

Thematic Brief 3

IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIC CEFMU INTERVENTIONS

The root causes and consequences of CEFMU in Asia Pacific are certainly diverse and are combined in a myriad of ways in different countries, districts and communities across the region. Therefore, each programmatic intervention must be designed in a holistic manner, and must have a multi-sectoral and diverse approach. Interventions should of course also be based on the specific local needs assessment, and tailored according to the specific causes and consequences of CEFMU in any given context.

This brief provides an overview of effective and promising intervention strategies to guide practitioners addressing CEFMU across the Asia-Pacific region.



STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS TO ADDRESS CEFMU

A total of 25 promising intervention strategies for addressing CEFMU are organised below into seven key intervention clusters. You should, of course, bear in mind that the different clusters and themes are often closely interconnected, and many of the interventions are inter-related in practice.

All of the interventions proposed are important. That being said, it is not expected that all interventions will be applicable to every context or project. The list encompasses diverse programmatic areas and reflects suggestions and examples from practitioners working in very different contexts across the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. Each programme implementer, therefore, needs to decide which interventions to utilise as part of the strategy, depending on the specific country or local context:

- What data and evidence are available to indicate the nature of the structural barriers to eliminating CEFMU in the country or local context, including humanitarian or emergency settings and COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery, and ‘what works’;
- Your organisation’s on-going work and comparative advantages;
- National policies and priorities/opportunities and entry points for progress;
- Existing and potential resources of your organisation, and expertise and partnerships necessary to address the issue effectively and at scale.

A multi-sectoral and holistic approach necessarily involves working with a range of different stakeholders. To help you think through ways of involving and targeting the right actors, you will find a list of relevant stakeholders at the end of each intervention cluster below.



INTERVENTION CLUSTER A

INFLUENCING POLICY, LEGAL AND ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

OVERVIEW

A critical factor of CEFMU perpetuation across Asia Pacific is found in the weak legal frameworks, and/or in the lack of enforcement of laws and regulatory frameworks on age of marriage and other relevant aspects, and/or the co-existence of plural legal systems. It is crucial, therefore, to incorporate interventions addressing the legislative and policy frameworks as part of your programming and, more particularly, influencing. The adoption and implementation of laws and policies, and the creation of an enabling legal and policy framework should be at the heart of efforts to address CEFMU.

SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS (FEATURED IN DETAIL IN THE TOOLKIT)

- Analysis of laws, policies and their implementation as a basis for advocacy
- Advocacy with parliamentarians and policy makers

KEY STAKEHOLDERS TO CONSIDER

- Parliamentarians, policy makers, advocacy groups, youth leaders, media outlets and journalists, police, law enforcement officials, civil society organisations (CSOs) and child brides, wherever possible and safe to do so

TOP TIP!

Refer to the CFEMU Toolkit for Practitioners for promising examples and further guidance.



INTERVENTION CLUSTER B

AWARENESS RAISING AND TRANSFORMING NEGATIVE BEHAVIOURS AND SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS, AS WELL AS HARMFUL TRADITIONAL BELIEFS AND RELIGIOUS MISCONCEPTIONS

OVERVIEW

It is widely known that another critical root cause of CEFMU in Asia Pacific is found in the deep-rooted gender inequalities that subordinate girls and deprive them of their entitlements. This is reflected in negative, regressive and discriminatory social norms that have been deeply embedded in the societal fabric. Moreover, in some countries, and in specific pockets within countries in the Asia Pacific, there is a prevalence of harmful traditional beliefs and misconceptions or misinterpretations of religion that act as drivers and enablers of CEFMU. Incorporating awareness-raising activities and interventions that contribute to the changing social and gender norms and behaviours, whilst challenging traditional beliefs and religious misconceptions, are some of the first critical steps within projects to prevent and eliminate CEFMU.



SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS (FEATURED IN DETAIL IN THE TOOLKIT)

- Working in local communities to bring about attitudinal and behaviour changes so that people, in particular those in positions of power and influence, stop supporting CEFMU
- Educate and engage people in the community who are directly involved in the marriage process, such as registrars and marriage solemnisers
- Media and social media campaigns, and the use of digital technology
- Engaging religious and traditional leaders
- Engaging men and boys
- Behaviour change programming

KEY STAKEHOLDERS TO CONSIDER

- Parents, men and boys, community, community leaders including traditional and religious leaders, police, schools, media outlets and journalists, marriage registrars and solemnisers, match-makers, community-based child protection committees, government-sponsored child protection committees, and child brides wherever possible and safe to do so.

TOP TIP! Refer to the CEFMU Toolkit for Practitioners for Practitioners for promising examples and further guidance.



INTERVENTION CLUSTER C

EDUCATION

OVERVIEW

We know that a serious consequence of CEFMU is directly related to lack of access to education and school dropouts across the Asia-Pacific region. At the same time, CEFMU can often mean the end of a girl's education, which, of course, has a lasting effect on her life chances and opportunities. Along these lines, the discontinuation of schooling due to the COVID-19 pandemic increases the risk of CEFMU for girls in the region. Following such long periods of disruption, it is less likely that girls will return to school, and this increases the risk of them getting married early. Therefore, it is important to adopt interventions that support girls' continued education as part of your CEFMU programme strategy. In this section, you will find multiple approaches relating to girls' education to consider and draw ideas from.

SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS (FEATURED IN DETAIL IN THE TOOLKIT)

- Encouraging and empowering girls to continue with their education
- Sensitisation and training of teachers
- Additional education responses in the COVID-19 context (home-based/online learning)

KEY STAKEHOLDERS TO CONSIDER

- Young girls and boys, parents, teachers and school authorities, community leaders including traditional and religious leaders, policy makers, government departments, youth volunteers, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and child brides, wherever possible and safe to do so.

TOP TIP! Refer to the CEFMU Toolkit for Practitioners for promising examples and further guidance.



INTERVENTION CLUSTER D

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

OVERVIEW

Given that one of the most significant drivers of CEFMU in all settings is poverty, strategic interventions addressing economic empowerment are crucial. It is well known that socio-economic conditions often drive families to marry off their daughters early in order to obtain a dowry, or to simply reduce the number of dependents within the household. Across Asia Pacific, economic scarcity and the pressure it places on families to marry off their daughters early, is a common root cause of CEFMU, especially when payments are exchanged between families. In order to address this challenge, there are a number of possible interventions to consider as a part of your CEFMU programming strategies.

SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS (FEATURED IN DETAIL IN THE TOOLKIT)

- Skill training for girls for economic empowerment and livelihood opportunities for families

KEY STAKEHOLDERS TO CONSIDER

- Girls and young women, including child brides, wherever possible and safe to do so, parents, media outlets, men and boys, and CSOs

TOP TIP!

Refer to the CEFMU Toolkit for Practitioners for promising examples and further guidance.



INTERVENTION CLUSTER E

GIRLS' EMPOWERMENT, LEADERSHIP AND ACTIVISM

OVERVIEW

A crucial aspect for the success of CEFMU interventions is the involvement of the youth, and in particular girls, who are the most affected by this issue. Girl-led youth activism in different forms is an integral element of CEFMU interventions. Advocacy by girls and women can touch upon key concerns related to the norms, attitudes and behaviours that affect girls' autonomy and voice, including gender-based violence and discrimination. Such advocacy can also constitute important opportunities for girls to develop and display leadership skills. In addition, the establishment of youth clubs in school and outside of school settings is an important element to consider as part of your CEFMU intervention strategy.

SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS (FEATURED IN DETAIL IN THE TOOLKIT)

- Girl-led youth activism, youth forums and girl-friendly action plans in schools
- Awareness raising on gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights for girls and boys enrolled in school, and out-of-school children and adolescents
- Empowering girls to lead

KEY STAKEHOLDERS TO CONSIDER

- Young boys and girls, parents, men and boys, teachers, youth leaders, community leaders including traditional and religious leaders, policy makers, media outlets and journalists, women's rights organisations, CSOs, and child brides, wherever possible and safe to do so

TOP TIP! Refer to the CEFMU Toolkit for Practitioners for promising examples and further guidance.



INTERVENTION CLUSTER F

PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE

OVERVIEW

As a key consequence of CEFMU in many countries in Asia Pacific, far too many girls experience different forms of gender-based violence, including physical and sexual violence by their husbands once married. In many contexts, this has tragically increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. Reducing and preventing CEFMU requires upholding of human rights to avoid a further perpetuation of any kind of discrimination, abuse, violence, neglect or exploitation towards girls and women. Therefore, it is crucial to consider incorporating interventions relating to protection from violence as part of your CEFMU programming intervention. In this section, you will find a number of suggested interventions to choose from as you tailor your programme strategy.



SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS (FEATURED IN DETAIL IN THE TOOLKIT)

- Protection and legal services for girls and women against sexual gender-based violence (SGBV) and child marriage
- Strengthening existing child protection mechanisms, with a particular focus on CEFMU prevention and ensuring birth registration
- Increased use of national child helplines for reporting suspected or imminent cases of CEFMU

KEY STAKEHOLDERS TO CONSIDER

- Parents, men and boys, CSOs, healthcare workers, police, law enforcement officials, community leaders including traditional and religious leaders, match-makers, marriage registrars, child protection committees, media outlets and journalists, and child brides, wherever possible and safe to do so



TOP TIP! Refer to the CEFMU Toolkit for Practitioners for promising examples and further guidance.



INTERVENTION CLUSTER G

ACCESSIBLE AND QUALITY GENDER-RESPONSIVE SERVICES

OVERVIEW

There are multiple negative consequences of CEFMU linked to girls' health, including in the context of mental health where self-inflicted injuries and suicide occur, and related to sexual and reproductive health in the context of pregnancy and childbearing. It is, therefore, crucially important to ensure accessible and quality gender-responsive services to meet girls' needs. This includes but is not limited to ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, and services to reduce adolescent pregnancies and minimise risks of CEFMU. For intervention cluster G, you will find multiple suggested interventions to consider.

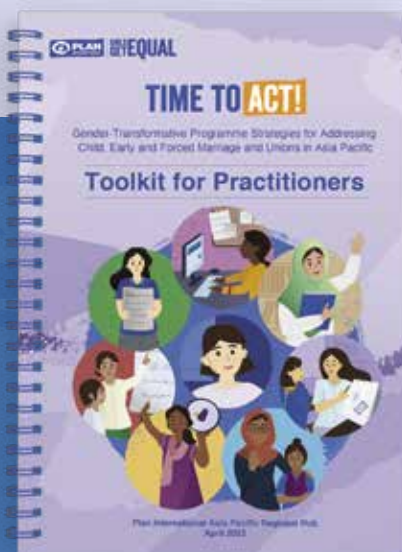
SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS (FEATURED IN DETAIL IN THE TOOLKIT)

- Mental health and psychosocial support services
- Working with child brides, in marriage or unions
- Availability of and access to SRHR services
- Sensitisation of health care providers and provision of gender-responsive reproductive health care services for adolescents
- Sensitisation of law enforcement officials, police, and crisis centres
- Addressing CEFMU vulnerabilities in emergency and humanitarian settings

KEY STAKEHOLDERS TO CONSIDER

- Child brides, wherever possible and safe to do so, parents, teachers, healthcare providers, counsellors and psychologists, CSOs, government departments, police, law enforcement officials, crisis centres, child protection committees, and child rights organisations

TOP TIP! Refer to the CEFMU Toolkit for Practitioners for promising examples and further guidance.



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TO ADDRESS CEFMU?
LET'S GO! DOWNLOAD
THE TOOLKIT TODAY!**

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