship approach and promoting female youth participation at the community and systems levels. Peer mentors are mobilized for example in Mozambique, Nepal, India, Uganda, Ethiopia and Niger, through safe spaces and adolescent clubs as well as through digital and online platforms.
   * The Global Programme is strengthening capacity of adolescents and youth to transfer key message on ending child marriage among their peers, households and communities. In Nepal, awareness raising activities have been organized by peer leaders and young champions, including through theaters, community discussions, door-to-door messaging, rallies and inter-generational dialogues on child marriage, the value of girls and the importance of education.
   * The Global Programme trains adolescents to effectively engage with decision makers to influence annual plans of their communities. In 2018, adolescents in Nepal were able to influence plans of 62 local governments to include activities addressing child marriage. In Nepal and Ghana, adolescents (including married girls) have been consulted in the development of national strategies on ending child marriage, as well as related policies.
   * The Global Programme supported the adaptation of Girls Not Brides’ manual on youth participation to end child marriage in countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, including translation into Spanish, a consultancy to piloting the manual in a participatory workshop with young female leaders, and getting recommendations to enhance the tool for the region.
6. **What type of measures are taken to empower girls, including by removing barriers to education and promoting equal access to free and quality education and promoting technical and vocational training and skills development for women and girls?**
   * The Global Programme supports gender-responsive pedagogies focused on improving girls’ learning, preventing gender-based violence, and connecting girls to female role models and mentors that have completed secondary or higher education, in countries like Bangladesh, India, Ethiopia, Mozambique and Uganda.
   * In Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Niger, Uganda and Yemen, the Global Programme supports cash transfer interventions, and in Ethiopia the provision of in-kind items such as menstrual health products and school materials, to promote retention of girls in school.
   * Countries such as Ghana, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zambia supported advocacy campaigns and provided support to pregnant girls and teenage mothers to re-enroll in formal schools.
   * Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Nepal and Niger established community-based learning centers to create alternative and/or accelerated learning opportunities for out-of-school adolescent girls. Nepal, for instance, organized various kinds of afterschool activities such as peer-led homework groups, learning camps, life skills camps, quiz-contests and sports activities that aimed at promoting girls’ inclusion and to boost their learning.
   * Life Skills-Based Education programmes are conducted both in and out-of-school by promoting psychosocial and interpersonal skills that can help people make informed decisions, communicate effectively, and develop coping and self-management skills that may help them lead a healthy and productive life.
   * Life skills-based education and comprehensive sexuality education content have been incorporated in curricula and educational materials for both teachers and students have been produced in countries such as Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Mozambique, Uganda and Zambia.
   * Most countries have developed linkages with the education sector by institutionalizing life skills education and comprehensive sexuality education training in formal education curricula and establishing school clubs to reach more girls. Countries such as Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Niger and Uganda designed interventions to ensure flexible hours for adolescents and provided home visits by peer leaders with the aim of motivating parents, families and in-laws to send girls, including married and disabled girls, to the life skills sessions. Countries such as Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique and Sierra Leone used peer networks and safe spaces mentors to mobilize and recruit adolescent girls, including online platforms.
   * Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) programmes which provide life skills, sexual and reproductive health information, sexual and gender-based violence prevention and menstrual health management are implemented in countries such as Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, India, Mozambique, Nepal, Sierra Leone and Uganda. In Bangladesh and Mozambique, the Global Programme contributes to a gender-transformative agenda by facilitating the interactive sharing of ideas between boys and girls through mixed adolescent safe spaces that provide life skills education for both girls and boys.
7. **What type of measures are taken promote women’s and girls’ access to health care, social services and childcare opportunities?**
   * The Global Programme serves to enhance the contributions of health, education and protection systems to preventing child marriage and supporting married girls, by getting child marriage recognized explicitly in sectoral policy documents, driving sectoral investments to geographic areas and populations at risk of child marriage, and building capacity of various frontline cadres on the issue on service provision and referrals.
   * To address sexual and reproductive health needs of unmarried and married girls and realizing their sexual and reproductive rights, UNFPA stepped up efforts to promote a comprehensive approach to SRHR i.e. adopting the full definition of SRHR and providing an essential package of SRHR interventions with a life course approach. Institutional efforts, channelled selectively through the Global Programme, to promote the essential package included comprehensive sexuality education; counselling and services for a range of modern contraceptives; and prevention, detection, immediate service, and referrals for cases of sexual and gender-based violence.
   * Manuals for life skills-based education, comprehensive sexuality education, menstrual hygiene management and prevention of school-related gender-based violence were integrated into government curricula in Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Mozambique, Nepal, Uganda and Zambia.
   * Sierra Leone renovated and upgraded eleven community health centres and health posts to include separate and confidential spaces for the provision of services to adolescents and youth.
   * Burkina Faso improved the quality of education for adolescent girls by training 43,000 primary school teachers in the child-friendly school approach.
   * India enhanced the capacity of over 15,000 teacher educators and academic leaders (30 per cent female) for reviewing curricula, providing child-centred teaching and learning practices, quality mentoring, academic leadership and ICT-led supportive supervision to improve grade-appropriate learning skills. The Global Programme provided technical inputs to NCERT for using the National Achievement Survey data to train 4.2 million teachers and school leaders (nearly 60 per cent female).
   * Uganda collaborated with Irish Aid to support school supervision visits, establish school management committees and train over 3000 committee members, and construct twenty-four latrine blocks in selected primary schools.
   * Ethiopia, Uganda, Zambia and Mozambique integrated menstrual health into their child marriage programmes and are looking to scale up these efforts in Phase II of the programme. Uganda launched national standards for menstrual health products.
8. **What progress has been made in formulating or reviewing policies, programmes or strategies to address discrimination and violence, including domestic violence, which may occur against women and girls subjected to child, early and forced marriage, including with a view of strengthening child protection systems?**
   * Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Mozambique, Niger and Uganda, supported the development and implementation of national policies, guidelines and standards, and capacity building for more gender- and child-sensitive health and protection services at national and subnational levels.
   * In Ghana, the Global Programme supported the integration of standard operating procedures for handling cases of child sexual abuse into the national police training curricula. Burkina Faso, Nepal, Sierra Leone and Zambia focused on the training and certification of gender-sensitive and child-sensitive services.
   * Ethiopia, Niger and Burkina Faso supported legal and justice systems related to GBV through a case management approach.
   * Advocacy in Mozambique led the government to revoke a decree that ordered pregnant girls to be transferred from day to night schools, therefore preventing them to enjoy their right of access to education since Mozambique has few night schools.
9. **What measures are taken to hold perpetrators accountable, to ensure access to justice and accountability mechanisms, and to implement violence prevention and response activities, including at school and community level, as well as to provide adequate victim reparation and assistance measures?**
   * The Global Programme advocates for and supports campaigns that aim to both lift the minimum age of marriage for girls and ensure accountability. Child marriage remains legal not just in some of the Global Programme focus countries, but also elsewhere around the world. According to the evidence, legislative reforms setting the legal age for marriage at 18 (or higher) and eliminating parental or judicial exceptions must be accompanied by a wide range of additional policies and interventions. Many governments are now adopting national strategies to end child marriage, but what is even more important is the adoption of action plans with clear interventions to delay marriage and increase investment in the poorest and most marginalized girls.
   * During Phase I, the advocacy and technical support efforts of the Global Programme and partners led to a number of focus countries to increase the minimum age of marriage for girls to align with international standards (e.g. Bangladesh, Mozambique and Nepal), including the review of contradictions between civil/common law and customary law (e.g. Nepal, Sierra Leone). In addition, the Global Programme supported changes in discriminatory laws restricting the rights of adolescent girls (e.g. Mozambique revoked the law that transferred pregnant girls to night schools).
   * In Nepal, the government enacted a Children’s Act that contains progressive provisions related to child protection and justice and criminalizes child marriage. In Sierra Leone, the Global Programme supported the review of contradictions between civil/common law and customary law and the drafting of the “prohibition of child marriage” bill.
10. **What progress is made to improve the collection and use of disaggregated quantitative, qualitative and comparable data on violence against women and girls and harmful practices in order to strengthen measures to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriage?**
    * UNFPA and UNICEF have been instrumental for many years in the generation and analysis of data on child marriage and adolescent health issues. Spurred on by the need for better data to measure the SDGs and progress against the Global Programme targets, and the need for updated figures for policy advocacy, the two agencies have deepened the analysis of child marriage trends and patterns. UNICEF produced statistical data and analysis on the latest global, regional and national child marriage trends. Publications included brochures on child marriage prevalence and trends in India, in Ethiopia, in Latin America and the Caribbean and in the Middle East and North Africa.
    * At the global level, an evaluability assessment of the Global Programme led to significant adjustments in programming, monitoring and reporting during the last two years of Phase I (2018-2019). The joint independent evaluation of Phase I informed the development of Phase II of the Global Programme (which was launched in 2020), including shifts in strategies. Based on the evaluation recommendations, UNICEF partnered with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to pursue research on how to effectively deliver large-scale child marriage programmes targeted at girls most in need.
    * The Global Programme partnered with the University of California San Diego to produce three publications on: ‘Strengthening the evidence base in support of behaviour and social change interventions to end child marriage’; ‘Associations between village-level norms related to age and choice in marriage and younger age at marriage among adolescent wives in rural Niger’; and ‘Longitudinal analysis of the effects of parent-child relationships on child and early marriage in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam’. These publications informed the development of national roadmaps to end child marriage in Ethiopia and Niger as well as are informing the development of communication for development strategies at regional and country level.
    * In Phase I the Global Programme established the foundation of evidence for programming and policy advocacy on ending child marriage, country and regional offices completed 157 studies, which included analyses of the drivers of child marriage, mapping the implementation of national strategies, and assessments, reviews and evaluations of programme outcomes. The studies covered a wide range of issues, including the prevalence, drivers and consequences of child marriage and strategies to end child marriage. Two publications catalogues have been published to make this rich repository of knowledge more widely available.
    * In addition to conducting studies, surveys and evaluations, the Global Programme supports efforts to strengthen monitoring and administrative data systems to record and track child marriage programmes at the country level. Some countries, such as India, developed sophisticated systems to measure outputs and outcomes. To address national capacity gaps in relation to evidence generation, monitoring and evaluation, the regional offices for West and Central Africa developed a monitoring and evaluation capacity development plan in consultation with country offices. Regional offices also led initiatives to develop tools for measuring social norms change in addition to countries prioritizing activities and allocating budgets for measurement of outcomes during Phase II.
    * The Global Programme has supported data collection and evidence-building on child marriage in humanitarian settings in the Middle East and North Africa region as well as in South Asia, including settings affected by conflict, environmental disasters and refugee crises.

1. Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zambia. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)