Assessment of adaptations to the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage in light of COVID-19
Assessment

Objectives

Learn from the Global Programme adjustments to the COVID-19 pandemic and generate useful and timely evidence for Phase II implementation, on the status of implementation of these adjusted strategies and programming approaches.

**Purpose**

**Objectives**

Assess relevant contingency planning and implementation and alternative delivery and management arrangements for the Global Programme due to the COVID-19 pandemic, taking into account the views of the beneficiaries (vulnerable adolescent girls, their families and community) and key implementing partners.

Make recommendations for the immediate to mid-term improvement of Global Programme response to COVID-19, identify ongoing programme changes, and recommend any additional support required to implement those programme changes and shifting priorities.

Make any recommendations required to adjust Phase II to the new context, including to its theory of change and the targets established before the COVID-19 pandemic.
2 Scope and Governance

Scope

All twelve Global Programme countries

East and Southern Africa: Ethiopia, Mozambique, Uganda and Zambia

Middle East and North Africa: Yemen

West and Central Africa: Burkina Faso, Ghana, Niger and Sierra Leone

South Asia: Bangladesh, India and Nepal

Focus on 2020

Governance

Isabelle Cazottes (team leader)
Virginia Thomas (team expert)

Assessment Team

Steering Committee

Reference Group

Overall guidance

Technical advice and support
Assessment Methodology

Desk review
of background documentation, reports, workplans, research

Key informant interviews
with a range of stakeholders at global, regional, country level

Group discussions
With beneficiaries including girls, boys, mothers and fathers, community leaders in 3 countries

Online questionnaire (all countries)
UNFPA – UNICEF technical teams IP national and sub national
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## Online survey

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Remote Group Discussions

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Findings
Relevance

Q1 — Emerging needs of vulnerable and marginalized adolescent girls

Identification of emerging needs in the context of COVID-19 varied across countries through a range of methods including some innovation. Modes of delivery, tools and packages were adapted to ensure continuity of interactions. However, the “digital divide” is a concern for reaching vulnerable and marginalised adolescent girls.

Q2 — Alignment of adopted measures with the GP Phase II approaches

Programme adjustments to COVID-19 sought to maintain the alignment with the Global Theory of Change Phase II as well as with national COVID-19 response strategies.
Findings

Effectiveness

03 — Contribution of adjustments to the results of the GP Phase II

Contact could be maintained with adolescent girls through digital platforms, mentors and community-based networks. However virtual modes of delivery may not be optimal in terms of content quality and outcomes on adolescent girls’ agency or social norms.

Support to encourage adolescent girls to return to school once reopening showed some success but was not systematically monitored.

Community-based activities were continued, in most countries, through smaller groups, home visits or involving local leaders. The emphasis on mass and social media campaigns allowed a wider reach although their potential to influence gender and social norms remains a concern.

Most countries endeavoured to adapt their capacity building and system strengthening activities:

• Despite school closures and lockdowns, capacity building activities took place, often online, and some were postponed.

• Capacity building was sustained however efforts to facilitate adolescent access to SRH services was constrained because of factors related to the pandemic and associated restrictions.

• Child protection systems were generally impacted as not considered as “essential services”. Sustained advocacy helped to correct this situation over time.
Small-scale initiatives to address economic empowerment were undertaken but linkages with *social protection programmes* to address heightened risks of child marriage due to the pandemic were weak and **limited to a few countries**. 

Advocacy and technical support contributed to continue enhancing the capacity of governments to **develop national and subnational plans** related to ending child marriage although at a **smaller scale**. Some related capacity building events were postponed.

COVID-19 impacted the ability of country offices to **reach targets on evidence generation**. Instead, rapid assessment and studies on the **impact of COVID-19 restrictions** were conducted in some cases using digital technologies.

The transition from a gender-sensitive approach to a **gender-transformative approach**, is underway, but has been **hampered by the pandemic**.

‘**Do no harm**’: the health and wellbeing of agency staff, partners and beneficiaries was taken into consideration while adhering to COVID-19 prevention and mitigation measures.
Findings

Effectiveness

Q4 — Support to COs programme adjustments

Timely guidance and tools were provided to support adjustments but their operationalisation was sometimes challenging. One-on-one support in the reprogramming process and sharing of good practices were considered as the most valuable support.

Q5 — Adjustments likely to be maintained over time

Learnings from the adjustments to the pandemic have the potential to shape future programming, such as:

- The use of virtual methods with beneficiaries allowing to reach larger numbers provided that their outcomes are assessed before scaling them up
- Multi-pronged approaches necessary to address issues such as changes in gender norms or skills development
- Flexibility in adjusting programming and in reallocating budgets
- Leveraging of additional, non-Global Programme funds supported adjustments
Coherence

Q6 — Coherence of adjustments with key related programmes

Adjustments were generally coherent between sectors within agencies and between agencies. Overtime, the multi-sectorality of the effects of the pandemic and its related restrictions on child marriage was recognised by governments.
Recommendations
Recommendations

01 — The Global Programme should advocate with governments to continue developing multi-sectoral legal and operational frameworks contributing to ending child marriage, with a focus on addressing the various drivers of child marriage at national, subnational and local levels.

- **Advocacy** with government and partners for the integration of child marriage in ongoing COVID-19 response but also in future emergency response and recovery plans.

- Supporting the development of policies and multi-sectoral operational costed strategies at national, subnational and local levels.

- Strengthening of a multi-sectoral and coordinated approach to the prevention and response to child marriage to address the various drivers of child marriage as well as the rights of adolescent girls and women supported by a reinforced internal collaboration between sectors.

- Including preparedness for different types of emergencies, risk and mitigation analysis and contingency planning in Global Programme workplans.
Recommendations

The Global Programme should reinforce its efforts to reach the most vulnerable and marginalized adolescent girls, boys and their families through targeting them further and relying on local partners, stakeholders and networks.

- Ensuring that identification of the most vulnerable and marginalized girls is institutionalized and used as a basis for policymaking;
- Involving local partners, and actors to undertake vulnerability assessments to be used as advocacy tools;
- Reinforcing the reach of rural and remote communities through partnering with local organizations, local networks and local authorities as well as other local actors to mobilize adolescent girls and boys and parents and to deliver community-based activities;
The Global Programme should continue to develop complementary multi-channel approaches to reach target populations based on country specificities and context.

- Adopting a mix of face-to-face and digital/mass media channels to reach beneficiaries accompanied by advocacy with governments to address the digital/media divide for women and girls.

- Ensuring that quality standards are developed for the design of digital approaches and that the application of these new approaches is monitored.

- Ensuring that developed digital approaches foster two-way communication with a view to engage with intended audiences.

- Strengthening linkages with local authorities and networks to further involve them in child marriage-related interventions.
The Global Programme should continue advocacy and systems-strengthening with governments with a view to maintaining access to essential services for adolescent girls and boys in contexts of heightened vulnerability, including in humanitarian crisis.

- Supporting system strengthening to ensure that education, SRH and social welfare services, including help lines, are recognized as ‘essential services’ for adolescent girls and that their access is improved and facilitated

- Advocating and ensuring that essential service provision is related to the rights of adolescent girls and women in particular during emergencies

- Strengthening prevention components of sexual and reproductive health services in particular as far as the prevention of unintended and early pregnancy is concerned

- Including mental health and psychosocial support various services as well as in life skills packages
• **Orienting** agencies and government departments involved in social protection and economic empowerment programmes on the criteria used to identify girls vulnerable to child marriage.

• Strengthening advocacy and linkages with these agencies and government departments involved in social protection programmes, with the support of UNICEF social policy, with a view to anchor the needs of adolescent girls in the conditionalities of these programmes.

• Building Global Programme country teams and implementing partners technical capacities to leverage social protection programmes.
The Global Programme should adjust its results framework and indicators, and further support country offices for monitoring, data generation and analysis, in order to reinforce evidence-based programming.

**Recommendations**

- **Reviewing the results framework** with a view to adding or refining some indicators, taking into consideration the differences in focus highlighted by the pandemic.

- Continuing to support Global Programme country offices to streamline reporting with a view to harmonizing the measurement of the result framework indicators.

- Ensuring that short- and medium-term effects of the newly developed approaches are measured, including effectiveness and coverage of digital/mass media communications and their effects on girls’ agency and social and gender norms.

- Facilitating the systematic analysis of the available data on child marriage and its drivers.

- Monitoring the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on child marriage rates in relation to changes in gender dynamics and norms, non-return to school, hindered access to SRH services, teenage pregnancies and families economic situation.
Dissemination

Assessment Report & Exec. Summary
GP Network and practitioners on CM
UNICEF & UNFPA Executive Boards
National / Regional Partners

Country reports
National Government Counterparts
National Partners

Webinars: three
Regional child protection managers, UNICEF
Open Global webinar: global, general public
Bi-annual meeting Network

Multimedia: Blog(s), Social Media Content
National/Regional Partners
General Public
Thank you
Assessment of adaptations to the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage in light of COVID-19