



# TEN REASONS TO INVEST IN THE UNFPA-UNICEF GLOBAL PROGRAMME TO END CHILD MARRIAGE

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The international community is committed to eliminating child marriage by 2030, as one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN).<sup>1</sup> To keep this goal on global, regional and national agendas and to accelerate change, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) launched the Global Programme to End Child Marriage (the Global Programme) in 2016. Over a 15-year period, in 12 countries<sup>2</sup> across four regions, the Global Programme is working with multiple partners to end child marriage.



There are many reasons for governments, foundations and organizations to invest in the Global Programme. Here are the top ten:

**REASON #1** The Global Programme is the largest programme addressing child marriage and is surpassing its targets to reach millions of girls and community members.

A robust external evaluation<sup>3</sup> confirmed that Phase I (2016–2019) of the Global Programme provided information, skills and services to over 3 million girls and almost 14 million community members in Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. This success is illustrated in Table 1.

**TABLE 1. Results achieved for output indicators of the Global Programme by 2018<sup>4</sup>**

OUTPUT INDICATORS OF THE GLOBAL PROGRAMME	TARGET	RESULT	PERCENTAGE ACHIEVED
<b>1.1 Life skills:</b> Adolescent girls are actively participating in a targeted programme	1,398,559	2,972,494	212%
<b>1.2 Education:</b> Adolescent girls are supported to enroll and remain in formal and non-formal education	61,590	121,658	198%
<b>2.1 Community dialogue:</b> Households are increasingly aware of the benefits of investing in adolescent girls and ending child marriage	4,641,463	13,911,913	300%
<b>3.1 Health and protection systems</b> are supported to implement guidelines, protocols and standards for adolescent girl-friendly health and protection services	4,957	6,121	122%
<b>3.2 Education systems:</b> Non-formal/primary/secondary schools are supported to improve quality of education for adolescent girls	4,379	6,270	143%
<b>4.1 National Plans 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 scale to accelerate ending child marriage	12	12	100%

**REASON #2** The Global Programme uses the convening power of the UN to position the issue of child marriage on global, regional and national stages.

The unique convening power of the UN enables the Global Programme to access decision makers at the highest level and to ensure that child marriage is addressed seriously by world leaders.

The Global Programme generated political momentum and provided technical input into a UN resolution which recognizes child, early and forced marriage as a harmful practice that violates human rights and disproportionately affects girls and women. This 2018 resolution was co-sponsored by seven countries in which the Global Programme operates,<sup>5</sup> with Mozambique and Niger joining for the first time.<sup>6</sup>

**REASON #3** The dual-agency Global Programme is a successful example of UN reform.

The Global Programme clearly demonstrates that ‘the whole is greater than the sum of its parts’, with UNFPA and UNICEF working together to have an integrated advocacy strategy, policy approaches and monitoring through joint workplans, as well as promoting the convergence of services and interventions for adolescent girls and their families and communities.

Joint programming in common geographic areas is facilitating the delivery of integrated services and interventions in keeping with the evidence on the success of multi-sectoral solutions. It is also helping countries address national priorities and any obstacles in their path towards meeting the SDGs.



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**REASON #4** **The Global Programme is able to use multi-sectoral approaches to end child marriage, due to the unique and complementary strengths of UNFPA and UNICEF.**

Using their comparative advantages and building on their well-established presence at country and regional levels, UNFPA and UNICEF have developed multi-sectoral approaches to the complex set of interrelated issues that lead to child marriage.

For example, in Bangladesh, the Global Programme supports advocacy and policy dialogue with governments, anti-child-marriage media campaigns, life skills interventions for girls, adolescent-friendly health services, the creation of adolescent clubs and anti-sexual harassment committees in schools, as well as the improvement of water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in schools.

In Yemen, adaptation of the Global Programme to the context has shown that cross-sectoral collaboration and taking advantage of the access and resources of other sectors such as education is key to enable programming on child marriage in humanitarian settings.

**REASON #5** **The Global Programme plays a catalytic role in leveraging domestic financing and official development assistance to end child marriage.**

The Global Programme provides technical assistance to help national governments meet their political commitments through leveraging and influencing all available financial flows and instruments in support of the SDGs, to end child marriage by 2030.

Currently, six of the Global Programme countries have government budget allocations for national and subnational action plans to end child marriage.<sup>7</sup> As a result of UNFPA and UNICEF advocacy and technical support, the Government of Ghana allocated 3 per cent of its recurrent budget to the coordination and implementation of the National Strategic Framework on Ending Child Marriage (2017–2026).

**REASON #6** **By investing in research, the Global Programme helps build a strong evidence base for advocacy, policy making and programming to end child marriage.**

The Global Programme supports innovative research on the prevalence and causes of child marriage and on its impact on girls, as well as approaches that work best to address child marriage, including at scale. The Global Programme has supported the production of over 75 studies and reports in Phase I of the programme.<sup>8</sup>



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For example, with support from the Global Programme, Mozambique’s Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Action reviewed implementation of its national End Child Marriage Strategy (2016–2019). The ministry learned that while investments are being made in social mobilization and social-norms transformation, large gaps remain in service provision and economic empowerment. These insights will enable improvements in delivery of the strategy.<sup>9</sup>

**REASON #7** **An investment in the Global Programme is good value for money.**

Consolidated proposals and reporting, pooled funding and lower management costs allow for a larger proportion of donor contributions to be used for programme delivery and the achievement of results. Ninety per cent of Global Programme spending in 2018 was for programme activities, while the remaining expenditures covered human resources, monitoring and administrative costs.<sup>10</sup>

**REASON #8** **The gender transformation agenda of the Global Programme aims to empower adolescent girls and transform gender norms.**

The Global Programme focuses interventions on empowering adolescent girls by addressing their different needs, harmful gender norms and power relations, as well as social risk factors.<sup>11</sup> With this approach, the Global Programme helps to ensure adolescent girls have access to sexual and

reproductive health services and choices and opportunities beyond delaying marriage, while simultaneously working with boys and talking with communities.

For example, in Niger, the Illimin Zaman Dunia adolescent initiative focuses on strengthening the capacity of adolescent girls' clubs through the recruitment and training of mentors to provide services to adolescent girls in and out of school. This includes training in livelihood skills and income generation and referrals for health and protection services. The impact of this initiative is demonstrated through adolescent girls' increased knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence.

**REASON #9** **The Global Programme's interventions are accelerating as they go to scale, amplifying change.**

The Global Programme has scaled up by expanding its interventions, covering larger geographic areas and reaching greater numbers of adolescent girls, their families and communities. It has also impacted on wider systemic change.<sup>12</sup>

For example, vertical scale-up, which achieves large-scale change through system-wide intervention, is evident in the Kanyashree Prakashin programme in West Bengal, India. The state's action plan for children now supports a fully budgeted scheme reaching 4.3 million girls through conditional cash transfers in support of girls' education.

**REASON #10** **The Global Programme successfully partners with many stakeholders to drive transformative change.**

The Global Programme embodies the spirit of partnerships that are at the core of the global call for a Decade of Action by working with stakeholders to accelerate progress towards achieving the SDGs; this includes working with host governments, parliaments, civil society organizations, academics, the private sector, children and families.

One of the Global Programme's most impactful partnerships is with Girls not Brides, a global partnership of more than 1,300 civil society organizations from over 100 countries committed to ending child marriage and enabling girls to fulfil their potential.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Maksud, Nankali, 'Reflecting on Four Years of Global Progress Towards Accelerating Action to End Child Marriage', 2019 (unpublished).
- UNFPA and UNICEF, 'Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage: Phase II Design Workshop Report', 2019, <<https://www.unicef.org/reports/global-programme-to-accelerate-action-to-end-child-marriage-2019>>.
- UNICEF, 'Briefing note #10, Harmful Practices' in 'UNICEF Briefing Note Series on SDG global indicators related to children', 2018, <<https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/SDG-Briefing-Notes-web.pdf>>.
- United Nations Sustainable Development Group, 'United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework', 2019, <[https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/UN-Cooperation-Framework-Internal-Guidance-Final-June-2019\\_1.pdf](https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/UN-Cooperation-Framework-Internal-Guidance-Final-June-2019_1.pdf)>.
- United Nations Sustainable Development Group, '8 Ways the UN reform is helping to kick-start the Decade of Action', 2 January 2020, <<https://unsdg.un.org/latest/stories/8-ways-un-reform-helping-kick-start-decade-action>>.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 SDG 5.3 states an international commitment 'to eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilations'. Child marriage is defined by the UN as a formal marriage or informal union of children before age 18. This includes both formal (i.e., marriages) and informal unions defined as those in which a couple live together as if married, but for which there has been no formal civil or religious ceremony (i.e., cohabitation).
- 2 Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Yemen and Zambia.
- 3 Cazottes, Isobel, Coupal, Françoise and Esser, Andrea Lee, 'Phase I Evaluation Summary: UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage', 2019, <<https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/GP-2019-Evaluation-Summary-English.pdf>>.
- 4 UNFPA and UNICEF, '2018 Annual Report. Turning Commitments into Solid Actions: UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage', UNFPA and UNICEF, 2019, <<https://www.unfpa.org/resources/global-programme-accelerate-action-end-child-marriage-annual-report-2018>>.
- 5 Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique, Niger, Uganda and Zambia.
- 6 UNFPA and UNICEF, '2018 Annual Report. Turning Commitments into Solid Actions: UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage', UNFPA and UNICEF, 2019, <<https://www.unfpa.org/resources/global-programme-accelerate-action-end-child-marriage-annual-report-2018>>.
- 7 Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique, Uganda and Zambia.
- 8 UNFPA and UNICEF, 'Investing in Knowledge for Ending Child Marriage. Publications Catalogue 2016–2017', UNFPA and UNICEF, 2018, <[https://www.unicef.org/protection/files/Global\\_Programme\\_Publications\\_Catalogue\\_2016-2017%281%29.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/protection/files/Global_Programme_Publications_Catalogue_2016-2017%281%29.pdf)>; UNFPA and UNICEF, 'Investing in Knowledge for Ending Child Marriage. Publications Catalogue 2018–2019', UNFPA and UNICEF, 2019, <<https://www.unicef.org/media/63661/file>>.
- 9 UNFPA and UNICEF, '2018 Annual Report Country Profiles. UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage', UNFPA and UNICEF, 2019, <<https://www.unfpa.org/resources/global-programme-accelerate-action-end-child-marriage-country-profiles-2018>>.
- 10 UNFPA and UNICEF, '2018 Annual Report. Turning Commitments into Solid Actions: UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage', UNFPA and UNICEF, 2019, <<https://www.unfpa.org/resources/global-programme-accelerate-action-end-child-marriage-annual-report-2018>>.
- 11 UNFPA and UNICEF, 'Technical Brief on Adolescent Girls' Empowerment through Life Skills in the Global Programme to End Child Marriage', UNFPA and UNICEF, 2020.
- 12 The Global Programme promotes various strategies, including horizontal or vertical scaling up, grafting, diffusion and mobilization.

