

HUMAN
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UC Berkeley School of Law



Save the Children



TOWARD AN END TO CHILD MARRIAGE

Lessons from Research and Practice in
Development and Humanitarian Sectors

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SAVE THE CHILDREN AND BEYOND

June 2018

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HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER

The Human Rights Center at the University of California, Berkeley, School of Law conducts research on war crimes and other serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights. Using evidence-based methods and innovative technologies, we support efforts to hold perpetrators accountable and to protect vulnerable populations. We also train students and advocates to document human rights violations and turn this information into effective action.

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SAVE THE CHILDREN

Save the Children fights for children every single day. We stand side by side with children in the toughest places to be a child. We do whatever it takes to make sure they survive, get protection when they're in danger, and have the chance to learn. Because every child should be able to make their mark on the world and build a better future for us all.

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Cover Photo: Rokaya,* 14, stands in the grounds of a temporary learning center for children who fled the conflict in Marawi city, the Philippines, run by Save the Children. At this site, girls and young women face a heightened risk of early or forced marriage as well as other forms of gender-based violence. **The child's name was changed to protect her identity.* Photo by Hanna Adcock / Save the Children.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AMS	Awards Management System	IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
ASRH	Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health	INGO	International Non-governmental Organization
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer	IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women	IRC	International Rescue Committee
CEDPA	Centre for Development and Population Activities	NGO	Non-governmental Organization
CEFM	Child, Early, and Forced Marriage	RCT	Randomized Control Trial
CM	Child Marriage	RH	Reproductive Health
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child	SC	Save the Children
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education	SGBV	Sexual and Gender-based Violence
CSO	Civil Society Organization	SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo	SRH/R	Sexual and Reproductive Health/ Rights
FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting	STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
GBV	Gender-based Violence	UCT	Unconditional Cash Transfer
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome	UN	United Nations
HRC	Human Rights Center	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
ICRW	International Center for Research on Women	VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association
		WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DESPITE RECENT DECLINES in the prevalence of child marriage globally, an estimated 12 million girls are still married each year.¹ Additionally, there has been growing concern around reports of increasing child marriage rates among those affected by conflict or natural disaster where underlying drivers such as gender inequality, social norms, and lack of opportunities for girls are exacerbated, and new drivers related to protection concerns and extreme poverty arise. Consequently, girls who are married young experience a violation of their human rights and suffer negative impacts on their education, economic prospects, social lives, mental and physical health, and the health and nutrition of their children. Effective interventions are urgently needed to address this critical issue.

The purpose of the following study is to gather findings from efforts to prevent and respond to child marriage in both development and humanitarian contexts and determine what Save the Children and other organizations can do to improve their response to this critical issue. The study adds to existing research by synthesizing the most up-to-date literature, bringing the voices of practitioners and experts into the discussion, and examining the topic of child marriage interventions in a humanitarian context for the first time. In addition, through a mapping and analysis of Save the Children's programming, it assesses the organization's approaches against the available evidence.

Methodology

The study methodology has three components:

- 1. LITERATURE REVIEW:** A literature review was conducted to identify the state of the global evidence on child marriage prevention and response interventions. In sum, 355 development and 27 humanitarian articles from both grey and academic literature were evaluated for inclusion. Forty-three development and no humanitarian articles met the inclusion criteria and were extracted and evaluated for quality using adapted STROBE and CONSORT scales.² Data was reviewed and findings relating to programs and initiatives for combatting child marriage were identified and analyzed for common themes.
- 2. MAPPING EXERCISE:** A mapping exercise of Save the Children's past and current programs to address child marriage was undertaken using internal and published documents from three sources: submissions from Save the Children member and country offices, Save the Children's Awards Management System Database, and the program and project Evaluation Repository database. Any evaluations meeting inclusion criteria for the literature review were included in the literature review extraction and analysis process. Program information from the 181 resulting documents that met the inclusion criteria was extracted to a standardized form for analysis.

Methodology

1

Literature Review

A literature review to identify the state of the global evidence on child marriage prevention and response interventions

2

Mapping Exercise

A mapping exercise of Save the Children's past and current programs to address child marriage using internal and published documents from three sources

3

Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews with 27 practitioners active in child marriage prevention and response in 21 countries or regions across Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, Europe, and North and South America

3. KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS: Key informant interviews were conducted with 27 practitioners active in child marriage prevention and response in 21 countries or regions across Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, Europe, and North and South America. Interviews were conducted over Skype using a semi-structured interview guide. Twenty-one interviewees were from Save the Children, while six practitioners were from other non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Transcripts were coded and analyzed thematically to identify patterns in participant responses.

Findings

The literature review identified 43 experimental and quasi-experimental evaluations of 30 distinct interventions in development settings that had as their primarily objective or a significant outcome impacts on child marriage outcomes including related behavior, knowledge, and attitudes. Studies focused primarily on African and South Asian contexts. Interventions were typically designed as single-component or multi-component and targeted girls alone or multiple levels of the social-ecological model, including families, communities, policy environment, and society. Approaches to addressing child marriage included empowerment, incentive/asset transfer, community sensitization and engagement,

and legal and advocacy. Empowerment approaches were the most frequently evaluated and consistently effective, but covered a broad range of activities that were rarely evaluated independently to determine which components were most effective. Incentive/asset transfer approaches had mixed results, but were more likely to be effective when focused on younger adolescents and conditioned on or used to promote educational outcomes (such as school attendance). Community sensitization and engagement approaches, while promising, were poorly represented and evaluated in the literature, but programs focusing on deeper community engagement were generally more successful than those that used more light-touch sensitization approaches. Finally, legal and advocacy approaches were found to be the least represented in the literature, likely due to substantial challenges in evaluating such programs using experimental and quasi-experimental methods. We identified two studies evaluating programs designed to address child marriage in humanitarian contexts, but neither fit the criteria for inclusion in the study.

The mapping of Save the Children's programming revealed that Save the Children has been active in addressing child marriage since at least 2001 when the *Ishraq* program for out-of-school girls was instituted in Egypt. Since then, the organization has

conducted over 52 projects, programs, and advocacy initiatives in more than 41 countries. The majority of programs are designed as multi-component, multi-level interventions, and all four approaches identified in the literature are recognized in Save the Children's programming. However, empowerment and community sensitization and engagement approaches are the most frequently utilized, with legal and advocacy efforts increasingly common. Incentive/asset transfer approaches were used to address child marriage only twice by the organization.³ Program evaluations ranged from highly rigorous randomized controlled trials (RCTs) to quasi-experimental and qualitative evaluations, and less-rigorous baseline-endline evaluations. Four past and current programs in humanitarian contexts were identified.

Key informants discussed interventions or strategies to address child marriage, outcomes or impacts (anecdotal or based on formal evaluation), implementation challenges, risk factors and intervention adaptation strategies for humanitarian settings, information or guidance needs of practitioners, and key programming gaps. A number of themes arose from the interviews. On strategies and promising practices, practitioners discussed the importance of multi-level, integrated interventions, mobilizing communities to change social norms, conducting formative research to inform intervention design, and contextually sensitive framing of child marriage. They also identified implementation challenges and gaps, including the need for a holistic, coordinated strategy across sectors, the diverse and context-specific drivers of child marriage, the resource and time intensive nature of social norms change, limited legal frameworks and enforcement, and the difficulty of translating national level legal and policy successes into meaningful change at the local level. Researchers identified certain groups—such as ethnic minorities, faith-based leaders, men and boys, and married girls as needing greater inclusion in future efforts.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are targeted at Save the Children and intended to help move the organization forward in addressing child marriage in development and humanitarian contexts. They are also intended to help other stakeholders, including researchers, policymakers, and practitioners, to more effectively prevent and respond to child marriage.

Development

Cross-thematic Recommendations

1. Adopt a gender equality lens when designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating child marriage programs and initiatives.
2. Expand the geographic coverage of child marriage programming and advocacy to include countries or regions with very high rates of child marriage not currently covered by Save the Children's efforts.
3. Target programs and advocacy to address the following under-reached populations: 1) girls in urban contexts, 2) very marginalized girls, 3) faith-based and customary/traditional leaders, 4) men and boys, and 5) married girls.
4. Consider addressing context-specific risk factors at multiple social-ecological levels; however, these activities should complement efforts to support, empower, and build the capacity of girls themselves.
5. Contextualize empowerment approaches to address local drivers of child marriage as well as the specific needs and interests of the girls themselves.
6. Use incentive/asset transfer approaches to build girls' human capital by incentivizing educational outcomes or combining them with complementary approaches for long term impact.
7. Ensure community sensitization and engagement approaches are long-term, participatory, and engage a broad range of actors within a community who have been identified through formative research.

8. Identify and engage key decision-makers and/or people of influence within communities to serve as champions for child marriage prevention and response.
9. Design programs with the following considerations in mind: 1) scalability and cost, 2) length, 3) formative research, 4) community input, and 5) rigorous evaluation.
10. Develop a coordinated strategy at the organizational level to address child marriage by establishing joint objectives, outcomes, and indicators; unifying terminology; and clarifying where the issue sits within Save the Children and how coordination within the organization will take place.
11. Develop a coordinated strategy at country levels with all stakeholders within and outside of Save the Children active in addressing child marriage.

Advocacy

1. Place youth voices at the center of all advocacy efforts, with a particular emphasis on girls' voices.
2. Develop high-level partnerships and identify champions to expand political will and buy-in.
3. Coordinate with well-established women's rights organizations to strengthen advocacy efforts and maximize impact.
4. Combine advocacy efforts with technical assistance to support governments in developing and implementing legislative and policy changes.
5. Ensure advocacy efforts complement programming directly benefitting girls where possible, that programs integrate advocacy components, and that programming and advocacy are coordinated and work in synergy with each other.
6. Expand legal advocacy initiatives to include educational goals for adolescent girls.
7. Assess the impact of advocacy achievements on women and girls, rather than strictly focusing on whether legal or policy goals have been achieved, to strengthen evaluation efforts.

8. Increase the rigor of evaluations of child marriage advocacy initiatives using creative, context-appropriate methodologies.

Child Poverty

1. Measure the impact of child poverty programming on behavioral child marriage outcomes.
2. Consider the use of incentive/asset transfer programs which incentivize educational outcomes to reduce child marriage.
3. Ensure that incentive/asset transfer programs are well-evaluated and that impact is measured by age.
4. Consider the use of age-appropriate employment and livelihood opportunities, as well as training, to delay marriage among older adolescent girls.

Child Protection

1. Evaluate the impact of child protection interventions on child marriage-related outcomes using rigorous experimental and quasi-experimental methodologies or alternative rigorous evaluation approaches.
2. Encourage other sectors to include child marriage outcomes when evaluating interventions to address drivers of child marriage in the local context.
3. Coordinate with other thematic areas to address child marriage through approaches such as education, health, or livelihoods.
4. Provide assessment and measurement guidance to other sectors to support the identification of contributing factors to child marriage.

Child Rights Governance

1. Support opportunities for child-led advocacy and accountability on child marriage, such as via child clubs and other forums for children to receive information about their rights, gain advocacy skills, and lead activities in their communities and countries.

2. Build gender equality and child marriage into child-friendly budget analysis and advocacy work, to increase resourcing for child marriage policies and programs.
3. Integrate gender equality and child marriage into efforts to protect and expand civil society space from local to international levels, including through working with girls' and women's groups.
4. Measure the impact of nutrition programming on child marriage behaviors.
5. Evaluate the impact of SRH programming, including CSE, SRHR information, and youth-responsive SRH services, on behaviors, knowledge, and attitudes around child marriage.
6. Offer youth-responsive SRHR education programs and services, as well as nutrition programs, to already-married girls.

Education

1. Measure the impact of educational programming on behaviors, knowledge, and attitudes on child marriage.
2. Remove barriers to school participation and increase access to education for adolescent girls.
3. Consider additional incentives to lower barriers to school attendance and increase the opportunity cost for older adolescent girls to leave school.
4. Integrate comprehensive sexuality education and/or child marriage, gender equality, and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) into standard education curriculum.
5. Remove barriers to education for already-married girls and pregnant and adolescent mothers.

Health and Nutrition

1. Determine whether food-insecurity is a driver of child marriage and consider how nutrition programs may improve child marriage outcomes.
2. Determine whether lack of access to youth-responsive sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services is a driver of child pregnancy, and thus child marriage, in a given context and consider how such programs may improve child marriage outcomes.
3. Integrate child marriage into comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), SRHR, and gender-based violence (GBV) education and awareness-raising activities for in- and out-of-school youth.

Humanitarian

1. Conduct assessments to identify both pre-existing drivers of child marriage, as well as new risk factors related to crisis coping, such as economic and protection concerns, when developing child marriage interventions.
2. Determine which forms of child marriage intervention are appropriate for various phases of an emergency.
3. Identify key entry points for mainstreaming child marriage into existing humanitarian response efforts.
4. Pilot stand-alone child marriage programs and integrate sector-specific approaches to address child marriage in humanitarian settings. Build in rigorous evaluations to develop evidence in acute and protracted displacement settings.
5. Build child marriage prevention and response capacity in fragile contexts whenever possible to ensure that the underlying drivers of child marriage are being addressed prior to acute crises.
6. Enable girls to return to school as quickly as possible following acute crisis.

Research

1. Expand research on child marriage drivers and interventions to include settings that are poorly represented in the literature, including child marriage in urban contexts, child marriage in regions such as Latin America and Southeast Asia, and child marriage in the context of gang conflict in Central America.

2. Conduct more rigorous impact evaluations of child marriage programming and advocacy initiatives.
3. Disaggregate evaluation data by age to better understand what works to prevent child marriage among younger and older adolescents and among different social, economic, and identity groups.
4. Lengthen evaluation time to capture individuals' significant life events and social norm change.
5. Evaluate each component of multi-component and multi-level programming individually as well as together to determine which components are most successful at addressing child marriage.
6. Consider cost, sustainability, and scalability when evaluating program impacts.
7. Evaluate distinct components of empowerment programming separately to determine the impact of each component on child marriage outcomes.
8. Improve evaluation of community sensitization and engagement to contribute significantly to organizational and global evidence on changing social norms.
9. Improve evaluation of advocacy initiatives to contribute to organizational and global evidence by 1) assessing the impact of advocacy achievements on women and girls and 2) employing creative, context appropriate methodologies to improve rigor of non-experimental methodologies when necessary.
10. Evaluate the impact of other approaches such as health, nutrition, and education on child marriage as an outcome.
11. Build a formative research phase into piloting and evaluation efforts to tailor interventions to the context-specific drivers and needs and preferences of the community.
12. Prioritize research addressing support needs, outreach strategies, and effective interventions for already-married girls to expand child marriage response efforts.
13. Build an evidence base in humanitarian settings that addresses the following topics: 1) why child marriage increases in some contexts, 2) decision-making factors of parents, 3) pre-existing and crisis-specific drivers of child marriage, 4) support needs of girls and their families, and 5) what interventions work to address child marriage.
14. Engage youth in participatory research during formative and pilot design phases to ensure that the needs and interests of young people are prioritized and to improve buy-in.

INTRODUCTION

CHILD MARRIAGE, defined as formal or informal union before the age of 18,⁴ is a pervasive global phenomenon. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), more than 650 million women alive today were married as children, and more than a third of those unions took place before those women were 15. Currently, 12 million girls are married each year,⁵ meaning globally one in six adolescent girls (aged 15–19) is married or in union.⁶ While some progress has been made with regards to decreasing the prevalence of child marriage, it is often not enough to offset population growth in regions such as West and Central Africa where the practice is the most common.⁷ In Niger, for example, where women have an average of 7.3 children each,⁸ prevalence of child marriage is 76%. According to UNICEF, given the impact of population growth, at the current rate of decline, countries are not on track to reach the Sustainable Development Goal of ending child marriage by 2030, and an additional 150 million girls will be married by that date.⁹

In addition, there has been increasing concern around child marriage in humanitarian contexts, where practitioners say a complex combination of factors leads parents to turn to early marriage as a negative coping mechanism. While research in this context is minimal thus far (several large-scale prevalence studies are due for publication this year), one multi-country study found that early marriage may increase markedly during some crises such

as armed conflicts and natural disasters, and that where it does, adolescents under age 15 are often the most significantly impacted.¹⁰ In Jordan, for example, UNICEF reported that rates of child marriage among displaced Syrian communities increased from 12% in 2011 to nearly 32% by the end of 2014.¹¹ In Bangladesh, Human Rights Watch found that families were hurrying to marry off their daughters before river erosion took away their homes.¹²

Drivers of child marriage vary significantly across regions and even within countries, but in nearly every context, child marriage is rooted in gender inequality and discrimination. While statistics on rates among boys are poor, current data shows that girls are at nearly five times the risk compared with boys.¹³ Other drivers of child marriage include social and cultural norms and traditions with deeply entrenched beliefs around virginity and purity as they relate to sex and pregnancy outside of marriage. Economic factors also play a significant role, with girls from poor families nearly three times more likely to marry before age 18 than those from wealthy ones.¹⁴ Parents who are unable to adequately meet the financial needs of their families may see marriage of a daughter as a way to lighten the financial burden, obtain a bride price, or keep dowries more affordable. Finally, where education is inaccessible or of low quality and where job prospects for girls are poor, girls may become brides simply because they have few alternatives.¹⁵

In humanitarian contexts such as armed conflict or natural disaster, child marriage is driven by many of the same factors; however, these factors are often severely aggravated by significant loss of resources, crumbling infrastructure, breakdown of the rule of law, and uprooted social structures. Families report marrying off their daughters because there is not enough food to go around and few educational opportunities or job prospects in displacement camps. In addition, protection concerns become primary, and parents arrange marriages hoping to protect their daughters' safety and honor in volatile situations where living quarters are often close and leaving home unsafe.¹⁶

Unfortunately, girls who marry young face consequences that impact nearly every aspect of their lives. First and foremost, child marriage is a violation of children's rights. While the Universal Declaration of Human Rights does not explicitly address child marriage, Article 16(2) states that "Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses."¹⁷ The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) adds that any marriage of a child, which the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) defines as a person under the age of 18,¹⁸ shall have no legal effect.^{19,20}

Recently, committees for both CEDAW and CRC reaffirmed 18 as the minimum age of marriage,

emphasizing that child marriage, among other harmful practices, impairs "the recognition, enjoyment and exercise of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and children."²¹ Second, child marriage has a serious impact on girls' education and future economic prospects. Girls who marry before 18 years of age are less likely to stay in school and consequently, have 9% lower earnings as adults.²² Young brides also face increased social isolation and are at significantly higher risk of physical and sexual violence at the hands of their partner than girls married after 18.²³ Finally, child marriage is correlated with a number of serious health consequences. Complications from pregnancy and childbirth are the number one reason for the death of girls ages 15–19. In addition, babies born to adolescent mothers are more likely to have low birth weight, and thus suffer from malnutrition and underdevelopment. This often perpetuates the cycle of poverty and early marriage for another generation.²⁴

Effective interventions to prevent and respond to child marriage and its consequences are sorely needed. This report outlines the findings of a three-part study, conducted in collaboration with Save the Children, to determine what we know and what we still need to learn about preventing and responding to child marriage in both development and humanitarian contexts.

IMPETUS AND OBJECTIVES

Impetus

Save the Children is a global leader in addressing the health and protection needs of children in both development and humanitarian contexts. Through its member and country offices, Save the Children implements programs and advocacy initiatives to prevent and respond to child marriage. The Human Rights Center (HRC), at the University of California, Berkeley, School of Law, through its Health and Human Rights Program, conducts research to promote the health and protection of marginalized populations affected by humanitarian crisis. HRC undertook this research, in partnership with Save the Children, in order to provide the organization with a synthesis of available evidence both within and beyond the organization to inform Save the Children's strategy development and to strengthen programming to address child marriage. In addition, this research responds to key gaps in the evidence base more broadly and aims to provide organizations that address child marriage with accessible information to inform intervention design.

Although Save the Children implements a broad range of child marriage prevention and response interventions around the world, the organization has not yet undertaken a comprehensive mapping of their previous and current work on the issue of child marriage to ensure strategic coverage and coordination across member and country offices. In addition, lessons learned from their program evaluations and

the experiences of their practitioners have not yet been synthesized and analyzed to inform a clear strategy to guide their work on this issue.

Further, the global evidence addressing child marriage interventions is not available in an accessible format for practitioners and has several limitations (Box 1). First, previous literature reviews addressing child marriage interventions include only a small handful of studies due to strict inclusion criteria, often excluding grey literature or quasi-experimental studies that may offer useful information for programming. Second, previous reviews also do not include interventions in humanitarian contexts in addition to development contexts. Finally, research and evaluations addressing child marriage interventions lack the perspectives of practitioners, their strategies, and challenges encountered in the field, in order to ensure that we are building on lessons learned from practice.

Objectives

This study has three main objectives:

1. To provide a summary of the state of the evidence regarding child marriage prevention and response interventions, including promising practices and evidence gaps;
2. To assess the nature, scope, and coverage of Save the Children's current and recent child marriage work within the past 10 years; and

Reviews and Reviews-of-Reviews on Interventions to Address Child Marriage

1. *Child Outcomes of Cash Transfer Programming* by Anjini Mishra and Francesca Battistin (Save the Children, 2018)
2. *The Global State of Evidence on Interventions to Prevent Child Marriage* by Sophie Chae and Thoai Ngo (Girl Center, 2017)
3. "Preventing Gender-Based Violence Victimization in Adolescent Girls in Lower-Income Countries: Systematic Review of Reviews," *Social Science & Medicine*, by Kathryn Yount, Kathleen Krause, and Stephanie Miedema (2017)
4. "Interventions to Prevent Child Marriage Among Young People in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Systematic Review of the Published and Gray Literature by Amanda Kalamar," *Journal of Adolescent Health*, by Susan Lee-Rife, and Michelle Hindin (2016)
5. "Interventions to Prevent or Reduce Violence Against Women and Girls: A Systematic Review of Reviews" by Diana J. Arango, Matthew Morton, Floriza Gennari, Sveinung Kiplesund, and Mary Ellsberg (The World Bank Group, 2014)
6. "An Evidence Review of Gender-Integrated Interventions in Reproductive and Maternal-Child Health," *Journal of Health Communications*, by Joan Kraft, Karin Wilkins, Guiliana Morales, Monique Widyono, and Susan Middlestadt (2014)
7. "The Efficacy of Interventions to Reduce Adolescent Childbearing in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Systematic Review," *Studies in Family Planning*, by Kate McQueston, Rachel Silverman, and Amanda Glassman (2013)
8. "What Works to Prevent Child Marriage: A Review of the Evidence," *Studies in Family Planning*, by Susan Lee-Rife, Anju Malhotra, Ann Warner, and Allison McGonagle Glinski (2012)
9. *Solutions to End Child Marriage: What the Evidence Shows* by Anju Malhotra, Ann Warner, Allison McGonagle, and Susan Lee-Rife (ICRW, 2011)

3. To identify strategies, implementation challenges, and the research priorities of practitioners within Save the Children and beyond.

Research findings are intended to inform Save the Children's strategic focus, future programming, research, and advocacy, further strengthening the organization's ability to prevent and respond to child marriage in development and humanitarian settings.

METHODOLOGY

THE STUDY METHODOLOGY includes three components: a review of the academic and grey literature addressing child marriage prevention and response interventions; a review of project and program documents available in Save the Children's global database; and key informant interviews with practitioners from Save the Children and other organizations involved in child marriage prevention and response.

Literature Review

Researchers identified peer-reviewed and grey literature that evaluate interventions to prevent and respond to child marriage in development (i.e. low- and middle-income country contexts) and humanitarian (i.e. armed conflict, natural disaster, or displacement) contexts. Relevant databases were combed using search terms appropriate to each database's native controlled vocabulary. Searches were built by combining terms that indicate a young person in a marriage-like arrangement, with terms that indicate prevention, intervention, reduction, or response in both humanitarian and development settings (Appendix 1). In addition, websites for non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), and governmental organizations known to be active in child marriage programming were hand-searched for relevant publications. Searches were expanded by screening bibliographies of published and grey literature matching eligibility criteria to identify new sources. Finally, experts and

professional networks were consulted to identify additional research or grey literature that had not been found through the previous processes. The resulting 355 development and 27 humanitarian articles were stored using RefWorks web-based reference management software.

All titles and abstracts resulting from the searches were screened according to the inclusion criteria provided in Table 1 below. Criteria for literature addressing interventions in humanitarian contexts were expanded to include all years and humanitarian indicators (such as armed conflict or natural disaster) in addition to low- and middle-income country indicators. The remaining 43 evaluations from development contexts were subject to full-text review, quality assessment, and data extraction. No evaluations for interventions in humanitarian contexts met inclusion criteria. Extraction was conducted using predefined criteria outlined in a comprehensive data extraction template (Appendix 2). In addition, researchers applied ranking criteria, adapted from the STROBE and CONSORT standards for observational studies and randomized trials,²⁵ to assess the quality and reporting of intervention and evaluation design (Appendix 3). Disagreements were recorded and resolved by further discussion among the research team. Findings from the included studies relating to programs and initiatives for combatting child marriage in humanitarian and development settings were identified and analyzed for patterns. Findings are outlined in the following report.

TABLE 1 INCLUSION/EXCLUSION CRITERIA FOR LITERATURE

DEVELOPMENT SETTINGS	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Publication type	Peer-reviewed journals or grey literature from organizations known to be active in CEFM	
Publication date	2007–2017	
Study type	Intervention studies, clearly reported methodology	Descriptive studies
Population	Girls or boys <18 years of age	
Intervention	Targeting CEFM, ≥1 month in length	Addressing SGBV broadly
Outcome Measure	At least one CEFM-specific	Other forms of SGBV broadly
Location	Low- or middle-income countries	High-income countries
Language	English	Other languages

The literature review is subject to several limitations. First, the search strategy may have failed to capture literature on interventions that address the root causes of child marriage under the greater umbrellas of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) or child protection if child marriage language was not clearly used. In addition, search results pertaining to already-married girls were limited to those that were clearly marked as preventing or responding to child marriage, though it is very likely that many promising interventions of this type don't use child marriage response language and/or include married adolescent girls in programs alongside married adult women. Finally, the search excluded studies not reported in English.

At the program level, participation in initiatives represented in the literature was generally voluntary, meaning there was likely a selection bias toward participants who were more inclined to delay marriage at baseline, thus showing an exaggerated program effect. Ages of participants also varied widely between studies. While researchers initially tried to limit the literature to those studies that evaluated programs with participants under age 18, they found this criterion to be too restrictive. Thus, several programs include young adult participants

over the age of 18, which may have impacted findings with regards to age at marriage or proportion of girls married, where that was not taken into account. Furthermore, most studies relied on self-reported data on age at marriage, which may have underestimated true rates, especially in countries with strong child marriage laws. Finally, evaluation studies were often too short to capture long-term program impacts and did not follow participants over a long enough period to capture age of marriage for a majority of participants.

In general, published literature is frequently biased towards interventions that had positive outcomes (known as publishing bias), while interventions with ineffective or harmful outcomes may be less likely to be published. Likewise, interventions funded by international NGOs or government organizations are more likely to be published and may be biased in favor of the program for funding purposes. Additionally, given that child marriage research has been conducted in only a few global regions, practitioners should exercise caution in generalizing findings to other regions, making it important to invest in strong data collection and analysis within all future programs.

Mapping

Researchers reviewed and synthesized Save the Children's internal and published documentation, focusing primarily on project and program evaluations and research on child marriage interventions across the movement since 2012. Documents were collected from a number of sources including:

1. Submissions by Save the Children member and country offices;
2. Save the Children's Awards Management System (AMS) Database; and
3. Save the Children's Evaluation Repository (a database where members and country offices may voluntarily submit program or project evaluations).

A request for program documents was circulated among Save the Children member offices, asking for all relevant proposals, donor reports, and evaluations with a child marriage component within the past five years. The AMS search was conducted by exporting all grants or "awards" to Excel and applying filters to identify active, closed, and approved awards relating to child marriage. Researchers then downloaded logframes, final project reports, or evaluation reports associated with each award. Together, these resulted in 175 program documents. The Evaluation Repository was searched for documents related to child marriage, yielding a total of 89 documents. All mid-term reviews, baseline studies, needs assessments, or formative research documents were excluded, leaving 31 evaluation documents. Finally, transcripts from key informant interviews were reviewed for project or program information relevant to mapping. (For key informant methodology, see below.) Documents from all sources which met inclusion criteria were those related to interventions (including programs, tools and curricula, and campaigns) that sought to address child marriage as an explicit objective or those that measured child marriage indicators as an outcome in any year. In total, 206 Save the Children-generated documents were collected and reviewed and 181 included in the final analysis.

Once collected, program name, implementation dates, objectives, target population, intervention components, theory of change, and evaluation methods and outcomes were input into a standardized mapping form for analysis. Any evaluations which met the inclusion criteria for the literature review were put through the same data extraction, quality review, and analysis process used for published literature.

There are a few notable limitations to the mapping exercise. First, use of Save the Children's Evaluation Repository is voluntary, which means member offices have not necessarily submitted all evaluations of child marriage-related programming to the repository. Second, not all grants or "awards" identified in the AMS Database were associated with strong program documentation. Thus, not all programs related to child marriage were well-understood. Third, participation in the mapping exercise was not mandatory. Though all member offices were encouraged to submit documents and fill in documentation gaps, some member offices were more actively engaged in this process than others. Given these limitations, this mapping exercise should not be considered exhaustive or in any way representative of all of Save the Children's programming related to child marriage, especially in regards to non-current interventions.

Key Informant Interviews

Researchers conducted key informant interviews with 27 practitioners currently engaged in child marriage prevention and response efforts. The majority of these interviews (21) were conducted with Save the Children staff. Six practitioners at other international and local NGOs implementing child marriage programming were also interviewed (Box 2).

Researchers selected an initial set of key informants within Save the Children through purposive sampling based on their work on child marriage prevention and response programming, research, or advocacy. Sampling aimed to include Save the Children staff focusing on gender, child protection, advocacy, and program development across member, regional, and country offices. From these

BOX 2**Key Informant Offices and Locations****SC Member Offices**

- Canada
- International
- Netherlands
- United Kingdom
- United States

SC Country/Regional Offices

- Asia
- Bangladesh
- Ethiopia
- Latin America and Caribbean
- Malawi
- Nepal
- Niger
- Sierra Leone
- Somalia
- South Sudan
- West and Central Africa

Outside NGOs

- Arab Region
- Bangladesh
- Ethiopia
- Lebanon
- Somalia
- South Sudan

interviews, snowball sampling was used to identify additional key informants involved in direct implementation of child marriage programming within Save the Children and other organizations, prioritizing those working in humanitarian contexts to address the significant gap in the literature on interventions in these contexts.

Researchers conducted all interviews by Skype using a semi-structured interview guide which was developed based on research objectives and informed by key findings from the literature review. Interviews explored the following topic areas: nature of child marriage, context-specific risk factors, nature of interventions or strategy, outcomes or impact (anecdotal or based on formal evaluation), implementation challenges, adaptation strategies for humanitarian settings, information or guidance needs of practitioners, and key programming and research gaps. Researchers took detailed notes during interviews and followed up with thematic coding and analysis of those notes to identify patterns in participant responses.

This qualitative research has several limitations. First, interviews were conducted in English only. Second, some key informants in our initial

interviews were not as directly involved as others in child marriage program design or implementation. Although these informants could provide general information about their programming and advocacy, they were not able to speak about promising strategies, challenges, and research needs based on direct experience. Third, interviews were conducted primarily with staff focusing on gender and child protection, while only a few focused on advocacy. Save the Children staff working in the areas of education, poverty / livelihoods, and nutrition were not interviewed, and therefore strategies to address child marriage through these sectors were not fully explored. Finally, the vast majority of interviews conducted were with practitioners from Save the Children, and their perspectives reflect their experiences within this organization. Promising practices, challenges, and research priorities of practitioners in other organizations were not fully explored and may follow different trends. Given limited time and resource constraints, and the lack of literature addressing child marriage interventions in these contexts, individuals working in humanitarian settings were prioritized.

FINDINGS, PART I

THE LITERATURE

Development Literature

Study Characteristics

Researchers identified, extracted, and analyzed a total of 43 experimental and quasi-experimental evaluations to determine what is known about promising practices, programs, and evidence gaps to address child marriage in development contexts (see Appendices 4 and 5). Of these documents, 31 were grey literature, including United Nations (UN) reports, NGO reports, working papers, and dissertations, and 12 were academic (peer-reviewed). Evaluations included 15 randomized controlled trials (RCTs), 23 quasi-experimental studies, and 5 natural experiments which evaluated 30 distinct projects or programs. Six studies evaluated programs implemented by Save the Children.

Of those studies that met inclusion criteria, researchers determined that 24 were of high quality, 18 of medium quality, and 1 of low quality according to modified STROBE and CONSORT scales.²⁶ Medium and low-quality evaluations generally scored lower because the intervention was poorly described, inclusion/exclusion criteria for participants was poorly outlined, the sample size was not justified on a statistical basis, no adjustment for confounding was used, and limitations were not reported. We retained all studies that met inclusion criteria for learning, regardless of quality. However, only medium and high-quality studies were included in the analysis of successful approaches.

Fourteen countries are represented in the evaluation literature, including Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Malawi, Mexico, Pakistan, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (Figure 1). Program settings included 23 rural, 2 urban, and 18 mixed rural, semi-urban, or urban settings. Program location settings were generally chosen (where reported) based on low literacy rates, high poverty rates, and high prevalence of child marriage.

Of the programs included in the evaluation studies, a majority of interventions (29) targeted adolescent girls, with ten programs targeting both adolescent girls and boys, and four targeting families of adolescents or the community more broadly. Across studies, the term adolescent is used generously, and where defined, may include children and youth ranging in age from 10 through 24 years. Most programs targeted some broad span of ages within this range (i.e. 12–19 years); however, five programs specifically targeted younger adolescents (ages 10–14 years), including Save the Children’s “CHOICES” curriculum and four school stipend programs for girls beginning in grade 6 (roughly age 11). In addition, six studies aimed to respond to the needs of already married adolescent girls either exclusively or in addition to preventing child marriage. For clarity, these are separated from the remaining analysis, and findings are examined in Box 3.

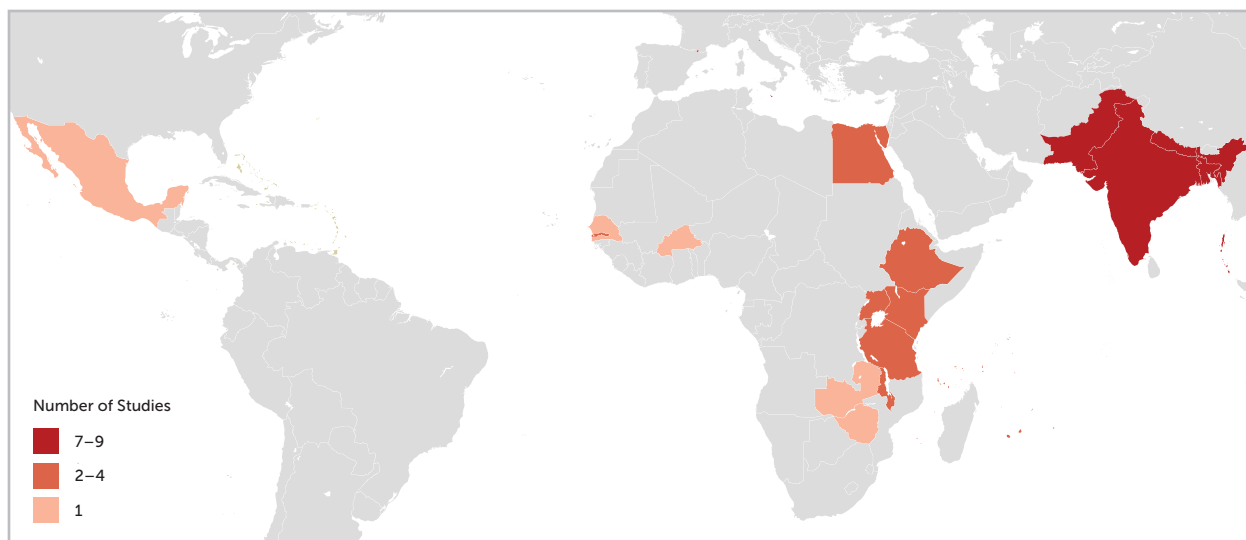


FIGURE 1: Locations of child marriage program evaluations represented in this study.

In general, studies sought to measure programmatic impact on child marriage via behavior change, change in knowledge and attitudes, or both. Of the evaluations measuring behavior change, indicators generally included age at first marriage or proportion of girls married between baseline and endline. Of the evaluations that sought to measure change in knowledge and attitudes, a wide range of indicators were evaluated for both girls and their parents or guardians, including knowledge of the legal age of marriage and legal consequences for violations, perceptions regarding marriage before 18 years of age, belief in girls' right to choose both marriage age and partner, knowledge of advantages or benefits of marrying after 18 years of age, and knowledge of a range of consequences of marrying before 18 years of age.

Intervention Design

The evaluation studies outline a number of different intervention designs and approaches used to prevent child marriage in development contexts. Interestingly, only five of the interventions aimed to address child marriage alone, while five interventions combined child marriage objectives with objectives around fertility decision-making such as

early pregnancy or contraceptive use. The remaining 18 interventions seek to reduce child marriage as one of a range of objectives, including improving educational outcomes; improving economic opportunity; decreasing SGBV; improving SRH outcomes; changing gender norms, attitudes, and practices; strengthening social networks; and improving life skills.

Programs to address child marriage may be single- or multi-component by design. A single-component intervention is one in which the program activities are focused around addressing one primary driver of child marriage. For example, the *Zomba* cash transfer program sought to address child marriage in Malawi by giving a cash transfer to families with never-married daughters between the ages of 13–22 years.²⁷ Multi-component interventions, on the other hand, are those that seek to address multiple drivers of child marriage using several different components as part of the same program. These may all be targeted directly towards girls, or they may address multiple levels of the social-ecological model from a girl's family, to her community, her policy environment, and her society. The *Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA)* program by the NGO BRAC is one such program. It combines five

different components into one program, including 1) adolescent development centers, 2) life skills training, 3) livelihoods training, 4) community participation, and 5) microfinance (Case Study 1).²⁸ Overall, of the 37 evaluation studies included in this report, 21 assess 14 distinct single-component interventions

and 16 assess 13 distinct multi-component interventions, 7 of which evaluated all components as a single intervention and 9 of which evaluated components separately and against a control to determine the impacts of individual components.

BOX 3

Responding to Child Marriage

The prevention of child marriage is a critical focus of child marriage interventions, yet the stark reality is that despite efforts to the contrary, 12 million girls are still married each year.²⁹ While some of the challenges faced by young brides are similar to those of their unmarried peers, many, including those having to do with SRH, family planning, IPV, parenting, social isolation, education, and livelihoods, are unique to this population. For the nearly one in six adolescent girls (aged 15–19) married or in an informal union, it is critical that interventions and support are tailored to meet their unique needs.³⁰ Unfortunately, many organizations are not focusing on supporting married girls either because they do not feel it falls under their mandate or because they fear supporting married girls could be viewed as condoning child marriage. Of those that do provide programming, many include married and unmarried girls in the same cohorts, failing to address their distinct needs.

There are so many organizations working on prevention of early marriage, but not a lot are working at response to early marriage. . . . You cannot promote awareness and prevention of early marriage in a culture that does not want to stop early marriage. . . . I think it would be much more effective, when you've passed the point when you can do prevention, to do response. So our job is to empower these girls, empower these individuals in that specific culture. —PRACTITIONER, NGO, LEBANON

This review identified 10 articles evaluating programming for married girls, including 4 prevention intervention studies from the literature review that

also evaluated response components (Appendix 5). Response programming in these studies addressed a broad array of topics, including use of modern contraceptives, use of SRH services, pregnancy-related care seeking, egalitarian marital relations, and measures of autonomy and social support networks. Evaluations measured outcomes such as increased contraceptive use, delay and spacing of pregnancies, seeking out RH services and pregnancy-related care, absence of marital violence and physical punishment of children, improved partner communication and knowledge of SRH, and improved economic outcomes.

An example of an effective response project for married girls is *TESFA (Toward Economic and Sexual Reproductive Health Outcomes for Adolescent Girls)*, which worked with married girls in the Amhara region of Ethiopia to achieve four primary aims: to 1) empower girls with information, skills, and a support network, 2) provide essential health information and services, 3) educate and rally parents and community members, and 4) provide financial and livelihoods training. Over the three years it ran, the program saw a significant improvement among married girls with regards to improved husband and wife communication, decreased SGBV, improved mental health, increased investment in productive economic assets, and improved knowledge and use of SRH services, including family planning.³¹

In humanitarian contexts, key informants identified a program known simply as the “early marriage tailored package curriculum,” which is current-

ly being piloted by IRC in Lebanon to address the specific needs of married adolescent girls in displacement settings. The program uses a 26-module life skills curriculum tailored to the local context through participatory assessments to cover topics such as self-esteem/self-worth, healthy relationship skills, financial management, family planning, and SGBV. With girls' approval, husbands and mothers-in-laws are engaged through one-on-one meetings to ensure girls are allowed to attend sessions regularly.

Generally speaking, Save the Children is well-poised to contribute to addressing the needs of married girls through new and existing program models. As one key informant told us,

Response falls firmly under our mandate. We're talking about anyone under the age of 18. . . . We also do a ton of work with adults. . . . This is really relevant work through the themes we have: livelihoods, life skills, post-secondary education, through health we're doing work around SRH rights, maternal health. . . . It's really not a stretch for us, [it's] just connecting the dots. That is something we haven't done as well as we could.

—PRACTITIONER, SAVE THE CHILDREN, CANADA

As programming to address child marriage continues to develop, interventions that respond to the needs of already married girls, in addition to those that prevent child marriage, should receive increased attention and funding.

An analysis of child marriage program evaluations over time shows that there has been a significant increase in rigorous evaluations of child marriage programming in the past 10 years. Programming prior to 2013 was typically single component by design; however, since 2013, there has also been a recognizable increase in the number of multi-component programs, likely in response to the increasing acknowledgement of the complex range of drivers that may promote child marriage in a given context. Around the same time, evaluations of multi-component programs began to separate components for individual evaluation against a control to better determine which program components were most effective.

Overall, program periods ranged in duration from 1–16 years, with nearly half of all evaluated programs falling between 1–2 years in length, and more than three quarters between 1–5. Given that longer programs were all run by government entities, the high number of 1–5 year interventions likely reflects the funding cycles to which NGOs and INGOs are subject, rather than ideal program length. Likewise, intervention time—the amount of time a single participant might be engaged in the program—ranged in length from 3 days to 5 years, with nearly three quarters of all interventions completed in 24 months or less. There are no apparent trends in length of programs or interventions over time.

Interventions were generally introduced at the level of the child, household/village, community, region, or nation. Size or scope of the interventions were measured in different ways depending on the target, while program scope was typically measured using number of villages/communities reached, number of households reached, number of girls reached, and number of girls and boys reached. Programs' scopes ranged from 100–460 villages, 600–150,000 households, 860–40,000 youth or children, and 183–2 million girls more specifically.

Intervention Approaches

Given the many drivers of child marriage, organizations and governments take a broad range of approaches to addressing the issue. However, across interventions, there are four primary approaches evaluated in the literature: 1) Empowerment, 2) Incentive/asset transfer, 3) Community sensitization and engagement, and 4) Legal and advocacy.

Empowerment

Social economist and women's empowerment specialist Naila Kabeer defines empowerment as, "The expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them."³² Thus, empowerment approaches are those that seek to improve a child's agency, choice, and freedom of action with regards to marriage and other aspects in his or her life.³³ Given the broad definition, empowerment programs encompass a wide range of interventions. Common themes across programs are gender and child-rights awareness, life skills education, health education (particularly SRH), financial literacy programs, and livelihoods skill-building (Box 4). These hold a common theory of change that by improving a girl's knowledge, skills, self-confidence, and self-awareness, she will have the tools necessary to reduce her vulnerability to early marriage, improve her position within her home and community, and expand her alternatives outside of the home.

Of the programs evaluated, 22 include empowerment interventions either as a sole component or in addition to other programmatic components. Empowerment interventions are generally held in designated youth-friendly spaces which have been called safe spaces, girls groups, help groups, development clubs, or adolescent development centers in the literature. These spaces typically function as meeting spaces for learning, recreation, and social activities, are often stocked with books, art supplies, and recreation equipment (like balls or table games), and are generally managed by peer educators or older adolescent or youth leaders who

Intervention Approaches

1

Empowerment

Empowerment programs encompass a wide range of interventions. Common themes across programs are gender and child-rights awareness, life skills education (Box 3) health education (particularly SRH), financial literacy programs, and livelihoods skill-building.

2

Incentive/asset transfer

Incentive/asset transfer approaches are those approaches that use the transfer of cash or goods, whether conditional or unconditional, to a girl or her family, to achieve a decrease in child marriage either through incentivizing behaviors known to decrease child marriage (such as school attendance) or to incentivize the delay of marriage.

3

Community sensitization and engagement

Sensitization approaches are those that seek to disseminate information and raise awareness around child marriage to counteract inaccurate and harmful beliefs. Engagement approaches, on the other hand, seek to collaborate with community members to create long-term change, including social norms change, around child marriage and related topics in their own communities.

4

Legal and advocacy

Legal and advocacy approaches may include ensuring laws are in place which set 18 as the minimum age for marriage, assisting governments in developing policy frameworks that support girls' economic, educational, and social opportunities, strengthening birth and marriage registration systems, and improving monitoring and accountability.

provide information, tutoring, counseling, support, or referrals as needed. In these spaces, curricula, readings, lectures, discussions, games, songs, and role play may be used to educate girls or mixed-gender groups on a large range of topics (Box 4).

Incentive/Asset Transfer

Incentive/asset transfer approaches are utilized in 17 of the child marriage interventions included in this report. Incentive/asset transfer approaches are those approaches that use the transfer of cash or goods, whether conditional or unconditional, to a girl or her family, to achieve a decrease in child marriage either through incentivizing behaviors known to decrease child marriage (such as school attendance) or to incentivize the delay of marriage. Where economic motivators such as poverty, the relatively high cost of schooling, or higher dowry costs for older adolescent brides are seen as drivers of child marriage, incentive/asset transfer approaches are

thought to work by removing economic barriers to education and increasing the opportunity cost of early marriage. In the process, organizations hope to address gender inequality by changing attitudes of families and communities around the value of girls.

Incentives/asset transfer approaches evaluated by this study found that while unconditional transfers were occasionally employed, conditional transfer of cash and/or goods was by far the more common approach. Assets transfers were most frequently conditioned on either 1) school attendance, or 2) delay of marriage. Cash transfers for school attendance included payment of tuition and monthly or quarterly stipends, often combined with transfer of goods in the form of books, school supplies, or uniforms, and conditioned on school attendance rates of 75–85%, with one program adding the additional requirement of at least a 45% score on annual exams.³⁴ Incentives to delay marriage were more commonly in-kind incentives, though cash was occasionally

Themes in Empowerment and Life Skills Programming

Education

- Programs for out-of-school girls
- After school literacy/numeracy
- After school tutors or mentors

Financial Education/Literacy

- Budgeting and saving
- Accounting
- English/French language skills

Gender Awareness

- Gender and sexuality
- Power dynamics
- Gender roles and division of labor

Health

- WASH and nutrition
- FGM/C
- HIV/AIDS
- ASRH and contraception
- Safe motherhood

Leadership and Communication

- Communication and negotiation
- Critical thinking
- Decision-making skills
- Teambuilding
- Volunteering
- Good citizenship training

Livelihoods Education

- Computer skills
- Market assessment
- Enterprise skills
- Income generating opportunities
- Mentorship and jobs assistance
- Microfinance

Psychosocial

- Mental and social wellbeing
- Group discussions on feelings
- Group discussions on gender discrimination

Rights and Protection

- Child and women's rights
- Early marriage rights and effects
- SGBV
- Land rights

Sports and Recreation

- Physical fitness
- Mental wellbeing
- Teamwork and cooperation
- Self-confidence

employed. These goods-based incentives took the form of chickens, goats, or oil and were given to girls or their parents once yearly for every year they delayed marriage, upon completion of the program or on a girl's 18th birthday if she was unmarried.

Community Sensitization and Engagement

Community sensitization and engagement approaches were represented in nine of the interventions included in this report. Sensitization approaches are those that seek to disseminate information and raise awareness around child marriage to counteract inaccurate and harmful beliefs. Engagement approaches, on the other hand, seek to collaborate with community members to create long-term change, including social norms change, around child marriage and related topics in their own communities. The theory of change for this approach type is based on the understanding that discriminatory gender norms, traditional practices, and expectations are significant drivers of child marriage in many contexts, and that empowering a girl without educating and engaging

her community has the potential to place her at increased risk of violence and abuse.

Interventions that fall within the category of community sensitization and engagement are very diverse and may engage actors from every level of society from parents or guardians to neighbors, friends, and relatives, to community and faith-based leaders. Forums for engaging with the community range across studies from one-on-one meetings with parents and community leaders, to community meetings or conversations, print or non-print mass media communications, and public ceremonies or events such as theatre or video shows. Two interventions required parents or guardians to publicly sign a document committing to allow their daughters to attend the program and to delay their marriages during the program period,³⁵ while a third had women of the community make a public statement that they would abandon the practice of child marriage altogether.³⁶ Master trainers, also called community facilitators or influencers, may be trained to lead activities within the community, or special subcommittees

Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA) Program by BRAC

The Program: The *ELA* program was developed in 1993 in Bangladesh to address female disempowerment by improving vocational skills and building knowledge to enable girls to make informed choices about sex, reproduction, and marriage. The program is delivered in after-school adolescent development clubs to reach school dropouts in addition to those still enrolled. Since 1993, BRAC has established more than 9,000 clubs reaching one million adolescent girls in Bangladesh and has begun implementation in other countries, including Tanzania and Uganda.

Outcomes: An evaluation of *ELA* in Bangladesh showed a decrease in child marriage among the intervention group, as well as increased engagement in economic activities, though researchers warned that there were differences between treatment and control groups that may have impacted the outcome.³⁷ In Uganda, however, two independent research studies found the program had a significant impact on child marriage,³⁸ with treatment groups showing an overall reduction of 62% in one study.³⁹ In addition, the program was found to reduce teen pregnancy and increase girls' likelihood of engaging in income generating activities.

Challenges: Researchers faced a number of challenges when rolling out the program in Tanzania, including resource limitations and preference among participant girls for educational activities rather than income-generating activities. In the end, the evaluation in Tanzania found the program had no significant impact.⁴⁰

Conclusions: The *ELA* program highlights the potential for promising programs to be replicated globally, yet serves as a warning that such rollout won't always be successful due to a number of factors. It is especially critical that programs are adequately resourced and adapted to the local context if interventions are to be successful.

with representation from various segments of the community may be utilized to share child marriage messaging and impact norms and practices. In these programs, child marriage messaging is frequently combined with other forms of education and sensitization around other harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), gender equality, girls' education, and adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH) needs.

Legal and Advocacy

Legal and advocacy approaches are those that seek to address child marriage by developing a strong legal and policy framework at national, regional, and international levels. Legal and advocacy approaches may include ensuring laws are in place which set 18 as the minimum age for marriage, assisting governments in developing policy frameworks that support girls' economic, educational, and social opportunities, strengthening birth and marriage registration systems, and improving monitoring and accountability.⁴¹ Theories of change behind these

approaches generally focus on the importance of having structural frameworks that enable large-scale social change. Two of the three interventions which utilized legal and advocacy approaches to address child marriage were the *Ishraq* program in Egypt, which collaborated with local and national policy-makers to build support for policies that benefitted girls, and *Deepshikha*, which established gender resource centers to support regional and national adolescent and gender programming.⁴²

Characteristics of Successful Approaches

When examining what works to address child marriage in development contexts, we examine themes in both intervention design and approaches and their correlates with success. With regards to intervention design, the number of program components did not clearly correlate with success in the literature. In general, single-component approaches appeared to be more successful more frequently, while multi-component interventions more often had mixed results. However, this is likely due to publication

bias—evaluations with positive outcomes are more likely to be reported—and due to the fact that multi-component programs, especially those with components evaluated individually, are more likely to have at least one ineffective component. Only two studies evaluated a multi-component intervention intended to address more than one level of the social-ecological model. They did not find that multi-level, multi-component interventions were necessarily more successful than a simple, single-component intervention.⁴³

Turning to approaches, we find that empowerment programming is the most consistently effective programming approach across evaluations—both as stand-alone programs and when evaluated separately as part of multi-component programs. Empowerment programs were successful at achieving both positive behavioral and knowledge and attitude-related outcomes in Africa and South Asia, for girls between ages 10–24 years, and in both rural and urban contexts. Themes within successful empowerment programs included designated meeting spaces, life skills, and livelihoods education, educational support, and gender and child rights awareness components. They also tended to be 1–3 years in length. Very few studies report unsuccessful outcomes; however, among those that do, themes include a short intervention time (3 days–6 months), a lack of programming resources such as designated space, supplies, or well-trained facilitators, and an emphasis on topics in which girls were not interested (e.g., livelihoods training over education). Among empowerment programs that did not show a statistically significant effect, most reported early positive trends, but began programming with girls who were very young and/or did not evaluate over a long enough time period to capture most participants’ transitions into marriage. Interestingly, one evaluation that measured outcomes separately for younger (aged 12–14) and older (aged 15–17) adolescents found that empowerment programming worked particularly well in the earlier years, but that further intervention was

likely necessary to delay marriage for older adolescent girls.⁴⁴

When examining the success of incentive/asset transfer programs on preventing child marriage, we generally find mixed results. However, by looking at individual study branches in evaluations with mixed outcomes, we find that depending on design, these programs can be very successful at achieving the intended outcomes. Incentive/asset transfer programs were successful in Mexico, Africa, and South Asia. They frequently worked for targeting girls in grades 6–8 and in high school. When we evaluated impact by age, cash or in-kind transfers conditioned on educational outcomes were particularly effective for younger adolescents (ages 12–14). While impacts of education-conditioned transfers dropped off for older adolescents (ages 15 and older), incentives for delaying marriage seemed more helpful among this cohort. Effective programs tended to last on average 24 months to 5 years, were conditioned on school attendance of 75–85%, and included money given to families and/or directly to girls themselves. Interventions with mixed results showed that cash or in-kind transfers conditioned on attendance are helpful for girls not likely to be in school but have essentially no effect for girls likely to be in school already (although cash may encourage them to stay in school, the noted effect is small). When comparing cash with in-kind transfers, we find more information about cash. However, transfer of uniforms and school supplies worked particularly well with younger adolescents, while incentives of cooking oil and chickens worked to delay marriage among some older adolescents. Only two interventions employed unconditional cash transfers (UCTs).⁴⁵ One did not find UCTs to be effective at delaying marriage, while the other found them to be effective for girls already in school, but only for as long as the intervention persisted. However, unconditional transfers of school uniforms and school supplies were found to be consistently helpful in incentivizing schooling and thus delay of marriage. Cash and in-kind transfers worked to delay marriage; however, gains

Second-Generation Research on Child Marriage Interventions by Population Council

Background: In 2012, Population Council, together with the Ethiopia Ministry of Youth and Sports, reported that girls who took part in Berhane Hewan, a multi-component program designed with community consultation to meet the needs of married girls and prevent child marriage, reduced rates of marriage for girls ages 10–14 to one-tenth of those of the comparison group.⁴⁶ With such promising results, many expected the program to be scaled up nationwide. However, scale-up efforts met resistance due to concerns around cost and feasibility of expanding a multi-component intervention. To address this challenge, Population Council designed a second-generation research study based on a modified version of Berhane Hewan which simplified the program into three basic components, taking cost into consideration.⁴⁷

The Study: Research was conducted in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, and Tanzania and involved the following components:

1. Community dialogue/sensitization (\$9–\$20/person)
2. Education promotion with school supplies (\$13–\$20/girl)
3. Conditional asset transfer of two chickens or a goat (\$32–\$107/girl)

Interventions were tested over 27–28 months, both individually and as a comprehensive model compared against a control. Cost effectiveness was also analyzed.

Findings: In summary, researchers found the following:

- Community dialogue/sensitization: Correlated with a significant reduction in child marriage among 12–14 year olds in Ethiopia and 15–17 year olds in Burkina Faso.
- Education promotion: Correlated with a significant reduction in child marriage among 12–14 year olds in Ethiopia and Tanzania.
- Conditional asset transfer: Correlated with a significant reduction in child marriage among 15–17 year olds in Ethiopia and Tanzania.
- Comprehensive model: Correlated with a significant reduction in child marriage at all ages in Tanzania and among 15–17 year olds in Ethiopia.⁴⁸

Conclusions: The study found that simple, cost-effective interventions can be highly effective in delaying child marriage. Interventions like these are particularly promising for scale-up over large regions and demonstrate potential as simple, cost-effective interventions in emergency contexts.

faded immediately when girls turned 18 or the program stopped. Researchers expressed concern that this was because such transfers do not promote the development of human capital through education or livelihoods training.

Among community sensitization and engagement programs, outcomes are mixed. In general, programs are poorly explained in the literature and notably heterogeneous with regards to design, objectives, target populations, forums, and program or intervention length. Successful programs are generally 1–6 years in length, use mass media campaigns, or focus on in-depth forms of community engagement such as community dialogue or participatory action. Those with poor outcomes were more likely

to be poorly resourced, shorter in length, and tended to focus on more superficial forms of engagement like sensitization and short information sharing sessions. Most programs with a community-facing component showed some positive impact on knowledge/attitudes around child marriage; however, of those programs that measured impact on behavior, just two demonstrated positive outcomes directly attributable to community engagement.⁴⁹

Legal and advocacy approaches are poorly described and evaluated in the literature, perhaps due to the significant challenges in evaluating such programs using experimental and quasi-experimental methods. Of the three studies that met our inclusion criteria and utilized advocacy approaches,⁵⁰ the

most common method for evaluating success was simply to determine whether advocacy goals had been achieved. The *Deepshikha* model was the only program to measure an advocacy outcome (arguably also an empowerment outcome). It demonstrated a 5% increase in girls' civic engagement when evaluated against the comparison group, as well as reporting some impact on the design and implementation of similar government programs. The latter, however, was not evaluated using experimental methods.⁵¹ The *Ishraq* program, which aims to “increase local and national policymakers' support for girl-friendly measures and policies,” among its many program activities, states only that it was successful at gaining buy-in and active engagement from governors and relevant ministries which it felt were crucial to national-level scale-up of the program.⁵²

Humanitarian Literature

Only two studies evaluate interventions for child marriage in humanitarian contexts. Of these, neither

fit our inclusion criteria. The first, a multi-country evaluation of a participatory video project called *Through Our Eyes*, used qualitative methods to assess changes in awareness around several SGBV outcomes, including child marriage. The results were promising, but the evaluation was not rigorous enough to meet our criteria.⁵³ The second study is a multi-country RCT of an empowerment intervention called *Creating Opportunities through Mentorship, Parental Involvement and Safe Spaces* (or *COMPASS*), which is currently being conducted by International Rescue Committee (IRC) in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and several western Ethiopian refugee camps.⁵⁴ The study intends to measure early marriage as a secondary outcome to changes in sexual violence; however, at the time this report was published, findings related to child marriage had not yet been released.

FINDINGS, PART II

SAVE THE CHILDREN PROGRAMMING AND ADVOCACY

Introduction to Save the Children's Work on Child Marriage

Save the Children, founded in 1919, is comprised of 29 member organizations and Save the Children International and works in over 60 of the world's least developed countries. The organization fights for children's rights and sees child marriage as a fundamental violation of those rights. Child marriage cheats girls of their education. It leaves them at risk of early pregnancy and vulnerable to domestic violence and social isolation. It often traps them—and their children—in poverty. Save the Children programs and advocates—directly and through partners—in humanitarian and development settings to both prevent and respond to child marriage, through a gender equality lens and drawing on their expertise in programming on Child Poverty, Child Protection, Health and Nutrition, Education and Child Rights Governance.

Mapping

Save the Children has been active in addressing child marriage since at least 2001 when the *Ishraq* program, which aimed to change harmful gender norms including child marriage, was introduced in Egypt. Since then, the organization has conducted more than 52 projects, programs, and advocacy initiatives in more than 41 countries to meet the needs of both married and unmarried girls in developing countries (Appendix 7). A mapping exercise of Save the Children's past and current efforts to address

child marriage in both development and humanitarian settings produced the following findings.

Geographic Coverage

The map in Figure 2 below illustrates the geographic coverage of Save the Children programs and advocacy initiatives across the globe as identified by the mapping exercise. Interventions have primarily been implemented in the Middle East and North Africa, West and Central Africa, East and Southern Africa, and South Asia, but parts of Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and Southeast Asia are also included. Many of the countries in which Save the Children works have some of the highest prevalence rates of child marriage in the world, including Niger (76%), Bangladesh (59%), Burkina Faso (52%), South Sudan (52%), Mali (52%), and Somalia (45%). However, there are a number of countries with equally high prevalence where Save the Children has the opportunity to contribute significantly to the reduction of child marriage. In Africa, these include the Central African Republic (69%), Chad (67%), and Guinea (51%) in West and Central Africa; Madagascar (41%) and Eritrea (41%) in East and Southern Africa; and Sudan (34%) in the north. In Latin America and the Caribbean, Brazil has the highest rates (36%), while Nicaragua (35%), Guatemala (30%) and Guyana (30%) fall close behind. Other places like Lao People's Democratic Republic (35%) in Southeast Asia also present opportunities for expansion of efforts.⁵⁵

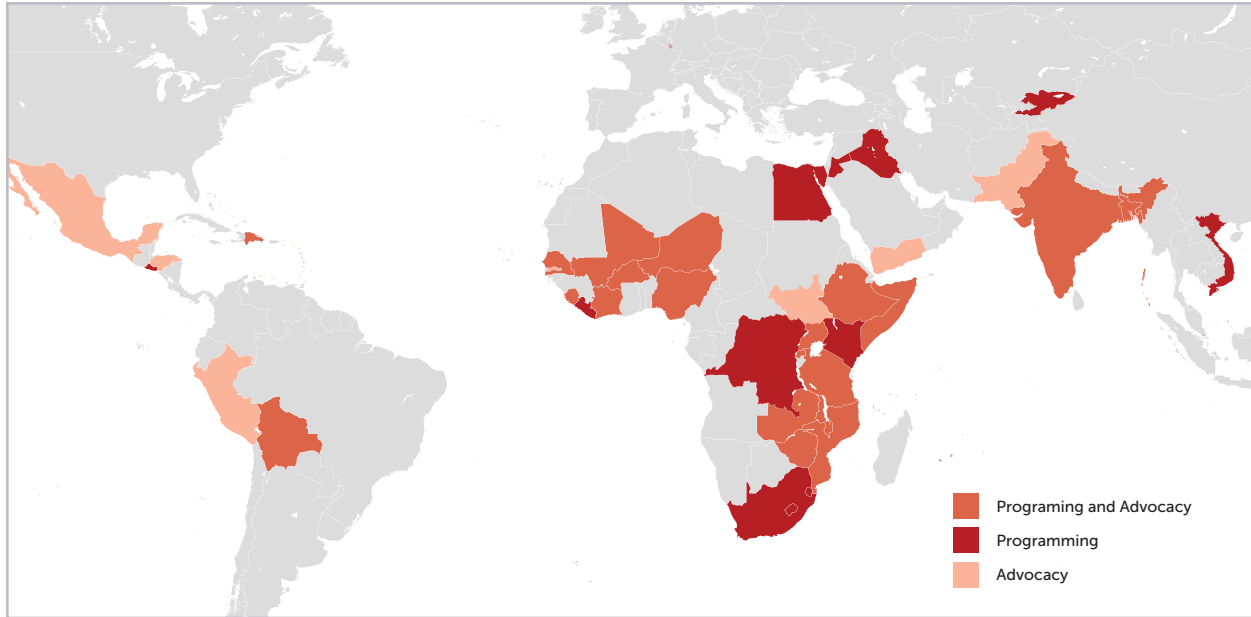


FIGURE 2: Save the Children’s program and advocacy initiative locations.

Target Populations

Programs and initiatives addressing child marriage at Save the Children have generally targeted girls alone or boys between the ages of 10–19, and often include parents, the community, and other stakeholders. At least nine programs identified in the mapping claimed to take a social-ecological approach, which targets more than one level, including adolescent girls, their families, their communities, policy environments, and/or their societies.⁵⁶ Four programs in five countries, along with the “Choices, Voices, and Promises” curriculum which has been implemented in at least 10 countries, sought to specifically address the needs of very young adolescents (ages 10–14),⁵⁷ while 13 programs implemented in nine countries sought to meet the needs of married adolescent girls or girls and boys either exclusively or together with unmarried adolescents.⁵⁸ Programs geared towards very young adolescents include multi-component empowerment type programs with social, economic, educational, ASRH, and community sensitization and engagement components, all aimed at lowering

the rates of child marriage or changing knowledge and attitudes related to child marriage. Programs for married adolescents have a broader range of objectives including reduction in domestic violence; improved reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health outcomes; increased positive parenting skills and practices; and empowerment.

Thematic Areas

Save the Children focuses on five Global Thematic Areas: child rights governance, health and nutrition, education, child protection, and child poverty (Box 5). Researchers attempted to analyze child marriage programs by thematic areas; however, program documentation rarely identified which thematic areas were involved and in what capacity. When relevant thematic areas were indicated (less than 37%), child protection and child rights governance were the most commonly cited, particularly in humanitarian contexts where child protection was the primary thematic area involved.

We also analyzed the cross-thematic area of gender equality. No programs were identified as gender equality programs per se and none of the documents explicitly stated that programs were designed through a gender-equality lens (though it is possible that some programs were in practice). However, a few programs, including *Marriage: No Child's Play* (multiple countries), *CHANGES* (Somalia), *Life Steps* (Nigeria), *Keep It Real* (Ethiopia and Uganda), and *Bien Grandir!* (DRC) include at least one gender equality-related objective or program component.

Summary of Design and Approaches

Intervention Design

Of the programs and initiatives included in this mapping, 12 aimed solely to address child marriage. These included flagship programs such as *Marriage: No Child's Play* (Case Study 3) and *The Right to Be a Girl*. Nine additional programs sought to address child marriage as one of a few objectives, including reducing child labor, addressing trafficking, and improving outcomes related to ASRH or SGBV. However, the majority of programs bundled child marriage objectives along with several other aims including educational, economic, health, social well-being, gender norms, and child protection objectives. In this vein, the majority of Save the Children's programs are multi-component and multi-level in nature and have been since the first program to address child marriage was introduced in Egypt in 2001.

Intervention Approaches

Save the Children has employed each of the approaches to addressing child marriage identified in the literature to varying degrees, including empowerment, community sensitization and engagement, legal and advocacy, and incentive/asset transfer approaches.

The vast majority of Save the Children's programs addressing child marriage involve empowerment as the primary approach. Empowerment approaches are most frequently employed in the context of

BOX 5

Save the Children's Five Global Themes

1. Child Rights Governance: Save the Children works to identify and address the systemic and underlying factors that can help or hinder the realization of children's rights. By addressing a lack of open, inclusive and accountable governance for child rights and a lack of resources to fund obligations to children, Child Rights Governance programming and advocacy helps to remove these obstacles and create conditions for long-term sustainable change.

2. Child Protection: Save the Children works to prevent violence from happening and respond efficiently by: strengthening families and caregivers, implementing laws and policies, working with governments and other partners to develop strong child protection systems, changing attitudes and social norms, listening to and involving children, building the social work workforce and providing services for children.

3. Health and Nutrition: Save the Children focuses on ensuring that all young children receive the health and nutrition care and services they require to survive. To achieve this goal, Save the Children collaborates with local governments, multilateral institutions, grassroots organizations and others to strengthen health systems, and works with individuals, families and communities to encourage the uptake of healthy behaviors.

4. Education: Save the Children believes that all children have the right to learn in a safe and happy environment. They work with families and communities to ensure that all children receive the support and care they need in the years leading up to school. Once in primary education, they work to ensure that all children learn to read and write, and that no child's learning stops because they are caught up in a crisis situation.

5. Child Poverty: The Child Poverty Global Theme addresses families and children affected by and suffering from deprivations relating to extreme, absolute and relative poverty. Poverty exists in societies at all income levels, including middle and high-income countries with significant forms of inequalities. Save the Children's efforts are focused on the most deprived girls and boys of all ages and may include children who lack adequate family care, who have recently migrated or have been displaced.

youth-led clubs or adolescent centers. Programs may be in school or after school and most frequently expose adolescents to topics such as life skills, livelihood training, and educational programs; child's rights, gender equality, and norm change; and SGBV and ASRH education in particular. For married adolescents, these topics are generally adapted to have a greater focus on livelihoods training; literacy and numeracy education; maternal, newborn, and child health; and positive parenting skills and practices.

As many as half of child marriage programs identified in the Save the Children movement involved a community sensitization and engagement component. This has been consistently true since 2001. While some programs engage families or communities only superficially through awareness raising, others, such as *Marriage: No Child's Play* (Case Study 3), seek to promote long-lasting social norms change by engaging a variety of stakeholders, "promoting community dialogue, facilitating social mobilization, and supporting collective action."⁵⁹ As part of those efforts, programs like *Marriage: No Child's Play*, *CHANGES* in Somalia, and six others have specific focuses on engaging men and boys.⁶⁰ Tools for community engagement vary widely between programs and many include flipbooks, storybooks, activity cards, community games, and radio discussions as employed by *Bien Grandir!* in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), or peer-led discussion groups and testimonial videos as used by the "Choices, Voices, and Promises" curriculum for very young adolescents, their families, and their communities to promote deeper engagement and lasting social change.

Incentive/asset transfer approaches were the least commonly employed of all approaches within Save the Children's child marriage programming. Only two programs were found to have used this approach. The first program, *Kishoree Kontha* in Bangladesh, incentivized delay of child marriage by awarding girls cooking oil for every three months marriage was delayed.⁶¹ The second program, *Adolescent Girls Initiative—Kenya*, is currently using household level cash transfers to incentivize school enrollment and

attendance.⁶² An RCT comparing this among four intervention packages is currently underway.⁶³

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact number of dedicated advocacy campaigns that Save the Children has conducted on child marriage, as advocacy efforts may be undertaken directly by advocacy teams or as a component of programming, with a continuum between programming and advocacy work. Currently, the organization's primary advocacy initiative is *Every Last Child*, a global umbrella campaign which seeks to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by pushing for an increased focus on the most excluded children by governments and the international development community. Child marriage is a focal theme under the campaign, which is operating in over 15 developing countries, plus a number of Save the Children member or donor offices and advocacy offices targeting the African Union and United Nations. The SIDA-funded *Local to Global* initiative also addressed advocacy around child marriage, among other issues relevant to Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5. The program has since transitioned to an advocacy approach which supports children and civil society organizations in standing up for their rights, approaching local decision-makers, and holding their governments accountable. Advocacy is also one component of many large multi-component programs including *Marriage: No Child's Play* (Case Study 3) and *The Right to be a Girl*. Efforts often center around advocating for laws to establish 18 as the minimum age of marriage without exception, strengthening the existing legal framework, improving policy and budget commitments for child marriage prevention, increasing accountability and monitoring, and influencing the attitudes and commitment of high-level political and influential stakeholders.

Evaluations

Evaluations are not available for all programs included in the mapping. Of those that are available, various methodologies were utilized including randomized controlled trials (RCTs), quasi-experimental

Marriage: No Child's Play

Program: *Marriage: No Child's Play* is Save the Children's most comprehensive and largest funded child marriage program. This five-year program, which began in 2016, is currently implemented in India, Pakistan, Malawi, Mali, and Niger by the More than Brides Alliance which includes Oxfam, Simavi, Population Council, and Save the Children. Program activities, based on a detailed theory of change, target multiple levels of the social-ecological framework and aim to achieve five key outcomes:

1. Young people are better informed about SRHR and empowered to voice their needs and rights.
2. Increased access to formal education, economic opportunities and child protection systems for girls at risk of and affected by child marriage, and their families.
3. Increased utilization of SRHR services that are responsive to the needs of young people, particularly girls at risk of, or affected by, child marriage.
4. Increased engagement and collective social action against child marriage and in support of ASRHR.
5. Development of a supportive rights-based legal and policy environment against child marriage.

Strategies to achieve outcomes include empowering adolescent girls with life skills and youth-responsive SRHR education, increasing access to education and economic opportunities as alternatives to marriage, engaging a variety of stakeholders to change social norms and build a supportive community environment, and working with local partners and the government to conduct policy dialogue and advocacy activities to improve national legislative and policy environments.

Implementation: The program, now reaching its midpoint, initially set out to implement the complete theory of change in each country, with different members of the alliance responsible for different components of the program at a given location. In practice, however, members have implemented program activities in different locations within the countries, making it difficult to evaluate components as

a comprehensive program. Standardizing the evaluation process has also been challenging. For example, due to cultural sensitivities, not all countries started with outcome one. In some contexts, such as Mali and Niger, it has been critical to start with creating an enabling environment before engaging girls. In Mali, they began with less culturally sensitive economic and employment activities and will follow up with SRHR activities. Some components of the theory of change suffer from funding gaps and the varying nature, dose, and frequency of activities across contexts makes comparison difficult.

Staff have found that countries with more experience implementing child marriage programming have run into fewer challenges as they are able to draw on staff capacity, partnerships, and a more supportive environment for this work. They are also able to draw on context-specific curriculum and activities that have also proven effective. Linking child marriage programming to existing social protection schemes, whenever possible, has been an important strategy in countries such as India where such schemes exist. To this end, program staff inform girls and their families about available social protection structures and ensure they have access those services. Finally, conducting formative research is essential to informing ongoing social and behavioral change communication methodologies.

Research and Learning Agenda: *Marriage: No Child's Play* offers an ideal opportunity to increase our understanding of a multi-component, multi-level intervention across contexts. The program includes a detailed research agenda that aims to build the evidence base regarding what strategies work, in which contexts, and why. Population Council is conducting the research and evaluation in all five countries to include impact assessments of programs, analysis of existing evidence in each context, formative research to fill gaps in understanding of context-specific drivers, baseline, midline, and endline surveys, and country-specific research questions where feasible. The mid-term evaluation report is expected to be available at the end of 2018. The program will run through 2020.

evaluations, simple baseline/endline evaluations with no control, qualitative evaluations, and mixed-method evaluations. RCT methodologies, which are considered by many as the gold standard for impact evaluations, are only utilized in evaluations of two programs: *Kishoree Kontha* in Bangladesh (completed in 2010) and the *Adolescent Girls Initiative—Kenya* which is currently ongoing. Quasi-experimental methods utilizing baseline and endline methodologies with a control are more common and are represented in evaluations of eight programs, both completed and ongoing. Three evaluations which met the inclusion criteria for the literature were included in our review and evaluated as part of the literature review. Qualitative methods were used in four evaluations, and simple baseline/endline evaluations with no clearly defined control were used in 12 others. There are no clear trends reflected in the type of evaluation methodologies utilized over the years. Simple baseline/endline surveys were just as likely to be used since 2015 as before.

Programs in Humanitarian Settings

Save the Children has been conducting programming to address child marriage in humanitarian contexts since at least 2013 when Save the Children Canada began *Going Against the Grain*, a one-year program to address child marriage in Somaliland. Since that time, the organization has conducted programs to address child marriage with refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and conflict-affected adolescents in Egypt, Ethiopia, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Nepal, Rwanda, Syria, and in other regions of Somalia. For most programs in these contexts, child marriage is a secondary objective or focus under child protection. However, four programs based in Jordan and Somalia feature child marriage as a primarily objective (Appendix 7).

- ***Going Against the Grain, Somalia (2013–2014)*** aimed to address child marriage using a social-ecological model with a strong

advocacy component to enhance the capacity of local officers and communities to protect girls from marriage and enhance the capacity of girls to protect themselves from abuse, exploitation, and harm through marriage. The program had a duration of one year and was not formally evaluated, but it was reported to be effective in creating dialogue at all levels on a topic previously considered taboo in the region.

- ***Building a Resilient Youth among Syrians and Jordanians, Jordan (2015–2017)*** focused on protecting children from the risks of child marriage and child labor by providing them with the tools of awareness, education, and institutional support to protect them and help them find a pathway to continuing their education. The program included psychosocial support, life skills training, informal education curriculum, and community awareness raising.
- ***CHANGES (also known as SNaP), Somalia (2016–2020)*** is an ongoing program funded by Save the Children UK which has just completed the design phase and is currently in the first year of implementation. It aims to achieve broader social norms change with a strong component of addressing child marriage. The program includes economic empowerment, engages men and boys, engages community leaders, and conducts specific activities around FGM/C and child marriage.
- ***The Right to be a Girl, Jordan (2018–2019)*** is an ongoing program supported by Save the Children Spain which utilizes empowerment approaches with married and unmarried adolescent girls, involves communities in transforming behaviors, and conducts advocacy around child marriage in Za’atari camp to enhance girls’ resilience and wellbeing.

Key Informant Interviews

Semi-structured key informant interviews were conducted with practitioners both within and outside of Save the Children. Researchers identified common themes within the following areas: 1) strategies and promising practices, 2) implementation challenges and gaps, 3) considerations for humanitarian settings, and 4) research priorities.

Strategies and Promising Practices

Multi-level Integrated Interventions

When asked about promising or effective practices, most key informants discussed the importance of multi-level, integrated interventions that address the complex drivers of child marriage at the individual, family, community, and structural (law and policy) levels. Through an ecological approach, these programs involve multiple activities, across various sectors, aimed at achieving a set of common outcomes. Given the complexity of these interventions, they may require implementation through a partnership of multiple organizations.

There's also a need for more integrated programming. . . . child marriage isn't an issue you can think about from one lens only. It is not only driven by poverty or a lack of access to education. It is about multiple risk factors that come together and that are all driven by gender inequality and gender-based discrimination. It is, therefore, important to focus on integrated programming that places a strong focus on gender equality and transforming the discriminatory social norms that drive child marriage. It is also important for all stakeholders to work together to see how we can complement each other, as opposed to trying to reinvent the wheel or do everything at once.

—Senior Advisor, Save the Children, Canada

Save the Children's largest and most comprehensive example of a multi-level, integrated program is *Marriage: No Child's Play*, a five-year program

implemented by the More than Brides Alliance comprised of Oxfam, Simavi, Population Council, and Save the Children in five countries (Case Study 3). In addition, the five-year *CHANGES* program implemented by Care, IRC, and Save the Children in 15 districts in Somalia addresses discriminatory gender norms at the structural, cultural, and individual levels. In addition to advocacy and technical support to the government to strengthen child marriage laws and policies, they implement community dialogue sessions with men, women, girls and boys to discuss gender inequality and enhance civic engagement, gender training and rights education for very young adolescents, and village saving and loans associations (VSLAs) and social and economic empowerment activities for women and girls.

Although evaluations are limited or not yet available for these programs, informants highlighted the importance of combining empowerment activities for adolescent girls with efforts to create an enabling family and community environment in which girls can freely communicate and advocate for their rights. Similarly, they also spoke about the need to combine community mobilization strategies with national level advocacy efforts to strengthen legal frameworks and improve access to educational and employment opportunities for women and girls. For example, the *Life Steps* program in Northern Nigeria included a school enrollment campaign to encourage parents to send their daughters to school as well as state and national level advocacy to increase access to education and strengthen laws and policies addressing child marriage. Similarly, through the *Marriage: No Child's Play* program in Mali and Niger, programming and advocacy are jointly implemented to mutually reinforce program objectives.

Despite widespread acknowledgement among practitioners that multi-level, integrated approaches are necessary, they are not always feasible. Some informants involved in their implementation expressed that these interventions are very challenging to coordinate and implement well given their

complexity, are expensive, and can be difficult to evaluate. Others mentioned that, given resource constraints, it is important to simplify interventions and understand which components are most effective. A few informants noted that it is critical to keep girls at the center of programming and to prioritize the majority of resources for building their knowledge, confidence, and capacity.

One final thing, you'll hear about integrated "multi-faceted" approaches, but I think we have to sort this out. We need to make the case. What do we mean? And what is an integrated approach? What is the evidence base it works better? We need to be more explicit about what works and how.

—Practitioner, Save the Children, Malawi

For me, I think the programs need to really focus on getting resources to the girls and increasing the status and the resource base for the girls. A lot of times when we talk about child marriage, they say, 'Oh we have to do it with boys and men and community leaders.' I think that's important, but it should not be the central focus of the program. You can still reach out to men, religious leaders, community leaders and pass your message, but the bulk of your programming resources should be directed at girls, otherwise, nothing will ever change.

—Practitioner, NGO, Ethiopia

Community Mobilization to Change Social Norms

Until you can make a practice socially unacceptable, no matter what the law is, it will continue.

—Practitioner, Save the Children, Bangladesh

Community mobilization to change social norms was cited as the most important strategy to prevent child marriage by many key informants. Practitioners highlighted the importance of investing in community sensitization and engagement activities in order to address discriminatory gender norms, attitudes, and practices, and change the culture of acceptance of child marriage.

Working with the communities, consulting community members, consulting community groups, religious leaders, all different actors in that community is really what's been working for us. When the community doesn't adhere to your ideas, there's no way you can get results. When the community is on board with the vision, you can make progress.

—Practitioner, Save the Children, Niger

Informants described key characteristics of successful norm change interventions. First, community mobilization strategies should be long-term, going well beyond typical one- to two-year child marriage prevention projects in order to shift entrenched social norms. Second, they should engage a broad range of actors within a community—including teachers, police officers, healthcare providers, local government officials, religious leaders, men and boys, and adolescent girls—in order to reinforce key messages and build a movement for social change. Informants noted that identifying opinion leaders within a community, particularly religious or other community leaders, to act as champions for ending child marriage and promoting women and girls' rights is critical.

Some informants discussed the need to identify and sensitize the "owners" of child marriage, who are not always parents, but may be grandparents, mothers-in-law, aunts, or uncles in a given context. Other practitioners engaged and trained "providers" of child marriage. For example, in Somaliland, Save the Children had success in developing a code of conduct and training religious leaders who perform marriages to recognize and oppose child marriages. In Bangladesh, practitioners are working with marriage registrars to identify false birth certificates and ensure that they do not perform marriages of girls who are below age 18. Finally, community mobilization strategies should be generated and driven by community members themselves. Some practitioners explained that they had the most success when they developed context-specific messages and strategies, in partnership with communities, which promoted local ownership and leadership in their implementation.

What we did in Somalia is we went around and asked various people in the community, 'Who do you listen to most?' And we compiled the most frequently mentioned people and those were the people we considered our opinion leaders. Then it's important to change those people and get them on board because those are the people most people said they listened to.

—Practitioner, Save the Children

Several informants within and outside of Save the Children reported that promoting dialogue and discussion on issues related to child marriage and girls' rights is essential to changing social norms. Save the Children's work to prevent child marriage in Nepal offers a strong example of community dialogue and mobilization to change social norms. Program staff work with the police to increase awareness of the law banning child marriage and develop prevention strategies. They also work closely with district child welfare authorities and religious leaders to address child marriage and promote dialogue on the issue among teachers, parents, and community members. Finally, through child clubs, girls and boys engage in social activities, training, and discussions regarding leadership skills and children's rights and implement prevention activities in their own communities. According to a staff member overseeing work in the region, the prevalence of child marriage has declined in some districts where they are implementing community-based prevention activities.

What I've found is that it's best to work with communities to identify solutions from within. Ensure that community members are deciding the solutions as opposed to approaching them with 'what works.'

—Practitioner, Save the Children, South Sudan

Formative Research to Inform Intervention Design

Key informants from Save the Children and other organizations emphasized the value of conducting quality formative research on the context-specific drivers of child marriage within a community prior

to program implementation. Given the diversity of the drivers of child marriage across settings, conducting an in-depth assessment to understand the complex individual, family, community, and policy-level drivers is essential to informing the design or adaptation of effective child marriage interventions. Assessment findings can help practitioners to more effectively target interventions, develop communication strategies, and identify the influential opinion leaders to bring on board.

Information about social norms and practices within a community at baseline also provides practitioners with the foundation for developing an effective theory of change. Some informants explained that this evidence is rarely available and that theories of change often rely heavily on assumptions. Several informants noted that going forward, it is essential that adequate time for a formative research phase, ranging anywhere from a few months to a year, is built into project periods.

We need to look into causal relationships and theories of change and make sure that we have an evidence base before we charge in with our interventions. Sometimes we're not even talking to or targeting the right people.

*—Practitioner, Save the Children,
West and Central Africa*

Formative research also provides program staff with the opportunity to engage with community members for a period of time prior to program implementation. This engagement can also serve to build the trust of various stakeholders, such as religious and community leaders, parents, and adolescent girls, which informants said is essential to program attendance and uptake. One practitioner stressed that at least two months of activities should be conducted by field staff in a location to build trust before implementing any intervention. A participatory community assessment process helps to ensure that interventions are aligned with the needs and preferences of the community and designed in partnership with community members.

Framing the Issue

Framing the issue of child marriage and related interventions strategically, according to social and political sensitivities in each context, is essential to gaining community support and overcoming barriers to implementation. For example, informants explained the different framing required in various locations for their work on child marriage in West and Central Africa. In the Hausa Islamic communities in Northern Nigeria, a conservative cultural context, it can be challenging to discuss girls' rights and child marriage. For this reason, Save the Children program staff have framed most of their child marriage prevention work around promoting girls' education. By contrast, in Senegal, staff are able to have open discussions about the stigma associated with early pregnancy as a driver of child marriage and brainstorm ways to improve access to contraceptives for adolescent girls.

In Mali, once girls' groups were formed, we decided to start with life skills and economic empowerment because it's less sensitive, and then we'll follow with the sexual and reproductive health and rights component. So, we're trying to find entry points and angles that are more acceptable to the context and to the people involved.

—Practitioner, Save the Children, Netherlands

In Niger, Save the Children has engaged the Ministry of Interior in addressing child marriage by framing the issue as a matter of national security. After the minister expressed concerns about the increasing number of forced marriages in areas affected by violence by Boko Haram, program staff viewed this as an opportunity to make the case for strengthening national efforts to prevent child marriage nationally. In addition to gaining high level political support, this Ministry also oversees the Department of Religious Affairs, which provided Save the Children staff with the opportunity to address child marriage among religious leaders at key forums.

Informants noted that the appropriate framing of child marriage interventions can improve the feasibility of implementation, generate greater ownership

by political and community leaders, and ease barriers to girls' participation in program activities.

Advocacy Strategies and Lessons Learned

Save the Children has implemented a broad range of advocacy initiatives and campaigns to strengthen or introduce new laws, policies, and coordinated efforts to reduce child marriage in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Several key themes emerged from discussions of successful advocacy strategies. First, informants spoke of the need to develop strategic partnerships with high-level government officials and political leaders in order to build political support and create structural change. For example, Save the Children works closely with the Vice President's office and state governors in Nigeria, the Prime Minister's office in Senegal, and the First Lady's Office in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Sierra Leone. Although evaluation of advocacy efforts is extremely limited, informants reported that partnerships with, and the endorsement of, political leaders have helped to push policy and legislative changes forward, develop coordination structures to facilitate multi-sectoral work on the issue, and increase public awareness and support.

Second, successful advocacy strategies should engage youth and ensure their voices are at the center of campaigns. Informants explained that adolescent girls have a platform to speak out and to advocate for themselves and their peers. In Mexico and Guatemala, for example, Save the Children has worked to engage adolescent girls as champions in advocacy coalitions to ensure that their voices and priorities are reflected in advocacy initiatives. In Bangladesh, in the recent, multi-agency advocacy campaign against the new provision allowing for child marriage in special circumstances, Save the Children brought a focus on children, emphasizing the need to listen to children's views on the issue and enable their participation in legal and policy decisions affecting their lives (Case Study 4)

Child clubs are a common model for engaging youth in children's rights discussions and advocacy implemented by Save the Children in several countries. Through these clubs, girls and boys engage in social

New Child Marriage Laws in Bangladesh and Lessons Learned from Advocacy

Background—The “Special Circumstances” Provision: Bangladesh has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world with over half of girls (59%) married by their 18th birthday.⁶⁴ Child marriage is prevalent in both rural and urban settings, driven by cultural and religious beliefs, poverty and SGBV, and dowries that often increase as girls get older.⁶⁵ While child marriage rates have gradually declined in recent years, progress has been slow.

In February of 2017, the Bangladesh Parliament passed a bill that allows for a new provision in the Child Marriage Restraint Act, Bangladesh’s 1929 law against child marriage. The provision allows girls under 18 to marry in “special circumstances” when parents or guardians obtain permission from a court. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was supportive of the provision, arguing that it would protect girls who become pregnant before age 18 from stigmatization and social isolation, particularly in more conservative, rural areas. Women and children’s rights organizations argue that the provision is a major step backward, as the undefined “special circumstances” allow for a broad range of exceptions within a law that previously set the minimum age of marriage for girls at 18.

Advocacy: Save the Children, in partnership with international and local women and children’s rights organizations, engaged in more than two years of extensive, sustained campaigning and advocacy against the new provision. They implemented advocacy activities at various levels, organized protests in local districts, developed position papers for national government committees, held community dialogue sessions, and engaged the media. Throughout the campaign, Save the Children promoted a “child first” lens, placing children’s voices at the center of advocacy efforts to ensure their views and needs were represented.

Outcomes: Although their advocacy was not successful in preventing the new law’s passage, Save the Children continued to engage with the government on this issue. They served as one of seven members to draft the regulations for the new law which focused on limiting the use of this provision and ensuring additional safeguards are in place. For example, advocates were concerned that the provision could be used to force girls to marry their perpetrators in cases of sexual violence. The regulations, which were being finalized at the time of writing this report, state that the special

circumstances provision cannot be applied in cases of rape. Save the Children will focus next on raising community awareness of the regulations through briefing papers and information sessions to ensure that community leaders, parents, and children understand what is stated in the new law and regulations.

Through more than two years of sustained advocacy, Save the Children was also able to develop strong partnerships that will lay the foundation for future collaborative advocacy work and increased public awareness of the issue and consequences of child marriage.

We had a true spirit of solidarity and activism. So, for me, that was a huge gain. I always view rights work as a journey. It’s the friendships you develop, the networks, the solidarity that will help you in future movements also . . . and the discussions we were able to generate on children’s rights, girls’ rights not to be discriminated against, valuing girls’ dreams and realizing their potential, [and] the status of women and girls. I think those conversations are valuable to society. You have to have those conversations. If it was not for this advocacy, we wouldn’t have discussed the issue this much.

—Practitioner,
Save the Children, Bangladesh

Lessons Learned:

- Combine broad public awareness and mobilization strategies with technical assistance to the government.
- Collaborate with women’s rights organizations and networks to strengthen and expand advocacy efforts.
- Engage the media to generate discussion and increase public awareness.
- Following an advocacy initiative, regardless of the outcome of that initiative, continue to support and provide technical assistance to the government to mitigate further protection risks and strengthen legal and policy frameworks addressing child marriage.
- Engage youth and ensure their voices are at the center of campaigns.

activities, receive education and training in reproductive health and rights, leadership skills, and child protection issues including child marriage. With these skills, club members engage in advocacy and awareness raising efforts in their own communities. According to an informant in Nepal, child clubs have become very active in both advocacy and prevention efforts, acting as vigilant groups in their communities and even intervening and talking to parents when they learn of girls at risk of marriage. Despite numerous positive experiences shared by Save the Children practitioners, one informant from an outside NGO mentioned that child clubs can compete with homework time and domestic work at home, and may be challenging to attend for girls who travel long distances home from school. For these reasons, they may be more appropriate and accessible in urban areas.

Third, informants highlighted collaboration with women's rights organizations as a critical strategy for strengthening advocacy efforts and maximizing impact.

What I have noticed is that working with women's rights organizations on issues related to girl children is really important, because in this advocacy we really collaborated very well with women's rights organizations and networks, and that made the advocacy stronger, because women's rights have a longer history than child rights in the country and they are stronger as a movement.

—Practitioner, Save the Children, Bangladesh

Practitioners in Latin America and South Asia expressed that Save the Children's current advocacy partnerships with civil society organizations addressing women's rights are limited and highlighted this as a priority area for further development. Other strategies and lessons learned regarding effective advocacy campaigns included combining policy advocacy with technical support to the government to implement changes, simplifying legal terms to develop clear messaging to mobilize the public, using both prevalence data and qualitative stories to convey urgency to policymakers, filing a petition in

the constitutional court to harmonize domestic legislation with international standards, and effectively engaging the media.

Strategies Through Other Sectors

Ending child marriage is not a child protection objective, it's a foundational intervention. If we don't raise the age at first pregnancy or ensure that women have better birth spacing and that they have the education to care for their children and start reducing their fertility rates, then we'll never address the issue of malnutrition which is a huge problem in this region.

—Practitioner, Save the Children,
West and Central Africa

When asked about child marriage interventions, many key informants mentioned that although they are not implementing targeted child marriage projects or programs, they are addressing the issue through programming in the education and health sectors or through SGBV programming more generally. In particular, efforts to increase access to education and incentivize girls to stay in school as long as possible were discussed as critical child marriage prevention interventions. For example, Save the Children's *Adolescent Girls Initiative—Kenya (AGIK)*, implemented in collaboration with Population Council, focused on reducing barriers to education for girls by providing SRH education and a household-level cash transfer. In addition, the *Keeping Girls in School* program implemented in 10 districts in Malawi provided cash to households as an incentive to keep girls in secondary school. The program also aims to improve the learning environment for girls by training female teachers to serve as positive role models and to more effectively engage girls who are at-risk of dropping out. Although often referred to as education projects rather than child marriage interventions, efforts to ensure the safety of girls both while traveling to and at school; strengthen legal frameworks to guarantee access to

education until the age of 16; integrate child marriage, gender, and girls' rights into standard educational curriculum; and invest in improving the quality of education were all cited as promising child marriage prevention strategies.

In recent times, we've been looking at the girl child, and for us it's all about keeping girls in school for those 12 years, developing their aspirations, making sure that they understand that there's a world out there and so exposing them to role models and helping them step into leadership roles. We arrange what we call "takeovers" to build aspiration and leadership, so a large part of our programming now turns toward the girl to advance gender equality.

—Practitioner, Plan International, Bangladesh

Save the Children's programming through the health sector may also serve to prevent and respond to child marriage, particularly in contexts where early pregnancy is a primary driver. For example, through the *Marriage: No Child's Play* program in Niger, program staff train local nurses and midwives to provide youth-responsive SRH services and support health centers with necessary equipment and supplies. In the Somaliland region of Somalia, they provide payments to enable girls with pregnancy complications to go to the hospital. Through their SRH program in the Northern Region of Ethiopia, child marriage and other SGBV issues have been integrated into their awareness-raising activities for in- and out-of-school youth, parents, and community members.

Finally, informants from Save the Children in some locations with a high prevalence of child marriage, such as Bangladesh and Ethiopia, mentioned that although they do not currently have active child marriage projects, child marriage is addressed through their broader child protection and SGBV prevention and response mechanisms such as community-based child protection committees comprised of community members who implement activities to raise awareness of SGBV and respond

to incidents. Some informants noted that measuring child marriage as an outcome when evaluating programming in other sectors would enable them to better identify promising practices for prevention.

Implementation Challenges and Gaps

An Integrated, Coordinated Strategy

Several informants spoke of the need for a holistic, coordinated strategy to address child marriage across sectors, both internally at Save the Children and with other organizations at the country level.

Within Save the Children, coordination at the global level is limited as there is not currently a central coordinating body for work on this issue. Child marriage is addressed by both child protection and gender; however, programming within each sector/area is often disconnected from that within other sectors. One informant explained that there is often a lack of a gender perspective in child protection programming. Another practitioner mentioned that sexual violence is addressed by child protection, while SGBV is addressed by gender, which further inhibits coordination. There is also a disconnect between advocacy and programming efforts. Other informants emphasized the need to more effectively mainstream child marriage prevention and response across sectors.

Child marriage just isn't something we're mainstreaming across our thematic areas. Child marriage and reproductive health and rights are critical components under every heading, and we miss opportunities for this to be part of the work we're doing.

—Practitioner, Save the Children, Canada

At the country level, there are often disparate efforts to address child marriage through health and nutrition, education, child poverty, child protection, and child rights governance thematic areas. Informants spoke of the importance of developing an integrated child marriage strategy focused in a particular geographic area and bringing together various components of this work.

A challenge is for Save the Children to have this kind of holistic approach. We tend to think of it [child marriage] in thematic areas... but we're not very strong as an organization in having a more integrated and holistic approach, which is really what's most needed in addressing this issue.

—Practitioner, Save the Children, Asia

In addition to a lack of a common strategy with joint objectives and outcomes, the absence of common terminology or language regarding child marriage across the Save the Children movement further inhibits coordination at both global and national levels.

Developing a holistic approach at the country level, in collaboration with other organizations, was also cited as a promising practice. Recognizing that addressing the complex drivers of child marriage at multiple levels is not feasible for any one organization alone, informants spoke of the need to partner with other organizations to implement different components of a multi-level intervention in a given location in order to maximize impact. Coordination is often challenging given that organizations have different agendas and priorities. Establishing a community of practice to address child marriage at the country level can help to prioritize and move prevention and response work forward.

Diverse and Context-Specific Drivers

One of the most commonly cited challenges among practitioners was the diversity of drivers of child marriage and the need for tailored, context-specific interventions. Child marriage is driven by a combination of cultural, social, economic, and structural factors that vary widely by location, making it challenging for practitioners to draw on a relevant evidence base and to develop replicable, scalable interventions. For example, in Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh, drivers are often related to concerns about girls' virginity and the need to preserve family honor. In some areas of West Africa, informants noted that child marriage is driven less by morality

concerns and more by poverty, which may lead to transactional sex and pregnancy, and result in many of these girls dropping out of school and marrying for economic reasons. Informants working on child marriage issues in Malawi, Sierra Leone, and Latin America explained that early pregnancy is a primary driver of child marriage due to the stigma associated with pregnancy outside of marriage, making access to SRH services and information a primary form of child marriage prevention. In areas of El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala affected by gang violence and organized crime, girls are forced by gang members to get married to them and may be threatened or killed if they refuse. Addressing the diverse drivers of child marriage in each of these contexts requires unique and tailored prevention interventions.

I think because the drivers are very different, it's very difficult to say 'this works!' Some things work in some circumstances... Really what we need to have is the whole list of all the different things you could potentially do and under what kind of circumstances do these ones work best.

—Practitioner, Save the Children

Norm Change and Resource-Intensive, Longterm Interventions

Many informants explained that changing social norms at the root of child marriage requires long-term interventions. However, this need does not align with the typical model of short-term, donor-funded projects.

Social norms that shape gender roles and promote acceptance of child marriage are deeply entrenched and require extensive time and resources to change. For example, one informant spoke about the dowry system in the Terai region of Nepal in which the dowry becomes higher as the girl ages, incentivizing her parents to marry her off earlier. In this context, despite laws, policies, and a national strategy to end the practice, early marriage is widely accepted as the norm, not only among community

members, but also among many government representatives and NGO program staff. An informant in Bangladesh emphasized that social acceptance that is so ingrained in society makes it extremely challenging for families to choose alternatives to marriage for their daughters.

Resource constraints were consistently cited as a key challenge in the implementation of child marriage interventions. The majority of child marriage programs and projects are implemented for one to two years due to short-term and inconsistent funding streams. Although it was widely acknowledged by practitioners that shifting deeply entrenched social norms required holistic, long-term interventions, sustained investment in the same communities over time has rarely been feasible.

Another challenge is obviously that these kinds of interventions have to take place over a significant amount of time, and our capacity to think long-term about sustaining these programs for a long time is also a challenge. A lot of our funding is dependent on donors. Very seldom do donors say they'll support a program or project for 10 years.

—Practitioner, Save the Children, Asia

Limited Legal Frameworks and Enforcement of Laws

Limited legal frameworks addressing child marriage, as well as poor enforcement of existing laws, were highlighted as key challenges in child marriage prevention and response. In some contexts, laws addressing child marriage are vague or conflict with customary law. In South Sudan, for example, informants explained that there is currently no direct legislation addressing child marriage and the laws related to child marriage are not harmonized. The Child Act protects the rights of children; however, customary laws are also recognized by the Constitution and can undermine protections set forth in the Child Act. To address this inconsistency, Save the Children, in partnership with national NGO Advocates without Borders, filed a petition in

the Constitutional Court to set the marriageable age at 18 or above. Informants explained that the application of customary law remains very strong.

In other contexts, despite a strong legal framework and widespread public awareness of the law, enforcement and compliance are limited. In Bangladesh, for example, although the law prohibits the marriage of girls below age 18, child marriage is widespread and parents may present false birth certificates to circumvent the law. Similarly, one practitioner in Ethiopia explained that despite a clear penal code that prohibits child marriage, parents continue to arrange marriage ceremonies for their underage daughters even though they are aware of the legal consequences. Others emphasized that improving the law is a necessary but insufficient step in ending child marriage.

At the advocacy level, a legislative framework—a law banning child marriage—is important, but it's very far from being enough to reduce child marriage. We have to focus on the community level. . . . We really need to address social norms and give girls a voice to say it's not right to be married before age 18.

—Practitioner, Save the Children, Asia

Some informants spoke of the need to improve the enforcement of existing child marriage laws. One informant highlighted that those involved in the marriage, including leaders of the faith-based community, village chiefs, or parents of children should be subject to prosecution to send a clear and consistent message to others that child marriage will not be tolerated. He explained that state courts, rather than customary justice mechanisms, should handle all child protection cases. On the other hand, another informant cautioned that holding parents accountable under the law is too heavy-handed and can be dangerous for girls. By encouraging girls to report the actions of their mother or father, they may be at risk of being thrown out of their house or losing the breadwinner of their families if their father is arrested. Strict enforcement of the law may

also “drive the practice underground,” making it more difficult to reach at-risk or married girls with support services and information.

Advocacy Challenges

In the area of advocacy, informants explained that it is often challenging to translate national level law and policy successes into concrete changes at the local level.

We have a lot of information on the legal framework, and we're moving forward on that. The problem is how to bring these regulations and this information of the law to lower levels of policy making, especially when we have countries where the policy making is very decentralized in terms of education policies or health policies or decisions on where to provide sexual and reproductive health services for whom, when, etc.

*—Practitioner, Save the Children,
Latin America and Caribbean*

In addition, it is important for advocacy strategies to find ways to target powerful stakeholders who are blocking change. For example, in Bangladesh, despite extensive advocacy against it, the new legal provision allowing for the marriage of children under age 18 in certain circumstances was eventually passed by Parliament, largely due to strong support of the Prime Minister (Case Study 4). In Latin America, one informant noted that strong religious and patriarchal norms and powerful conservative groups are a challenge to advancing SRHR.

Further, limited capacity and resources of the relevant government ministries and the judiciary to develop and implement child marriage laws and policies was cited as an advocacy challenge in several contexts.

One of the lessons learned from the high-level meeting we had . . . in Dakar is really that child marriage very often is a topic which is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Family, Ministry of Social Affairs. Too often in West and Central Africa those

ministers are fragile and not really empowered. . . . So, you have ministers who have very limited capacity, scale, and resources to be able to operate, and they don't have the political gravitas to put this as a priority theme in the political agenda of the country.

*—Practitioner, Save the Children,
West and Central Africa*

Finally, informants noted that methodologies and tools for evaluating advocacy efforts are needed. Advocacy efforts and campaigns are rarely rigorously evaluated, and without understanding what makes an impact, practitioners struggle to determine how best to invest time and resources in advocacy activities.

Implementation Gaps: Marginalized Communities, Faith-Based Leaders, Men and Boys, and Married Girls

When asked about key gaps in programming, informants highlighted marginalized communities, leaders of the faith-based community, men and boys, and married girls as important groups not sufficiently reached by Save the Children's interventions.

Practitioners commonly cited the urgent need to engage leaders of the faith-based community in child marriage prevention and response. Religious leaders are instrumental in shaping public perceptions and norms in many communities, particularly regarding marriage ceremonies and other cultural traditions. Yet despite recognizing this group as a priority, some informants explained that they do not know how to engage them effectively in child marriage prevention efforts. For example, one informant working in West Africa explained that getting faith-based leaders on board can be time and resource-intensive, particularly in religions that are more decentralized. In the Sahelian cultural tradition, for example, Islam is decentralized and program staff need to “go imam by imam to start a movement,” one leader at a time, which can be difficult with limited resources. Practitioners in Malawi and South Sudan explained that it can be very difficult to bring leaders of the

faith-based community fully on board because they are often invested in upholding the status quo and view carrying out these marriages as a source of employment and income. Several practitioners said that they would like to learn evidence-based strategies for working with the faith-based community in order to expand their work with this population.

Unfortunately, even though everybody has identified the traditional and religious leaders as some key actors of change, nobody has been seriously engaging with them in our day to day work. I strongly believe in the region that there is a huge opportunity to start engaging them to try to make a difference because they're the ones at the end of the day that influence the behavior of the people in our country through TV shows, radio shows, through sermons, etc. We believe if we can get them with us, we can make a difference. If we can't, maybe we will have a bottleneck we won't manage to unlock.

*—Practitioner, Save the Children,
West and Central Africa*

Men and boys are rarely meaningfully engaged in child marriage prevention and response interventions, which practitioners viewed as an important gap to address moving forward. Informants explained that interventions to empower girls and change social norms often neglect to involve men and boys entirely. Without understanding the motivations and experiences of men and boys involved in early marriage, and bringing men and boys into norm change efforts, progress is stalled. While many practitioners felt that they were not working enough with men and boys on this issue, a few offered examples of successful strategies. For example, in Niger, through “husband schools,” groups of men in the community receive training and then sensitize their peers on topics of gender equality and women’s rights and serve as role models in the community. According to one informant, with enhanced understanding of SRH, men are working to facilitate, rather than inhibit, their wives from accessing health services. For example, they built structures to

provide shade to women waiting outside of health facilities. In Bangladesh, Save the Children program staff found that by facilitating community-based discussion groups with men and boys about gender and SGBV, their attitudes related to dowries and child marriage changed.

I also think that the biggest gap exists when we say that we want to empower girls. We completely forget the other part which is working with males. . . . All the things that she's learned, she can't really apply because there's no response from the people that she's surrounded by.

—Practitioner, NGO, Lebanon

Practitioners in Asia, Africa, and Latin America spoke of the challenges in reaching ethnic and religious minorities and other marginalized adolescent girls. For example, among Dalit communities in Nepal and India, child marriage rates are high, yet practitioners have a hard time reaching these remote communities. In Latin America, practitioners struggle to reach indigenous adolescent girls in very rural areas where child marriage is widely accepted by the community and is not a priority for local governments. In Ethiopia, one practitioner mentioned that in the Western part of the country, communities are very traditional and adolescent girls are at high risk of child marriage. However, successful implementation of child marriage prevention interventions in these areas would first require extensive preliminary work to educate the community on basic concepts of gender, power, and women’s rights, which requires more time and resources than are usually available. In several contexts, practitioners expressed the concern that although Save the Children aims to target the most marginalized adolescents as an organizational priority, they are often not the target of interventions.

Practitioners also highlighted the gap in programming for married girls, as the majority of child marriage efforts focus on prevention rather than response. Married girls are often difficult to reach with adolescent support services because they are less

visible in schools and their communities. However, because they are often socially isolated, providing them with life skills programming and opportunities to meet with their peers is critical. Reaching them with SRH information and services should also be a priority, as they are at high risk of complications related to early pregnancy. Married girls may also face heightened barriers to participation in programming. In India, for example, one informant explained that married girls were often prohibited by their husbands from attending discussion groups. In addition, it can be challenging to gain support for child marriage response as a priority both at community and organizational levels. Once girls are married, they are often viewed by their communities as women and their participation in child marriage programming or other adolescent support programming can be viewed as contradictory. Focusing on programming for married girls may also be seen as condoning or accepting child marriage. Informants mentioned that although the focus of Save the Children's child marriage work has been on prevention, they are well-positioned to also address response through their work with adolescents across thematic areas.

Unfortunately, girls wanted to have children in order just to have their marriage registered. So this, for me, is like what are we doing? . . . If you are responding to child marriage, you aren't reinforcing child marriage, you are recognizing the reality and reaching out to vulnerable communities and providing the services that are needed.

—Practitioner, NGO, Lebanon

I think it [response] falls really firmly under our mandate . . . we're doing programs globally around livelihoods, life-skills, and different types of secondary education or alternative vocational learning. Through our health piece, we are doing work around sexual and reproductive health and rights . . . Overall, I would say, it's really not a stretch for us, it's just connecting the dots—that is something that we haven't necessary done as well

as we could. There is a huge amount of potential there, and maybe we're actually doing ourselves a disservice by having this issue specifically under child protection when it actually cuts across thematic areas.

—Practitioner, Save the Children, International

Considerations for Humanitarian Settings

Given the limited literature addressing child marriage in humanitarian settings, interviews were conducted with practitioners who have worked, or are currently working, in humanitarian settings in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Iraq, Lebanon, Uganda, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, and South Sudan. Observations regarding the nature and drivers of child marriage, intervention approaches, and implementation challenges in humanitarian contexts are summarized below.

Nature and Drivers of Child Marriage

Practitioners working in humanitarian settings consistently reported that child marriage is driven by acute economic and protection needs in crisis. Many informants discussed child marriage as a form of coping with extreme poverty and financial instability. Even where child marriage is not a normative cultural practice, parents marry off their daughters because they simply cannot provide for them.

When you ask them, 'If you hadn't been living in this situation would you still consider marrying off your daughter?' They say, 'No, I think I would much prefer that she would go to school, get an education, finish her education, and then get married. But under these circumstances, we don't have money to support our children. We don't have money to send them to school, and things are out of our control.'

—Practitioner, NGO, Lebanon

Protection concerns are also a primary driver of child marriage in displacement contexts where traditional family and community support systems have broken down. In South Sudan, for example, one informant observed that when families flee conflict,

children are exposed to new protection risks because they are separated from their families, often lack proper accommodation, and are increasingly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse. One practitioner in Lebanon explained that refugee girls are at increased risk of sexual violence, and child marriage often takes place to avoid the shame and stigma associated with sexual violence or pregnancy. Informants who had experience working with IDPs in Iraq, Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, and IDPs in Nepal during the 2015 earthquake response explained that many families married their daughters because they felt they would be safer and protected from sexual violence.

Others working with Syrian, Somali, and Rohingya refugee communities shared the observation that crisis exacerbates the pre-existing cultural drivers of child marriage. For example, in Bangladesh, an informant explained that child marriage was already practiced in Rakhine State in Myanmar, and that crisis and displacement to Bangladesh simply intensifies this risk.

Child marriage was already very prevalent in the Rohingya community. So, what we're noticing in this humanitarian crisis is that you already have acceptance of child marriage, and then in dealing with a crisis like this, it just makes the situation worse.

—Practitioner, Save the Children, Bangladesh

Informants generally spoke about child marriage increasing in crisis. Acknowledging the lack of official data, practitioners working in Diffa, Niger, Northeast Nigeria, and Bangladesh shared anecdotal evidence that child marriage was on the rise in these settings. Inconsistent with these narratives, however, one informant in Somalia explained that child marriage had actually decreased throughout the country, including in the drought-affected areas. He noted that one possible theory for this decline in a humanitarian context is that due to the prolonged droughts, the ability of households to afford the costs of marriage has also declined.

Interventions

Most Save the Children practitioners interviewed reported that they were not implementing or aware of child marriage-focused projects or programming in humanitarian settings. However, many mentioned that child marriage should be addressed through their child protection strategy and interventions. Child protection is consistently a major component of Save the Children's response efforts, as program staff work to identify children at risk in humanitarian settings, assess their needs, and refer them to protection and support services. In several humanitarian contexts, such as Somalia, Iraq, and Nigeria, Save the Children has established child protection committees comprised of community members who identify and respond to children at risk of SGBV and other protection issues. However, one informant in Somalia pointed out that they are not documenting the number of marriages prevented as an outcome, and therefore do not know if this intervention is working well in cases of child marriage.

In some cases, child marriage has been incorporated into community sensitization and awareness-raising activities regarding children's and women's rights issues. For example, through a program to build resilience in conflict-affected areas of Iraq, Save the Children implemented community education activities, many of which were led by children themselves. Child marriage was not initially part of this program; however, upon learning that child marriage was a primary protection concern for girls, children and program staff worked to sensitize camp leaders and parents about the importance of prevention. In Somaliland, program staff sensitized the Ministry of Justice and developed a code of conduct for traditional marriage providers to prevent child marriage and educate key actors about the consequences. In Bangladesh, program staff addressed the misconception among Rohingya parents that girls could not wear a hijab to school, which was preventing parents from sending their daughters to school. According to one informant, working with

parents to ensure that girls continue their education is an essential child marriage prevention strategy in displacement settings.

Child-friendly spaces, safe areas designated for children to engage in structured play, educational activities, and psychosocial support were also cited as interventions that can address child marriage in humanitarian settings. Save the Children implements this model in several humanitarian contexts. In these spaces, program staff address child marriage through adolescent SRH and SGBV education and training. In Bangladesh, one informant had found it important to create adolescent-friendly spaces focused exclusively on offering protection, rights education, and capacity building of adolescent girls. Regarding life skills curriculum addressing child marriage, International Rescue Committee (IRC) has developed curricula for adolescent girls, including “My Safety, My Well-being” and “Girl Shine,” offering life skills education and coping strategies for humanitarian settings, both of which address the issue of early marriage. After recognizing the very distinct needs of married girls, IRC also developed a tailored life skills curriculum for engaged, married, and previously married girls. The life skills package is currently being piloted and evaluated in Lebanon.

Finally, integrating child marriage and other protection issues into cash transfer programming, also referred to as child sensitive social protection, was also highlighted as a potential child marriage prevention strategy in humanitarian settings. In Somalia, for example, Save the Children is currently piloting unconditional cash transfers as part of a child sensitive social protection strategy that includes education and discussion sessions for parents on issues of child protection and rights. They are evaluating the impact of the program on a range of child protection outcomes.

Discussions with key informants also reflected an emerging debate as to whether child marriage prevention and response warrants specific, targeted programming or should be mainstreamed into other

sectors through existing humanitarian response efforts. Some informants explained that meeting the minimum standards in humanitarian response across sectors and ensuring the holistic needs of communities are met, rather than establishing parallel child marriage programming, is the most important way to prevent child marriage. This includes basic needs and identifying and supporting girls at risk of child marriage through adolescent SRH programming, SGBV response efforts, and through the education sector.

Some informants highlighted that nutrition/food security and livelihoods sectors offer key entry points in humanitarian response, particularly in the acute phase of an emergency, for addressing child marriage. For example, informants working in Bangladesh after the 2017 influx of Rohingya refugees observed an increase in child marriage driven by a lack of food. They reported that parents married off their children because they were unable to provide food for them. In this context, child marriage prevention efforts took the form of increasing food distribution. One informant from Save the Children explained that the livelihoods sector offers critical opportunities to obtain information about household composition and identify children at risk of marriage. For example, through the household economic assessments and surveys conducted by food security and livelihoods teams in emergencies, child marriage has been identified as a coping mechanism to manage deteriorating livelihoods. Additional questions aimed at identifying child marriage as a coping strategy, which may be associated with the advent of a crisis or shock, could be integrated into emergency assessments. This information should be used to guide targeted child marriage prevention programming through cash-based and other interventions.

We have such enormous opportunities through the household economy analysis and through the coping strategies index and through much more

advanced and sophisticated tools that we have in the livelihood sector, but we've never fully utilized them for monitoring protection issues and evaluating the impacts of our programming and developing integrated strategies. . . . When we register a household, we should be asking, 'Are there any children who don't normally live there?' to identify separated children. We can also ask if any of the family have recently left and why, potentially simple questions, to get a sense of which girls have gone.

—Practitioner, Save the Children, UK

One informant emphasized that approaches to child marriage prevention and response in humanitarian settings depends on the stage of the emergency. For example, targeted child marriage prevention programming aimed at changing social norms may not be feasible or appropriate for the acute stage of an emergency, but is important to introduce after the situation stabilizes.

I'm not saying social norms change doesn't belong in emergency contexts. But in acute emergency [the first 3–6 months], I wouldn't advocate for a parallel program where prevention/mitigation of child marriage is the ultimate goal, or that there's a whole program focused on this end. I would instead focus on making sure basic needs are met: that girls are enrolled in education, that there are opportunities for girls to meet safely. . . . And those are those early footprints of what could potentially be longer social norms change efforts . . . that roll out six months into an emergency.

—Researcher, NGO, USA

Aligned with this perspective, another informant explained that displacement actually offers an important opportunity for prevention programming as gender norms and expectations can change rapidly in humanitarian contexts where traditional community structures may have broken down and people are in a new environment.

In general, I think we're well set up to do it in our structure, mandate, and approach. As far as the kind of humanitarian response approaches, we do a lot of work around child-friendly spaces, education, protection, and all of these areas that could be such amazing entry points. We have the structure, we need the capacity and vision or approach.

—Practitioner, Save the Children, Canada

Save the Children practitioners generally agreed that the organization should do more to address child marriage in humanitarian settings and is well-positioned to do so through their current response efforts in these contexts.

Challenges

Key informants expressed that they are not currently addressing child marriage in humanitarian contexts because they do not know what programming should look like and are not aware of evidence-based approaches. One informant explained that Save the Children does not yet have standards or protocols addressing child marriage in emergencies, which inhibits mainstreaming of child marriage into humanitarian response efforts. A practitioner in South Sudan highlighted the challenges in enforcing child marriage-related laws in settings where police and judicial systems have been weakened by conflict. Further, data on the drivers, nature, and prevalence of child marriage is extremely limited in conflict-affected settings. Marriages may be less likely to be registered and therefore it can be more difficult to track trends. In Latin America, research on child marriage drivers and interventions is particularly limited. One practitioner discussed the need for evidence to inform interventions in contexts affected by gang activity and organized crime in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.

The short-term nature of humanitarian funding cycles also poses a significant challenge to addressing child marriage, which often requires long-term investment in activities intended to target deeply-rooted drivers such as social norms.

To create such big change like reducing child marriage, it's a long-term type of work. And it is also an issue that needs to be addressed across the social-ecological model and over a long period of time. It is a challenge for sure in humanitarian contexts because it's very rare that we have funding that goes beyond a year because of the nature of the context in which we're working. And that's why it's really hard to do the groundwork we need to do to really have a meaningful and long-term impact on child marriage in humanitarian settings and fragile contexts.

—Senior Advisor, Save the Children, Canada

Finally, practitioners in humanitarian settings explained that insecurity creates challenges in implementation and access to program sites. In South Sudan, for example, practitioners explained that despite weeks of planning, they could no longer carry out advocacy activities and community dialogues in some communities because of conflict-related violence. Practitioners emphasized that child marriage interventions in crisis settings need to have flexible time frames and be adaptable in their design and delivery.

Research Priorities

Development

Noted earlier as a promising practice, informants highlighted formative research on context-specific drivers of child marriage as a key research priority to improve child marriage interventions. This foundational research, which should be built into project periods, recognizes the diversity of drivers across contexts and allows for tailored interventions. It also helps to ensure that interventions are aligned with the needs of community members and establishes trust among stakeholders. One informant stated that a standard community assessment tool to help practitioners to collect data on the drivers of child marriage, understand perceptions and motivations of communities, and identify influential community members may be useful in designing more responsive interventions.

More rigorous evaluations of child marriage interventions, built into program designs from the start, were commonly cited research priorities. In particular, informants highlighted the need for improved methodologies to evaluate the long-term impact of advocacy campaigns and initiatives on reducing child marriage to inform future resource allocation. Measuring rates of child marriage as an outcome in evaluations of efforts through other sectors such as health, education, and livelihoods programming would also be useful in building the evidence base for prevention.

Other research priorities in development contexts included: evaluations of interlinked interventions addressing child marriage and teen pregnancy, understanding how child marriage cases are handled by formal and customary justice systems, the impact of social media on the nature of child marriage, and improving marriage registration data and registration systems.

Humanitarian

When asked about research priorities, practitioners in humanitarian settings consistently reported on the need for piloting and evaluating new interventions to prevent and respond to child marriage. Intervention research is needed to build the evidence base and establish what works in different stages of an emergency.

Informants also discussed the need for research on the decision-making factors of parents to marry off their daughters in humanitarian settings. They also requested information on the support needs of families and adolescent girls that may put girls at risk of child marriage. One informant explained that research should focus on understanding the benefits of child marriage from the perspective of families. Doing so would help humanitarian actors to identify measures to offset these incentives through humanitarian response efforts such as food distribution, cash-based interventions, or protection programming.

We would like to study those choices that parents are making now and whether those choices to marry off their daughters are influenced by economic livelihoods, the need to make ends meet, or is it the same that influenced them before the conflict to marry off their daughters? We want to draw out that distinction.

—Practitioner, Save the Children, South Sudan

There's been a lot of research done on the negative economic impacts of child marriage and girls not finishing school . . . but what are the positive impacts? If we see that as crisis coping, can we quantify the positive impacts to the family of marrying off their daughter? . . . They might not want to do it and might see it as the only option, but let's get into the detail there of why.

*—Practitioner, Save the Children,
West and Central Africa*

Practitioners in some humanitarian contexts requested research to better understand trends, as well as factors contributing to the rise or decline of child marriage in emergencies. For example, in Somalia, one practitioner expressed that understanding why child marriage has declined in some areas is critical to understanding how to design effective interventions and avoid negative, unintended consequences of other interventions that may incentivize marriage. In addition, research on the nature and drivers of child marriage in conflict-affected settings in Latin America is absent from the literature and urgently needed.

Finally, evidence-based, youth-driven programming was cited as a priority need in crisis settings. Research to understand how to more effectively engage adolescent girls and boys in programming in humanitarian settings through peer-led activities, SRH services, and context-specific life skills programming is necessary.

DISCUSSION

Lessons from Research and Practice

This three-part study, including a literature review, key informant interviews, and a mapping exercise of Save the Children's programming and interventions, identified promising practices, programs, and evidence gaps to address child marriage in both development and humanitarian settings. A total of 43 evaluations were identified in the literature, including experimental and quasi-experimental evaluations. Findings from the literature combined with findings from 27 key informant interviews help to outline what we know, and what we still need to learn, to make headway on this critical issue. This study adds to existing research by synthesizing the most up-to-date literature, bringing the voices of practitioners and experts into the discussion, and examining the topic of child marriage interventions in a humanitarian context for the first time. In addition, through a mapping and analysis of Save the Children's programming, it assesses the organization's approaches against the available evidence.

The review identified four approaches to child marriage programming currently evaluated in the literature: 1) Empowerment, 2) Incentive/asset transfer, 3) Community sensitization and engagement, and 4) Legal and advocacy. These are similar to programmatic approaches identified by two other reviews;⁶⁶ however, they differ in that both included an approach involving education. We felt that purely educational approaches were not represented in the literature that fit our inclusion criteria. Rather, they

fell neatly into 1) empowerment programs, which focused on after-school and school enhancement activities as part of a broader empowerment objective, or 2) incentive programs, which sought to provide incentives to encourage girls to stay in school. It should also be noted that other approaches, in addition to the four identified in this study, likely exist and simply have not been evaluated for their impact on child marriage or published. For example, comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in schools may also help reduce rates of child marriage, as may youth-responsive sexual and reproductive health services in contexts where early pregnancy is a key driver. Likewise, many programmatic approaches that effectively address drivers of child marriage, such as educational interventions for girls in low- and middle-income country contexts, have not been evaluated for their impact on child marriage. These may offer promising approaches outside of those identified thus far.

What we know now is that empowerment approaches are the most frequently evaluated, the most likely to show positive impacts in those evaluations, and the most common approach within the Save the Children movement. There are likely a number of reasons for this. These approaches are generally easy to implement on a small scale, relatively inexpensive, and work not only to prevent child marriage, but to equip adolescents, especially girls, with skills to improve many aspects of their lives from health to livelihood opportunities. There

are a few significant challenges to empowerment programming, however. First, such programs tend to address a large range of topics and skills. This makes it difficult to compare various program models and to understand which portions of the program are having the most significant effect. Second, these programs can be very difficult to scale up and sustain due to expense, issues with quality management, and the time and resources required to implement them successfully. In-school programs such as CSE offer systematic, scalable approaches to achieving empowerment and may contribute to preventing child marriage, assuming government support for CSE; however, these approaches may fail to reach vulnerable out-of-school adolescent girls. Third, a few studies which separated impacts of empowerment programming for younger (10–14 year-old) and older (15–19 year-old) adolescents found that empowerment approaches are less effective in reaching older adolescents, perhaps because the economic and social costs of delaying marriage in later years are much higher. Finally, there is a danger that empowerment approaches place the onus of preventing marriage on the girl herself, which may put her at increased risk of violence or abuse if her family or community are not supportive of her decision. As noted by key informants, the content of empowerment programs should be tailored to the local context based on initial formative research, and complementary approaches that engage family and community should be implemented as appropriate to increase the chance of positive outcomes and decrease risks for adolescent program participants.

Other program types present their own unique benefits and challenges. Incentive/asset transfer programs are particularly appealing because they are relatively easy, if not relatively inexpensive, to implement at a large scale (assuming the transfer is in cash or easily obtained goods, rather than livestock or goods which are more difficult to procure and distribute). This approach has received a somewhat negative response in at least one recent literature review,⁶⁷ as practitioners point to a few failed

attempts as indicative of the usefulness of the approach more broadly. This review did not find that to be the case. Incentive/asset transfer programs were found to play an important role in improving outcomes related to child marriage when such programs are complementary to other approaches that address gender inequality (such as empowerment or community sensitization and engagement) and are focused on building adolescents' human capital rather than simply incentivizing parents to delay marriage until a girl's 18th birthday. Again, practitioners are encouraged to carefully assess their local context before implementing cash programming, as at least two practitioners warned that cash payments to parents may actually increase child marriage by providing parents with the funds necessary for young daughters' dowries, ceremonies, and other wedding expenses.

The most significant difference between findings from the literature and those from practitioners and other experts were with regards to community sensitization and engagement approaches. While practitioners championed such approaches as the way forward for child marriage programming, the evaluation literature on this approach was extremely limited. Most of the programs or program components in this category were poorly evaluated, described in very little detail, and treated by many study authors as secondary to other approaches. There are a few reasons why this may be the case.

- Changing social norms takes a significant amount of time. Given the funding cycles on which most NGOs and civil society organizations rely, a program and evaluation cycle may be too short to create or measure any significant social norms change.
- Community programs vary with regards to depth of engagement. While some programs held regular community meetings with leaders and established subcommittees focused on the issue, others consisted only of a simple one-time meeting with parents or

short film screening. Short term, superficial engagement such as the latter may not be sufficient to produce meaningful change.

- It can be challenging to evaluate long-term community sensitization and engagement efforts through traditional experimental and quasi-experimental methods. At least one study evaluating a mass media campaign on child marriage in Ethiopia was excluded from this review because it lacked a valid comparison group—although results from the study were highly promising.⁶⁸

Community-level interventions to change social norms aimed at preventing other forms of SGBV fell outside of our review criteria but may offer important evidence for changing social norms around child marriage. For example, SASA, a long-term community mobilization intervention aimed at reducing intimate partner violence (IPV), was rigorously evaluated in Uganda through a cluster randomized trial and found to be effective in lowering social acceptance of IPV, reducing physical and sexual violence against women, and improving supportive community responses.⁶⁹ Practitioners shared that effective norm-change interventions, from their experiences, must be long-term (more than two years), should involve a broad range of influential actors in a given community, and should be developed and driven by community members themselves. Many felt that formative research was a powerful tool for understanding the social determinants of child marriage as well as for establishing the level of community trust and buy-in necessary for achieving social norms outcomes. However, researchers express concern that a traditional knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) survey may not be sufficient to capture social expectations and collective practices driving SGBV. Cristina Bicchieri et al. offer alternative tools practitioners might consider to capture these social drivers of child marriage.⁷⁰ In addition, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine's (LSHTM) recently established Learning Group on Social Norms

and Gender-based Violence offers guidance, tools, and practical examples to assist practitioners in diagnosing social norms.⁷¹

Legal and advocacy approaches were represented the least in the evaluation literature and few key informants shared learnings on successful advocacy initiatives. This is likely due to the difficulty of evaluating the effectiveness of such efforts using experimental methods—several practitioners noted that tools are sorely needed. That does not, however, negate the important role that such efforts play in creating long-term, sustainable change with regards to child marriage. For example, advocacy on child marriage laws can not only provide critical legal protection for children, but also establish a foundational commitment upon which national strategies and action plans can be built and help to create a supportive policy environment with sufficient resource allocation. Research examining child marriage laws in Sub-Saharan Africa found that countries with consistent laws establishing 18 as the minimum age of marriage had 40% lower child marriage and 25% lower teenage childbearing prevalence than in countries without consistent marriage laws.⁷² Yet legal approaches have their limitations—joint research by Save the Children and the World Bank found that 68% of child marriages still occur in countries where the practice is illegal.⁷³ Practitioners interviewed in this study highlighted other advocacy approaches such as increasing monitoring and policy implementation, strategic partnerships with high-level government officials and other influential people, ensuring that the voices of youth are at the center of campaigns, and greater collaboration with local organizations, like women's rights groups. These are important strategies for achieving results at scale, tackling structural barriers, and building policy and financial environments that are conducive for sustainable change.

Evidence Gaps

While research in the last 10 years has added considerably to what we know about addressing child

marriage, there are still significant gaps in the evidence. Existing research largely captures the efforts of governments, large NGOs, and INGOs, and fails to reflect the innovations, experiences, or perspectives of grassroots or civil society organizations. Research locations are heavily centered around Africa and South Asia, creating challenges for generalizability of findings to under-represented regions, such as Latin America or Southeast Asia. Samples frequently include girls who are greater than 18 years in age and suggest that findings are relevant to all adolescent girls, in spite of evidence that interventions may have varying effectiveness based on age. Many evaluations of successful programs do not provide enough information about program content for effective replication. Evaluations of empowerment programs, in particular, fail to specify which empowerment approaches are being used and rarely break down program components for individual evaluation to determine which portions of programs are having the largest effect on marriage outcomes. Likewise, multi-component programs are only beginning to be evaluated on a component-by-component basis, rather than as a single program. All approaches suffer from evaluation timelines which are generally too short to measure long-term impact or capture key life transitions such as age at marriage for younger adolescent participants. Finally, while simple baseline/endline evaluations remain standard for many NGOs and civil society organizations, this type of evaluation design is simply not rigorous enough to provide generalizable evidence to improve child marriage programming.

Humanitarian

In examining the state of the evidence on child marriage in humanitarian settings, this review found that this critical research is still largely in its infancy. A small but significant body of literature demonstrated that pre-existing drivers such as traditional practices, poverty, weak legislation and enforcement, pregnancy, and concerns over protection of honor are aggravated in humanitarian contexts,

while new drivers such as protection concerns, decreased access to educational and livelihoods opportunities for women, and increased isolation are also seen. Less is known about prevalence in these settings. According to UNICEF, of the 10 countries with the highest child marriage rates, 9 are considered fragile or extremely fragile states.⁷⁴ One review found prevalence rates ranging from 3–51% in conflict settings,⁷⁵ while another found clear evidence of both increases and declines in marriage for those under 20, but noted that where increases were seen, they were generally concentrated among younger adolescents.⁷⁶ New research on prevalence is expected to be published in 2018.

Unfortunately, a significant gap still exists with regards to interventions to address child marriage in humanitarian contexts. Practitioners informed us that child marriage is driven by extreme poverty and heightened protection risks in humanitarian settings, and that in some settings, it exacerbates pre-existing cultural drivers. Although most practitioners were not implementing specific child marriage programming, they reported that they were addressing the issue to some extent through child protection case management, community-based child protection committees, community sensitization efforts addressing children's rights, child-friendly spaces, and general life skills curriculum. However, these efforts were not being evaluated for their impact on child marriage. Practitioners underscored the urgent need for evidence of effective interventions in humanitarian settings to guide their work. While there is little evidence on how this should be undertaken given the complex barriers faced by researchers and practitioners in these settings, recent research examining methodologies to evaluate GBV interventions in humanitarian settings may offer guidance for child marriage research as well. The authors found that where traditional impact evaluation methodologies such as RCTs are not appropriate or feasible, other mixed methods approaches such as realist evaluations, longitudinal designs with a qualitative component, or other

observational designs offer rigorous and informative alternatives.⁷⁷

Save the Children's Approaches and the Evidence

When we compare Save the Children's child marriage programming with the evidence on effective child marriage interventions from the literature review and key informant interviews, we find a number of ways that Save the Children's efforts are well-aligned with the evidence and offer suggestions for how future programming can be brought into closer alignment.

During the project inception phase, evidence from key informant interviews pointed to the importance of formative research to better understand the context-specific drivers of child marriage and community input to ensure programs are aligned with community needs and preferences, build trust, and gain buy-in from parents, guardians, and local leaders. Yet, Save the Children staff often recalled only a brief community assessment prior to implementing programming in new regions. Save the Children can strengthen its programming and outcomes by considering how to more directly engage the community in the early project-inception phase and build local ownership over its programs.

In recent years, Save the Children's child marriage programming has increasingly moved away from simple, single-component interventions towards multi-component interventions intended to address many levels of the social-ecological model, from the girl herself to her relationships, her community, her policy environment, and her society. Evidence from many key informants pointed to multi-level interventions as the future of child marriage programming, arguing that programs are more likely to be successful if they are working to address the multiple and interlaced drivers of child marriage at every level. Unfortunately, this type of program design is poorly represented and rarely evaluated in the literature. One study which evaluated the impact of adolescent- and community-level interventions on

child marriage both individually and combined in three African contexts concluded that multi-level interventions were not necessarily more successful than simple, single-component interventions due to poor cost-effectiveness and difficulties of effectively implementing these complex programs.⁷⁸ This was echoed by some interviewees who added that coordination and implementation of such programs is incredibly challenging, and that given limited resources, it is important to understand which components are working and prioritize those that directly benefit girls themselves. Save the Children can contribute to a broader understanding of the role of multi-component, multi-level interventions in addressing child marriage by improving evaluation of these programs.

In regard to approaches used to address child marriage, the majority of Save the Children's programs focus on empowerment. This approach is well-backed by the literature, which shows that empowerment approaches can be very effective in improving knowledge and attitudes around child marriage and delaying age of marriage. Given the broad range of topics which often fall under empowerment programming, both within Save the Children and within child marriage programming generally, Save the Children is well-poised to contribute to learning in this area by evaluating the individual impact of various topics on child marriage outcomes to better understand which components of empowerment programming are the most impactful for reducing child marriage. Additionally, early research suggests that empowerment programming may be more beneficial for reducing child marriage among younger adolescents than for older adolescents. Save the Children can contribute to learning around age-specific empowerment interventions and additional approaches that might be required to reduce child marriage rates among older adolescents.

Incentive/asset transfer approaches to addressing child marriage are rarely utilized by Save the Children. However, the literature indicates that incentive programs focused on promoting education

can be a powerful tool for reducing rates of child marriage, particularly among out-of-school girls or older adolescent girls, where they can be used to increase the opportunity cost of early marriage. Save the Children could significantly expand efforts around this type of cash or asset transfer programming, particularly in areas where empowerment-type programming falls short of achieving the desired impact and economic factors are determined to be major drivers of child marriage. Care should be taken to ensure that quality education is readily available in program areas, and any efforts should be closely monitored and evaluated to ensure safety and both immediate and long-term effectiveness. Additionally, Save the Child should consider adding child marriage indicators to evaluations of existing cash programming around health, nutrition, or emergency response.

Community engagement around child marriage is the second-most widely utilized approach to addressing child marriage within Save the Children's programming. This is also aligned with the literature, which finds that meaningful community engagement can reduce rates of child marriage by increasing the perceived value of girls, changing gender norms, and challenging traditional practices. Both the literature and key informant interviews, however, indicate the importance of long-term, deep level engagement and mobilization rather than shorter, lighter-touch sensitization approaches. Save the Children should ensure that community programming focuses on activities which encourage significant engagement, involve a broad range of actors within a community, and are long enough to promote social norm change. In addition, by carefully describing and rigorously evaluating these programs, Save the Children can contribute significantly to the literature around what works with community engagement approaches to reduce child marriage and why.

Legal and advocacy efforts are the final approach to addressing child marriage evaluated in the literature. Save the Children has been active in working

with governments and other stakeholders to promote change around child marriage legislation and policy environments and has reported a number of promising successes worldwide. However, Save the Children's evaluations of these programs reflect a weakness found in the literature broadly—they focus on whether the program achieved its goals, rather than the impact on child marriage after these goals are achieved. This is likely because advocacy efforts do not lend themselves well to traditional experimental and quasi-experimental evaluation methodologies and suffer from limitations posed by timescales and data collection. UNICEF offers recommendations for how monitoring and evaluation, including impact evaluation, can be more responsive to advocacy programs. Among its recommendations, UNICEF suggests increasing the rigor of appropriate non-experimental methodologies, focusing on measuring outcomes such as improved services and systems and positive social conditions, and working to demonstrate an organization's contribution to outcomes, rather than proving direct attribution.⁷⁹ In addition to evaluation challenges, we identified advocacy challenges related to intervention length and structural coordination. Advocacy initiatives attempt to create a long-term, sustainable impact in environments which are often resistant or even hostile to change. Thus, advocacy efforts benefit from long-term horizons over which to conduct campaigns. Yet Save the Children's largest global campaign runs on three-year strategy periods. We also found that global advocacy and programming structures within Save the Children are often siloed, limiting opportunities for joint planning and implementation. This not only creates the potential for confusion over roles and responsibilities, but also creates the risk of missing synergies between programming and advocacy and that efforts by one structure might duplicate or even undermine efforts of another. In addition, both structures could serve as valuable resources for each other, with advocacy staff contributing a high level of expertise to country programs, and program staff providing first-hand

perspectives to inform high-level advocacy efforts. In general, program and advocacy structures would benefit from an integrated theory of change, and mechanisms to facilitate joint strategy, planning, and implementation from national to global levels.

Evidence on child marriage prevention and response in humanitarian settings is still in its infancy, and many practitioners point to the gap that needs to be filled here in terms of research and practice. Save the Children is well-positioned to advance this work, given the scope of their humanitarian response efforts in the area of child protection and across sectors, and their long-term work in countries with both acute and protracted emergencies. As noted by one practitioner within Save the Children, the Protecting Children in Conflict thematic group may be a mechanism for strategy development and coordination on this issue within the Save the Children movement.

Emerging Issues in Child Marriage Programming

Over the course of this research, several issues emerged that warrant further discussion and debate both within Save the Children and among stakeholders in this field at large.

A lack of consistency and clarity in the terminology used to address the issue of child marriage creates challenges in strategy development, coordination, and research. For example, while some stakeholders within Save the Children and other organizations prefer to use the broader term “child, early, and forced marriage” (CEFM), others use simply “child marriage” when addressing this issue. As noted earlier, child marriage is defined as a formal or informal union before the age of 18. The term early marriage is often used interchangeably with child marriage, referring to marriage before age 18. Forced marriage, however, is defined as a marriage that occurs without the free and full consent of one or both parties.⁸⁰ Child marriage can be considered forced marriage because individuals below 18 do not have the ability to provide consent. However,

not all forced marriage is child marriage; adults can also experience forced marriage. Forced marriage can involve physical, psychological, or financial coercion and can occur in a variety of circumstances such as human trafficking, mail order marriages, or arranged and customary marriages, which require unique and targeted interventions. This report uses the term “child marriage” both for clarity of definition and to reflect the term most commonly used by the practitioners in our interviews, as well as in the literature reviewed.

In addition, there remains a lack of clarity regarding what constitutes a child marriage intervention, which creates challenges when assessing the evidence. For example, some of the practitioners interviewed explained that they are not implementing child marriage programs or interventions; however, they are working to prevent and respond to child marriage in other ways, such as through efforts to increase girls’ access to education. For the purposes of this study, we define child marriage interventions, programs, and initiatives as those addressing child marriage as an explicit objective or those measuring child marriage as an outcome. This enabled us to capture some of the programming that may have impacted, but was not entirely focused on, child marriage. On the other hand, efforts such as those to ensure girls remain engaged in education or provide sexual and reproductive health services, which may serve to prevent child marriage or respond to the needs of married girls, were not included if child marriage was not explicitly stated within program objectives or outcomes.

Finally, regarding terminology, there is also confusion among stakeholders, both within Save the Children and more broadly, regarding response to child marriage. When asked about preventing and responding to child marriage, informants interviewed often spoke about prevention only, or noted that they have focused primarily on prevention and there is not enough focus on response. Those who spoke about response explained that response refers to support services for married girls. Under this

definition, child marriage response is an incredibly broad umbrella which could include any education initiatives, SRH services, psychosocial support, livelihoods training, or any other support services in which married girls take part, either exclusively or in addition to other populations. This creates challenges in conducting research and assessing the evidence base, because it can be challenging to isolate these efforts and synthesize what works for this specific population. In addition, without a clear concept of child marriage response programming, prevention may continue to take precedence while tailored support for married girls is overlooked.

Another emerging trend that has generated debate among practitioners is the movement toward multi-component interventions which target risk factors at multiple levels of the ecological framework. Many practitioners emphasized the need for multi-level interventions, recognizing that in order to prevent child marriage, interventions must aim not only to educate and empower girls but also to create an enabling family, community, and policy environment that is protective and supportive of their rights. However, as noted previously, these more complex interventions are often challenging to coordinate, implement, and evaluate, or are simply not feasible given resource constraints. Further, while many key informants in this study promoted multi-level interventions, some emphasized the need to simplify programming and identify and prioritize the most effective components of interventions in the context of scarce resources. Although most practitioners recognized that child marriage prevention efforts targeting parents, men and boys,

community leaders, or policymakers are important, some expressed concerns about diverting already limited resources and underscored the need to invest in building the capacity of girls.

Despite growing evidence and awareness among practitioners that child marriage can increase in humanitarian crises, there remains debate regarding how to prevent and respond to child marriage in these settings. Some stakeholders assert that rather than implementing parallel programming, the most effective way to prevent and respond to child marriage is to ensure that existing minimum standards in humanitarian response are met, such as the Sphere standards in food security and nutrition, health and protection, or the UN Interagency-Standing Committee's (IASC) gender-based violence guidelines. Other practitioners said that it is important to identify key entry points within existing humanitarian response efforts, such as household vulnerability assessments used in food security, livelihoods, nutrition, and cash programming, in which additional measures to identify and support girls at risk of child marriage are integrated. Some practitioners expressed that child marriage-specific programming is appropriate and necessary in humanitarian settings, as displacement by conflict or natural disaster offers an ideal opportunity to shift social and cultural norms. Different phases of an emergency likely require different intervention approaches. Across practitioners, the urgent need for evidence and guidance regarding child marriage prevention and response strategies in both acute emergencies and protracted displacement settings was clear.

RECOMMENDATIONS

THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS, based on findings from the literature review, mapping exercise, and key informant interviews, are targeted towards Save the Children and intended to help move the organization forward in addressing child marriage in development and humanitarian contexts. However, these recommendations are also relevant outside of Save the Children and are intended to make a meaningful contribution to the efforts of other stakeholders—including researchers, policymakers, and practitioners—who are working on this issue.

Development

For ease of use across the Save the Children movement, we offer recommendations under each of the organization's five global thematic areas (Box 5).

Cross-thematic Recommendations

1. Adopt a gender equality lens when designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating child marriage programs and initiatives to address the deep roots of gender inequality which drive child marriage.
2. Consider expanding the geographic coverage of child marriage programming and advocacy to include countries or regions with very high rates of child marriage not currently covered by Save the Children's efforts. These include Lao People's Republic in Southeast Asia; Brazil, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Guyana in Latin America; Sudan in North Africa; Central African Republic, Chad, and Guinea in West and Central Africa; and Madagascar and Eritrea in East and Southern Africa.
3. Target programs and advocacy to address the following under-reached populations:
 - a. Girls in Urban Contexts—Given the lack of evidence on effective interventions in urban contexts, conduct formative research to understand the unique drivers of child marriage in these settings, gain girls' input in program design, and implement programming directly tailored to their needs.
 - b. Very Marginalized Girls—Focus programs on often-neglected girls living in remote, difficult to reach areas or fragile contexts, as well as those belonging to racial, religious, or ethnic minorities where prevalence of child marriage may be particularly high.
 - c. Faith-Based and Customary/Traditional Leaders—Given their role as gatekeepers, influencers, and decision-makers in many communities, engage key faith-based, customary and traditional leaders, as identified in formative research, in community outreach, sensitization, and advocacy efforts to reshape public perceptions and norms around child marriage.

- d. Men and Boys—Engage men and boys in efforts to address child marriage to better understand motivations and experiences of men involved in child marriage, help transform gender and social norms, and educate them on women’s participation in programming to ensure buy-in and mitigate backlash, such as the potential for increased domestic and intimate partner violence.
 - e. Married Girls—Invest in programs for already-married girls to address the dearth of programming targeting this population. Identify opportunities to reach married girls with information and support services, develop outreach strategies, and reduce barriers to married girls’ participation.
4. Consider addressing context-specific risk factors at multiple social-ecological levels such as engaging families, religious and other community leaders, and local and national government leaders; however, these activities should complement efforts to support, empower, and build the capacity of girls themselves who should remain at the center of programming.
 5. Contextualize empowerment approaches to address local drivers of child marriage as well as the specific needs and interests of the girls themselves. Consider combining empowerment with other approaches, such as incentive/asset transfer programs, to fully address the needs of older adolescents. Conduct targeted outreach strategies and tailored programming as needed to engage married girls.
 6. Use incentive/asset transfer approaches to build girls’ human capital by incentivizing educational outcomes or combining them with complementary approaches such as empowerment and community sensitization and engagement for long-term impact. Ensure such approaches are responsive to different age groups.
 7. Ensure that community sensitization and engagement approaches are long-term, participatory, and engage a broad range of actors within a community who have been identified through formative research. Build in rigorous evaluation of behavior, knowledge, and attitude change outcomes over time to ensure the efficacy of community engagement approaches is reflected in the literature.
 8. Identify and engage key decision-makers and/or people of influence within communities to serve as champions for child marriage prevention and response.
 9. Design programs with the following considerations in mind:
 - a. Scalability and Cost—When deciding between single- and multi-component interventions, consider the feasibility, sustainability, and cost of program scale-up and whether a simple, single-component intervention may prove as effective in achieving the desired results as a complex, multi-component design given organizational limitations.
 - b. Length—When possible, design programs and corresponding evaluations to be conducted over longer time periods to promote and capture changes in social norms and long-term outcomes for girls.
 - c. Formative Research—Conduct formative research to understand context-specific risk factors, including social expectations, knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions related to gender roles and practices of child marriage; identify barriers to abandoning the practice of child marriage, influential community members and decision-makers; and develop tailored interventions.
 - d. Community Input—Encourage community participation, with a focus on girls, during the program-inception phase to ensure

programs are responsive to local needs and interests and have local buy-in.

- e. **Rigorous Evaluation**—Build in a rigorous monitoring and evaluation plan from the outset of program implementation, based on an experimental or quasi-experimental methodology, wherever appropriate. Consider alternative ways to achieve rigor when evaluating advocacy initiatives or social norms change such as those identified by UNICEF and the LSHTM’s Learning Group on Social Norms and Gender-based Violence.⁸¹ Consider longer program evaluation periods to capture a majority of program participants’ age at marriage.
10. **Develop a coordinated strategy at the organizational level to address child marriage.**
 - a. **Joint Objectives, Outcomes, and Indicators:** Develop an organization-wide set of objectives, outcomes, and indicators for addressing and evaluating child marriage.
 - b. **Terminology:** Unify terminology to address child marriage prevention and response across the movement.
 - c. **Coordination:** Clarify where the issue sits within Save the Children and how coordination will take place across development and humanitarian sectors, across thematic areas, and at the organizational and country levels. Further coordinate and integrate advocacy and programming structures to unify and reinforce efforts and synergize expertise.
 11. **Develop a coordinated strategy at country levels with all stakeholders, within and outside of Save the Children, active in addressing child marriage to improve national outcomes and minimize duplication of efforts.**

Advocacy

1. Place youth voices at the center of all advocacy efforts, with a particular emphasis on girls’ voices, to ensure youth’s needs and interests are prioritized.
2. Develop high-level partnerships and identify champions, such as national ministers or offices of the first lady, to expand political will and buy-in on the issue of child marriage.
3. Coordinate with well-established women’s rights organizations to strengthen advocacy efforts and maximize impact.
4. Combine advocacy efforts with technical assistance to support governments in developing and implementing legislative and policy changes.
5. Ensure advocacy efforts complement programming directly benefitting girls where possible, that programs integrate advocacy components, and that programming and advocacy are coordinated and work in synergy with each other.
6. Expand legal advocacy initiatives around child marriage to include educational goals for adolescent girls, such as guaranteed access to quality education through secondary school.
7. Assess the impact of advocacy achievements on women and girls, rather than strictly focusing on whether legal or policy goals have been achieved, to strengthen evaluation efforts.
8. Increase the rigor of evaluations of child marriage advocacy initiatives using creative, context-appropriate methodologies, such as those identified by UNICEF,⁸² to significantly contribute to the global literature on the impacts of advocacy approaches. Consider how indicators for child marriage outcomes, such as reduced prevalence or changes in community knowledge and attitudes, can be included in these evaluations and monitored over time.

Child Poverty

1. Measure the impact of child poverty programming on behavioral child marriage outcomes such as age at first marriage or proportion of girls married.
2. Consider the use of incentive/asset transfer programs which incentivize educational outcomes to reduce child marriage among families for whom poverty is a primary driver of child marriage.
3. Ensure that incentive/asset transfer programs are well-evaluated and that impact is measured by age to determine whether younger or older adolescents are impacted more significantly.
4. Consider the use of age-appropriate employment and livelihood opportunities, as well as training, to delay marriage among older adolescent girls in contexts where limited educational and income generating opportunities and poverty are primary drivers of child marriage.

Child Protection

1. Evaluate the impact of child protection interventions on child marriage-related outcomes using rigorous experimental and quasi-experimental methodologies or alternative rigorous evaluation approaches whenever relevant.
2. Encourage other sectors, such as education, health, or livelihoods to include child marriage outcomes when evaluating interventions to address drivers of child protection issues in the local context to better understand the role other thematic areas can play in addressing the issue.
3. Coordinate with other thematic areas to address child marriage through programming and measurement/evaluation approaches such as education, health, or livelihoods which are critical for child marriage prevention and response, yet do not fall under the child protection thematic area.

4. Provide assessment and measurement guidance to other sectors to support the identification of contributing factors to child marriage, for example, by developing tools which build measurements of social expectations and collective practices into traditional knowledge, attitudes, and practice (KAP) studies to identify the social determinants of child marriage.

Child Rights Governance

1. Support opportunities for child-led advocacy and accountability on child marriage, such as via child clubs and other forums for children to receive information about their rights, gain advocacy skills, and lead activities in their communities and countries.
2. Build gender equality and child marriage into child-friendly budget analysis and advocacy work to increase resourcing for child marriage policies and programs.
3. Integrate gender equality and child marriage into efforts to protect and expand civil society space from local to international levels, including through working with girls' and women's groups.

Education

1. Measure the impact of educational programming on knowledge and attitudes around child marriage as well as child marriage behaviors, such as age at first marriage or proportion of girls married.
2. Remove barriers to school participation, such as direct and indirect costs of schooling, gender-discriminatory norms, or poor health and nutrition, and increase access to education for adolescent girls of all ages, including older adolescents.
3. Consider additional incentives such as cash transfer programming or free school uniforms and supplies to lower barriers to school

attendance and increase the opportunity cost for older adolescent girls to leave school.

4. Integrate comprehensive sexuality education and/or child marriage, gender equality, and sexual and reproductive health and rights into standard education curriculum.
5. Remove barriers to education for already-married girls and pregnant and adolescent mothers, including addressing legal and policy barriers, counteracting discriminatory social norms, and providing child care, as well as offering after-school literacy and numeracy training and bridge programs where necessary.

Health and Nutrition

1. Determine whether food-insecurity is a driver of child marriage in a given context and consider how food security, livelihoods, and nutrition programs may improve child marriage outcomes—for example, where parents choose to marry daughters early because they cannot afford to provide food for all family members, or where girls are unable to attend or succeed in school because of poor nutrition.
2. Determine whether lack of access to youth-responsive SRH services is a driver of child pregnancy, and thus child marriage, in a given context, and consider how such programs may improve child marriage outcomes by increasing access to SRHR education and contraceptives. Develop targeted outreach strategies to increase service utilization by unmarried girls.
3. Integrate child marriage into CSE, SRHR, and GBV education and awareness-raising activities for in- and out-of-school youth.
4. Measure the impact of food security, livelihoods and nutrition programming on child marriage behaviors such as age at first marriage or proportion of girls married.

5. Evaluate the impact of SRHR programming, including CSE, SRHR information, and youth-responsive SRH services, on knowledge and attitudes around child marriage as well as child marriage behaviors such as age at first marriage or proportion of girls married, particularly in regions where early pregnancy is a significant driver of child marriage.
6. Offer youth-responsive SRHR education programs and services, as well as food security and nutrition programs, to already-married girls to delay pregnancy and reduce risk of STIs, encourage healthy spacing of pregnancies, promote safe pregnancy and delivery, and respond to the health and nutrition needs of married girls' infants and children. Develop targeted outreach strategies to increase service utilization by married girls.

Humanitarian

1. Conduct assessments to identify both pre-existing drivers of child marriage, such as traditional norms and practices, as well as new risk factors related to crisis coping, such as economic and protection concerns, when developing child marriage interventions. Identify key decision-making factors and support needs of adolescent girls and their families to inform intervention design.
2. Determine which forms of child marriage intervention are appropriate for various phases of an emergency. For example, nutrition programs to reduce child marriage among food-insecure households may be most appropriate in acute crisis, while empowerment programs and community sensitization to change social norms may not be realistic or appropriate until the long-term recovery stages.
3. Identify key entry points for mainstreaming child marriage into existing humanitarian response efforts including household economic

surveys, SGBV prevention and response, and food distribution and nutrition activities.

4. Pilot stand-alone child marriage programs and integrate sector-specific approaches to address child marriage in humanitarian settings. Build in rigorous evaluations to develop evidence in acute and protracted displacement settings.
5. Build child marriage prevention and response capacity in fragile contexts whenever possible to ensure that the underlying drivers of child marriage are being addressed prior to acute crises.
6. Enable girls to return to school as quickly as possible following acute crisis by incentivizing schooling and reducing barriers such as language, transportation, and safety concerns—particularly in displacement settings—to increase access to education for all girls.

Research

1. Expand research on child marriage drivers and interventions to include settings that are poorly represented in the literature, including child marriage in urban contexts, child marriage in regions such as Latin America and Southeast Asia, and child marriage in the context of gang conflict in Central America.
2. Conduct more rigorous impact evaluations of child marriage programming and advocacy initiatives. Use experimental and quasi-experimental evaluation methods or alternative rigorous approaches whenever possible.
3. Disaggregate evaluation data by age to better understand what works to prevent child marriage among younger and older adolescents and among different social, economic, and identity groups. Likewise, report findings for adolescents under age 18 as distinct from youth over age 18.
4. Lengthen evaluation time to capture individuals' significant life events for program

participants such as age at first marriage and long-term program impacts, particularly with social norms change.

5. Evaluate each component of multi-component and multi-level programming individually as well as together to determine which components are most successful at addressing child marriage.
6. Consider cost, sustainability, and scalability when evaluating program impacts.
7. Evaluate distinct components of empowerment programming such as SRHR education, financial literacy, or sports programming separately to determine the impact of each component on child marriage outcomes.
8. Improve evaluation of community sensitization and engagement to contribute significantly to organizational and global evidence on changing social norms around child marriage. Use creative methodologies to achieve this when experimental and quasi-experimental methods are not appropriate.
9. Improve evaluation of advocacy initiatives to contribute to organizational and global evidence by doing the following:
 - a. Assess the impact of advocacy achievements on women and girls by measuring changes in knowledge and attitudes or behaviors rather than strictly focusing on whether law and policy goals have been achieved.
 - b. Employ creative, context-appropriate methodologies, such as those identified by UNICEF,⁸³ to improve the rigor of non-experimental methodologies when experimental and quasi-experimental methods are not appropriate.
10. Evaluate the impact of other approaches such as health, nutrition, and education on child marriage as an outcome.

11. Build a formative research phase into piloting and evaluation efforts to tailor interventions to the context-specific drivers and needs and preferences of the community.
12. Prioritize research addressing support needs, outreach strategies, and effective interventions for already-married girls to expand child marriage response efforts.
13. Build an evidence base in humanitarian settings that addresses the following topics:
 - a. Increases and Decreases—Determine why child marriage increases in some humanitarian contexts and decreases in others.
 - b. Decision-Making Factors—Determine what decision-making factors by parents and adolescents lead to child marriage.
 - c. Drivers—Expand local and global knowledge around the pre-existing and crisis-specific drivers that promote child marriage.
 - d. Support Needs—Understand the support needs of adolescent girls and their families to prevent and respond to child marriage.
 - e. Interventions—Evaluate interventions to determine what works to address child marriage in humanitarian settings.
14. Engage youth in participatory research during formative and pilot design phases to ensure that the needs and interests of young people are prioritized and to improve buy-in.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Literature Review Key Search Terms

KEY SEARCH TERMS

Child	youth, young people, young person, adolescent*, teen*, juvenile*, minor*, pre-teen*, preteen, girl*, boy*
Marriage	marriage*, marital, matrimony, nuptial*, wedlock, union, wedding*, bride*, spouse*, "conjugal relationship", "consensual union", cohabit*
Child Marriage	"child early and forced marriage", "early marriage", "forced marriage", "child bride"
Intervention	program*, solution*, service*, approach*, method*
Prevention	prevent*, eliminat*, reduc*, decreas*, end*, stop*, delay*, address*, respon*
Setting	<i>Humanitarian:</i> humanitarian disaster*, conflict*, natural disaster*, disaster zone*, refugee camp*, IDP camp*, emergenc*, crisis, crises <i>Development:</i> development, developin countr*, low-/lower-/middle-income countr*, global south, regions or countries (by name)

* Indicates a wildcard character

Appendix 2: Literature Review Data Extraction Form

DATA EXTRACTION FORM

Background Information

1. Abstractor name
2. Article title
3. Author or agency name(s)
4. Publication title
5. Year of publication
6. Type of publication
7. Country(ies) where the study took place
8. Study setting/situation (school/community, rural/urban, etc.)
9. Humanitarian crisis type (armed conflict or natural disaster)
10. Crisis stage (acute, chronic, recovery, etc.)
11. Participants/population type (refugees, IDPs, etc.)
12. Participant characteristics (age, sex, etc.)

Intervention

1. Type/description
2. Objectives

3. Theory of change
4. Frequency and duration (exposure period)
5. Number and size of intervention groups

Outcomes

1. Operational definition of CEFM
2. Primary and secondary outcomes by sector
3. Key conclusions by sector
4. Negative impacts reported

Evaluation

1. Study design
2. Method of data collection
3. Adapted STROBE score OR Adapted CONSORT score (1–8)

Analysis

1. Strengths/weaknesses of evaluation
2. Any other comments

Appendix 3: Literature Quality Review Criteria and Scoring⁸⁴

QUALITY REVIEW CRITERIA

STROBE Criteria (Observational Studies)

Intervention:

1. Is the intervention clearly described?

Selection of participants:

2. Is the target population defined?
3. Is there a comparison group (e.g. baseline, control)?
4. Are the inclusion and exclusion criteria defined?

Statistical methods:

5. Is the sample size / method justified with statistical basis?
6. Is there a statistical test (p-value or confidence interval)?
7. Is there adjustment for confounding variables?

Limitations:

8. Are study limitations explained (e.g. biases)?

CONSORT Criteria (Randomized Trials)

Eligibility:

1. Did study state # not meeting inclusion criteria?
2. Did study state # declined to participate?

Once Randomized (allocation):

3. Did study state # receiving intervention?
4. Did study state # not receiving intervention?

Follow-Up:

5. Did study state # lost to follow-up?
6. Did study provide reasons for loss to follow-up?

Analysis:

7. Did study state reasons participants were excluded from analysis?
 8. Are limitations of the study explained (e.g. biases)?
-

LEVEL OF QUALITY (PER STROBE/CONSORT)

High	7–8 criteria met = high quality evidence
Medium	4–6 criteria met = moderate quality evidence
Low	1–3 criteria met = low quality evidence

Appendix 4: Summary of the Literature on Child Marriage Interventions in Development Contexts^{85–121}

Study Details	Country, Years	Program, Implementing Organization	Target Population, Setting	Objectives	Approach	Evaluation Design, Quality	Outcomes
Alam et al., 2011	Pakistan, 2003–09	Punjab Female School Stipend Program (FSSP), Government of Pakistan	Girls in grades 6–8, urban/rural	To improve school participation of middle school-aged girls and improve gender equality	Incentive	Quasi-Experimental, High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age at marriage (increased) • Middle school completion (increased)
Amin et al., 2016	Bangladesh, 2012–15	BALIKA Project, Population Council, PSTC, CIDIN, mPower Social Enterprises	Married and unmarried girls aged 12–18, rural	To delay marriage by increasing girls' skills, self-confidence, and strategies to advocate for themselves	Empowerment	RCT, Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probability of child marriage (decreased) • Drop-out rates (decreased) • Knowledge of SRH topics (improved)
Ara and Das, 2010	Bangladesh, 2008–10	Adolescent Development Program (ADP), BRAC	Girls and boys aged 11–19, rural border districts	To increase awareness of HIV/AIDS related issues, marriage laws, gender equality, SRH, and dowry	Empowerment, Community	Quasi-Experimental, Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child marriage knowledge (not significant) • Knowledge of HIV/AIDS (increased) • Schooling outcomes (no impact) • Awareness of legal, social issues (increased) • Positive attitudes towards women (improved)
Austrian et al., 2016	Zambia, 2013–16	Adolescent Girls Empowerment Program (AGEP), Population Council	Girls aged 10–19, urban/rural	To reduce social isolation and build assets to facilitate intermediate and long-term positive change for girls' transitions to adulthood	Empowerment	RCT, High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timing of marriage, educational attainment, pregnancy/birth, experience of violence, or HIV/HSV-2 prevalence (no impact) • Transactional sex (decreased) • Use of condom at first sex (increased) • Empowerment outcomes (improved)
Baird et al., 2010	Malawi, 2007–09	Zomba Cash Transfer Program, Multiple	Unmarried girls aged 13–22, urban/rural	To improve school enrollment, educational attainment, marriage, and child-bearing outcomes	Incentive	RCT, Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marriage rates (mixed) • Pregnancy rates (declined) • Sexual debut (delayed) • School enrollment (improved) • Number of sexual partners (reduced)

Appendix 4: *Continued*

Study Details	Country, Years	Program, Implementing Organization	Target Population, Setting	Objectives	Approach	Evaluation Design, Quality	Outcomes
Baird et al., 2011	Malawi, 2007–09	Zomba Cash Transfer Program, Multiple	Unmarried girls aged 13–22, urban/rural	To improve school enrollment, educational attainment, marriage, and child-bearing outcomes	Incentive	RCT, High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marriage rates, UCT arm (decreased) • Pregnancy rates, UCT arm (decreased) • Dropout rates, both arms (declined) • Educational achievement, CCT arm (improved)
Baird et al., 2013	Malawi, 2007–09	Zomba Cash Transfer Program, Multiple	Unmarried girls aged 13–22, urban/rural	To improve school enrollment, educational attainment, marriage, and child-bearing outcomes	Incentive	RCT, Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marriage rates (mixed) • Pregnancy rates (decreased) • Access to financial resources (increased) • Schooling outcomes (increased) • Health outcomes (improved) • Household agency (improved)
Baird et al., 2016	Malawi, 2007–09	Zomba Cash Transfer Program, Multiple	Unmarried girls aged 13–22, urban/rural	To improve school enrollment, educational attainment, marriage, and child-bearing outcomes	Incentive	RCT, Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marriage rates (no impact) • Schooling outcomes (mixed) • Fertility outcomes (no impact) • Wage work (little impact)
Bandiera et al., 2012	Uganda, 2008–10	Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA), BRAC	Girls aged 14–20, urban/rural	To improve cognitive and non-cognitive skills	Empowerment	RCT, Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age at marriage (delayed) • Age at first birth (delayed) • HIV, pregnancy related knowledge (improved) • Risky behaviors (reduced) • Likelihood of self-employment (increased)
Bandiera et al., 2017	Uganda, 2008–10	Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA), BRAC	Girls aged 14–20, urban/rural	To improve the economic and social empowerment of adolescent girls	Empowerment	RCT, Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income generating activities (increased) • Adolescent pregnancy rates (decreased) • Early marriage, cohabitation rates (decreased) • Non-consensual sex (decreased)

Appendix 4: Continued

Study Details	Country, Years	Program, Implementing Organization	Target Population, Setting	Objectives	Approach	Evaluation Design, Quality	Outcomes
Brady et al., 2007	Egypt, 2001–07	The <i>Ishraq</i> Program, Population Council, Caritas, CEDPA, Save the Children	Out-of-school girls aged 13–15, rural	To change gender norms, improve literacy, life skills, health knowledge and attitudes, and civic participation, and gain policy-makers' support	Empowerment, Advocacy	Quasi-Experimental, High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child marriage attitudes (improved) • Schooling outcomes (improved) • Health knowledge (increased) • Gender equitable attitudes (improved)
Buchmann et al., 2017	Bangladesh, 2007–15	Kishoree Kontha and Conditional Incentive Program, Save the Children	Unmarried girls aged 10–19, urban/rural	To reduce CM and teenage childbearing through an empowerment program and/or a conditional incentive intervention	Empowerment, Incentive	RCT, High	<p><i>Conditional incentive only:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likelihood of marriage (reduced) • Adolescent childbearing (reduced) <p><i>Combined:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likelihood of being in school (increased)
Buehren et al., 2015	Tanzania, 2009–11	Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA) Plus, BRAC	Adolescent girls, urban/rural	To assist adolescents in achieving greater economic and social empowerment through life skill and livelihood training and safe spaces	Empowerment, Community	RCT, Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child marriage (no impact) • Participants' empowerment (no impact) • Reproductive outcomes (no impact)
Chow and Vivaldi, 2016	Ethiopia, 2012–14	N/A, Government of Ethiopia	Girls aged less than 18, their parents and communities, rural	To reduce child marriage through economic incentives and information about the potential harms of early marriage	Community, Incentive	Quasi-Experimental, High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child marriage (reduced) • Women's empowerment (mixed) • Educational outcomes (mixed) • Polarization in beliefs about CM (increased)
Duflo et al., 2015	Kenya, 2003–05	Education Subsidy program and the HIV Education program, Government of Kenya and ICS Africa	Girls and boys in grade 6, urban/rural	To decrease STI prevalence and teenage pregnancy using an education subsidy and/or abstinence-only HIV education program	Empowerment, Incentive	RCT, High	<p><i>Education subsidy only:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early marriage (reduced) • Adolescent childbearing (reduced) • School drop-out (reduced) <p><i>Abstinence-only HIV education program:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counteracts positive effects of subsidy

Appendix 4: Continued

Study Details	Country, Years	Program, Implementing Organization	Target Population, Setting	Objectives	Approach	Evaluation Design, Quality	Outcomes
Erulkar and Muthengi, 2009	Ethiopia, 2009	Berhane Hewan, Population Council and Ethiopia Ministry of Youth and Sport	Married and unmarried girls aged 10–19 and their parents, rural	To improve educational attainment, RH knowledge, contraceptive use and age at first marriage	Empowerment, Community, Incentive	Quasi-Experimental, High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferred marriage age >18 years (increased) • Age at marriage (mixed) • RH knowledge, contraceptive use (increased) • School enrollment (increased)
Erulkar et al., 2017	Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, and Tanzania	N/A, Population Council	Unmarried girls aged 12–17, rural	To delay CM through simplified interventions, including community dialogues, school promotion, and asset transfers	Empowerment, Community, Incentive	Quasi-Experimental, High	<p><i>Child marriage rates:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community dialogue (decreased for girls 12–14 in ET, 15–17 in BF) • Education promotion (decreased for girls aged 12–14 in ET) • Asset transfer (decreased for girls 15–17 in ET and TZ) • Comprehensive model (decreased for girls 12–14 in TZ, girls 15–17 in ET and TZ)
Gulemetova-Swan, 2009	Mexico, 2002–2004	Oportunidades, Government of Mexico	Adolescents and families in poverty, urban	To reduce poverty for families meeting the official criteria of poverty	Incentive	Natural Experiment, High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age at marriage (delayed) • Onset of premarital sex (delayed) • Age at first and second birth (delayed)
Hahn et al., 2016	Bangladesh, 1994–2011	Female Secondary School Stipend Program (FSSSP), Government of Bangladesh	Unmarried girls in grades 6–10, rural	To increase female enrollment and retention in secondary school, enhance female employment opportunities, and delay age of marriage	Incentive	Natural Experiment, High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age at first marriage (delayed) • Age at first birth (delayed) • Years of schooling (increased) • Probability of completing secondary school (increased) • Likelihood of women working (no impact)

Appendix 4: Continued

Study Details	Country, Years	Program, Implementing Organization	Target Population, Setting	Objectives	Approach	Evaluation Design, Quality	Outcomes
Hallfors et al., 2015	Zimbabwe, 2007–10	N/A	Never married or pregnant orphaned girls in grade 6, rural	To impact HIV infection, sexual debut, marriage, educational achievement, health-related quality of life, and socioeconomic status	Incentive	RCT, Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likelihood of marriage (reduced) • HIV infection (no impact) • Sexual debut (delayed) • School achievement (improved) • Health-related quality of life (improved) • Socioeconomic status (improved)
Handa et al., 2015	Kenya, 2007–11	Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (CT-OVC), Government of Kenya	Girls aged 12–24, urban/rural	To reduce poverty for families caring for orphans and vulnerable children	Incentive	RCT, Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likelihood of early marriage (no impact) • Probability of being pregnant (reduced)
Heath and Mobarak, 2015	Bangladesh, 1980s–2009	N/A	Women employed in the garment industry, urban/rural	To analyze the welfare effects of access to factory jobs for women	Other	Natural Experiment, High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age at marriage (increased) • Child-bearing (declined) • School enrollment (increased) • Employment (increased)
Hong and Sarr, 2012	Bangladesh, 1990–2012	Female Secondary School Stipend Program (FSSSP), Government of Bangladesh	Unmarried girls grades 6–10, rural	To increase enrollment rates in secondary school, enhance enrollment opportunities, and delay age at marriage	Incentive	Natural Experiment, High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age at marriage (increased) • Labor force participation (increased) • Educational attainment (increased)
Independent Evaluation Group, 2011	Pakistan, 2003–08	Punjab Female School Stipend Program (FSSP), Provincial Government of Pakistan	Girls in grades 6–10, urban/rural	To improve educational attainment among girls and decrease gender gaps at the middle school and high school levels	Incentive	Natural Experiment, High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age at marriage (delayed) • Adolescent pregnancy (suggestive decrease) • Enrollment rates (increased) • Completion of high school (increased) • Labor market participation (decreased)
Jensen, 2012	India, 2003–06	N/A	Girls aged 15–21, rural	To examine the effect of an exogenous change in labor market opportunities for women	Empowerment	RCT, Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likelihood of getting married (decreased) • Likelihood of childbearing (reduced) • Employment gains • School enrollment (increased) • BMI (increased)

Appendix 4: Continued

Study Details	Country, Years	Program, Implementing Organization	Target Population, Setting	Objectives	Approach	Evaluation Design, Quality	Outcomes
Kanesathasan et al., 2008	India, 2005–07	The Development Initiative Supporting Healthy Adolescents (DISHA) Program, ICRW, Local NGOs	Married and unmarried girls and boys aged 14–24, rural	To increase access to contraceptive and SRH services, delay marriage and childbearing, teach livelihoods skills, and develop leadership capacity of adolescents	Empowerment, Community	Quasi-Experimental, High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age at marriage (increased) • Attitudes around marriage (improved) • Contraceptive use (increased) • Livelihoods skills and perceived self-value (increased) • SRH knowledge, attitudes (improved) • Uptake of SRH services (no impact)
Landesa: Rural Development Institute, 2013	India, 2012–13	Security for Girls Through Land, Landesa: Rural Development Institute	Girls, rural	To break the cycle of rural poverty using a curriculum on land-based livelihoods and land rights	Empowerment, Community	Quasi-Experimental, Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age of marriage (delayed) • Dowry practices (improved) • School drop-outs (decreased) • Economic and land assets (increased) • Legal knowledge and life-skills (increased) • Likelihood of having own income (increased) • Participation in land-based livelihoods (improved)
Nanda et al., 2016	India, 1994–98	Apni Beti Apna Dhan (ABAD), Government of India	Unmarried girls born from 1994–98 to families below the poverty line, urban/ rural	To delay child marriage and improve attitudes related to the value of girls	Incentive	Quasi-Experimental, High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marriage before age 18 (no impact) • Completion of 8th grade (increased) • Aspirations for post-secondary school (increased)
Pandey et al., 2016	India, 2010–11	PRACHAR Project (Phase 3), Pathfinder International	Girls and boys aged 13–21, rural	To provide adolescents with SRH knowledge and communication and negotiation skills	Empowerment	Quasi-Experimental, High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timing of marriage (no impact) • Age at first pregnancy (no impact) • SRH knowledge (improved) • Contraceptive use (increased)

Appendix 4: Continued

Study Details	Country, Years	Program, Implementing Organization	Target Population, Setting	Objectives	Approach	Evaluation Design, Quality	Outcomes
Pathfinder International, 2011	India, 2002–11	PRACHAR Project (Phase 1 and 2), Pathfinder International	Girls and boys aged 13–21, rural	To provide adolescents with SRH knowledge and communication and negotiation skills	Empowerment	Quasi-Experimental, Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child marriage attitudes (improved) • Knowledge of SRH (Improved) • Contraceptive use (Increased) • Years of schooling (Increased)
Rahman et al., 2017	Bangladesh, 2012–17	Skills Training for Advancing Resources (STAR), BRAC	Out-of-school girls and boys aged 14–18, urban/ rural	To enhance employment of school drop-outs through practical training and empowerment	Empowerment	Quasi-Experimental, High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early marriage (no impact) • Employment (increased) • Earning levels and financial assets (increased) • Health knowledge (increased)
Sambodhi Research and Communications, 2014	India, 2008–15	Deepshikha Adolescent Girls Groups (AGG), UNICEF	Girls aged 12–18, urban slums/ rural	To engage adolescent girls in protecting their rights and provide life-skills education	Empowerment, Advocacy	Quasi-Experimental, Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child marriage (decreased) • Political, economic empowerment (improved) • Social impact (significant) • School enrollment (increased) • Health knowledge (increased)
Save the Children, 2015	Bangladesh, 2014–15	Adolescent Health and Empowerment to Reduce Child Marriage (RCM) Project, Save the Children	Girls aged 10–19, urban slums	To improve knowledge of SRHR, delay marriage, reduce harmful practices, improve adolescents' economic situation, and strengthen policies	Empowerment, Community, Advocacy	Quasi-Experimental, Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence to advocate with parents for delayed marriage, refuse marriage before 18, help prevent marriage of other girls before 18 (increased) • Awareness on CM and SRHR (increased)
Scales et al., 2013	Bangladesh, 2006–10	Kishoree Kontha, Save the Children	Girls aged 10–19, rural	To build developmental assets of rural girls through peer education in social skills, literacy, and school learning	Empowerment	RCT, Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marriage status (excluded from evaluation) • Developmental assets (increased)

Appendix 4: Continued

Study Details	Country, Years	Program, Implementing Organization	Target Population, Setting	Objectives	Approach	Evaluation Design, Quality	Outcomes
Selim et al., 2013	Egypt, 2001–13	<i>Ishtraq</i> Program, Population Council, Caritas, CEDPA, Save the Children	Out-of-school girls aged 12–15, rural	To improve schooling, health, and economic development by improving self-confidence, self-awareness, and community gender norms	Empowerment, Advocacy	Quasi-Experimental, Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CM knowledge and attitudes (improved) • Desire to delay marriage until 18 (increased) • Knowledge and attitudes related to SRH, child bearing, FGM/C, and gender roles (improved) • Functional literacy and life-skills (improved) • Mobility (improved)
Shahnaz and Karim, 2008	Bangladesh, 2005–07	Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA), BRAC	Girls aged 10–24, urban and rural	To create empowering opportunities for girls and equip them with psycho-social and interpersonal skills to make decisions that promote well-being	Empowerment	Quasi-Experimental, High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age at marriage (increased) • STI and HIV knowledge (no impact) • School enrollment rates (no impact) • Economic empowerment (improved) • Mobility (improved) • Extracurricular reading (increased)
Yoder, 2008	Senegal, 2000–06	Tostan Programme, Tostan	Women aged 15–49, rural	To encourage social change by developing capacity in human rights, problem resolution, basic hygiene, financial management, and health	Community	Quasi-Experimental, Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age at first marriage (unclear) • Female genital cutting (small decrease) • Health status of mothers and children (improved) • Use of services (improved)

Appendix 5: Summary of the Literature on Interventions for Married Girls^{122–127}

Study Details	Country, Years	Program, Implementing Organization	Target Population, Setting	Objectives	Approach	Evaluation Design, Quality	Outcomes
Ashburn et al., 2016	Uganda, 2013–15	Responsible, Engaged, and Loving (REAL) Fathers Initiative, Save the Children, Institute for Reproductive Health	Married fathers aged 16–25 with children aged 1–3, rural	To address gender norms that promote use of violence with children and intimate partners through promotion of positive parenting and partnership skills building	Empowerment	Quasi-Experimental, High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All forms of IPV (decreased) Confidence in non-violent resolution (increased) Positive parenting (mixed) Communication (improved)
Edmeades and Hayes, 2014	Ethiopia, 2010–13	TESFA, CARE and ICRW	Married girls aged 10–19, rural	To improve economic empowerment and SRH outcomes for married adolescent girls	Empowerment	Quasi-Experimental, Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SRH knowledge, use of services (increased) Contraceptive use (increased) Decision-making, communication (improved) Income-generating activities (increased)
Erulkar and Muthengi, 2009	Ethiopia, 2009	Berhane Hewan, Population Council and Ethiopia Ministry of Youth and Sport	Married and unmarried girls aged 10–19 and their parents, rural	To improve educational attainment, RH knowledge, contraceptive use and age at first marriage	Empowerment, Community, Incentive	Quasi-Experimental, High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preferred marriage age >18 years (increased) Age at marriage (mixed) Reproductive health knowledge and contraceptive use (increased) School enrollment (increased)
Erulkar and Tamrat, 2014	Ethiopia, 2008–13	Meseret Hiwott, Population Council	Married girls aged 12–24 and husbands, rural	To increase social networks and provide knowledge and skills to improve RH and prevent HIV	Empowerment	Quasi-Experimental, High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Husbands' support with domestic work, accompaniment to clinic, family planning, voluntary counseling, and testing (improved) Sexual violence (mixed)
Kanesathasan et al., 2008	India, 2005–07	The Development Initiative Supporting Healthy Adolescents (DISHA) Program, ICRW, Local NGOs	Married and unmarried girls and boys aged 14–24, rural	To increase access to contraceptive and SRH services, delay marriage and childbearing, teach livelihoods skills, and develop leadership capacity of adolescents	Empowerment, Community	Quasi-Experimental, High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age at marriage (increased) Attitudes around marriage (improved) Contraceptive use (increased) Livelihoods skills and perceived self-value (increased) SRH knowledge, attitudes (improved) Uptake of SRH services (no impact)
Pandey et al., 2016	India, 2010–11	PRACHAR Project (Phase 3), Pathfinder International	Unmarried and married girls and boys aged 13–21, rural	To provide adolescents with SRH knowledge and communication and negotiation skills	Empowerment	Quasi-Experimental, High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timing of marriage (no impact) Age at first pregnancy (no impact) SRH knowledge (improved) Contraceptive use (increased)

Appendix 6: Summary of Save The Children’s Programs and Initiatives to Address Child Marriage

Program or Intervention	Country, Years	Target Populations	Description	Evaluation
Adolescent Development	Bangladesh, 2014–ongoing	Adolescent girls and secondary school students	Livelihood interventions, awareness-raising about gender norms and CM, SRH, and menstrual hygiene management to promote equal opportunity to adolescent girls.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 65% increase in adolescents receiving ASRH services from government health facilities
Adolescent Development	Vietnam, 2016–ongoing	Adolescents and community members	Multi-pronged approach to improve adolescents’ SRH knowledge, attitude and practices, the quality and accessibility of health information and services, and the social and policy environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None available
Adolescent Girls Initiative - Kenya (AGI-K)	Kenya, 2015–ongoing	Marginalized adolescent girls aged 11–14	Includes educational, health, wealth creation, and prevention of violence interventions, including CM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project ongoing—early evidence of changes in attitudes toward CM in one community
Adolescent Health and Empowerment to Reduce Child Marriage (RCM) Project	Bangladesh, 2015	Adolescent girls aged 10–19	Interactive sessions on SRH, CM, and early pregnancy; strengthened local services; vocational training; and working with male decision-makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased girls’ ability to name harmful effects of CM Increased girls’ self-confidence and strength to refuse marriage before age 18 Increased the likelihood girls will refuse to marry before 18
ASPIRE	Malawi, 2014–18	Adolescents aged 10–19 and their communities	Activity to improve educational achievement for girls, addressing literacy, SRH education, and social norms and behavior change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project ongoing
Bien Grandir! (Growing Up Great!)	DRC, 2015–20	Very young adolescents aged 10–14 and parents, newly married couples, first-time parents, and teachers	In-school and out-of-school club activities as well as family and community engagement to improve gender-equitable norms, family planning, and SRH practices and outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None available
Choices Voices Promises	Multiple, including Bangladesh, Bolivia, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Nepal, Uganda, and Zambia	Very young adolescent girls aged 10–14, adolescent brothers, parents, and their communities	Curriculum for very young adolescents, their families, and their communities to increase knowledge, skills and opportunities to improve gender norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Girls felt empowered to talk to their parents about continuing their studies and avoiding early marriage Significant positive impact on creating a shift towards more gender-equitable attitudes

Appendix 6: *Continued*

Program or Intervention	Country, Years	Target Populations	Description	Evaluation
Choices Voices Promises (Adapted Curriculum)	Bolivia, Bangladesh, Egypt, Ethiopia, El Salvador, Malawi, Zambia	Unclear	Unclear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None available
Combatting Child Marriage and Human Trafficking in Mwanza and Neno	Malawi	Children, communities, community and district leaders	Comprehensive social-ecological approach to strengthening children, communities, community and district structures to prevent and respond to child marriage and trafficking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None available
Combatting Child Marriage in North Gondar Zone of Amhara Region, Ethiopia	Ethiopia, 2012–13	Unclear	Program to prevent child marriage and contribute to the attainment of girls' right to education and protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None available
Every Last Child	Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Honduras, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Nepal and Bhutan, Niger, Nigeria, Peru, Senegal, Uganda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, as well as advocacy offices in New York (UN); Geneva (UN); Addis Ababa (AU), and donor countries 2016–ongoing	Various, including adolescent girls	Global advocacy initiative to contribute to SDG targets and SC's breakthrough ambitions, focusing on exclusion. Select countries focus on CM.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varies by country
FACT with Pragati	Nepal, 2016–ongoing	Hard-to-reach married and unmarried adolescent girls and boys aged 15–25	Series of games to diffuse information about fertility awareness and family planning (including messaging around CM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project ongoing
<i>Ishraq</i>	Egypt, 2001–13	Out-of-school, rural, adolescent girls aged 12–15 and their communities	A literacy, life-skills, and sports approach to foster girls' self-awareness and build self-confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive effects on participants' knowledge and attitudes related to RH, marriage and child bearing, FGM/C, and gender roles • Participants more likely to want to delay marriage and limit childbearing

Appendix 6: *Continued*

Program or Intervention	Country, Years	Target Populations	Description	Evaluation
Keep it Real	Ethiopia and Uganda, 2013–16	Very young adolescents aged 10–14 and youth aged 15–24	Comprehensive sexuality education program for in-school and out-of-school youth with improved service access, provision, and coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External evaluation by ICRW—evaluation reports available
Kishoree Kontha	Bangladesh, 2006–10	Adolescent girls aged 10–19 and their communities	Community mobilization, SRHR and literacy for girls, financial literacy, and cooking oil incentive to improve girls' health, education, economic opportunity, and social well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substantial improvement in girls' developmental assets
Kishori Abhijan	Bangladesh, 2001–10	Adolescent girls aged 10–19, boys, and their communities	Awareness raising, peer-to-peer participatory education and life skills training, and community mobilization to lower school dropout rates and delay marriage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence that girls targeted under this project waited significantly longer to marry
Life Steps	Nigeria, 2014–17	Adolescents, families, communities, government and religious leaders	Comprehensive model to address child marriage at every level from adolescent empowerment and vocational skills training to family and community knowledge enhancement, to training CSOs and strengthening the legislative framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation ongoing
Local to Global	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India, Mexico, Sierra Leone, Yemen, Zambia, as well as advocacy offices in Brussels (EU), New York (UN), Addis Ababa (AU), and Geneva (UN), 2013–16	Children, civil society organizations, media, governments, and other traditional leaders	Program and advocacy approach to foster dynamic advocacy efforts from the community up to national and relevant global platforms to ensure governments are on track to prioritize and significantly invest in children, especially the most marginalized; (has CM focus)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative evaluation Stakeholders were able to strengthen their capacity and hold duty-bearers to account for delivery on strengthened policy, legal, and budget commitments
Marriage: No Child's Play	India, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Pakistan, 2016–20	Adolescent girls and stakeholders	Model social-ecological program to enable girls to decide if and when to marry and pursue their SRHR in a supportive environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation ongoing
Norad Cooperation Agreement	Mozambique, 2015–18	Adolescents	Multi-pronged approach of equipping adolescents with necessary skills and information, increasing their access to services and opportunities, and building their agency, while shifting social norms related to CEFM, SRHR, and gender equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None available

Appendix 6: *Continued*

Program or Intervention	Country, Years	Target Populations	Description	Evaluation
Pan-African CSE and Information Project	Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe	Community members, including parents, teachers, community and religious leaders	SRHR education to change restrictive perceptions around gender, sexuality, and child marriage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child marriage criminalized in Zimbabwe
Reducing Exploitation and Abuse of Children through Strengthening National Child Protection System in Bangladesh (REACH)	Bangladesh, 2011–16	Children and stakeholders	Program aimed to reduce the vulnerability of children from abuse, exploitation and other forms of violence with a small CM component	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities with program activities reported little to no cases of CM as compared with control groups where nearly all girls were married by 18
Reducing Child Early and Forced Marriage	Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, 2018–21	Unclear	CM prevention integrated with SRH, education and child protection components	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None available
Reducing Teenage Pregnancy by Keeping Girls in School	Mozambique	Unclear	Integrated child protection and health interventions to support completion of quality basic education by addressing barriers to access including CM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None available
Resources Towards Elimination of Child Vulnerability (REVE)	Cote d'Ivoire, 2015–20	Girls aged 12–24, parents, and community members	Awareness raising and sensitization of parents, caregivers and community members and empowering girls with accurate information and education covering CSE, cultural pressures, early pregnancy, gender norms, GBV, and consequences of CM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project ongoing
Strengthening Community Child Protection Systems to fight Violence Against Children (VAC)	Malawi, 2014–16	Families, communities, and institutions	Program to strengthen both the formal and informal child protection systems to be able to prevent, detect, and respond to all forms of exploitation, corporal punishment and neglect of children, including CM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in knowledge of adults who have the capacity to detect and respond to all forms of violence against children, including CM

Appendix 6: *Continued*

Program or Intervention	Country, Years	Target Populations	Description	Evaluation
That's No Way to Marry	Mali, Niger, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, 2015–16	Adolescents, communities, teachers, and other stakeholders	SRH and CM training in existing youth clubs, training of teachers and other professionals on child rights and protection, and a radio campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased knowledge about the detrimental effects of CM • Increased awareness of SRH services, though not service utilization
The Right to be a Girl	Dominican Republic, Sierra Leone, 2017–21	Married and unmarried girls	Social-ecological approach to prevent and reduce the acceptance and practice of early marriage, while ensuring support for adolescent girls who are already married	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project ongoing
TZA Supporting Civil Society to Counter Harmful Traditional Practices in Sinyanga Region of Tanzania	Tanzania, 2018–19	Adolescent girls aged 10–19, men and boys, civil society groups, community members, elders, and policymakers	Program to empower and enable civil society in Shinyanga region to counter harmful traditional practices that violate rights of the most vulnerable children, notably adolescent girls, and share learning with other regions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project ongoing

Appendix 7: Summary of Save the Children’s Programs and Initiatives to Address Child Marriage in Humanitarian Contexts

Program or Intervention	Country, Years	Target Populations	Description	Evaluation
Building a Resilient Youth among Syrians and Jordanians	Jordan, 2015–17	Vulnerable youth and their communities	Informal education, life skills, and psycho-social support to improve vulnerable youth outcomes and protect them from the risks of child labor and CM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None available
CHANGES (or SNaP—Social Norm and Participation)	Somalia, 2016–ongoing	Women and girls, families, communities, and leaders	Harmonized package of approaches to enhance civic engagement to support gender equality, improve knowledge and attitudes on FGM/C and CM, and increase social and economic empowerment of women and girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project ongoing
Going Against the Grain: Protecting Girls Against Early and Forced Marriage in Somalia	Somalia, 2013–14	Girls, boys, family members, and communities	Program to strengthen institutions and civil society in crisis affected states by working to build capacity of government, community organizations and local partners to work to prevent CM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No formal evaluation • Found enhanced capacity of local officials and community to protect girls from CM and enhanced capacity of girls to protect themselves from abuse, exploitation, and harm through CM
The Right to be a Girl	Jordan, 2018–19	Married and unmarried girls	Girls empowerment, advocacy, and involvement of communities in transforming behaviors to end child marriage and empower married girls/young women to enhance their resilience and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project ongoing

NOTES

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- 3 Programs include Kishoree Kontha and Adolescent Girls Initiative—Kenya (AGIK). See Nina Buchmann et al., *Power vs Money: Alternative Approaches to Reducing Child Marriage in Bangladesh, a Randomized Control Trial* (2017), 1–42; Eunice Muthengi et al., *Adolescent Girls Initiative—Kenya: Qualitative Report* (Nairobi: Population Council, 2016), 1–40.
- 4 The term “child marriage” is used throughout the report to denote a formal or informal union where at least one of the parties is under 18 years of age. The authors acknowledge that individuals or organizations may prefer other terminology including “child, early, and forced marriage” (CEFM) or simply “early marriage.” However, as early marriage is frequently inclusive of adolescents and young adults above 18, and forced marriage may happen to anyone, regardless of age, we have chosen to use “child marriage” for clarity and accuracy. For further discussion on terminology, see Susanna Greijer and Jaap Doek, *Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse* (Luxembourg: Interagency Working Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children, 2016), 62–64.
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- 16 *Child Marriage in Humanitarian Settings* (London: Girls Not Brides, 2017), 1–7.
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