

Joint Assessment of Adaptations to the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage in Light of COVID-19



Brief – November 2021

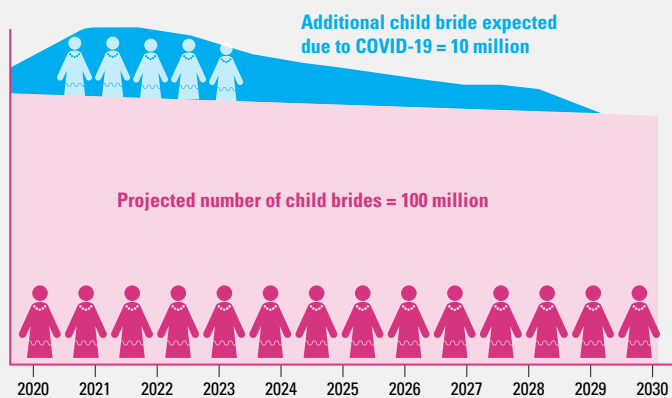


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The UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage was designed as a 15-year programme (2016-2030) to contribute to Sustainable Development Goal 5.3, which aims to eliminate all harmful practices, including child marriage. The COVID-19 pandemic hit at the very beginning of Phase II (2020-2023) of the Global Programme, and we know that it profoundly affected the everyday lives of girls, from their physical and mental health to their education and to the economic circumstances of their families and communities. Up to 10 million more girls are estimated to become child brides by 2030, as a result of the pandemic.

UNFPA and UNICEF evaluation offices conducted a joint assessment of the Global Programme adaptations to the COVID-19 crisis. The results of this assessment will inform further adjustments and refinements of the programme, to continue delivering in changing contexts and to accelerate the pace during the Decade of Action to eliminate the practice of child marriage.

The child marriage situation is changing significantly due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



School closures

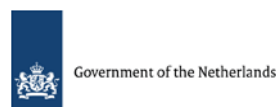


Poverty and economic insecurity



Interruptions in prevention and protection services

Source: United Nations Children's Fund, COVID-19: A threat to progress against child marriage, UNICEF, New York, 2021



▲ ASSESSMENT



The assessment aimed to:

- ▶ **Assess relevant contingency planning and implementation and alternative delivery and management arrangements** for the Global Programme **due to the COVID-19 pandemic**, taking into account the views of vulnerable adolescent girls, their families and communities, and key implementing partners
- ▶ Make **recommendations** for the immediate to mid-term **improvement of the Global Programme response to COVID-19**, identify ongoing programme changes, and recommend any additional support required to implement those programme changes and shifting priorities
- ▶ Make any **recommendations** required to **adjust the Global Programme Phase II to the new context**, including its theory of change and the targets established before the COVID-19 pandemic



Review of documentation, work plans, programme and research reports



Interviews with **85** key informants



Online survey with **80** programme and implementing partners' staff



Group discussions with **46** girls, family or community members



Findings validated and verified through presentation to programme staff and national and global stakeholders

📌 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

01 —

C: Programme advocacy and engagement efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic kept child marriage on national agendas

R: Advocate with governments to continue developing legal and operational frameworks contributing to ending child marriage with a rights-based and multisectoral focus

03 —

C: Adoption of digital and mass media approaches demonstrated a high potential for sustaining engagement of adolescent girls at scale, although the digital divide should be considered

R: Develop complementary multi-channel approaches to reach target populations, ensuring that they foster two-way communication

05 —

C: The programme theory of change remains valid but poverty and economic drivers need to be stressed further in operational strategies

R: Articulate further the strategy to leverage social protection schemes such as cash transfer and income generation opportunities for adolescent girls and their families

02 —

C: The COVID-19 crisis underscored the vulnerability of adolescent girls in rural and remote areas

R: Reinforce efforts to reach the most vulnerable and marginalized adolescent girls, boys and their families

04 —

C: COVID-19 restrictions limited adolescent girls' access to health and social welfare support services

R: Continue technical support and explore the most effective approaches to ensure adolescent girls have access to essential services

06 —

C: COVID-19 programme adjustments created a high demand on data and evidence for adopted approaches

R: Continue adjusting monitoring, data generation and analysis in order to reinforce evidence-based programming