

# TECHNICAL NOTE ON ENSURING VALUE FOR MONEY IN THE GLOBAL PROGRAMME TO END CHILD MARRIAGE

## BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The purpose of this technical note is:

- 1 To facilitate the exchange of knowledge and good practices to include the most marginalized adolescent girls, their families and communities in programmes and services to end child marriage; and
- 2 To provide practical guidance on the application of key concepts and effective programming approaches.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)–United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Global Programme to End Child Marriage (the Global Programme) works with many partners to advocate and support practical actions to end child marriage and promote gender equality and the empowerment of adolescent girls. The Global Programme assesses value for money for two main reasons: accountability to donors, and learning to inform management decisions. This technical note illustrates how value for money can be applied and measured in programmes to end child marriage. It builds on other technical notes from the Global Programme, including the notes on gender-transformative approaches, on scaling up efforts and on leaving no one behind.<sup>1</sup> The note is evidence-based and informed by the promising practices of UNFPA, UNICEF and partner agencies.

## DEFINITIONS<sup>2</sup>

**Value for money:** The optimum combination of whole-life cost and quality (or fitness for purpose) to meet the user’s requirement. It can be assessed using the criteria of economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equity.

- **Economy:** Reducing the cost of resources used for an activity, with a regard for maintaining quality.
- **Efficiency:** Increasing output for a given input, or minimizing input for a given output, with a regard for maintaining quality.
- **Effectiveness:** Successfully achieving the intended outcomes from an activity.
- **Equity:** Leaving no one behind and ensuring that interventions reach the poorest and most marginalized, even if they might be harder or more costly to reach. Target interventions at the right populations, with no person disadvantaged due to social, economic, demographic or geographical differences.
- **Relevance:** The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiary

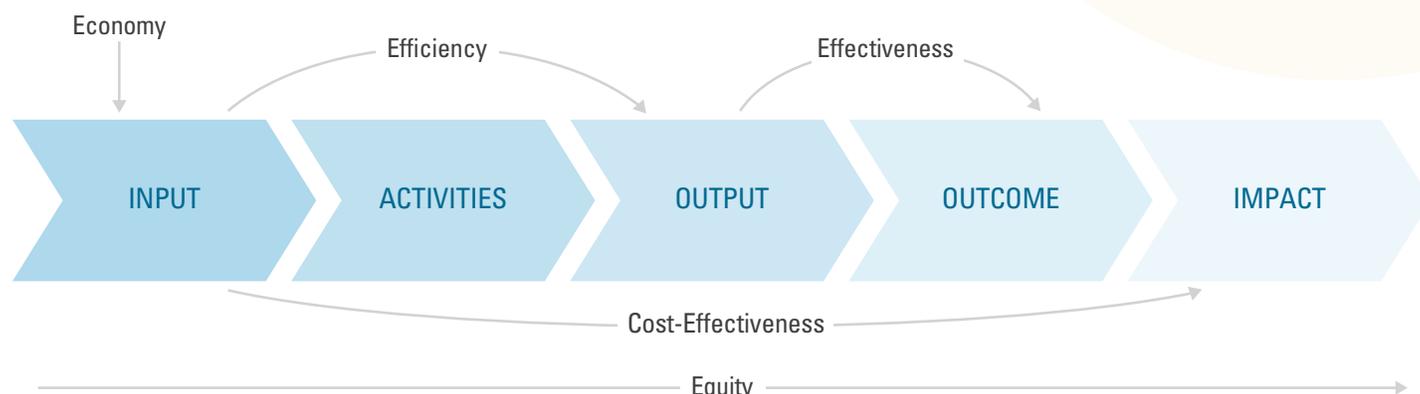
requirements, country needs, global priorities, and partner and donor policies.

- **Sustainability:** The continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed, the probability of continued long-term benefits and the resilience to risk of the net benefit flows over time.
- **Benchmarking:** The comparison of unit costs across similar activities and interventions.
- **Cost-effectiveness:** An intervention’s impact relative to the invested inputs.
- **Inputs:** Such as human resources (staff); financial resources; or partnerships.
- **Activities:** The methods of using the inputs (procurement, consultancies) to deliver results: for example, training health workers, conducting community dialogues, delivering life skills sessions, and so on.
- **Outputs:** Results delivered directly by the Global Programme through partners and communities: numbers of adolescent girls attending life skills sessions, girls continuing their education.
- **Outcomes:** Generated as the result of investments: for example, children less susceptible to arranged marriages. The Global Programme has less control over outcomes than over outputs.
- **Impact:** Long-term transformational change: for example, reduced child marriage in a country.

## WHAT IS VALUE FOR MONEY?

Value for money is the optimal use of resources to achieve intended outcomes by maximizing economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equity for each intervention and for the programme as a whole.<sup>3</sup> Systems need to be in place to measure value for money for accountability purposes, and to identify opportunities to get better or more value by allocating resources to do the right things in the right places. The value-for-money approach is based on an analysis of resources as well as data along the results chain. Beyond measurement, it is about embedding value-for-money considerations into day-to-day operations, so programme management processes routinely promote the four Es: economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equity.<sup>4</sup> The four Es align with different elements of the results chain, as shown in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: Value for money framework<sup>5</sup>



### Value-for-money considerations<sup>6</sup>

PROGRAMME STAGES	VALUE-FOR-MONEY CONSIDERATIONS AND QUESTIONS
<b>Assessment, evidence and design</b>	<p><b>Equity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has the programme analysed financial, human rights, age and gender-related barriers in service access, uptake and retention?</li> <li>Is the programme based on an analysis of target geographical 'hotspot' areas where a large proportion and number of girls are at risk of child marriage and experience other forms of marginalization and disadvantage?</li> </ul> <p><b>Effectiveness:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design the programme based on the best available evidence</li> </ul> <p><b>Effectiveness and relevance:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contextualize the programme to national or subnational contexts to ensure that interventions are relevant and effective</li> <li>Select programme areas against, for example, high prevalence of child marriage, current and future burden of child marriage, government commitment to invest in ending child marriage</li> </ul> <p><b>Effectiveness and sustainability:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invest in the most impactful and strategic partnerships</li> </ul>
<b>Planning and budgeting</b>	<p><b>Economy:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the programme buying inputs of the appropriate quality at the right price? Can the programme get the same or equivalent inputs for less money?</li> <li>Would using cheaper inputs risk lowering the quality of programme activities?</li> <li>Is the programme choosing the most advantageous contractual modalities (programme cooperation agreements, long-term agreements) and procurement procedures? Has the programme negotiated the best rates with suppliers for the services and goods delivered?</li> <li>Management costs as a percentage of total expenditure</li> </ul> <p><b>Equity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allocate programme funds to countries to reach marginalized and vulnerable adolescent girls</li> </ul> <p><b>Sustainability:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Would using cheaper or different inputs risk effectiveness and sustainability?</li> <li>Leverage the resources of other agencies, departments, sectors and programmes</li> <li>Maximize thematic and geographical convergence to achieve greater results, make strategic investments, complement or co-fund, reduce costs and avoid duplication of efforts<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Implementing activities and monitoring outputs</b>	<p><b>Efficiency:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have we chosen the most efficient intervention strategies?</li> <li>How well do we convert inputs into activities and outputs? Can we get the same outputs while saving on how we implement activities?</li> <li>Does saving on programme implementation risk incurring other costs?</li> <li>Are available resources strategically allocated across interventions, geographies and population groups to maximize programme impact?</li> <li>Have adequate resources been allocated to achieve the targets of all outcome areas?</li> <li>Are implementation arrangements designed to minimize management costs and respond to programmatic risks and bottlenecks? Were the overall management arrangements associated with the programme conducive to delivering the best results?</li> </ul> <p><b>Effectiveness and sustainability:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Would making savings to how the programme is implemented risk reducing effectiveness, including sustainability?</li> </ul> <p><b>Equity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the programme reach the most marginalized and disadvantaged adolescent girls? How has the programme achieved this? Where are the gaps?</li> </ul>

## Value-for-money considerations (continued)

PROGRAMME STAGES	VALUE-FOR-MONEY CONSIDERATIONS AND QUESTIONS
Evaluating outcomes	<p><b>Evaluation questions on child marriage programme effectiveness<sup>8</sup></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent has the theory of change contributed to an effective approach to ending child marriage?</li> <li>What are the main factors that explain the successful elements of the programme? What are the main factors that explain the unsuccessful elements of the programme?</li> <li>How have the attitudes and behaviours of adolescent girls and their communities towards child marriage changed during the lifetime of the programme?</li> <li>To what extent has the programme approach at the community level worked? Which aspects and approaches worked best?</li> <li>What were the wider benefits of community engagement for adolescent girls and their communities? (For example, in relation to education, violence against women and girls, gender norms, child marriage, etc.)</li> <li>What evidence is there about the effectiveness of economic incentives in changing the behaviours and attitudes of adolescent girls and their communities?</li> <li>To what extent has the programme delivered strategic engagement and communications to help leverage resources for adolescent girls and inform decision-making?</li> <li>To what extent has the programme developed an effective monitoring and evaluation system for programme delivery at large scale? What systems need to be put in place to more effectively measure effects?</li> <li>What role have national policy and legislative change played in the change process towards ending child marriage?</li> </ul> <p><b>Equity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the programme reach the most marginalized and disadvantaged adolescent girls? How has the programme achieved this? Where are the gaps?</li> </ul>

### Value for money does not mean:<sup>9</sup>

- Always paying the lowest price for products or services
- Prioritizing interventions that are easy to measure
- Avoiding risks
- Only considering value for money at the beginning of the programme

The following sections are organized according to the four Es: economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equity.

## ECONOMY

ECONOMY MEASURES
<b>Procurement:</b> Use of existing policies, competitive bidding
<b>Unit cost:</b> Maximize use of bulk purchasing through long-term agreements, providing rates 15–20 per cent below market
<b>Partnerships:</b> Build local capacity and use local non-governmental organizations (estimated 25–30 per cent lower on cost than international non-governmental organizations)

### Examples of achieving greater economy in the Global Programme<sup>10</sup>

**Competitive procurement, bidding and contracting** are used by UNFPA and UNICEF for all contracts to select the most competent contractor at the most reasonable price to deliver the work according to the terms of reference of the contract.

- Long-term agreements:** The Global Programme has relied heavily on negotiating contracts and the use of long-term agreements to deliver savings on the procurement of goods and services.

### Partnerships and joint ventures

- Common implementing partners across agencies:** The Global Programme lowered implementation costs by using the same government implementing partners and programme cooperation agreements (PCAs). In Niger, UNFPA and UNICEF share the same implementing partner. This has reduced the cost for the girls admitted to the Illimin empowerment programme from US\$90 to US\$65. For the community-based approach to child protection, efforts have been made to reduce the cost per direct village intervention from US\$5,200, plus sponsoring two other villages, to US\$4,600 with three villages to sponsor. The reduction mainly concerned supplies where equipment used for one village was recovered for use in another village with the agreement of the communities.
- Collective negotiation with implementing partners** to deliver key elements (such as life-skills training). As part of any partnership agreements with civil society organizations (CSOs), the Bangladesh programme negotiates to increase the contributions of CSOs in the form of infrastructure, in-kind contributions, knowledge products, and the co-sharing of human resources with other sectoral programmes, thus ensuring value for money.

- **Budget planning with implementing partners:** Ethiopia's programme implementation manual standardizes payments for daily subsistence allowance, resource persons, transportation, etc. The manual was endorsed by the Government of Ethiopia and United Nations agencies and provides guidance for a thorough review of costs and budget plans. In Zambia, the contracting of implementing partners requires micro-assessments and review of the proposed contract through a review committee. Implementing partners are regularly monitored to ensure the quality implementation of programming.

### Convergence and joint programming

- **Zambia:** Cost sharing by organizing joint UNFPA and UNICEF workshops with the government and other stakeholders has resulted in lower costs in programme implementation.
- **Bangladesh:** Organizing joint monitoring visits, conducting knowledge-sharing events, monthly meetings

through webinars, and video calls also contributes to reducing costs significantly.

- **Uganda:** In common programme districts, UNFPA and UNICEF pool activities and budgets to tackle multiple issues affecting a community. A single community dialogue session may cover key family care practices, child protection, health and education.

## EFFICIENCY

EFFICIENCY MEASURES
<b>Performance ratio:</b> Level of achievement of planned output or outcome targets <sup>11</sup>
<b>Budget allotment<sup>12</sup> and utilization ratio (expenditure ratio):</b> Amount of the budget actually consumed in relation to the available budget
<b>Price of service:</b> Reduce cost of delivery of services through integrated programming, same partner implementing multiple services, reducing support cost, etc.
<b>Overhead ratio in programme cooperation agreements:</b> Ratio of overheads to programme expenditure for the duration of a partnerships

### ILLUSTRATIVE TABLE FOR OUTPUT 1.1 Adolescent girls actively participating in a targeted programme

VALUE FOR MONEY MEASURES	CALCULATION	WORSE	BETTER	AVERAGE	BENCHMARK	JUDGEMENT
Performance ratio	Achieved outputs or outcomes ÷ planned targets	20%	150%	<b>99%</b>	100%	
Budget allotment and utilization ratio	Budget allotment ÷ utilization	156%	73%	<b>90%</b>	100%	
Performance-to-expenditure ratio	a ÷ b	70%	190%	<b>110%</b>	100%	
Unit costs (US\$)		86.7	3.4	<b>30.5</b>		
Difference in actual versus budgeted unit costs (US\$)		+47	-48	<b>-6</b>	0 or negative	

### EXAMPLE: Phase I output indicator performance ratio

OUTPUT INDICATOR	TARGET	RESULT	PERFORMANCE RATIO
<b>1.1 Life skills and comprehensive sexuality education:</b> Adolescent girls are actively participating in a targeted programme	6,426,102	7,971,937	124%
<b>1.2 Education support:</b> Adolescent girls are supported to enrol and remain in formal and non-formal education	703,899	744,812	106%
<b>2.1 Community dialogue:</b> Households are increasingly aware of the benefits of investing in adolescent girls and ending child marriage	25,869,434	39,483,656	153%
<b>3.1 Health and protection systems</b> are supported to implement guidelines, protocols and standards for adolescent girl-friendly health and protection services	18,544	24,267	131%
Number of adolescent girls in programme areas who have utilized health or protection services	5,071,216	6,096,672	120%
<b>3.2 Education systems:</b> Non-formal/primary/secondary schools are supported to improve quality of education for adolescent girls	16,229	26,380	163%
<b>4.1 National plan of action:</b> The country has a costed national action plan or development plan on ending child marriage across more than one ministry	11	11	100%
<b>5.1 Evidence on scale models:</b> Country-specific, high-quality data and evidence are generated and shared on what works at large scale to accelerate ending child marriage	12	12	100%

## Examples of achieving greater efficiency in the Global Programme<sup>13</sup>

**Empowerment of adolescent girls:** Countries reached 24 per cent more adolescent girls than targeted with life skills and empowerment interventions and 6 per cent more with school-based education. Countries improved their monitoring systems to better track changes in the knowledge, skills and attitudes of adolescent girls that have the potential to enable them to make their own decisions.

**Community dialogue and mobilization for social and behaviour change:** Countries reached 53 per cent more people through community-based dialogue and through media campaigns than targeted. Countries improved, diversified and expanded approaches to raise public awareness and mobilize 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. 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 would otherwise not be reached.

**Systems strengthening:** Country offices stepped up their efforts to ensure adolescent girls had access to essential social services. They exceeded their health and protection systems targets by 31 per cent and their education targets by 63 per cent. The Global Programme has fostered sustainability through advocacy, institutionalization, strengthening national and subnational systems, developing capacities and mobilizing complementary funding.

### Leveraging the resources of other agencies to implement activities and achieve outcomes at lower costs:

- **Zambia** linked 1,000 girls to a scholarship initiative offered by the private sector in coordination with the Office of the First Lady.
- **Nepal** linked 2,373 girls to the Sambhav-funded 'After School Initiative' to improve learning outcomes through homework clubs, sports and other extracurricular activities and 'Rupantaran' life skills sessions.

### Leveraging other programmes to contribute to ending child marriage:

- **Sierra Leone:** About 68,000 primary and secondary school girls received complementary support in the form of school materials and uniforms through the Girls' Access to

Education (GATE) programme to continue their education. **Nepal** leveraged the GATE programme to provide education support to 27,826 out-of-school girls with literacy and numeracy skills to enter formal schooling. More than 75 per cent of the girls graduating from the GATE programme were enrolled in formal schools.

- **India** leveraged government and partners to increase the efficiency of the Kanyashree Prakalpa cash transfer scheme for adolescent girls. The Global Programme also provided direct technical assistance and guidance to this government-run scheme.

## EFFECTIVENESS

### EFFECTIVENESS MEASURES

**Support costs:** Support costs are analysed separately as a proportion of the total programme costs. Support costs primarily include (i) direct support costs associated with the project, primarily the cost of UNFPA or UNICEF staff responsible for project management and oversight; and (ii) indirect support costs incurred by the office but not directly attributable to the project, for which the project must still contribute an appropriate share

**Enhanced partnerships with other United Nations agencies:** Provision of complementary services is key to integrating response to women and children in targeted locations

**Positive changes in the pathways to reducing child marriage:** Improvements in girls' and parents' knowledge/skills/attitudes, and in-service provision

## Examples of achieving greater effectiveness in the Global Programme<sup>14</sup>

**Empowerment of adolescent girls:** In Uganda, adolescent girls who participated in the empowerment and livelihood for adolescents (ELA) clubs were 48 per cent more likely to engage in income-generating activities, an impact almost entirely driven by their greater engagement in self-employment.

**Community dialogue and mobilization for social and behaviour change:** The Ouro Negro programme in Mozambique, supported by the Global Programme, uses radio drama, call-in shows, street theatre and social media to advance children's and adolescents' rights, and gender, social and reproductive health issues. The radio component has 3–4 million weekly listeners, 70 per cent of whom reported relevant behaviour change after listening to the programme.

**Systems strengthening:** The Global Programme estimates that, of the 7.9 million girls benefiting from life skills, comprehensive sexuality education, and asset-building interventions, 2.7 million also benefited from health or protection services. An additional 3.4 million girls used health or protection services supported by the programme but were not part of the skills and knowledge-building interventions.

## EQUITY

### EQUITY MEASURES

**Reaching marginalized communities:** Measure the spread of programme benefits to marginalized and hard-to-reach target populations

**Reaching particular groups of vulnerable girls:** Measure inclusion of particularly vulnerable subgroups in programming (i.e., ratio of out-of-school/in-school adolescent girls in programme; number (and proportion) of direct programme localities with child marriage prevalence in the 50th percentile and above of the country average)

**Assess the ability of different approaches (including the use of technologies and innovations) to intensify efforts to reach the most vulnerable,** including out-of-school girls, girls already married, girls in remote areas, girls with disabilities, and so on, to extend successful approaches into more difficult areas and individuals, bearing in mind the additional human and financial resource needs required to reach those most left behind

## Example of achieving greater equity in the Global Programme

At the country level, the Global Programme has taken action to enhance its ability to reach all adolescent girls, including the most vulnerable. Through the use of innovative social media and digital approaches, adolescent girls whose mobility within their communities is restricted are able to access life-skills education and information via the U-Report and SMS BIZ mobile platforms, and other social media platforms supported by the Global Programme. The multisectoral and convergence approach of the programme, leveraging partnerships with other sectors and stakeholders, has enabled adolescent girls in programme areas to access a comprehensive package of health, education and protection services.<sup>15</sup>

## ENDNOTES

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