MORE THAN BRIDES ALLIANCE

MARRIAGE
NO CHILD'S PLAY

2016 – 2020
India, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Pakistan

A project of the More than Brides Alliance

MARRIAGE
NO CHILD'S PLAY

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FORWARD

Dear reader,

Over the last decade, awareness of the issues related to child marriage has increased markedly, and there has been a push for change. There has been a steady decrease in child marriage globally from one in four to one in five girls marrying before age 18. Even so, 12 million girls still get married each year, and due to COVID-19, experts foresee 10 million more child marriages over the coming decade.

Marriage is no child's play.

A girl getting married at a young age is a violation of human rights. It triggers a life pathway of diminished wellbeing and opportunities, which has consequences for the girl personally, for society and across generations.

A girl who marries young typically has few years of education, is less able to economically support herself, will get pregnant when her body is not yet fully mature, and is more likely to face violence from her partner or in-laws. All of this can lead to poor mental and physical health and further reinforce gender and other inequalities.

Ending child marriage, which is Sustainable Development Goal Target 5.3, is interlinked with addressing at least half of the SDGs: poverty, hunger, health, education, gender equality and other inequalities, economic growth, and violence. Without reaching Target 5.3, it will not be possible to achieve these other SDGs. While we take a rights-based stance that girls should decide if and when to marry based on accurate sexual and reproductive health information and within a supportive environment, there are also positive economic effects. The International Center for Research on Women and the World Bank have made the case that reducing child marriage in countries where it is now prevalent will significantly contribute to strengthening the national economy[1].

1 https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2017/06/26/child-marriage-will-cost-developing-countries-trillions--of-dollars-by-2030-says-world-bankicrw-report

Advocates for the rights of girls.

Various governments, United Nations institutions, NGOs, networks, researchers, movements, and activists are working together for the rights and wellbeing of girls, their communities, and society as a whole. The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs is an example of one donor that has spoken out, prioritized child marriage, and invested significantly in the UNICEF-UNFPA Global Programme to End Child Marriage, Girls Not Brides, and consortia of civil society organizations working on the issue.

Let me introduce you to the More than Brides Alliance (MTBA). The Alliance formed in 2015 and is composed of four international partners (Save the Children, Oxfam Novib, Simavi, and The Population Council). MTBA recently completed a five-year programme, Marriage: No Child's Play (MNCP), which was implemented in five countries: India, Malawi, Mali, Niger, and Pakistan, and funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Alliance chose to work in these five countries because of the high rates of child marriage (Niger: 75% and Mali: 52%), because of the high number of child brides (India and Pakistan), and because of high rates of teenage pregnancy, leading to child marriage (Malawi).

MTBA has adopted a holistic approach that is girl-centred and community-driven. The programme design is thematically integrated and creates opportunities and platforms for adolescents, particularly girls. This report is designed to document the last five years in broad strokes by describing the context and drivers of child marriage in the five countries, documenting the Alliance's programmatic approach, recognizing its expert partners, and celebrating its achievements.

For practitioners who are interested in a more technical and critical lens on MTBA's experience and lessons, I encourage you to refer to MTBA's Five-Year Narrative Report . For those who may be interested in quantitative or qualitative research conducted as part of the programme, please see the MTBA website or the website or Population Council / Oxfam Novib.

In reading this report, it is important to understand that the reach and coverage of MTBA's programme varied considerably across the five countries due to various contextual factors. It is therefore not possible to compare the results from one country with another. A few examples of this diversity include:
- India is densely populated, contributing to efficiency in reaching many people with limited resources.
- In Malawi, operating costs such as office supplies, vehicles, lodging, and food are high.
- In Niger where 75% of girls are married before age 18, talking about child marriage is new and can be met with discomfort or defensiveness by many people, including some of our colleagues.

Moving forward.

2020 was the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. And yet, we are losing ground on the SDGs. UNFPA estimates that due to COVID-19 an additional 13 million child marriages will happen by 2030. Girls Not Brides has pointed out that failing to meet Target 5.3 imperils progress on all of these goals. The pandemic's impact on the life paths of younger girls in particular is likely to be visible only after some years.

In light of today's grim realities, MTBA's work must continue. To achieve our dream, we need commitment, political will, and sustained partnerships that focus on agency and wellbeing: choice, voice, and rights. Our Alliance, together with our allies, has made a difference, but it will take many more grassroots activists and organisers, civil society actors, governments, and international authorities to truly shift the global realities and surmount the obstacles that girls, their families and communities face today. We need increased investment in adolescents – girls and boys – and communities, to create a more equal society and one that promotes everyone's rights and wellbeing. As MTBA, we believe that this is possible, and we are committed to continuing the forward progress – together.

Sarah Harris,

Alliance Coordinator, More than Brides Alliance
March, 2021

CONTEXTS AND INTERVENTIONS

Drivers of child marriage

Child marriage is related to gender and other inequities, social norms and taboos -including around adolescent sexuality- and poverty.
How these factors interact in different cultures and geographies varies significantly:

Family honour.

In India, Pakistan, and Niger, ensuring girls' virginity and sexual safety prior to marriage is seen as a key factor for ensuring family honour. This pushes families to marry their daughters when they are young, fearing either that girls will experience sexual violence or will decide to have sex and become pregnant out of wedlock.

Maybe she gets spoiled or maybe she gets pregnant or maybe she gets molested by someone. Due to this fear, we marry her early.
— Mother in Jharkhand, India

Dowry.

In both India and Pakistan, girls' parents pay dowry to the boy's family when they marry[2]. Dowry increases as a girl becomes older and more educated. Girls are therefore seen as a financial liability and investing in a girl's education is often not a priority.

I am telling you that in one family there are 3 out of 4 unmarried young girls, poverty is there, they think that get rid of this burden, or we will arrange her marriage after one half years, they make arrangements for her dowry.
— Father in Muzaffargarh, Pakistan

One day some young girls came to me and complaint that their parents arranged dowry for their marriage and their parents wants to get them married but they didn't want to marry. When I approached them, I asked them what the total expenditure of food their daughters take is, she does domestic chores so this is your duty to feed her at least and get her married as well.
— Woman in Shikarpur, Pakistan

Cohorts.

In Niger, for girls, marriage symbolizes becoming a respected adult member of the community. Many Nigerien girls are married along with other girls in their age cohorts; a girl would not want to be "left out" when her peers marry.

Il n'y a pas de filles du même age dont certaines se sont mariées alors qu'elles sont là en train d'attendre.

There are no girls of the same age of which some are married while others are there waiting.
— Unmarried Girl in Maradi, Niger

Premarital pregnancy.

In Malawi and Mali, premarital pregnancy is a pathway toward child marriage when sexually active girls become pregnant and subsequently marry to ensure that the child is born and raised within marriage. In these contexts, contraceptives may not be readily available, their use by women who have not previously had children is taboo, or adolescents may consider contraceptives to be unnecessary. In Malawi, an additional factor is the prevalence of transactional sex as a necessity due to poverty and lack of livelihood options.

Même à l'âge de douze ans, elle peut être donnée en mariage ; mais elle n'a pas grandi en corpulence ; mais si elle contracte une grossesse, tu la donneras en mariage parce que tu ne pourras pas la garder pour la soigner, prendre soin de son enfant. C'est ce qui peut amener le mariage précoce

Even at the age of twelve years, she can be given in marriage; but her body has not developed; but if she becomes pregnant, you give her in marriage because you cannot keep her to take care of her, to take care of her child. This is what can lead to early marriage.
— Father in Sikasso, Mali

Girls are getting married at the ages of fourteen to sixteen. This is happening because the girls' priority is money -they want to earn money. They end up getting married with a fellow young boy instead of waiting to get married when they are of age. We rely on fishing here: boys go fishing and after fishing they earn money, and they use that money to coax girls to fall in love and have sex, and they end up getting married after getting pregnant.
— Father in Nkhata Bay, Malawi

2 Dowry has been outlawed since 1961 in India, but it remains a common practice.

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Figure 1
THEORY OF CHANGE

Theory of Change

MTBA's work is based on a theory of change that shows five interconnected pathways that are important for achieving the overall goal (Figure 1).

IMPACT

Enhanced SRHR that improves the wellbeing and life chances of young people
Indicators
• # of teenage-, and unwanted pregnancies among adolescents and youth
• Degree of girls' control in intimate relationships
• % of girls married before 18 years
• % married girls who do not wish to become pregnant using contraception.
• % of girls (married and unmarried) who report having a say in marital and child bearing decisions

LONG TERM OBJECTIVE

Young people are able to decide if and when to marry and pursue their SRHR in a supportive environment

PATHWAYS

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE BETTER INFORMED about SRHR, including adverse effects of child marriage AND EMPOWERED to voice their needs and rights

OUTPUTS
• Young people have access to CSE, SRHR information, and LSE
• Young people have access to peer support networks
• Teachers and peer educators have capacity to deliver CSE, LSE and SRHR information

INTERVENTIONS
• Providing CSE
• Providing SRH information
• Providing Life Skills Education

PATHWAYS

INCREASED ACCESS to formal education, economic opportunities, and child protection systems for girls at risk of and affected by child marriage, and their families

OUTPUTS
• Increased safe school environment for girls
• Schools, PTA's and students prevent drop out and assist married girls to remain in/re-enter school
• Parents and communities understand the importance of girls' education
• Girls and their families have access to existing social protection schemes, CCTs, non-cash incentives
• Girls and their families have access to savings accounts and income generation opportunities.
• At risk-, and married girls have financial literacy skills
• Strengthened child protection systems

INTERVENTIONS
• Supporting schools to enhance safety and track/reduce drop out
• Linking families and girls to social protection schemes, income generating opportunities
• Providing financial literacy training
• Strengthening child protection systems

PATHWAYS

INCREASED UTILIZATION OF SRHR SERVICES that are responsive to the needs of young people, particular girls at risk of-, and affected by child marriage

OUTPUTS
• Quality youth friendly SRHR services are available, affordable, acceptable and appropriate
• Young people (including unmarried and married girls and boys) can access youth friendly SRH services
• Healthcare providers are able to deliver youth friendly services

INTERVENTIONS
• Increasing social accountability
• Linking young people to services through outreach and vouchers
• Training service providers

PATHWAYS

INCREASED ENGAGEMENT AND COLLECTIVE SOCIAL ACTION against child marriage and in support of ASRHR

OUTPUTS
• Influential stakeholders discourage child marriage and understand the SRHR of young people
• Men and boys are increasingly aware of gender norms and stereotypes
• Girls and boys are actively engaged in social mobilisation activities.
• Key stakeholders mobilise communities
• Media supportive of renouncing child marriage
• Community conversations are held on risks of child marriage and early childbearing
• Key stakeholders have increased knowledge and awareness on ASRHR and the harmful consequences of child marriage

INTERVENTIONS
• Supporting social mobilization
• Training media
• Supporting adolescents as agents of change
• Working with role models
• Engaging men and boys, traditional/customary/religious leaders
• Promoting community conversations
• Raising awareness
• Analysing barriers and constraints

PATHWAYS

SUPPORTIVE RIGHTS-BASED LEGAL AND POLICY ENVIRONMENT against child marriage

OUTPUTS
• Duty bearers have the ability to enforce laws and to implement policies banning child marriage
• Strengthened reporting and referral systems for child marriage cases.
• Law enforcement and judicial officers are aware of child marriage-related laws
• Policy makers recognize the need for stronger legislation and policy against child marriage in the best interest of the child
• Strengthened networks advocate for supportive policy, legislative and customary laws and their implementation

INTERVENTIONS
• Training duty bearers
• Conducting policy dialogue
• Creating policy champions
• Advocating for prevention of child marriage and ASRHR

Theory of Change for Marriage: No Child's Play

This theory of change was developed in 2015; since then, the Alliance has made a gradual shift from focusing primarily on ending child marriage toward a broader vision of promoting the wellbeing of girls. We did this because when we invested in girls' life skills, provided SRHR information, helped open alternatives such as education and economic activities, and engaged communities and service providers, we realized that the age of marriage is less important than girls' agency, ability to make their own life choices, and ability to raise their voices.

This is how we arrived at the title for our new proposal:

My Choice, My Voice.

MY CHOICE
MY VOICE

Pathways to Outcomes

Whereas the MTBA Theory of Change is composed of five pathways, for the purposes of implementation, partners worked on seven outcomes. This is because the second pathway of the MTBA Theory of Change (alternatives to child marriage) was divided into three outcomes (education, economic empowerment, and child protection) to enable implementers to plan activities for each outcome. The following shows the outcomes that correspond with each pathway:

Pathway 1:	Outcome 1	Young people are better informed about SRHR, including adverse effects of child marriage and empowered to voice their needs and rights
Pathway 2:	Outcome 2	Increased access to formal education for girls at risk of and affected by child marriage
	Outcome 3	Increased access to economic opportunities for girls at risk of and affected by child marriage, and their families
	Outcome 4	Increased access to child protection systems for girls at risk of and affected by child marriage
Pathway 3:	Outcome 5	Increased utilisation of SRHR services that are responsive to the needs of young people, particular girls at risk of and affected by child marriage
Pathway 4:	Outcome 6	Increased engagement and collective social action against child marriage and in support of adolescent SRHR
Pathway 5:	Outcome 7	Supportive rights-based legal and policy environment against child marriage

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Programmatic Approach

Outcome 1
Outcome 6

The MTBA Theory of Change rested on two foundational outcomes: (Outcome1) empowering youth, especially girls, and providing them SRHR information, and (Outcome 6) community engagement and collective social action. MTBA took an asset-building approach, focusing on girls' or youth groups or clubs as safe spaces for girls to build their confidence, self-esteem, and social networks, to raise their aspirations through means of life skills education and to access SRHR information. In parallel, the programme engaged parents and community members to generate a supportive environment for girls through connecting with various community groups and influential stakeholders and organizing campaigns, actions and events tailored to each context. Examples of activities include street theatre, slam poetry, marches, inter-scholastic competitions, mobile cinema, radio talk shows or soap opera series, mural painting, intergenerational dialogue, and trainings for law enforcement, judicial officers, paralegals, and media professionals. In Figure 2, the pie chart shows that across the five countries, the budget spent on Outcomes 1 and 6 was most significant.

Outcome 2

With regards to education (Outcome 2), the focus was on monitoring girls' enrolment and retention, creating a positive and friendly school environment for girls through strengthening and engaging with school management committees and parent-teacher associations. In some contexts, more intensive investments in bridging schools and basic literacy and numeracy were made, and those activities provided a platform for integrating life skills education content within the curricula.

Outcome 3

Life skills education and the Gender Action Learning System[3] were the foundation for economic empowerment (Outcome 3). Activities included conducting labour market studies, financial literacy trainings, forming village savings and loan or Savings for Change groups, and supporting girls and young women in small enterprise development.

Outcome 4

In all countries, MTBA partners built the capacity of child protection committees to identify cases and when needed to refer them to the government system (Outcome 4).

Outcome 5

Working with health service providers to strengthen youth friendly SRH services (Outcome 5) was done through training of service providers on how to make health services youth friendly; in some contexts, it was also necessary to supplement this with basic training on sexual reproductive health services for adolescents. Partners also introduced social accountability mechanisms using community scorecards to bring youth and service providers in dialogue about the quality of services and to monitor progress.

Outcome7

Lobby and Advocacy activities (Outcome 7) are described in a separate section, following this one.

Since the contexts in which MTBA has worked differ substantially, the strategies for the seven outcome areas have been adapted accordingly. In addition, different outcomes have been given different emphasis depending upon the context. The below section highlights a few key factors in each country to illustrate the specificities. Analysing how the budget has been spent across the outcomes at the global level and in each country brings insights in terms of how the programme has been contextualized. In practice, the outcomes are interconnected, and many programme activities addressed more than one outcome area, which is not represented in the financial data.

3   The Gender Action Learning System (GALS) is a tool for cohesion and equality in the community. It helps to plan daily life and individuals' economic activities, allowing them to develop a vision for entrepreneurship and their life plans. GALS changes power relationships and leads to collective actions defending the rights of women and girls.

Figure 2:
Percent Spent by
Outcome Overall

Outcome 1	29 %	Young people are better informed about SRHR
Outcome 2	13 %	Increased access to formal education
Outcome 3	14 %	Increased access to economic opportunities
Outcome 4	7 %	Increased access to child protection systems
Outcome 5	9 %	Increased utilisation of SRHR services
Outcome 6	23 %	Increased engagement and collective social action
Outcome 7	6 %	Supportive rights-based legal and policy environment

NIGER

Outcome 1	24%
Outcome 2	25 %
Outcome 3	9 %
Outcome 4	4 %
Outcome 5	6 %
Outcome 6	26 %
Outcome 7	6 %

Niger

In Niger, a little over half of girls ever attend school, and most drop out after only a few years. One reason the vast majority of girls get married so young is because school provides little prospect or opportunity. This is why partners in Niger invested more heavily in education as compared to other countries. Approaches included bridging schools to reintegrate children who either never enrolled in school or who dropped out after a year or two; literacy and numeracy courses for older adolescents who could no longer enter formal school; and extra support and incentives to help girls stay in secondary school, such as life skills sessions, bicycles, and menstrual hygiene kits.

Engaging men and religious leaders has been a necessary strategy in Niger to ensure buy-in and engagement for improving the situation of girls in the community. Analysis of religious texts to bring out the elements favourable to girls' education and against child marriage and disseminating sermons about these teachings was one means of spreading messages. In Maradi Region, "husbands' schools" in each village or neighbourhood took leadership and pride in supporting programme activities ranging from education to women and girls accessing health services. These groups generated a sense of solidarity and commitment.

Figure 4:
Pourcentage des dépenses
par résultat : Mali

MALI

Outcome 1	28 %
Outcome 2	4 %
Outcome 3	9 %
Outcome 4	8 %
Outcome 5	2 %
Outcome 6	36 %
Outcome 7	13 %

Mali

In Mali, while premarital pregnancy is a substantial driver of child marriage, it remains socially unacceptable for girls to have sex before marriage and talking about SRHR is highly taboo. MTBA initially addressed this by training and supporting peer educators and their teachers in school. However, later in the project, MTBA increased emphasis on out-of-school peer education due to the frequent and prolonged teacher strikes, which caused many youth to not attend or drop out of school.

In Mali, there was a substantial emphasis on community mobilisation through means such as intergenerational dialogues, mobile cinema and radio soap operas, and through partnerships with schools; for example, for joint organization of interscholastic competitions. Whereas in Figure 4, it appears that there was little spending on education activities, the reality is that within community mobilisation (Outcome 6), there was a strong emphasis on messages about girls' education, such as the importance of education for girls in general, and promoting school enrolment and retention.

Another unique dimension of the Malian context is that the baseline data showed that more Malian girls had experience with income-generating activities than their peers in other MTBA countries. Indeed, the project found that girls and young women were very motivated to engage through the Gender Action Learning System methodology and life skills education when they saw that those methods led to financial literacy trainings and entrepreneurship opportunities.

Malawi

In Malawi, there is a relatively high prevalence off premarital and transactional sex -leading to pregnancy and child marriage- as well as taboos around contraceptive use, thus MTBA emphasized providing SRHR information within youth groups and strengthening youth-friendly health services. One approach was working with the Government of Malawi's strategy for Youth Community-Based Distribution Agents (YCBDAs). YCBDAs are youth who receive training to provide their peers who live far from health care facilities with information, distribute basic contraceptives such as condoms, and make referrals to health service providers where appropriate. This strategy reduces the barriers for youth to SRHR. Another area of work was to foster social accountability through community scorecards and dialogue with service providers.

MALAWI

Outcome 1	26%
Outcome 2	6 %
Outcome 3	10 %
Outcome 4	14 %
Outcome 5	14 %
Outcome 6	25 %
Outcome 7	6 %

Since poverty in Malawi is a key driver of transactional sex, partners placed much more emphasis on economic empowerment approaches in the later years of the programme. This included a labour market assessment, financial literacy trainings, village savings and loan groups, and either linking to vocational training or to entrepreneurship opportunities and mentoring.

In parallel, community mobilization was a major focus, as reflected in Figure 6. The programme worked extensively with a diversity of community groups. Methodologies for engaging communities included theatre for development, publicizing the stories of role models, engaging male champions, organizing parenting circles and Annual Girls' Conferences, airing radio shows, and providing trainings in Gender Transformative Approach.

Pakistan

In Pakistan, the biggest investment was made in community mobilisation and engagement with gatekeepers and influencers through a strategy for Edutainment (educational entertainment). Mobile cinema was a key component in this along with theatre plays, rallies, annual celebrations, mural painting, and others.

Girls' access to education is a major challenge in Pakistan, limiting alternatives to child marriage. To counter that, the programme organized enrolment campaigns and collaborating with Parent-Teacher Associations as well as a 9-month bridging course in Sindh for girls to catch up and re-enrol in formal education and evening classes in Punjab that were accessible to married girls.

Life Skills Based Education (LSBE) was a key strategy as well. In Punjab, LSBE groups had to take place outside of school in community clubs. In Sindh, significant time invested in working with government to develop the LSBE curriculum paid off in that LSBE has been fully integrated into schools across the province. Teachers have been trained to deliver the content, and support mechanisms have been put in place for peer support, learning, and improvement.

PAKISTAN

Outcome 1	15 %
Outcome 2	17 %
Outcome 3	19 %
Outcome 4	10 %
Outcome 5	2 %
Outcome 6	27 %
Outcome 7	10 %

INDIA

Outcome 1	🟩	36 %
Outcome 2	🟥	13 %
Outcome 3	🟪	18 %
Outcome 4	🟪	3 %
Outcome 5	🟩	11 %
Outcome 6	🟧	15 %
Outcome 7	🟦	5 %

India

In India, the greatest investment of time and resources was in life skills education and empowerment of girls and boys as well as providing SRHR information (Outcome 1). Partners took an intensive approach, reaching out to every adolescent girl in intervention villages. In the later years of the programme, girls' groups began to collectivize as federations to speak out, campaign, and advocate for their rights at the community level and beyond. The lines between the first and sixth outcomes blurred.

The Government of India has created many schemes to reduce inequalities of girls who face different types of marginalization through providing financial and in-kind resources. In practice, many eligible girls and families lack knowledge or face barriers in accessing these schemes. The programme helped to close this gap by providing girls and their families with information about the schemes or through helping them to overcoming barriers (i.e. fulfilling requirements such as having one's own bank account, or obtaining the necessary personal identification documents, etc.).

Due to government restrictions on foreign funds, partners engaged in influencing and campaigning through joint initiatives and constant engagement and capacity-building with government representatives and workers in all types of activities, especially at Gram Panchayat, Block and State levels.

Over the past five years, the More Than Brides Alliance (MTBA) has leveraged lobby and advocacy efforts to push for girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

1305 examples of community-led collective action and engagement to end child marriage (CM) and support adolescents' SRHR documented

7522 community conversations on risks of child marriage and early childbearing took place

2022 influential actors and role models expressed positive views on SRHR and against child marriage during MTBA events or on platforms.

IMPACT:
MTBA has successfully influenced policies and policy-making processes at various levels.

83 laws, guidelines and policies were changed improving SRHR and CM

113 alternative policy approaches on SRHR and child marriage were suggested by MTBA to key actors (incl. governmental duty bearers and influencers, global multilateral actors and the private sector). These efforts resulted in

420 cases where important actors endorsed the alternative policy approaches presented by MTBA partners

1371 law enforcement officers, judicial officers and legal aid lawyers were trained on child marriage laws and gender sensitivity – as a way to support awareness-raising and improve the implementation of existing policies and laws

12986 (social)media lobby and advocacy activities took place to raise awareness

ADVOCACY AND INFLUENCING

The More than Brides Alliance approached influencing and advocacy based on an ecological model, which emphasizes the different layers of engagement with girls and communities at the centre, moving outward to districts, states, and provinces, and national and international spaces. These same concentric circles feature in the MTBA theory of change to visualize these layers of engagement and their interlinkages. This visualisation of the ecological model shows key activities and accomplishments that MTBA has documented in community mobilisation, collective action, influencing and advocacy.

INDIVIDUAL AND INTERPERSONAL

INDIA:
ililated the formation of Girls' Federations to enable collectivizing adolescent girls' groups. Girls' Federations undertook advocacy actions to fulfil their demands for SRHR.

MALAWI:
MTBA organised an event around the 2018 Day of the African Girl Child, that focused on 'Leave No Child Behind for Africa's Development'. During the event, MTBA provided platforms for girls to voice their issues, influence policy and engage with the audience. Girls directly lobbied officials from the Ministries of Gender, Education, Youth and Health.

MALI:
MTBA used peer education as an important tool for life skills education and awareness-raising of young people. MTBA identified and trained peer educators, including girls, on adolescent SRHR issues and communication techniques, and they cascaded their knowledge to youth and held intergenerational dialogues.

COMMUNITY

INDIA:
MTBA partners' efforts have led to "child marriage free villages." This initiative grew out of a community-based monitoring tool that MTBA partner VHAI developed and introduced with village health and sanitation committees in Odisha State. The tool includes the indicator, "how many child marriages are being conducted in your village in the last month and action taken." 36 villages managed to achieve no cases of child marriage, after two years of monitoring, and they were declared 'child marriage free.'

MALI:
MTBA uses the Gender Action Learning System, a community-led approach aimed at gender transformation and linking change from individual, household, community to macro levels. Girls and young women used GALS tools to develop a vision to improve their lives, analyse their relationships and strengthen their negotiation skills. They then use the tools to engage key family and community members to change power relations that stand in the way of achieving their vision.

NIGER:
In 2018, the programme identified and trained ten religious leaders who support ending child marriages and improving adolescent health and education. The Chief of Canton in Maradi and ten village chiefs signed a public engagement not to accept marriages of girls under 18 years of age. MTBA partners in Tillabéri supported eight communes to integrate gender-based violence and girls' education into their community development plans. MTBA partner, ANBEF, supported religious leader to develop Friday sermons on marriage, family planning and the importance of girls' education.

DISTRICT AND STATE

INDIA:
MTBA partners Bihar Voluntary Health Association and Voluntary Health Association of India developed a community-based monitoring tool on social accountability in consultation with Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Committees. Key outcomes were summarised in a brief and presented to district and state-level authorities, which led to authorities committing to drive change (e.g., putting in place monthly health counselling sessions for adolescents).

PAKISTAN:
MTBA partner IRC engaged in a lengthy advocacy process with various government education actors, ultimately resulting in approval of a life skills-based education (LSBE) curriculum by the Government of Sindh for use in mainstream education curricula at the district-level in 2018. This enabled the project team to train 120 teachers who provided LSBE sessions in 48 schools in Shikarpur and Larkana.

MALI:
A regional workshop in Ségou was organized with 30 community leaders and 30 religious leaders on the conventions and new laws on child marriage in force in Mali. The workshop provided a framework for inter-religious dialogue on the theme of marriage in relation to religious texts. As a result, the community and religious leaders of the seven communes and three circles where MTBA works in Ségou publicly committed to no longer celebrate child marriages.

NIGER:
The first National Forum on Child Marriage was organized in June 2019 jointly by MTBA with the National Ombudsman. The Forum brought together girls from Maradi and Tillabéri, customary and religious leaders, civil society, youth and international organisations as well as state representatives to discuss child marriage, the taboos around it, the reasons for the stagnation of progress on key girl-related indicators. As a result of the Forum, the Ombudsman wrote a letter to the President, and a roadmap was agreed upon.

NATIONAL

INDIA:
During the MTBA Alliance week in November 2017, MTBA members spoke to girls, religious leaders, community members and other stakeholders and organised a joint-session on advocacy.

MALAWI:
MTBA contributed to develop and pass the National Strategy on Ending Child Marriages, which was launched in March 2018. The strategy focuses on changing social and cultural practices, improving girls' access to education and their economic and livelihood empowerment, improving boys and girls' access to SRHR information and services, enforcing policies and laws to end child marriage, and developing strong coordination mechanisms. Following the approval, MTBA has trained law enforcers about the implications of the legal changes.

PAKISTAN:
MTBA successfully lobbied then leading party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf, to strengthen the country's stance on child protection. This led to the party improving its vision on child protection policies and including new provisions in its manifesto, such as on children's social welfare. It also enabled MTBA to influence key provincial and district level political leaders, by holding them accountable for their election policies and their implementation of child protection policies in Punjab.

NETHERLANDS:
Via Simavi, a member of the SRHR Advocacy Group, MTBA was able to advocate for keeping ending child marriage on the agenda of the SRHR community in the Netherlands. E.g., the group drafted a document and call to action to lobby the Dutch parliament. In 2019, as a member of Girls Not Brides The Netherlands, MTBA co-organised a mid-term review event in The Hague to present its results (along with Her Choice and Yes I Do Alliances), with the engagement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Girls Not Brides International.

(SUB-) REGIONAL

MALI:
In the run-up to the 2017 High-Level Meeting in Dakar, Senegal, MTBA influenced the agenda and visit of the AU Special Rapporteur on Child Marriage to Mali. This visit increased the attention for child marriage as an issue of concern and contributed to the drafting of a multi-sectoral National Strategy for the Abandonment of the Practice of Child Marriage. In 2018, MTBA organised workshops on the monitoring and reporting of national recommendations following the visit of the AU's Special Rapporteur.

INTERNATIONAL

MTBA:
Throughout MTBA's duration, Alliance members organised conference sessions and panels at international political events, providing opportunities for capacity-strengthening and exchange of relevant knowledge. Online campaigns were also organised during key international days on human rights and sustainable development.

INDIVIDUAL AND INTERPERSONAL

COMMUNITY

DISTRICT AND STATE

NATIONAL

(SUB-) REGIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

The following timeline focuses in on key advocacy activities at the international level, in which MTBA facilitated linkages between influencing work happening in communities, in districts/states/provinces, and nationally with relevant regional and international events and platforms.

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW) 2018
New York, USA

During CSW, MTBA organized a side-event entitled, Ending Child Marriage and Promoting Choice and Alternative Pathways for Girls. Speakers from Population Council, Youth Net and Counselling (YONECO), Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAI), and Association Soro in Mali participated in the event. 60 individuals attended the event representing a wide-range of organizations and institutions, including the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Gender in Malawi, and the Qibla Ayaz Council of Islamic Ideology in Pakistan.

2ND GIRLS NOT BRIDES (GNB) GLOBAL MEETING 2018
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

GNB Global convened a meeting offering space for leading global advocates to end child marriage to connect, learn, inspire and align with each other. During the meeting, MTBA engaged in organized activities and presented sessions on its successful implementation of Edutainment approaches and the Gender Action Learning System.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2019
Virtual, Global

On the 8 March, MTBA bolstered the visibility of country-level lobby and advocacy events and activities held in Mali, Pakistan and India through an online communication campaign.

HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM (HLPF) 2020
Virtual, Global

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF ENFORCEMENT OF CHILD MARRIAGE LAWS
AN VIRTUAL HLPF SIDE EVENT

During the HLPF, MTBA hosted a side-event: Unintended Consequences of Enforcement of Child Marriage Laws. Due to COVID-19, the event was hosted online and the pandemic's impact on child marriage laws formed a central focus of the event. The event brought together 223 people from across the globe. The audience consisted of national governments, donor foundations, universities, local and international CSOs, along with UN agencies and organizations, such as UNFPA, UNWOMEN, UNICEF, and UNESCO.

In the week leading up to the Forum, MTBA launched our Are You Listening? campaign, which brought attention to the absence of girls' voices in governments and organizations' responses to COVID-19. The campaign highlighted the pandemic's disproportionate impact on adolescent girls by focusing on three topics: education, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and gender-based violence. Moreover, in a Call to Action, recommendations were put forward for governments to take action on these key areas.

EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT DAYS (EDDS) 2019
Brussels, Belgium

The EDDs centred around Addressing inequalities: Building A World Which Leaves No One Behind - thus putting the SDGs at the centre of development. Over the two-day conference, MTBA took part in the organized sessions and connected with European CSOs, European Union parliamentarian and other actors working on sustainable development to lobby for targeted action on women and girls' rights.

PARLIAMENTARY BRUNCH
Virtual, Global

MTBA organized a Parliamentary Brunch to conclude the Are You Listening? campaign. The online event invited aspiring Dutch parliamentarians to commit to taking forward the Call to Action in their potential tenure following the Dutch elections in 2021. Moreover, to highlight the importance of action driven by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to end child marriages globally, the Dutch Ambassador for Women's Rights and Gender Equality, Pascalle Grotenhuis spoke. The Ambassador reflected on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' achievements and its vision in pushing forward the agenda to end child marriages. Lastly, the event showcased both MTBA and the campaign's impact to a broader Dutch audience of policymakers, candidate parliamentarians, individuals working at civil society and international organizations and the general public.

Candidate Parliamentarians Elections 2021

Alexander Hammelburg | Anne Kuik | Lenna Vromans | Nevin Özütok | Queeny Rajkowski
CDA | CDA | PvdA | GroenLinks | VVD

Timeline:

2017 10 - 19 July
2018 16 - 20 April
2018 12 - 15 November
2019 3 - 6 Juni
2019 25 November - 10 December
2020 20 December

2018 12 - 23 March
2018 25 - 27 Juni
2019 8 March
2019 18 - 19 Juni
2020 29 Juni - 9 July
2021 11 January

HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM (HLPF) ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2017
New York, USA

MTBA increased visibility for ending child marriage as a priority area and highlighted our work during HLPF. MTBA developed a Call to Action titled A Call for Ending Child Marriage by 2030 linked to the HLPF theme of Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world. The call to action urged governments, international organizations and civil society organizations (CSOs) to end child marriage by 2030 and it was shared different permanent missions to the UN.

MTBA also organized a side-event: Implementing The SDG's And Working Towards Eliminating Child, Early and Forced Marriage, A Special Focus on India. During the event, Population Council, Simavi and Voluntary Health Association India presented the case of India. During HLPF, MTBA used Twitter to engage in ending child marriage. Afterwards, *an interview and blog* were produced and shared online.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FAMILY PLANNING (ICFP) 2018
Kigali, Rwanda

4,000 people from 120 countries took part in the ICFP conference. Before ICFP, a youth pre-conference was held on 10-12 November that brought together 600 young people. MTBA partners took part in both events showcasing research outcomes of MTBA's work and lobbying for accelerated action on family planning and child marriage issues. The theme, Investing for a Lifetime of Returns, focused on the various investment returns that result from the adequate provision of family planning, ranging from education to economic development and environmental health.

2ND SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOR CHANGE COMMUNICATION (SBCC) SUMMIT
Bali, Indonesia

The SBCC Summit brought together over 1,200 actors from across the globe to discuss the theme: Shifting Norms, Changing Behavior and Amplifying Voice: What Works? Attendees included bilateral and multilateral donor-related stakeholders (incl. UN agencies), CSOs, universities, local government agencies, and independent consultants. Alliance members presented MTBA's work, lessons learned, and forward-looking recommendations.

WOMEN DELIVER 2019
Vancouver, Canada

MTBA was well-represented during the Women Deliver conference in 2019. MTBA staff and partners from India, Malawi, Mali, Pakistan and, a girl champion, Shalini from India, attended the conference. MTBA organized an interactive booth encompassing a variety of activities in the programme, including presentations, theatre-plays, songs and game sessions. MTBA also successfully put child marriage on the global agenda through its networking efforts and engagements in various panels and (side-) events.

GIVING GIRLS A VOICE AND A CHOICE

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV) 2020
Virtual, Global

During the 16 Days of Activism Against GBV, MTBA re-launched the Are You Listening? campaign, which featured stories from MTBA's partners and young people about the pandemic's impact on their personal lives, work and rights. In total the campaign reached over 1 million people online (including Mette Gonggrijp, the former Ambassador to Women's Rights and Gender Equality, Dr Natalia Kanem, the Executive Director of UNFPA, and child marriage organizations such as Girls Not Brides and Her Choice). The Call to Action was signed by approximately 105 organizations and over 188 individuals.

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV) 2019
Virtual, Global

MTBA joined the #SayEnoughCypher Campaign and shared videos produced by partners featuring shared spoken word poetry performed by girls from India, Mali, and Niger. In preparation, MTBA partners hosted workshops where local youth artists trained girls to draft and perform poems. MTBA partners and the global communications used a co-creative process to ensure girl's voices and agency were at the centre of the campaign. Additionally, MTBA partners in India, Mali, Niger, and Pakistan organised various events and rallies during the 16 Days of Activism Against GBV.

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated vulnerabilities already felt by marginalized populations, including those that the More Than Brides Alliance works with. The tables on this page depict the effect on the lives of girls and their household members.

How did we respond?

MTBA country teams started adapting their implementing strategies as early as March 2020 in response to the effects of COVID-19. MTBA's approach for all five countries and for all implementing partners was to comply with national government guidelines and to provide the flexibility necessary to respond to the crises.

Adaptations mainly consisted of cancelling or postponing face-to-face activities, limiting group sizes, and making door-to door visits. Some activities could be shifted to remote channels, such as sensitization or awareness campaigns with mobile vans in India, rickshaws in Pakistan, and through radio in all countries. At the same time, activities were switched to digital formats such as virtual trainings or done via phone to continue as much as possible what we had planned.

Youth and discussion leaders became hubs around which digital contact strategies were developed. These leaders helped to maintain programme staff's communication with girls. The channels of communication included phone calls, phone messaging (SMS), WhatsApp, Facebook, and radio broadcasts. Most of these were already in use prior to the pandemic but were upscaled and extended. Cell phones and internet credit were provided to group leaders where required to maintain contact. Parental consent was taken before distribution of phones to ensure that parents had no issues with the activity.

Impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic

PAKISTAN

GIRLS' SURVEY

HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Reported getting angry more quickly	32.4
Reported arguing more often	51.0
Reported praying more often	76.3
Reported helping household members more with chores or other tasks	71.9
Reported fearing and worrying about their own health and the health of their loved ones	83.5
Reported feeling more scared in general	69.1

TIME USE

Spent more time on unpaid care work	24.1

HOUSEHOLD FINANCES & INSECURITY

Contributed to household income	15.0
Decreased contribution to household income	24.9

EDUCATION DISRUPTION

Attended school before Covid but no longer attending school at the time of survey	15.4
No longer attending school but expect it's likely they'll return once schools reopen	39.3

RISK OF BEING MARRIED OFF & OF EXPERIENCING GBV

Agreed that 'women and girls are at increased risk of being married off during the COVID lockdown'	35.4
Agreed that 'women and girls are at increased risk of experiencing GBV during the COVID lockdown'	30.9

Girls aged 11–29 (N = 993)

PARENTS'/OTHER HOUSEHOLD ADULTS' SURVEY

INCOME & FOOD INSECURITY

Decreased contribution from girls to household income	45.4

EDUCATION DISRUPTION

Felt that daughters in household would return to school once schools reopen	64.3
Felt that sons in household would return to school once schools reopen	70.0

RISK OF EXPERIENCING GBV

Agreed that 'women and girls are at increased risk of experiencing GBV during the COVID lockdown'	14.3

Household adults aged 24–87 (N = 98)

INDIA · MALAWI · MALI · NIGER

GIRLS

	INDIA	MALAWI	MALI	NIGER
HEALTH & WELL-BEING				
Reported feeling more depressed	65.5	82.8	86.4	47.2
Reported tensions in the house increased	52.3	19.4	10.4	12.4
Worries about getting sick with Coronavirus	81.2	71.6	94.0	85.2
Worries about money	75.3	87.6	90.1	81.8
Reported that access to SRHR services is more difficult during pandemic	57.5	50.7	34.3	29.8
TIME USE				
Spends more time doing chores	61.6	49.8	42.8	36.0
Spends more time caring for children/elderly	51.2	45.9	58.6	37.5
Spends more time with friends	7.7	34.9	13.0	15.1
Spends more time in the house	92.9	62.6	71.9	50.3
HOUSEHOLD FINANCES & INSECURITY				
Participated in activity to earn money since Covid started	11.9	21.3	28.8	20.7
Earned less money than before Covid	47.2	75.9	52.3	40.2
Feels that violence in her neighborhood increased	16.5	32.1	14.5	11.8
EDUCATION DISRUPTION				
Attended school just before Covid closures	78.0	83.8	55.6	44.1
Reported having returned to school since reopening	6.7	90.1	96.9	96.9
	N = 1425	N = 763	N = 814	N = 600

PARENTS OR OTHER ADULT HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS

	INDIA	MALAWI	MALI	NIGER
INCOME & FOOD INSECURITY				
Feels that Covid-19 has negatively affected finances	85.5	79.4	82.6	78.0
Reported that household has experienced food shortages since Covid started	62.7	81.0	63.0	81.0
Reported that household has a girl who left the home since Covid started	0.3	12.8	14.1	6.7
GIRLS' EDUCATION				
Reported that at least one girl in home was able to continue studies during lockdown	90.5	74.5	47.0	46.7
Reported that at least one boy in home was able to continue studies during lockdown	88.3	69.2	47.0	43.4
GIRLS' TIME USE				
Girls spend more time doing chores	82.2	70.1	59.1	64.3
Girls spend more time caring for children/elderly	59.5	62.0	78.0	66.0
	N = 1425	N = 786	N = 482	N = 300

PARTNERS

Closely connected with girls and communities, civil society organization partners have been the driving force of the Alliance. Partners have brought deep, contextual understanding, experience, expertise, and creativity to shape how the Alliance's theory of change was put into practice in the day-to-day. This section showcases partners' achievements.

Mali | Niger | Malawi | Pakistan | India

Research and Technical Partners by Country

	MALI	NIGER	MALAWI	PAKISTAN	INDIA
Partner	Centre d'Etudes et de Recherche sur l'Information en Population et Santé (CERIPS)	Laboratoire d'Etudes et de Recherche sur les Dynamiques Sociales et le Développement Local (LASDEL)	Save the Children Malawi	Quaid-i-Azam University	Population Council India
Role	Research	Research	Technical Support Advocacy	Research	Research
Partner			Invest in Knowledge	Maryam Jawad, Independent Consultant	
Role			Research	Research	
Partner				University of Oxford	
Role				Research	

INDIA

Implementing Partners India

BIHAR
- Bihar Voluntary Health Association (BVHA)
- Fakirana Sister Society (FSS)
- Save the Children India
- Samagra Seva Kendra (SSK)
- Center for Health and Resource Management (CHARM)

JHARKHAND
- Network for Enterprise Enhancement and Development Support (NEEDS)
- Child in Need Institute (CINI)

ODISHA
- Save the Children India
- Association for Social and Health Advancement (ASHA-Odisha)
- Social Welfare Agency and Training Institute (SWATI)
- Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAI)

RAJASTHAN
- Save the Children India
- Shiv Shiksha Samiti Ranoli (SSSR)
- Urmul

INDIA: select key indicators

564 villages

2872 youth groups formed under outcome 1

72157 girls & boys trained by the project on SRHR, CM, communication skills

3098 community conversations organized by the project on risks of child marriage and early childbearing

NIGER

Implementing Partners Niger

MARADI
- Save the Children International Niger
- Association pour le Bien-Être Familiale (ANBEF)
- SongES
- ASEC Mungane
- ADD Fassali

TILLABÉRI
- Oxfam Niger
- SOS Femmes et Enfants Victimes de Violences Familiales (SOS-FEVVF)
- Association pour le Bien-Être Familiale (ANBEF)

NIGER: select key indicators

42 villages

115 youth groups formed under outcome 1

22722 girls & boys trained by the project on SRHR, CM, communication skills

897 community conversations organized by the project on risks of child marriage and early childbearing

Anbreen, Executive Director of Bedari, Pakistan

"If women are given leadership skills, they have this innate capacity to lead; they only need nurturing and guidance, as I saw first-hand how women mobilised themselves during the pandemic to help their communities, all by themselves," Anbreen said.

For someone who has been actively working for women's rights in Pakistan for 18 years, Bedari is not just an organisation she works for, it's part of Anbreen's life. Having spent her childhood in a rural district, Anbreen knows that women and girls across Pakistan do not have fair and equal access to the law, nor are they aware of how to protect their rights. This knowledge has guided Anbreen's work over the past many years. Anbreen started to work at MTBA partner, Bedari, as a volunteer back in 1999. There was no turning back for her, and she continued to work in numerous capacities with Bedari and other organisations advocating for women's rights in Pakistan. Today, Anbreen serves as the Executive Director of Bedari.

With COVID-19, however, everything about Anbreen's work changed. While in lockdown, women and girls were bound to their homes. They were not only cut off from schools and other essential services, but they were also inhibited from reaching out to policymakers.

"Most of the girls we worked with were pushed into isolation as they were stuck at home during the lockdown. During this time, we came up with an innovative approach to bring together women members of the Provincial Assembly (MPAs) to meet the girls we work with. We identified six members of Punjab Provincial Assembly, both from the ruling political party and the opposition and took them to the field, to meet the girls so that they can listen and learn what challenges and barriers they were facing during the pandemic."

These women policymakers were overwhelmed by the young girls' stories. For them, it was an eye-opening experience. The girls talked about early child marriages and why there should be laws to ensure that girls are married only when they are of legal age of 18. They also talked about their futures and their economic empowerment.

While the pandemic has indeed bought many challenges with it, there were some positive effects as well. Firstly, there was a change in perception as typically, men do not consider care work as a huge responsibility. During the lockdown, many men saw how burdened women and girls were with domestic care work and realised that it left quite a toll on them. Another positive effect of the pandemic was how women and girls perceive technology. Some women that are part of the economic empowerment interventions started to create online businesses. Lastly, local volunteers and social mobilisers were able to engage local philanthropists to procure critical rations. They also worked in mapping their communities to identify families that needed these supplies most.

With the lockdown easing up, Anbreen looks towards the communities she is working with to think differently when it comes to women's economic empowerment. Girls and women who become engaged in economic activities can share the burden of running a household, and when they do this, they reduce the chances of getting married early as well. During the lockdown, many families saw rising unemployment and deepening poverty. Now, there is a greater chance of women economic empowerment to be accepted by the community.

For the future, Anbreen is hopeful that the pandemic will leave lessons for the government as she expects that in future, a gender-responsive humanitarian response can ensure women and girls are protected from the debilitating effects of crises like COVID-19.

PAKISTAN

Implementing Partners Pakistan

PUNJAB
- Oxfam in Pakistan
- Bedari

SINDH
- Oxfam in Pakistan
- Indus Resource Center (IRC)
- Baanh Belli

PAKISTAN: select key indicators

120	160	38265	370
villages	youth groups formed under outcome 1	girls & boys trained by the project on SRHR, CM, communication skills	community conversations organized by the project on risks of child marriage and early childbearing

MALAWI

Implementing Partners Malawi

MANGOCHI
- Youth Network and Counselling (YONECO)

MCHINJI
- Youth Net and Counselling (YONECO)

NKHATA BAY
- Girls Empowerment Network (GENET)

MALAWI: select key indicators

133
villages

259
youth groups formed under outcome 1

3397
girls & boys trained by the project on SRHR, CM, communication skills

151
community conversations organized by the project on risks of child marriage and early childbearing

Takondwa, Program Manager at GENET, Malawi

Takondwa is a Programme Manager with MTBA partner, Girl Empowerment Network (GENET) in Malawi. She has been working with MTBA since it started and has a wealth of experience in working on gender issues. She is very passionate about her work and said,

"I feel that when women are given the right skills and capacity they can change their lives."

When COVID-19 hit in March, schools were closed, meetings were banned, and travelling was not allowed. Takondwa explained how it was difficult for girls because schools closed suddenly and there was no information about when they would open again. Misinformation spread about the future of the schools and some believed they would never open again. Girls began to reconsider their education and make other plans. Since September, schools have reopened, but many girls have not returned.

The ban on travel during the lockdown decreased the availability of contraceptives and menstrual health products. Lockdown measures and stay-at-home orders disrupted supply chains, and girls became less mobile, decreasing their access to SRHR products and information. Takondwa explained how girls often access contraceptives and menstrual health products while going to school or at girls' clubs. This enables girls to collect these products freely and avoid their family's disapproval. However, with the lockdown, the chances for girls to leave the house were much more limited. Takondwa believes that the lack of contraceptives likely contributed to the increase in teenage pregnancies she now observed. While things have started to improve since the lockdown measures were lifted, there will be long-term negative effects on girls' lives from teenage pregnancy. Many pregnant girls will never return to school, and early pregnancy has many negative health implications.

COVID-19 responses required GENET to adapt their ways of working. At first, Takondwa explained how this was challenging because GENET's strategy is based on interpersonal communication and community mobilization. It was also difficult to use digital technology with the communities GENET works with because many do not have internet access. GENET had to find new ways of connecting and making their work more accessible. GENET began to produce comic books for young girls so they could still engage with these issues on their own. Takondwa says that they will continue working on making their resources more user-friendly for girls to use themselves without support or supervision. Additionally, more advocacy needs to be done for improved digital access.

What needs to change?
Takondwa told us how some school lessons were given on the radio, but they were not very structured. Furthermore, access to radio for women and girls is still challenging in rural areas where it is still used predominantly by men. Students need to be able to access education without physically being there.

COVID-19 showed that sometimes interventions rely too much on external structures for delivering adolescent health. Takondwa described how community-based agents were initially introduced to provide SRHR information and services due to some resistance from parents. As a result, the community-based agents bypassed the parents. However, when the lockdown began, schools, clubs, and community-based agents could no longer reach girls, leaving them with little access SRHR information and products. The pandemic demonstrated how the strategy to bypass parents by relying on external structures needs to be adapted, and parents need to be more engaged. Access to SRHR needs to be guaranteed no matter the circumstances.

In Mali, a Consortium within an Alliance: Interview with - Souleymane Traoré, Project Manager, Association SORO - Magnine Diarra, National Coordinator, FAWE Mali - Yacouba Konaté, Coordinator, Walé

Association SORO, FAWE Mali, and Walé are three NGOs that have formed a consortium for the implementation of Marriage: No Child's Play in Ségou, Mali. The consortium was founded on sharing visions and missions and above all on complementarity of expertise: FAWE-Mali specializes in girls' and women's education; A. Soro in girls' and women's empowerment, and Walé in reproductive health and rights. The consortium benefited from the three NGOs' previous working relationships since 2012 on projects such as My Rights, My Voice; and the pilot project, Child Marriage: 'Zo zijn we niet getrouwd.'

This interview was conducted live, beginning with
M: Magniné Diarra and **S:**Souleymane Traoré; **Y:** Yacouba Konaté joined the conversation part-way through.

What has MTBA offered to you as an existing consortium in Mali?
M: MTBA and the project MNCP brought visibility to our consortium. This has taken us far with the people in communities...
S: And also with strategic partners like schools and social services.

What have you been able to contribute to MTBA?
S: We have specific mobilisation strategies that we could share with other partners working on the project. And we have strengthened one another, mutually.
M: Yes, we were able to share innovative strategies such as the Gender Action Learning System and Savings for Change with the larger Alliance.
S: And also, MTBA gave us the ability to communicate messages from our project at international level, so in that way, we became more visible.

From your perspective, what were the primary results of MTBA, especially relating to changes in girls' lives?
M: For me, the real success and results of the project are the GALS champions who, now that the project is finished, continue to strengthen the capacity of other community members on Savings for Change, GALS, and entrepreneurship (GALS Business).
S: Yes, definitely, and I want to add that we have further professionalized our capacity-building work, because we created manuals that were translated into images according to the GALS strategy. This enabled us to facilitate sessions with those who have not had an education. This is true for GALS, Savings for Change, and entrepreneurship work but also for life skills education.

What were the primary lessons learned from the five years of planning and implementing the project?
M: That young women who are out of school can become youth with confidence, with capabilities, who can address community leaders and religious leaders. So that is possible! And this is thanks to the innovative strategies of MTBA!
Y: Yes, and it is thanks to the fact that we created alternatives to child marriage that appeal to people easily like GALS and Savings for Change, GALS Business – those allowed us to broach the difficult and sensitive topic of

child marriage with different community members.
S: I want to add about the creation of child protection committees. The members really took charge of the functioning of these committees, and communities participated and contributed actively to the change process.

And what about the obstacles? What would you say are the biggest obstacles?
M: It's the resistance of parents. There was a girl who became pregnant at age 14. Her father said to us: "if she is capable to become pregnant at age 14, she can do it just as well in marriage, because that's what she should do." We had to have a lot of conversations to push the marriage to 18 years old so that the girl could, even with her child, finish her studies.
Y: Another obstacle is that people do not want to denounce others. So if a marriage is planned, people do not want to denounce that. It's not done.
S: Another obstacle is linked to sustainability. We had agreed with community leaders that awareness raising and activities related to child marriage would be integrated into their community development plan, but we didn't have the resources to monitor that.

Do you think that the peer educator approach that was central to your work was fruitful and that it will continue to show results, even now that the project has ended?
Y: Yes, it was very fruitful because the project finished but the youth will stay. Moreover, a project that does not include youth is a project against youth! Messages are exchanged much better among youth. They have been strengthened: they even spoke in front of elected officials.
M: What worked very well was the learning system among peers, which created mobile groups that conducted sensitization, plays, and slam poetry for a diversity of audiences in other communities.
S: Yes, in fact the experiences with the Edutainment strategy such as theatre and choreography are now used in the context of other projects like the Spotlight Initiative.

MALI

Implementing Partners Mali

SIKASSO
- Save the Children International Mali
- AGIR pour l'environnement et la qualité de la vie

SÉGOU
- Oxfam Mali
- Association Soro
- Walé
- Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) Mali

MALI: indicateurs clés sélectionnés

42	**85**	**13853**	**3006**
villages	youth groups formed under outcome 1	girls & boys trained by the project on SRHR, CM, communication skills	community conversations organized by the project on risks of child marriage and early childbearing

ALLIANCE

Meaningful and lasting change – for example, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals – requires many different stakeholders and a shift in the ways of working toward 'global leadership.' Global leadership implies mutual capacity building of partners coming from different countries and perspectives to recognize and work with power dynamics to build more effective and sustainable collaboration. To what extent did the More than Brides Alliance exemplify this?

When asked about aspects of country alliances that were successful and beneficial, partners have emphasized mutual learning and capacity building.

The principle of 'global leadership' was not built into the Alliance structures from the start. The programme was designed mostly in the North, and its set-up was upward accountability driven. Clear structures for the participation of local partners in decision making were missing. There were tensions between the need for programme consistency and the intention to contextualise its implementation.

Over five years, partners' feedback showed positive progress in shifting power; for example, through increased flexibility with planning, lower influence on local partners' workplans and the increased involvement of partners in country-level decision making. Further, partners recognise added value from the global alliance in managing country level tensions, providing capacity building, facilitating learnings among local partners, enabling exposure to global lobby, advocacy, and networking.

MTBA has a strong experiential foundation to build on, and there is much more to experiment with and learn from in how we function as a partnership.

"Different partners had different skills and we all learnt from each other"

ACHIEVEMENTS

Over time, MTBA began to think of the five theory of change pathways and seven outcomes as three linked elements:

- Informed Decisions
- Alternative Life Paths
- Enabling Environment

We found that this simplified conceptualization streamlines and focuses our work, and it can be easier to understand. Below, we have chosen to present MTBA's achievements within each of these three areas. Note that the evaluation for India, Malawi, Mali, and Niger focused on girls themselves, so the data presented covers "informed decisions" and "alternative life paths" but not "enabling environment." The evaluation for Pakistan covers all three.

IMPACT
Enhanced SRHR that improves the wellbeing and life chances of young people

LONG TERM OBJECTIVE
Young people are able to decide if and when to marry and pursue their SRHR in a supportive environment

PATHWAY 1
YOUNG PEOPLE ARE BETTER INFORMED about SRHR, including adverse effects of child marriage AND EMPOWERED to voice their needs and rights

PATHWAY 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

PATHWAY 3
INCREASED UTILIZATION OF SRHR SERVICES that are responsive to the needs of young people, particular girls at risk of-, and affected by child marriage

PATHWAY 4
INCREASED ENGAGEMENT AND COLLECTIVE SOCIAL ACTION against child marriage and in support of ASRHR

PATHWAY 5
SUPPORTIVE RIGHTS-BASED LEGAL AND POLICY ENVIRONMENT against child marriage

ALTERNATIVE LIFE PATHS

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

INFORMED DECISIONS — INFORMED DECISIONS

OUTCOME 1 | OUTCOME 2 | OUTCOME 3 | OUTCOME 4 | OUTCOME 5 | OUTCOME 6 | OUTCOME 7

Key indicators (selected)

ℹ INFORMED DECISIONS

1730 number of girls who have convinced their parents to delay a marriage

2477 health care providers who were trained by the project on how to deliver youth friendly services successfully

950 social accountability systems used by the project to monitor health facilities

✦ ALTERNATIVE LIFE PATHS

1730 adolescent girls linked by the project to existing social protection schemes or scholarships or bridge courses in order for them to remain or re-enter school

2477 girls who were linked up with income generating opportunities through the project

950 CP committees engaged in the programme

⚙ ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

1730 documented examples of community driven collective action and engagement against CM and in support of ASRHR

2477 influential stakeholders/ role models/ frontrunners expressing positive views on SRHR and CM during events/ on platforms organized by the project

950 laws, guidelines and policies changed leading to a decrease of barriers to SRH, including CM

MTBA's achievements India

Impact:
- The MTBA program in India was effective in reducing proportion of girls currently married from 19.8% at baseline to 5.5% at endline.

Informed decisions:
- The MTBA program positively impacted the proportion of girls reporting being part of a club or group: 2.7% at baseline to 49.8% at endline.
- It also increased knowledge of child marriage: the proportion of girls able to name at least three adverse effects of child marriage increased from 28.0% at baseline to 45.8%, and the proportion able to identify the legal age at marriage increased from 61.9 % to 88.6%.
- Knowledge of HIV more than doubled in intervention communities in India from 22.4% to 50.2%

Alternative life paths:
- In India, the proportion of girls enrolled in school increased from 61.8% at baseline to 82.4% at endline.

✧ STORIES OF CHANGE

Alternative Pathways – Sunita Story, India, CINI
Nineteen-year-old Sunita is a regular student at the Lahanti Learning Centre, organized by MTBA partner CINI. Sunita has gained considerable respect from her instructors and fellow students. She also has not allowed her challenges to come in the way of education.

Sunita's parents are both daily wage labourers. Since she was a child, the family would migrate to another state in India for work during the harvesting season. In fact, the family has always lived without certainty of work and food. In the midst of this uncertain life, education was never a priority. Sunita went from irregular attendance at school to eventually dropping out.

An MTBA project team member came to her family during the initial house listing and survey phase. Sunita said, "[The project team member] said they wanted to help girls study and that they were going to open a centre for those who could not study. She said - you should come. I didn't really believe them in the beginning." Sunita's mother told her that she could give it a try.

Sunita explained how she was torn. On one hand, she wanted to learn, but she was also apprehensive about feeling overwhelmed, of not being able to manage. "The centre opened in November. I decided to go one day in December and see what it was about," she says. That first day drew her in. "They were playing games with the girls. They were not forcing anyone to study. I liked it," she says with a smile. "We learn. We play games. We play football. We draw. When I was at home, I did not have so many friends." Sunita described how she has come to enjoy learning mathematics and joined the karate classes offered at the centre as well.

Sunita's family's financial condition is still precarious, and she still has to work sometimes as an agricultural labourer. She earns between Rs 120 to Rs 150 for a full day of agricultural labour and uses the money earned to buy books, repair her bicycle and buy essential items for herself. Sunita wants to prepare herself and then take the examination. Her ambition is to become a teacher for children at the primary level. Do studies still overwhelm or make her feel apprehensive? "My fear is gone. Most of it," is her immediate and honest response.

"My fear is gone. Most of it."

Key indicators (selected)

INFORMED DECISIONS

88 number of girls who have convinced their parents to delay a marriage

75 health care providers who were trained by the project on how to deliver youth friendly services successfully

54 social accountability systems used by the project to monitor health facilities

ALTERNATIVE LIFE PATHS

1977 adolescent girls linked by the project to existing social protection schemes or scholarships or bridge courses in order for them to remain or re-enter school

755 girls who were linked up with income generating opportunities through the project

50 CP committees engaged in the programme

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

54 documented examples of community driven collective action and engagement against CM and in support of ASRHR

350 influential stakeholders/ role models/ frontrunners expressing positive views on SRHR and CM during events/ on platforms organized by the project

2 laws, guidelines and policies changed leading to a decrease of barriers to SRH, including CM

MTBA's achievements Niger

Impact:
- The MTBA program in Niger led to a decline in the proportion of girls reporting ever being married from 25.7% at baseline to 16.0% at endline.

Informed decisions:
- It also was effective in increasing the proportion of girls who could name three adverse effects of early marriage from 15.0% to 29.6% and the proportion of girls who could correctly identify the legal age of marriage from 18.9% to 31.9%.
- The proportion of girls who had knowledge of modern contraceptive methods increased from 48.3% to 64.4%.

Alternative life paths:
- The MTBA program in Niger increased the proportion of girls who were currently working for income from 23.8% at baseline to 67.1% at endline.

STORIES OF CHANGE

Informed Decisions – Mariam, Save the Children Niger
Mariam is a young orphan, eighteen years old, and is a pupil in ninth grade. She has been participating in the activities of the Life Skills Education (LSE) group for one year now.

"With this training, I learned that being a leader requires a lot of patience and sacrifice."

"With the LSE programme, we have learned that in life, one must not only set goals, but also give oneself the means to achieve them. For example, before, my goal was to become a teacher for the Ministry of Elementary Education. Now, with the different trainings I have received, I have decided that after obtaining my BEPC diploma, I will either continue my studies at the National Institute of Youth and Sports of Niamey to become a teacher of home economics or enroll in a health school to become a nurse. Also, with LSE, I learned to speak publicly. For example, if it were before I started the LSE activities that you came to meet me, I would not have been able to speak to you as I do now. We learned a lot about personal hygiene. Now I even counsel my sisters and friends who have not been through the LSE program about the behaviours they should adopt. I also give them education not only on how to prevent sexually transmitted diseases, but also on how to avoid them. With the leadership training I received, I now know how to get my message across without offending anyone. I used to be a mentor to my class. Because of the behaviour of the girls in my class, I almost quit. But the leadership training I received has allowed me to develop my leadership skills. With this training, I learned that being a leader requires a lot of patience and sacrifice. Now I know what strategy to adopt when I feel that my interlocutor is reluctant to talk to me. This training has made me more human because it has allowed me to no longer distinguish between my half-brothers and my direct sisters. Finally, I would like to say that before the training, talking about menstruation between girls was a taboo for me. But now we find it normal."

MALI

Key indicators (selected)

INFORMED DECISIONS

20 number of girls who have convinced their parents to delay a marriage

117 health care providers who were trained by the project on how to deliver youth friendly services successfully

14 social accountability systems used by the project to monitor health facilities

ALTERNATIVE LIFE PATHS

28 adolescent girls linked by the project to existing social protection schemes or scholarships or bridge courses in order for them to remain or re-enter school

1152 girls who were linked up with income generating opportunities through the project

39 CP committees engaged in the programme

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

108 documented examples of community driven collective action and engagement against CM and in support of ASRHR

109 influential stakeholders/ role models/ frontrunners expressing positive views on SRHR and CM during events/ on platforms organized by the project

1 laws, guidelines and policies changed leading to a decrease of barriers to SRH, including CM

MTBA's achievements Mali

Impact:
- In Mali, the mean age at marriage increased from 15.9 to 16.8 years from baseline to endline.

Informed decisions:
- The proportion of girls who knew that using a condom protects against HIV increased from 44.6% to 75.1%.
- The proportion of girls reporting that their community has a youth-friendly health center increased from 8.5% to 60.4%.

Alternative life paths:
- The proportion of girls reporting ever having attended school increased from 67.3% to 78.6%.

STORIES OF CHANGE

"Change is a story of men, women, girls, and boys who commit themselves to an ideal."

Enabling Environments –
Sékou Coulibaly, Gender Action Learning System Champion, Mali

Change is a story of men, women, girls, and boys who commit themselves to an ideal.

Sékou Coulibaly, is elected an elected official, a teacher by training, and an education advisor. He is one of the people who suggested that GALS be taught in schools with teachers and students through a pilot initiative.

His story has moved us a lot. He gave us a beautiful poem with a title of the project, Marriage: No Child's Play. What touched us about his story is that he comes from a very conservative Bambara family. According to him, among the Bambara, the head of the family decides everything, and this is not debatable.

His encounter with the MNCP project, and especially the GALS tool, made him realize that he could better lead his family by listening to the whole family. The GALS tool, Gender Balance Tree, allowed him to have a consultative approach. He liked this tool because it allows him to analyze the role of each person in the management of the family: household chores, management of expenses, roles in education, protection. What should be done to ensure that each member of the family is doing well? What does my partner, husband, wife need to be happy? What are the challenges? Who do I need to meet the challenges?

Today, Sékou says that he is the most fulfilled and happy man. He has the confidence of his family because every voice is expected, and every member of the family is involved in decisions.

Key indicators (selected)

INFORMED DECISIONS

813 number of girls who have convinced their parents to delay a marriage

75 health care providers who were trained by the project on how to deliver youth friendly services successfully

32 social accountability systems used by the project to monitor health facilities

ALTERNATIVE LIFE PATHS

838 adolescent girls linked by the project to existing social protection schemes or scholarships or bridge courses in order for them to remain or re-enter school

1837 girls who were linked up with income generating opportunities through the project

13 CP committees engaged in the programme

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

598 documented examples of community driven collective action and engagement against CM and in support of ASRHR

34 influential stakeholders/role models/frontrunners expressing positive views on SRHR and CM during events/on platforms organized by the project

20 laws, guidelines and policies changed leading to a decrease of barriers to SRH, including CM

MTBA's achievements Malawi

Informed decisions:
- In Malawi, girls who could correctly identify the legal age at marriage increased from 44.5% to 59.5%.
- The proportion of girls reporting that their community has a youth-friendly health center increased from 4.3% to 59.3%.

Alternative life paths:
- In Malawi, the mean number of years of education completed increased from 3.9 to 4.5 years from baseline to endline.
- The proportion of girls who could not read or write decreased from 32.3% to 14.4%.

MTBA's achievements Pakistan

Impact:
- The MNCP project positively impacted the percentage of girls getting married before 18 years old. At baseline, 26% of the girls were married before 18. This decreased to 11% at endline.

Informed decisions:
- Girls' knowledge on family planning, as well as girls' knowledge on marriage, positively increased because of the MNCP project. For instance, the percentage of girls with basic knowledge on menstruation almost doubled (from 23% to 67%), and the percentage of girls knowing the legal minimum age of marriage increased from 45% to 70%.

Alternative life paths:
- The MNCP project positively impacted girls' financial independence and literacy. For instance, girls' financial literacy increased from 1.0 to 1.7 on a scale from 0-3.

Enabling Environment:
- The enabling environment, proxied by household members' knowledge on harmful effects of child marriage and early childbearing, social norms on marriage before 18 years old, and attitudes towards gender equality, is positively impacted by the MNCP project. Household members reporting their personal attitudes that 18 or older is an appropriate age for marriage increased from 79% to 91%.

"First of all I take my own case. Mostly I was at home. I talked less. Since becoming part of this project, I now talk effectively, I can convey messages in a good way. I learned a lot of things and I want other girls to learn these things too."

Female interviewee, 17, Punjab

Key indicators (selected)

INFORMED DECISIONS

433 number of girls who have convinced their parents to delay a marriage

107 health care providers who were trained by the project on how to deliver youth friendly services successfully

0 social accountability systems used by the project to monitor health facilities

ALTERNATIVE LIFE PATHS

466 adolescent girls linked by the project to existing social protection schemes or scholarships or bridge courses in order for them to remain or re-enter school

412 girls who were linked up with income generating opportunities through the project

120 CP committees engaged in the programme

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

68 documented examples of community driven collective action and engagement against CM and in support of ASRHR

75 influential stakeholders/role models/frontrunners expressing positive views on SRHR and CM during events/on platforms organized by the project

1 laws, guidelines and policies changed leading to a decrease of barriers to SRH, including CM

EVALUATION AND RESEARCH

In each country, the MNCP programme involved qualitative research as well as a quantitative impact evaluation. In India, Malawi, Mali, and Niger, the impact evaluation was led by Population Council and in Pakistan by Oxfam Novib. Both evaluations were based on repeated surveys at baseline, midline, and endline and involved intervention and comparison groups, however, there were key differences in the study designs and methodologies followed in each evaluation. (Table 1) For more details and complete evaluation results, refer to the Population Council's 4-country Endline Evaluation Report and Oxfam Novib's Pakistan Endline Evaluation Report. More on MNCP qualitative research can be found at https://morethanbrides.org/resources-research/.

Table 1

Countries evaluated	INDIA, MALAWI, MALI, NIGER	PAKISTAN
Research Lead	Population Council	Oxfam Novib
Design	• Cluster randomized design in India and Malawi; quasi-experimental (matched) design in Mali and Niger • Repeat cross sectional surveys with girls in intervention and comparison villages at baseline, midline, endline	• Quasi-experimental design • Repeat surveys conducted with girls and parents/other adult members of their households in intervention and comparison villages at baseline, midline, and endline
Selection methods	• Participants selected via random sampling of household listing data	• New households selected using the random walk method • Past participants contacted to participate in later rounds of survey, with replacements selected via random walk method where past participants could not be contacted or declined to participate
Samples Sample sizes presented in Table 2	• Girls ages 12-19 at baseline, midline, endline Parents or other adult members of girls' households at endline • Sample sizes per country determined by power calculations conducted using Optimal Design	• Girls and young women ages 11-24 at baseline, 11-26 at midline, 11-29 at endline • Parents or other adult members of girls' households at baseline, midline, endline • Sample sizes determined by power calculations using Stata
Comparison groups	• Comparison group consisted of villages that did not receive the intervention • In India and Malawi, intervention and comparison villages randomized • In Mali and Niger, comparison villages chosen to match pre-selected intervention villages on key criteria (accessibility/distance from main road, population size, number of schools, number of health centres)	• Comparison group consisted of villages that did not receive the intervention. These villages are in different union councils than target villages, to minimize spill-over effects. • Comparison villages were randomly selected from a list of villages that matched intervention villages on key criteria (poverty levels, distance to schools/healthcare centres, community religion/customs) • For both intervention and comparison groups, selected samples were proportionate to size of village
Impact measurement	• Evaluation measured impact of programme package on girls at community-level	• Evaluation measured impact of programme on participants (girls and household members) compared to girls and household members who did not participate in the MNCP programme
Impact of Covid-19 pandemic	• Questions on impact of Covid-19 pandemic added to existing girl survey at endline • Survey of parents/other adult members of adolescent girls' households added at endline to measure impact of Covid-19 pandemic	• Questions on impact of Covid-19 pandemic added to existing girls and household survey at endline

Girls in studies were ages 12-19 — INDIA, MALAWI, MALI, NIGER

Girls in study were ages 11-29 — PAKISTAN

Percent of girls who were ever married

Comparison sample - - - -
Intervention sample ———

Percent of girls who were currently enrolled in school

Comparison sample - - - -
Intervention sample ———

Percent of girls ever pregnant*

Comparison sample - - - -
Intervention sample ———

* In Malawi, Mali, and Niger, this question was asked of all girls ages 15-19; in Pakistan, it was asked of all married girls; and in India, it was asked of all married girls ages 15-19.

Table 2: Samples size per country. Baseline - Midline - Endline.

Country	INDIA		MALAWI		MALI		NIGER		PAKISTAN	
Survey	Girls	Adult	Girls	Adults	Girls	Adults	Girls	Adults	Girls	Adults
Baseline	2,982	-	1,020	-	855	-	600	-	591	583
Midline	2,801	-	1,029	-	829	-	599	-	1,003	996
Endline	1,479	1,479	764	786	819	479	620	329	993	962

Governments, international organizations, and donor governments need to continue funding local NGOs and continue funding interventions on the grassroots level.

"Even if the intervention is so good… they are just a drop in the ocean."

"For child marriage to really see an impact at a national level, we need to go to more areas."

- Takondwa, Programme Manager GENET, Malawi

RECOMMENDATIONS

To a peer civil society organization that wants to engage on child marriage in its grassroots work, MTBA advises the following, based on experience:

- From the start, listen to girls and communities to discover the drivers and root causes of child marriage in the specific context.
- Involve girls in developing a girl-centered, asset-building, empowerment approach as a foundation.
- With respect for each context, find appropriate ways to broach sensitive issues with girls and communities, rather than avoiding them. This includes SRH topics, rights, and intersectional and gender inequalities.
- In the context, identify alternatives to child marriage that are realistic, viable and attractive to girls: without these alternatives, child marriage may remain the best option.
- Continually engage families and communities to be agents in the change process and to identify and explore social and gender norms that contribute to child marriage.

To our allies in government and public policy, MTBA advises to:

- Listen to the voices of girls in all issues that concern them.
- Support and create space for girl-led movements and collective action.
- Invest in creating viable alternatives to child marriage so that girls can pursue a quality education and find a career path; consider policies that open non-traditional career opportunities to girls.
- When developing or implementing laws on child marriage and adolescent SRHR, consider the potential for unintended negative effects and how such laws might be used to reinforce gender norms and inequalities.
- Recognize and promote girls, women and intersectional role models who have overcome obstacles and have accomplished their goals, to change societal views and inspire future generations.

With the experience of COVID-19 and its current and anticipated effects on girls' futures and child marriage, MTBA advises:

Governments to:
- Listen to girls in times of disruption and prioritize their rights and issues.
- Seize moments of disruption as opportunities for doing things differently and to embed societal equality and justice.

Donors to:
- Recognize the urgency of this moment: the positive trends of declining child marriage are at risk of being reversed, threatening the achievement of half of the SDGs.
- In this challenging moment, renew commitments and invest in girls.

Civil Society Organizations to:
- Focus on understanding the changes that are unfolding from this (or any) disruption or crisis.
- Be ready to let go of previous project plans and activities and reprioritize actions according to emerging issues.
- Establish systems and ways of working that favour flexibility and adaptation over upward accountability.