

# LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND: TECHNICAL NOTE OF 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 to leaving no one behind.

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 to promote gender equality and the empowerment of adolescent girls. This technical note responds to the recommendation of the Global Programme evaluation to strengthen programming in reaching the most marginalized adolescent girls.<sup>1</sup> The note illustrates how policies, services and programmes can be designed and delivered to ensure that no one is left behind. It builds on other technical notes from the Global Programme, including the notes on gender-transformative approaches<sup>2</sup> and on value for money.<sup>3</sup> This note is evidence-based and informed by the promising practices of UNFPA, UNICEF, partners and other agencies.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND?

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 193 United Nations Member States pledged to ensure no one would be left behind and to endeavour to reach the furthest behind. In practice, this means taking explicit action to end extreme poverty, curb inequalities, confront discrimination and fast-track progress for those furthest behind.<sup>4</sup> The United Nations approach to leaving no one behind not only entails reaching the poorest of the poor, but also seeks to combat discrimination and rising inequalities within and among countries, and their root causes. This is grounded in the normative standards of the

United Nations, including the principles of equality and non-discrimination, which are foundational in the Charter of the United Nations, international human rights law and national legal systems across the world.<sup>5</sup>

The most vulnerable groups, including those living in remote and hard-to-reach areas, are among those furthest behind in terms of the realization of their rights and human development. Reaching the most vulnerable groups is key for the Global Programme from both a human rights perspective and an efficiency perspective in the link between vulnerabilities and child marriage.<sup>6</sup> Investing in disadvantaged girls within the ecosystem is the right thing to do, and results in benefits to society and positive effects for disadvantaged girls, by delaying marriage and childbirth, gaining literacy and achieving higher levels of primary and secondary education.<sup>7</sup>

All girls and women face structural gender inequalities that marginalize them and increase their vulnerability. Within this broader structural and institutional context of gender inequality, some marginalized girls and women face additional discrimination, exclusion and invisibility. Among the many causes and consequences of gender discrimination, child marriage ranks as one of the most insidious.<sup>8</sup> The poorest and least-educated girls are most at risk of child marriage.<sup>9</sup> This calls for targeted programming to reach the furthest left behind. The COVID-19 pandemic has added to the urgency of leaving no one behind.

The primary focus of this note are the most marginalized adolescent girls. In line with the Global Programme’s overall strategic approach, this technical note also applies to vulnerable groups more broadly, including poor families and boys who are pushed into marriage before the age of 18 years. Leaving no one behind includes working with men and boys on gender and masculinities to address the realities and rights of boys as grooms, and men as parents, caregivers and decision-makers. It also means applying the intersectional lens and equity measures to social and child protection policies and programmes, sexual and reproductive health and rights services, and education services, including comprehensive sexuality education, and promoting synergies and partnership for economic support and financial relief.

## DEFINITIONS

**Leaving no one behind** means prioritizing the rights and needs of the most marginalized individuals and communities – women and girls are often at the top of the list. It urges the United Nations and partners to address the structural causes of inequality and marginalization.<sup>10</sup> Leaving no one behind calls for explicit and proactive rights-based efforts to ensure populations at risk of being left behind are included from the start, underpinned by three principles:<sup>11</sup>

1. **Equality** – the imperative of moving towards substantive equality of opportunity and outcomes for all groups;
2. **Non-discrimination** – the prohibition of discrimination against individuals and groups on the grounds identified in international human rights treaties; and
3. **Equity** – the broader concept of fairness and justice in the distribution of costs, benefits and opportunities.

Other key terms related to leaving no one behind include the following.

- **Intersectionality** – a prism for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other, a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects and how different forms of oppression work together to exacerbate injustice and to exclude and discriminate against certain groups. Intersectionality is a tool for analysis, advocacy and policy development that challenges intersecting forms of discrimination and power relations such as racism, sexism, heterosexism, adultism, ableism, ethnocentrism and classism.<sup>12-15</sup>
- **Disadvantage** – an unfavourable circumstance or condition that reduces the chances of success or effectiveness.
- **Discrimination** – the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of race, age, gender or sex.
- **Exclusion** – dynamic, multidimensional processes driven by unequal power relationships interacting across four main dimensions – economic, political, social and cultural – and at different levels, including individual, household, group, community, country and global. Exclusion results in unequal access to resources, capabilities and rights, and leads to health inequalities.<sup>16</sup>
- **Marginalization** – treatment of a person, group or concept as insignificant or peripheral.
- **Vulnerability** – exposure to the likelihood of being attacked or harmed, either physically or emotionally.

## ADOLESCENT GIRLS LEFT BEHIND

Disadvantaged, excluded and vulnerable girls (and boys) fall within the lowest wealth quintiles, castes and classes; lack educational opportunities and literacy; are married and have children young; belong to minority ethnic and racial groups; live away from their parents in marginalized rural or urban slums; are disabled; or live in areas affected by armed conflict or natural disasters. Different types of exclusion intersect, and the most disadvantaged adolescent girls experience multiple forms of marginalization, discrimination and oppression.<sup>17</sup> For transformative change to happen, it is key to have a deeper analysis of power relations and to squarely address oppressive systems identified by the ‘isms’,<sup>18,19</sup> introduced above. For instance, the overall system and ideology of racism manifested in the ideology of racial superiority or inferiority sets a frame that facilitates increased vulnerability, marginalization and exclusion of black and brown girls in many societies. Enforcing equitable governance and accountability of systems, institutions and communities at national and subnational levels is crucial, as is the meaningful engagement and participation of marginalized girls in decisions that impact them.<sup>20,21</sup>

Figure 1 and Table 1 present different types of exclusion and barriers to accessing services and programme interventions within entrenched structures of unequal power relations. This typology is useful for developing a systematic and intersectional-analysis approach to multiple forms of exclusion and oppression.

**FIGURE 1: Intersection of exclusion and power**

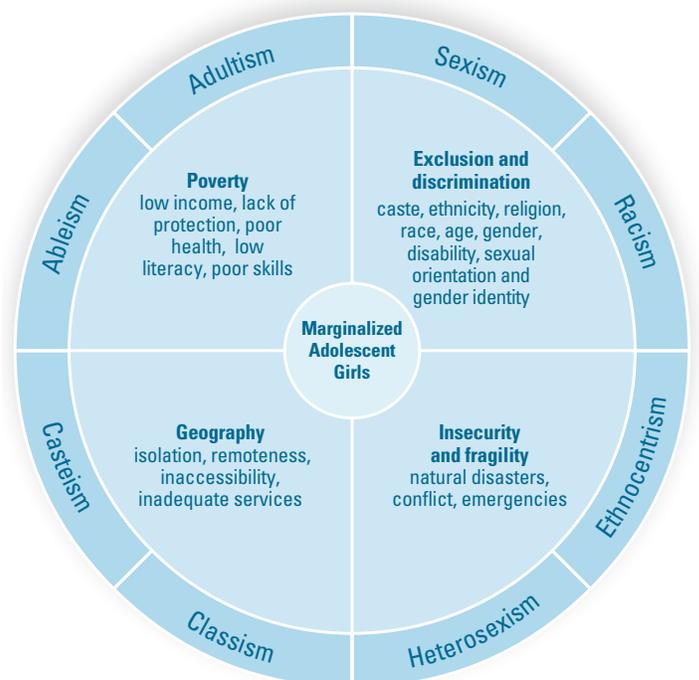


TABLE 1: Exclusion types and barriers<sup>22</sup>

TYPES OF EXCLUSION	CONDITIONS OF MARGINALIZED ADOLESCENT GIRLS	BARRIERS AND REASONS FOR EXCLUSION
<p><b>Poverty and low socioeconomic status</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low income, lack of opportunities, low life expectancy and low educational attainment</li> <li>• Poor nutrition, ill health, low level of education</li> <li>• Low skills and having to work in low-paying and exploitative jobs</li> <li>• Lack of access to social protection and financial services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Out of school and excluded from education</li> <li>• Working and migrating, trafficked</li> <li>• Living in humanitarian settings</li> <li>• Caring for family members</li> <li>• Lacking safety and security</li> <li>• In the poorest quintiles</li> <li>• Part of indigenous groups</li> <li>• Already married or divorced</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Services are too expensive</li> <li>• Services are not designed for working with adolescent girls</li> <li>• Life skills and comprehensive sexuality education sessions are held during times adolescent girls have to work</li> <li>• School-based interventions exclude out-of-school girls and girls who have to work</li> <li>• Migrant girls are excluded from accessing local schools</li> <li>• Girls are trafficked involuntarily</li> <li>• Media-based interventions exclude adolescent girls who do not have access to media and communication technologies</li> <li>• Programmes conceive girls as a homogeneous group</li> </ul>
<p><b>Geographical isolation and marginalization</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inexistent or poor-quality public services</li> <li>• Limited transportation and infrastructure</li> <li>• Limited access to communication technology</li> <li>• Limited access to income and economic opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living in rural areas</li> <li>• Nomadic herders</li> <li>• Living in remote and inaccessible areas: e.g., highlands, thinly populated arid areas, wetland areas and islands</li> <li>• Living in urban slums</li> <li>• Living in border communities furthest from major cities</li> <li>• Living in indigenous territories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Services do not reach remote areas, are of poor quality and expensive</li> <li>• High rates of absenteeism of service providers</li> <li>• High costs of delivering services to remote areas</li> <li>• Services fail to meet standards and to implement laws and policies</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social exclusion</b></p> <p>Discrimination, bias, stigma, exclusion and mistreatment based on identity (ascribed or assumed) and power relations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethnic, racial, religious, indigenous or linguistic minorities</li> <li>• Low caste or class</li> <li>• Migrants and foreigners</li> <li>• Pregnant adolescent girls and adolescent mothers</li> <li>• Disability</li> <li>• Sexual orientation and gender identity</li> <li>• HIV/AIDS status</li> <li>• Stigma associated with sexuality and 'honour'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active discrimination by service providers</li> <li>• Exclusion of adolescent mothers and pregnant girls from returning to school</li> <li>• Legislation prevents adolescent girls from accessing contraceptives</li> <li>• Policy and legal barriers to accessing health services based on: age, marital status, ability to pay, sexual orientation and gender identity, language</li> </ul>
<p><b>Insecurity, vulnerability and fragile populations</b> exposed to the impacts of climate change, natural hazards, violence, conflict, displacement, health emergencies and economic shocks. High level of insecurity and violence, isolation and vulnerability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living in areas affected by natural disasters, armed conflict or health emergencies</li> <li>• Adolescents living in institutions, living apart from both parents, living in violent households, living as domestic workers, trafficked or living on the street, living in refugee camps or internally displaced without family, and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence</li> <li>• Orphaned girls</li> <li>• Victims and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Services are interrupted</li> <li>• Living conditions prevent or constrain access to services</li> <li>• Human rights are violated</li> <li>• Autonomy and decision-making are neglected</li> </ul>
<p><b>Unresponsive governance and lack of a voice</b></p> <p>Underlying the barriers to service access are laws and policies along with other formal and informal structures that are not adequately resourced and that do not take into consideration the rights, concerns and needs of marginalized groups of adolescent girls and their families. The most marginalized adolescent girls are often overlooked by policymakers and are invisible in national statistics. These girls and their families and communities face disadvantages due to ineffective, unjust, unaccountable or unresponsive global, national and subnational institutions; are affected by inequitable, inadequate or unjust laws, policies, processes or budgets; and are unable to gain influence, or to participate meaningfully, in the decisions that impact them.<sup>23</sup></p>		

## THE GLOBAL PROGRAMME APPROACH

All adolescent girls targeted by the Global Programme are facing social and cultural barriers, including restrictions on their autonomy, mobility and access to means of communication; a culture of silence that discourages community members from speaking out against child marriage and violence against women and children; and a culture of resistance against sexual and reproductive health and rights and comprehensive sexuality education for adolescents and youth. However, the most marginalized adolescent girls – those who are left behind – are facing barriers in addition to those faced by the large majority of adolescent girls and boys at risk of child marriage.

The Global Programme has targeted areas with high child marriage prevalence.<sup>24</sup> At the community level, country offices have targeted out-of-school girls, those most at risk of child marriage, pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers. Some countries, such as the Niger and Sierra Leone, prioritized orphaned girls or girls living with one parent. In India, scheduled castes, tribes and religious minorities were identified as marginalized communities and selected for programme implementation. Mapping exercises in Ethiopia and Sierra Leone were used to identify and target interventions.<sup>25</sup> However, the Global Programme needs to continue increasing efforts to reach some of the most vulnerable adolescent girls, including those in less accessible and more remote areas who are among the furthest left behind.

### Examples of reasons why adolescent girls are not attending life skills, education and digital interventions<sup>26</sup>

Partners in Yemen have faced difficulties in reaching some remote locations with high rates of child marriage. Reaching out-of-school girls has been a challenge in several countries, for example due to child labour and migration in Ethiopia, children with disabilities in Bangladesh or adolescent mothers with children in Sierra Leone.

Life skills sessions are offered through gender clubs in Ethiopia, but the reach has been limited to 30 students per club. To reach larger numbers of girls, the ministry of education, with support from UNICEF, is reviewing the content of the life skills curriculum and is considering supporting life skills sessions in other clubs as well.

Digital approaches (e.g., SMS BIZ in Mozambique or U-Report in Nepal, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zambia) have broad reach, but are unlikely to reach the most vulnerable groups due to illiteracy and a lack of access to mobile phones.<sup>27</sup>

## HOW TO INCLUDE THE MOST MARGINALIZED ADOLESCENT GIRLS

Reaching the most marginalized adolescent girls within the ecosystem requires complementary investments in data, analysis and monitoring; laws, policies and budgets; services and programmes; and support for the collective voice of disadvantaged girls.<sup>28</sup> Leaving no one behind requires continual efforts throughout the programming cycle, year after year, as illustrated in Figure 2. Targeting marginalized girls themselves is essential but has to be complemented by creating or strengthening an environment that enables the inclusion of the most marginalized girls.

FIGURE 2: Programming cycle to leave no adolescent girl behind



### 1 Assess, analyse and account: leave no one behind in data

The first step towards reaching excluded adolescent girls is to make them visible to policymakers, service providers and implementing agencies by identifying where they are, researching their situation and analysing the barriers they are facing in accessing services, benefits and interventions. Collect and use more and better disaggregated data and people-driven information.<sup>29</sup>

## Analyse

- Conduct a vulnerability assessment to identify the most excluded groups and the reasons why they are being left behind, by addressing intersectional analysis.<sup>30</sup>
- Uncover vulnerabilities by conducting studies and generating data to raise public awareness and sensitize decision-makers about existing discrimination, and promote the needs of vulnerable groups.<sup>31</sup>
- Generate knowledge by working with marginalized girls, their families and communities to fill gaps in data and to identify obstacles to service access and ways to overcome them.<sup>32</sup>
- National statistical offices continue to face complexities in collecting and analysing multidimensional data and to capture the varied forms of violence and their impacts on adolescent girls. In turn, data on certain group identities may be distorted, misrepresented or used to perpetuate harmful stereotypes.<sup>33</sup>

## Examine marginalization

- Identify areas with high concentrations of girls at risk of child marriage through hotspot mapping and analysis.
- Systematically identify and target vulnerable girls experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.
- Assess the drivers of exclusion and barriers to service access. Are the interventions designed to benefit only girls who are in school, have higher education levels, and so on?
- Disaggregate data sets and sampling frames by sex, age, disability, migrant status, wealth, urban/rural, ethnic/linguistic and other relevant dimensions to capture intersectional forms of discrimination,<sup>34</sup> and to ensure that inequalities are highlighted and used by policymakers, planners and implementers to identify and reach marginalized adolescents.<sup>35</sup>

**The Girl Roster** is a user-friendly tool to collect segmented data on girls through basic technologies such as mobile-phone-based questionnaires or face-to-face interviews, with the engagement of communities. The tool was developed by the Population Council with the Women's Refugee Commission and other members of the Girls in Emergencies Collaborative.<sup>36</sup>

## Account

Monitor, track and report on progress towards the inclusion of the most marginalized adolescent girls in a regular, inclusive, participatory and transparent way.<sup>37</sup> This includes the participation of girls and ensuring that their opinions and perspectives define the issues and contribute to the design of potential solutions.

*In India, UNFPA supports the education of marginalized tribal adolescent girls living in hostels by equipping them with skills on sexual and reproductive health and rights and preventing gender-based violence through the education system.*

*In Uttar Pradesh in India, SHARDA adopted a comprehensive programme for the identification and enrolment of out-of-school children. With capacity-building support from UNICEF, the number of identified out-of-school children increased tenfold between 2018 and 2019. About 96 per cent of out-of-school children were mainstreamed into regular schools.<sup>38</sup>*

## 2 Leave no one behind in laws and policies

Reform and enact policies and laws to confront the drivers that leave marginalized girls, their families and communities behind.<sup>39</sup> The marginalization of certain groups of adolescent girls is rooted in discriminatory, inequitable, inadequate and unjust laws, policies, processes or budgets. Policymakers often lack an understanding of the specific needs and vulnerabilities of certain groups of adolescent girls.<sup>40</sup> Work with policymakers to remove discriminatory laws and replace them with inclusive and just laws and policies.<sup>41</sup> Advocate the removal of laws and regulations that prevent pregnant and married girls from continuing their education, and lobby policymakers to allocate adequate resources to reach the most marginalized adolescent girls. Support groups of adolescent girls and youth-led organizations to express their views and engage in policy advocacy.<sup>42</sup> Groups with a shared identity can offer safe spaces and support, foster a sense of belonging, and help the formation of leadership.

**Mozambique's 39/2003 decree** ordered the transfer of pregnant girls from day to night schools. This decree prevented pregnant girls from enjoying their right of access to education because Mozambique has few night schools and they are far from villages and are not safe for girls. With support and encouragement from UNFPA, the government of Mozambique revoked this discriminatory and exclusionary decree.

While **Sierra Leone** prohibits child marriage, implementation has been weak because rural communities respect customary leadership and local by-laws more than national laws. A draft bill was submitted to the parliament to harmonize the Child Rights Act (2007) and the Customary Marriage and Divorce Act (2009) in 2018.

The government of **Nepal** enacted a new Children's Act 2075, which contains progressive provisions related to child protection and justice and criminalizes child marriage.

In **India**, UNICEF engaged with the country's high courts to reinforce their oversight and coordination functions, and worked with state governments to leverage existing financial resources for the protection of children.<sup>43</sup>

### 3 Leave no one behind in services and programmes

Including the most marginalized adolescent girls is often particularly challenging, given the barriers and restrictions they face in access to essential services. Service providers and programme implementers often fail to account for cultural, linguistic and age-related differences among adolescent girls in their delivery, further exacerbating barriers.<sup>44</sup> This section provides ideas and suggestions on how to support implementing partners to overcome access barriers, develop supplementary and innovative services targeted at the most disadvantaged girls, involve marginalized girls in the participatory design of services and interventions, and mobilize communities for the inclusion of the most disadvantaged girls.

#### A. Remove access barriers and tailor interventions to ensure the inclusion of marginalized adolescent girls in services, programmes and cash transfer schemes

Identify and remove barriers and restrictions that prevent marginalized adolescent girls from accessing services and programmes and improve access to facilities, services, information and communication. These barriers include financial, social, geographical and time barriers, and resources should be dedicated to ensuring access to information, services and activities.<sup>45</sup>

- **Lift financial barriers** that prevent girls from going to school or from using health services. Such barriers include school fees, and expenses for uniforms and textbooks,<sup>46</sup> and medical consultations, contraceptives and medicines.

- **Provide transport** to school for girls who live too far from school, have a disability or are too poor to afford transport fees. Free school buses, fee waivers for public transport or free bicycles for adolescent girls are some of the models that have shown success. Enhanced mobility of adolescent girls is an indicator of empowerment.
- **Provide school stipends**, pay for scholarships, school kits and meals, and make conditional cash transfers linked to the continuing school attendance of the most vulnerable girls.<sup>47</sup> One way in which governments can improve girls' education is to reduce the direct costs associated with sending girls to school. This is a quick and effective way to boost the attendance rates of the most disadvantaged girls. Evidence shows that targeted cash transfers, both conditional and unconditional, voucher schemes and scholarships for the most marginalized girls lead to increased enrolment and may delay the age at which girls marry.

*Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mozambique, the Niger and Uganda provide cash (e.g., conditional cash transfers and scholarships) and/or in-kind items (e.g., school materials, menstrual hygiene kits and bicycles) to support girls' education. In Ethiopia, safe spaces for vulnerable out-of-school girls include cash support.<sup>48</sup>*

- **The timing of interventions** can prevent girls who work from attending life skills or comprehensive sexuality education sessions. Change the time of the interventions to facilitate the participation of girls who work.
- **Remove regulatory barriers**, such as rules that prevent pregnant and adolescent girls from attending school and from continuing their education.

*To alleviate the hardships caused by COVID-19 lockdowns, the government of Sierra Leone lifted the ban on pregnant girls attending school.*

- **Discrimination** by health workers, teachers and fellow students can discourage marginalized girls from using health and education services. Tackle discriminatory and stigmatizing attitudes, bullying and violence against marginalized girls and put in place accountability mechanisms to track whether marginalized adolescents are reached with appropriate services.<sup>49</sup> Support service providers to provide services at the community level.

Removing universal access barriers may not be enough to ensure that the most marginalized adolescent girls are included in programmes and services. Additional, targeted interventions are needed to facilitate the inclusion of specific groups of adolescent girls, especially girls with intersecting disadvantages. The following are some examples that have worked for some marginalized girls.

- Childcare services for the children of adolescent mothers or married girls.
- Special classes for adolescent girls with disabilities.
- Non-formal learning centres and alternative education for girls who are not able to attend or to follow regular classes and require more flexible learning pathways.
- Remedial classes to enable out-of-school girls to catch up and reintegrate in regular classes.
- Distance education and digital learning resources for girls who live in remote areas or are prevented from attending school due to public health emergencies. This adaptive strategy has been applied by radio education programmes, with the provision of a radio to the most vulnerable girls, for example during the COVID-19 pandemic, to continue education, comprehensive sexuality education and life skills programmes.<sup>50</sup>
- Appropriate curricula and altered teaching practices are critical to supporting girls' continuing education.

*Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Mozambique, Uganda and Zambia have supported the training of teachers to change teaching practices that negatively affect girls' education. In Ethiopia, teachers were trained on sexual and reproductive health and on the prevention of child marriage. In Zambia, teachers were trained in how to support girls to stay in school. In Ghana, teachers were given guidelines to prevent adolescent pregnancies. Burkina Faso, India and Mozambique developed curricula that support girls' education.*

*UNFPA in collaboration with UNICEF, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, have developed international technical and programmatic guidance for out-of-school comprehensive sexuality education, aiming to address the needs of specific groups who are unlikely to be addressed in comprehensive sexuality education programmes for children and young people generally. It seeks to reach the most left behind young people, including adolescent girls, men and boys, young people with disabilities, indigenous people, young people living with HIV, young people in humanitarian settings, LGBTIQ young people, and young people in detention. The guide provides core elements to implement evidence-based programming to reach the most marginalized at the community, subnational and national levels.*

- Provide mobile adolescent health services and information and out-of-school comprehensive sexuality education.
- Give livelihood opportunities: addressing poverty and providing economic opportunities for women and girls is critical in ending child marriage (e.g., in Uganda and Yemen). Reaching adolescent girls who are out of school and/or working requires a combination of training, community mobilization and incentives (e.g., in Ethiopia and India). Life skills and sexual and reproductive health knowledge and skills are insufficient to delay marriage if they are not complemented with livelihood opportunities and incentives for schooling.<sup>51</sup>
- Prioritize girls' safety and protection by providing gender-based violence prevention and response services in schools and communities.<sup>52</sup>

*In Maharashtra, India, seasonal migrants who work in the sugar cane harvest in Maharashtra are among the most disadvantaged populations. Adolescent daughters of seasonal migrants often have only two options: get married or migrate with their parents. Both options end the girls' education and have a range of other negative effects on them. By offering safe community-based living and care arrangements during the harvest season, these girls are able to continue their education and aspire to a better future.*

## **B. Participatory, girl-centred design, implementation and monitoring**

To ensure that interventions are effective in reaching and including marginalized groups of adolescent girls, use participatory design. Adolescent girls are best positioned to help find and test solutions. Feedback mechanisms and flexible programming tools allow for adjustments, and lead to more relevant interventions in constantly changing environments.<sup>53</sup> Design programmes around the practical and strategic needs and priorities of marginalized adolescent girls and involve them in programme design, implementation and monitoring.<sup>54</sup> Enable and empower adolescent girls by including them in decision-making and by establishing safe and inclusive mechanisms for their civic engagement.<sup>55</sup> Involving disadvantaged girls in the design of services and the review and assessment of interventions also gives them a voice.

Involving adolescent girls in design ensures that programmes and services are appropriate in terms of location, timing, methods and media of communication, and in being safe and avoiding stigma. Actively seek out the most marginalized

adolescents through community groups and other partners and ensure they are provided with the information, skills and support to enable them to actively engage with and contribute to their communities.<sup>56</sup>

**Biruh Tesfa** is an evidence-based programme with a reach of more than 75,000 out-of-school adolescent girls (aged 7 to 24 years) living in urban slums in Ethiopia. Through female mentors, the programme provides non-formal education (including for basic literacy, numeracy, life skills, financial literacy and reproductive health) and supports linkages to health services in the area. Girls who may otherwise be missed, such as child domestic workers who are largely confined to the home, girls with disabilities and children in commercial sexual exploitation, are reached through house-to-house mentorship. In-home contact also allows mentors to negotiate with the adults whom girls live with, for their participation, and to serve as advocates for girls if they encounter problems. With support from the Girls' Education Challenge (launched by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), the programme is now scaling up as Biruh Tesfa for All to reach even more girls. The programme aims to reach 10,500 additional girls living in modern slavery, including forced domestic servitude, girls who are trafficked, and girls living with disabilities in Addis Ababa, Bahir Dar and Shashamene.<sup>57</sup>

### C. Mobilize communities to leave no girl behind

It is not enough to work with adolescent girls, service providers and implementing organizations. Families, communities and leaders have to support the inclusion of the most marginalized girls. Mobilize communities and local leaders in support of girls' education, including for pregnant girls and those who are out of school.<sup>58</sup> Target parents and in-laws to raise awareness about the risks of child marriage and the support that adolescent girls need for good health and well-being. Raise awareness among men and boys to get their support to leave no adolescent girl behind.

In Niger and Burkina Faso, local, traditional and religious leadership has been critical to broaden the participation of adolescent girls in empowerment programmes and to convince parents to keep girls in school. Door-to-door household visits have been effective in identifying and mobilizing at-risk adolescent girls in Burkina Faso. Community engagement needs to be intensified to ensure the safety and protection of adolescent club facilitators in Bangladesh. Youth-led advocacy has been effective in building awareness and mobilizing public support for ending child marriage in Ghana.<sup>59</sup>

## ENDNOTES

- The Global Programme evaluation found that "Despite efforts to target high prevalence areas and reach the most vulnerable, interventions have not yet reached the most remote areas in many instances, including many of those that are furthest behind." The evaluation recommended assessing the ability of different approaches (including the use of technologies and innovation) to intensify efforts to reach the most vulnerable, including out-of-school girls, girls who are already married, girls in remote areas, girls with disabilities, and so on, to extend successful approaches to more difficult areas and individuals in the next phase, bearing in mind the additional human and financial resources required to reach those most left behind. See the evaluation here: <<https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/GP-2019-Evaluation.pdf>>.
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