



**GIRLS NOT BRIDES**

The Global Partnership  
to End Child Marriage

# CHILD MARRIAGE AND VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN (VAC): AFRICA EXPERT CONSULTATION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN ALL CARE SETTINGS

*Ruth Koshal, Senior Africa Engagement Officer, Girls Not Brides*

**Nairobi, Kenya**

**20 June 2017**

Each year, **15 million girls** are married before the age of 18.

**700**  
MILLION  
WOMEN

Over 700 million women alive today were married before 18 -  
**nearly 10% the world's population**



- **45%** of girls under age 18 are married in **South Asia**;
- **39%** in **sub-Saharan Africa**;
- **23%** in **Latin America and the Caribbean**;
- **18%** in the **Middle East and North Africa**;
- and in some communities in Europe and North America.



If there is no reduction **1.2 billion girls will be married as children by 2050** – equivalent to the entire population of India.

Child marriage happens across countries,  
cultures, regions, religions, in stable and fragile  
contexts

Prevalence rates (% of women 20-24 years old first married or in union before they were 18)

01	Niger	76%
02	Central African Republic	68%
03	Chad	68%
04	Mali	55%
05	Burkina Faso	52%
06	Guinea	52%
07	Bangladesh	52%
08	South Sudan	52%
09	Mozambique	48%
10	India	47%

Highest absolute numbers (number of women 20-24 years old who were married before they were 18)

01	India	26,610,000
02	Bangladesh	3,931,000
03	Nigeria	3,306,000
04	Brazil	2,928,000
05	Ethiopia	1,974,000
06	Pakistan	1,875,000
07	Indonesia	1,408,000
08	Mexico	1,282,000
09	Democratic Republic of the Congo	1,274,000
10	Tanzania	887,000

# What is the impact?



**Health:** complications during pregnancy & childbirth, increases risk of HIV, and impacts children's health

**Violence:** physical, sexual, emotional abuse

**Education:** schooling often ends with marriage

**Poverty:** traps girls and families in a vicious cycle for generations

**Inequality:** limit future work and decision making; violates girls' rights



A young girl with dark hair in a ponytail, wearing a yellow dress and a white shawl, stands in a field of tall grass. She is looking towards the right. The background shows a sunset sky with a large tree on the left and a line of trees in the distance. The sun is visible on the right horizon.

# What will it take to end child marriage?

- Empowering girls
- Mobilising families and communities
- Providing services
- Establishing and implementing laws and policies

## What do we know about child marriage and VAC?

- Child marriage is a form of VAC which disproportionately affects girls
- Denies rights to health, safety, and education.
- Girls suffer from intimate partner violence, including sexual, physical, psychological and emotional violence.
- The greater the age different between girls and husbands, greater intimate partner violence
- E.g. Bangladesh, Uganda, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe, around 50% married girls aged 15-19 years experienced physical, sexual or emotional violence; 70% in DRC and Equatorial Guinea
- In 2012, 75% early marriages Juba, South Sudan involved rape

# What do we know about child marriage and VAC?

- Globally 44% girls aged 15-19 think a husband or partner is justified in hitting or beating his wife or partner. In Africa and the Middle East this figure is above half
- Child brides suffer from a range of harmful consequences:
  - Physical, sexual, emotional and psychological violence
  - Increased risk of HIV and other STD
  - Complications in pregnancy and childbirth
  - Girls with no education are 3 times likely to marry by 18 as those with a secondary or higher education
  - E.g. Malawi 2/3 of women with no education were child brides compared 5% with secondary school or higher
  - Economic consequences e.g. preliminary research from the World Bank and ICRW indicates in Niger, eliminating child marriage could, between 2014 – 2030, lead to benefits of more than \$25 billion.

# How is child marriage a push factor that results in family separation or placement into alternative care?

- Currently lack of evidence and data on child marriage, a form of VAC being a push factor resulting in family separation or placement into alternative care
- Safe and confidential shelters sometimes required to protect girls from child marriage and FGM
- Girls who are survivors of child marriage or are at risk of becoming child brides often need safe accommodation and access to protection services.
- Girls who require long-term housing are referred to a halfway house e.g. Women for Afghan Women

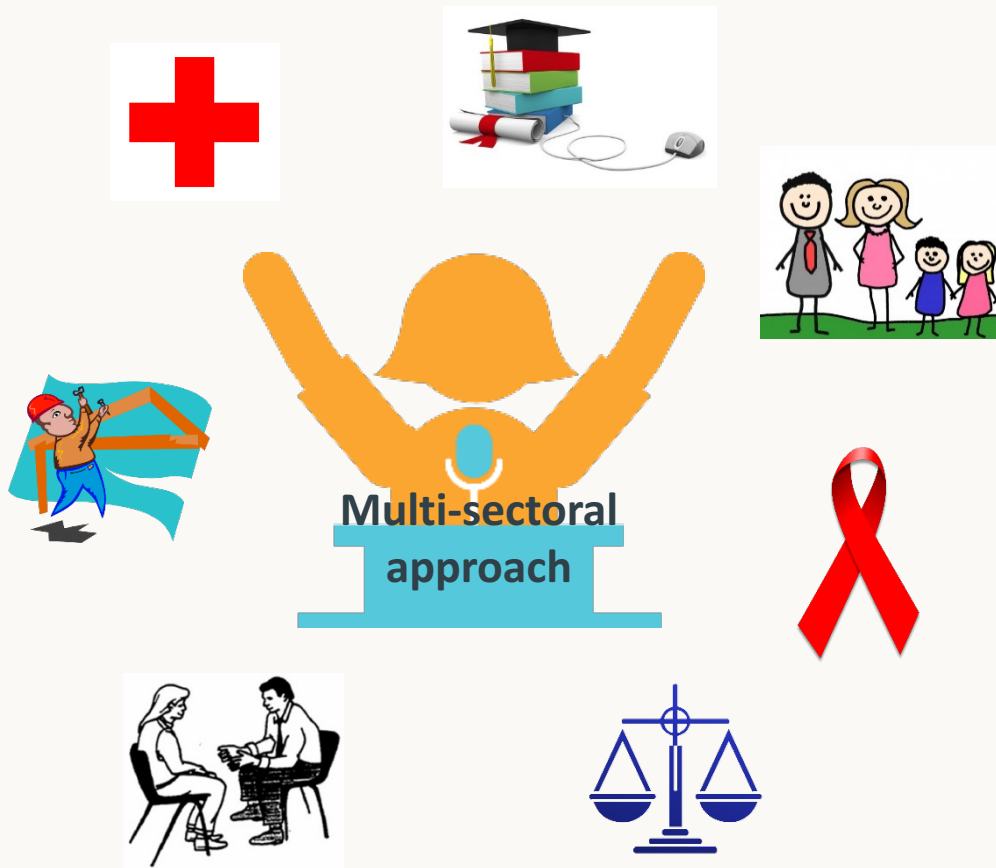


# What indicators and data are required?

Indicator	Data Source and Notes
% of women (married and unmarried) aged 15-49 subjected to physical or sexual violence in the last 12 months/at some time in their lifetime by an intimate partner/persons other than an intimate partner	Data are collected and made publically available by UNICEF and DHS. Country-specific sources may provide relevant data for 15-18 year olds. More localised data could be collected via community-or programme-level surveys.
Total and age-specific rate of women (married and unmarried) subjected to psychological violence in the last 12 months/at some time in their lifetime by an intimate partner	Data are collected and made publically available by DHS. Country-specific sources may provide relevant data for 15-18 year olds. More localised data could be collected via community- or programme-level surveys.
% of adolescent girls (married and unmarried) who feel confident in their ability to report and seek help with violence	A survey of individuals in the target population.
Number of child marriages that were investigated by the police/prosecuted by the law/resulted in a conviction.	A confidential review of police and court records.

Existence of a national strategy and plan of action to address gender-based violence that includes provisions for prevention of child marriage and other harmful traditional practices.	Review national legislation and legislative debates, where available. Review statements by cognisant ministers or other responsible national ministers.
Consultations with the target population on accessing services for child survivors of violence against children	Qualitative: # of services for child gender-based violence survivors conducting consultations with the target population to accessing the service x100 Quantitative: A survey of individuals in the target population, including information on the types of barriers children experience in accessing services for gender-based violence. Results should be disaggregated by sex and age.

# What indicators and data are required?



1. Increase research on the links between child marriage and VAC
2. Recognise and prioritise adolescent girls as a key population to target VAC programming
3. Link VAC programming with multi-sectoral initiatives to end child marriage and empower girls

Policy Frameworks or Programming Interventions  
to address child marriage and VAC

- **There is still very little comprehensive research on the causal links.** It is therefore vital that **research is funded to expand and strengthen the evidence base** so as to design more effective VAC and sexual and reproductive health and rights programmes for adolescent girls.
- Research is also required to **better understand the diverse needs of girls**
- Further **evaluation of programmes working to end child marriage**

**BUT the need for increased research should not hinder the action that is needed NOW to start integrating child marriage-related interventions in vac programming!**



**Increase research on the links between child marriage and VAC**



- Efforts to target adolescent girls with VAC programmes must also **involve families and communities**
- Men and boys need to be **engaged and empowered as positive agents of change** in addressing harmful gender and societal norms and promoting gender equality

**Recognise and prioritise adolescent girls as a key population to target in VAC programming**



- A number of countries are developing **national strategies, plans of action, and campaigns to tackle child marriage** across multiple sectors including health, education, employment and justice
- Other countries are exploring ways **to integrate child marriage interventions** into existing government policies and programmes across sectors.
- It is vital that **comprehensive child marriage and VAC programmes are linked to multi-sectoral initiatives** to end child marriage, particularly those focused on **sexual and reproductive health interventions for adolescent girls** and their sexual partners

**Link VAC programming with multi-sectoral national initiatives to end child marriage and empower girls**



- **Global and regional level:** Technical input, leveraging funding, joint advocacy, research, designing tools to support stakeholders working at national levels (e.g. capacity building, advocacy tools, etc.)
- **National level:** Work together across sectors e.g. ensuring everyone is at the same table to coordinate multi-sectoral efforts to address VAC and child marriage

# How can we work together?

# Prevention Strategies

## Prevention Strategies

- Mobilise and sensitise communities and individuals about the harmful effects of child marriage
- Create positive change at the individual and community levels around attitudes towards the value of girls in society, as well as create an enabling legal environment for ending the practice
- Provide girls and their families with viable alternatives to child marriage, including economic support and opportunities, as well as an education, particularly tied to the development of marketable skills
- Shift harmful beliefs around the acceptability of child marriage and other forms of violence, as well as promote positive role models for men and women

# Response Strategies

- Screening and response programmes, community mobilisation campaigns, and services such as legal aid, counselling, and shelters for at-risk girls, can protect married girls and mitigate additional violence faced by child brides.
- Including men and boys in prevention and response efforts.
- Sensitisation and mobilisation programmes that educate men and boys about gender-based violence should also include attention to the harms of child marriage, encourage them to champion women's and girls' rights, and teach them couple communication skills and peaceful disagreement resolution techniques

# Elimination of Structural Barriers

- Address structural barriers to girls' safety, such as marriage-related legal structures, laws, and policies
- Improving birth and marriage registration processes, which are vital for civic access to services, enacting or enforcing minimum age of marriage laws, and closing legal loopholes around parental consent and customary laws
- Promote laws and policies related to inheritance, asset ownership, economic entitlement, and family law
- Girls need access to justice through legal-aid and paralegal professionals who are educated on the issue of child marriage and the needs of married adolescents