



## Thematic Brief 2

# TAKING ACTION TO ADDRESS CEFMU

The root causes and consequences of child early and forced marriage and unions (CEFMU) in the Asia Pacific region are certainly diverse, and are combined in a myriad of ways in different countries, districts and communities across the region. Therefore, any programmatic intervention design must be based on the specific local needs assessment and tailored according to the specific causes and consequences of CEFMU in a given context.

In order to effectively tackle CEFMU, interventions must be holistic and have a multi-sectoral and diverse approach. In response to the multifaceted drivers and consequences of CEFMU, any programming intervention must ensure that there is engagement with a range of critical sectors, such as education, health, child protection and economic empowerment/poverty reduction, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and other services. Along with this, interventions should include awareness-raising and campaigning focused on social and gender norms change, address traditional practices and legal frameworks that are detrimental to girls, and work towards achieving gender equality.

This brief provides some guidance on how to go about planning, designing and preparing your CEFMU programme intervention, so make sure to keep reading!

## OVERVIEW OF THE TYPICAL CEFMU PROJECT CYCLE

The Project Cycle Procedure used by Plan International in designing and implementing its projects is outlined below. It provides a useful model for use as a starting point as you think about effective project design for your CEFMU intervention. Needless to say, feel free to follow your own preferred model instead if you have one.

Plan's project cycle is based on the principle of 'togetherness'. It highlights the importance of designing, preparing, implementing, measuring and reporting together with the communities and anyone impacted by the programming.

The minimum requirements for project design as outlined in the Project Cycle Procedure are identifying project ideas, identifying funding opportunities, designing the project, securing the funding, preparing for activities, and – finally – formal approval and signing the contract.



Let's look at this CEFMU project cycle in a bit more detail!

## 1. IDENTIFYING CEFMU PROJECT IDEAS

- Identify ideas, research topics and advocacy entry-points throughout the project cycle.
- Assess the relevance of potential ideas through consultations with stakeholders engaged in CEFMU-related interventions.
- Analyse rights gaps, root causes and needs in line with Plan International's global 18+ Theory of Change and Regional Strategic Framework Time to Act! or, for example, by looking at the Girls Not Brides' Theory of Change.
- Ensure that ideas are informed by data, evidence and learnings from current or previous CEFMU projects.
- Consider potential partners who are also working on CEFMU, or some related thematic areas, and engage them as early as possible.
- **Identifying funding opportunities** Map out potential donors interested in supporting CEFMU elimination and proactively communicate with key stakeholders to identify funding opportunities.
- Assess whether the funding opportunity should be pursued based on the nature of the potential project (e.g., does the project contribute to the country strategy, is it relevant to the local context, is it realistic?)

## 2. DESIGNING THE PROJECT

- Appoint a designated team and a project design lead of your CEFMU intervention.
- Develop a realistic schedule and send it for review and approval.
- Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework.
- Complete a risk assessment.
- Complete the narrative project design documentation.
- Develop a project budget.
- Finalise and submit project design documents.



## 3. SECURING FUNDING

- Submit the project proposals to donors with an interest in CEFMU work.
- If proposals are successful, negotiate contracts.

## 4. PREPARING FOR ACTIVITIES

- Start initial project activities while awaiting funding, if/as feasible.
- Create a project charter that outlines key roles and responsibilities, and describes project objectives.
- Create a project file with all relevant project documents.

## 5. FORMAL APPROVAL AND SIGNING THE CONTRACT

- Follow any relevant approval process that applies to your organisation.
- Sign contracts with partners and donors.



# ZOOMING IN ON THE DESIGN AND PREPARATION PHASES

## 1. CARRY OUT A NEEDS ASSESSMENT/SITUATION ANALYSIS: LEARN ABOUT THE CEFMU SITUATION, AND THE GIRLS AND COMMUNITIES YOU WILL BE WORKING WITH

### WHAT?

The gender-focused needs assessment process will help identify the most pressing CEFMU-related problems and causes that are current and that the intervention will aim to address. The needs assessment should be carried out before the project implementation starts to help inform the development of the most appropriate intervention to prevent, reduce and eliminate CEFMU. It will include an assessment of the resources available, opportunities for action, and the population's ability to meet those needs.

### WHY?

A needs assessment at the first stage of project design is important for understanding the needs of the girls and women, and the communities they are a part of. Investing in formative research and data mapping is critical to designing effective interventions. These activities will identify key populations and individuals at risk of CEFMU, reveal the drivers of CEFMU in a community, and lead to an understanding specific contexts. This understanding includes mapping out existing legal and policy frameworks, other organisations working in the area, stakeholder interests, and knowledge of beliefs and social and gender norms. Social and gender norms must be addressed throughout the life-course of a gender-transformative intervention, as mentioned earlier.



### HOW?

The needs assessment can include a desk review, surveys, focus groups and interviews to help gather data and evidence regarding CEFMU in the specific context. It is important that the correct questions are asked in order to determine the scale of the problem and what the current priorities are for the girls and women involved. Plan International's Index of Risk of Child Marriage Acceptability is a useful tool for anticipating how likely a community is to be accepting of the practice of child marriage, based on a range of environmental factors. The index assesses levels of risk of CEFMU, it can also help determine appropriate interventions and can be used to measure changes over a period of time.

### WHO?

As highlighted earlier, a participatory approach should be used across all stages of the project design. This means that needs assessments should be carried out in consultation with local actors. It is important to understand the needs and priorities of at-risk and married girls and women in order to design an effective intervention. Where it is possible and safe, girls, boys and women should be meaningfully engaged and consulted. This can include, for example, training young people as researchers and engaging them to gather qualitative information from their peers and communities about CEFMU trends, drivers and social norms. Participation is not only a right, it is a crucial prerequisite for avoiding incorrect assumptions, which can limit project reach and impact.

### TOP TIP!

Download the Plan International CEFMU Toolkit for Practitioners for guidance on what to look at in your Needs Assessment/Situation Analysis, and suggested data sources to use! [Download the Toolkit here](#)

## 2. DEVELOP INDICATORS: DECIDE ON MEASURABLE INFORMATION THAT IS MEANINGFUL AND ACCURATE

### WHAT?

Once the draft project design has been developed and the components including activities and expected outcomes of the intervention have been planned, quantitative and qualitative indicators should be developed so that the effects of the interventions can be measured. Indicators must be gender and socially inclusive to be appropriate and effective for CEFMU programmes, and should be clear, precise, realistic and feasible.

### WHY?

Indicators will help you evaluate if the project is moving in the right direction and will help you measure change, progress made and outcomes in relation to eliminating CEFM and preventing and reducing unions. Measuring changes for women and girls, and capturing changes in behaviour and attitudes is also important to reflect changing gender norms.

### HOW?

Practitioners should set indicators that specifically target the progress and intended outcomes of the project. Disaggregated data is important to ensure that reporting is accurate and complete. You may also want to use surveys to monitor shifts in attitudes and behaviours related to CEFMU. The range of indicators deployed for a project or programme is necessarily specific in order to allow you to measure changes as a result of your intervention. Longitudinal research and evaluation may be employed to measure impact over a longer period

### TOP TIP!

Download the Plan International CEFMU Toolkit for Practitioners for guidance on suggested CEFMU indicators to use! [Download the Toolkit here](#)



## 3. CONDUCT A BASELINE STUDY: DEVELOP A PICTURE OF CEFMU WITHIN YOUR OWN CONTEXT

### WHAT?

The baseline assessment will provide information on the current CEFMU situation your intervention aims to change and will help measure progress made and incremental improvements. Data should be segregated by gender, disability and other relevant categories to show the intersectionality of vulnerabilities.

### WHY?

Conducting the baseline study is an important step that will allow you to measure change and assess impact. The baseline is distinct from the needs assessment. The needs assessment establishes the context for the project, providing a 'big picture' perspective by gathering a wide range of social, economic and political information. The baseline study focuses on indicators and study metrics at the start of a project will enable practitioners to document and demonstrate progress over the project timeline.

### HOW?

A baseline assessment involves collecting accurate information, including disaggregated data, before the project begins. Much of the information from your needs assessment can be used for developing the baseline study. Depending on how detailed the needs assessment is, a decision can be made to conduct a 'light' or more rigorous and in-depth baseline study. Baseline information should be identified and gathered in such a way that the same data can be collected for comparison after the intervention.

### WHO?

As mentioned before, a participatory approach is key. As with the needs assessment, engaging girls, boys, women, community members and local organisations should be actively encouraged, where possible, to help shape and contextualise the project design.

### TOP TIP!

Download the Plan International CEFMU Toolkit for Practitioners for further details on conducting a baseline study! [Download the Toolkit here](#)



## 4. TAILOR YOUR INTERVENTION



### WHAT?

Now that you have a deeper understanding of your context and have a clear goal in mind, it's time to tailor your intervention accordingly. You should start with deciding the core components of your intervention – what are the big 'buckets' or 'building blocks' you want to focus on?

### WHY?

In order to ensure your project makes the biggest impact, it's important that the project targets key needs within the selected population.

### HOW?

If your assessments found:

- High rates of informal unions – then you may want to focus on the empowerment of girls, economic empowerment, and/or access to employment/livelihood opportunities.
- High rates of CEFMU – then you could include legal and policy-focussed interventions such as amending child marriage laws, changing social norms and/or providing access to SRHR services.
- High rates of violence, with linkages to CEFMU and unintended pregnancy – then you could include gender-based violence prevention and response, access to SRHR services, or empowerment initiatives.
- High rates of adolescent pregnancy within CEFMU – then you could include interventions on access to comprehensive sexuality education and SRHR, and access to school for married girls should be considered.<sup>1</sup>

## 5. ANALYSE RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

### WHAT?

At this stage major risks and assumptions in implementing a CEFMU intervention should be identified, and mitigation and control measures articulated and defined. A risk is any area of uncertainty that could be a threat to the project, its intended outcomes and to the communities you plan to work with. To manage and mitigate risks, they must first be identified and assessed.

### WHY?

For interventions focused on girls' and women's empowerment, practitioners must identify potential risks and how they can be mitigated. This important step helps rule out interventions that carry risks too severe to manage or justify pursuing. Assessing risks and mitigations early on will inform the project design in time to allow an opportunity to make adjustments accordingly. A thorough risk assessment is, of course, particularly important in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which poses health risks to individuals and communities alike, both among the implementers of the intervention and within the target communities. In line with the overarching principle of 'Do NO Harm', a robust risk assessment needs to be done in this regard.

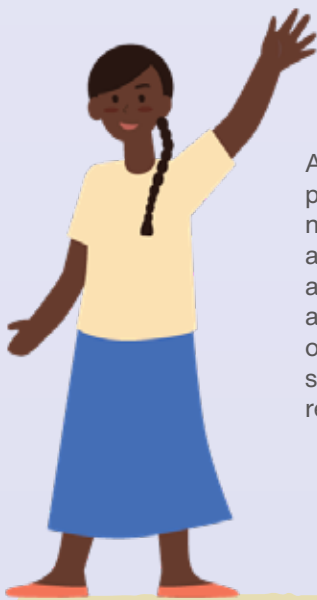
### HOW?

A risk analysis should address the following questions:

- What are the risks?
- Who is at risk?
- What is the likelihood or probability of the risk(s) occurring?
- What would be the impact on the project, its intended outcomes and the communities you'll be working with if the risk event(s) occurred?
- What steps can be taken to mitigate the risk(s)?



<sup>1</sup> Beyond Marriage and Motherhood: Empowering girls by addressing adolescent pregnancies, child marriages and early unions in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, UNICEF PPT



Assumptions are concepts that are accepted as true before they have been proven or demonstrated. When designing your project, you should be careful not to make assumptions, as doing so can skew the project outcomes. This is also why it is critical that the context for each intervention is fully understood at the needs assessment stage. The assessment stage should include an analysis of stereotypes and structural barriers that prevent the full participation of women and girls (or men and boys), and how the project will deal with these stereotypes and barriers. There should also be an assessment of any gender-related bottleneck that may reduce the effectiveness of the intervention.



## SPOTLIGHT: CHILD AND YOUTH SAFEGUARDING

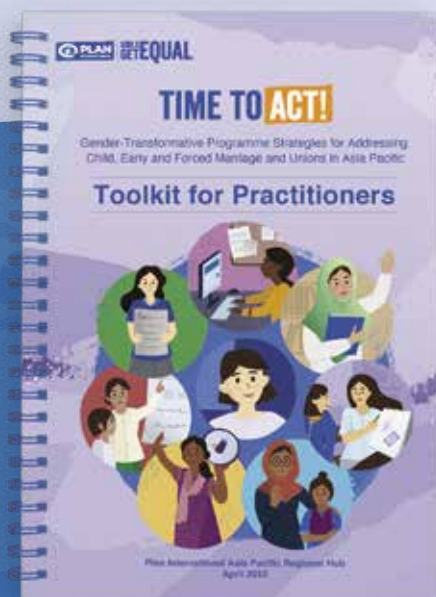
We need to be guided by Child and Youth Safeguarding policies and Codes of Conduct at all times when working with children and youth. You are welcome to refer to Plan International's Safeguarding Policy for inspiration in case you need to develop a policy for your organisation. [Download the Toolkit here](#)

## 6. FINALISE THE PROGRAMME DESIGN AND MOVE TO IMPLEMENTATION

Once you've carried out a needs assessment or situation analysis, conducted a baseline study, developed indicators and analysed risks and assumptions, you may want to consider rolling out a validation process with the key stakeholders you consulted and worked with in the design process. This could include prioritising different approaches and interventions. The project could then be refined using a series of iterations.

Then, it's time to plan out your key interventions to end CEFMU that correspond to tackling the specific root causes and consequences of CEFMU in your context!

In the Plan International CEFMU Toolkit for Practitioners, you will find a detailed overview of effective and promising strategic interventions organised into seven key clusters. Each intervention featured in the toolkit comes with key considerations and practical tips that Plan International in Asia Pacific and other parts of the world, as well as other organisations, have used in order to address the complex issue of CEFMU in different contexts. Moreover, it provides promising practice examples and a list of further reading and resources.



**LET'S GET STARTED  
TO TACKLE CEFMU!  
DOWNLOAD THE  
TOOLKIT TODAY!**

<https://plan-international.org/asia-pacific/publications/time-to-act-toolkit-for-practitioners/>