



MORE THAN  
**BRIDES**  
ALLIANCE



More than Brides Alliance  
**FINAL REPORT**

*India - Malawi - Mali - Niger - Pakistan*

**2016 – 2020**



Save the Children



OXFAM



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## List of Abbreviations

AU	African Union
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 2019
CPC	Child protection committee
CPD	Commission on Population and Development
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
GALS	Gender Action Learning System
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GNB	Girls Not Brides
HLPF	High Level Political Forum
L&A	Lobby and Advocacy
LS4S	Life Skills for Success
MEAL	Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning
MNCP	Marriage: No Child's Play
MoFA	Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MTBA	More than Brides Alliance
PCC	Programme Coordination Committee
REPAME	Réseau National pour la Promotion de l'Abandon du Mariage des Enfants au Mali (Mali)
SC	Steering Committee
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRH	Sexual Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association
YCBDA	Youth Community Based Development Agent (Malawi)



## List of Implementing Partners by Country

### INDIA

State	Partner	District	Villages
Bihar	<a href="#">Bihar Voluntary Health Association (BVHA)</a>	East Champaran	13
	BVHA and Fakirana Sister Society (FSS)	West Champaran	21
	<a href="#">Save the Children India</a> and Samagra Seva Kendra (SSK)	Gaya	32
	Save the Children India and Centre for Health and Resource Management (CHARM)	Sitamarhi	9
Jharkhand	<a href="#">Network for Enterprise Enhancement and Development Support (NEEDS)</a>	Deoghar	114
	<a href="#">Child in Need Institute (CINI)</a>	Dumka	50
Odisha	<a href="#">Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAI)</a>	Ganjam	115
	Save the Children India and Association for Social and Health Advancement (ASHA-ODISHA)	Nuapada	43
	Save the Children India and Social Welfare Agency and Training Institute (SWATI)	Kandhamal	122
Rajasthan	Save the Children India and Shiv Shiksha Samiti Ranoli (SSSR)	Tonk	32
	Save the Children India and <a href="#">Urmul</a>	Jodhpur	13

### MALI

Région	Partner	Cercle	Villages
Sikasso	Save the Children International Mali and <a href="#">AGIR pour l'environnement et la qualité de la vie</a>	Sikasso	8
	Save the Children Mali and AGIR	Yorosso	4
Ségou	Oxfam Mali and WALE	Ségou	10
	Oxfam Mali and FAWE Mali	San	10
	Oxfam Mali and A Soro	Bla	10



## MALAWI

District	Partner	Traditional Authority (TA)	Villages
Mangochi	<a href="#">Youth Net and Counselling (YONECO)</a>	Makanjira	14
		Namabvi	34
Mchinji	Youth Net and Counselling (YONECO)	Zulu	60
Nkhata Bay	<a href="#">Girls Empowerment Network (GENET)</a>	Fukamalaza	5
		Fukumapiri	20
		Mankhambira	20

## NIGER

Région	Partners	District	Villages
Maradi	Save the Children International Niger, Association pour le Bien-Etre Familiale (ANBEF), SongES, ASEC Mungane, ADD Fassali	Tessaoua	10
Tillabéri	Oxfam Niger, SOS Femmes et Enfants Victimes de Violence Familiale (SOS FEVVF), Association pour le Bien-Etre Familiale (ANBEF)	Say	10
		Tera	11
		Torodi	11

## PAKISTAN

Province	Partner	District	Villages
Punjab	Oxfam Pakistan, Bedari	Muzzaffargarh	20
		Lodhran	20
Sindh	Oxfam Pakistan, Indus Resource Centre (IRC); 2016 – Dec 2019 Baanh Belli; Dec 2019 - 2020	Larkana	40
		Shikarpur	40

## List of Research and Technical Partners by Country

### INDIA

Partner	Role
Population Council India	Research

### MALAWI

Partner	Role
Invest in Knowledge	Research
Save the Children International Malawi	Technical Support, Advocacy

### MALI

Partner	Role
Centre d'Etudes et de Recherche sur l'Information en Population et Santé (CERIPS)	Research

### NIGER

Partner	Role
Laboratoire d'Etudes et de Recherche sur les Dynamiques Sociales et le Développement Local (LASDEL)	Research

### PAKISTAN

Partner	Role
Quaid-i-Azam University	Research
Maryam Jawad (independent consultant)	Research
University of Oxford	Research

## Introduction and Report Summary

This is the final narrative report of Marriage: No Child's Play, a programme of the More Than Brides Alliance that has been implemented by over 30 local and international civil society organizations, researchers, and research institutions over the period of 2016 – 2020. The long-term objective of Marriage: No Child's Play (MNCP) was:

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

To achieve this objective, over the last five years, Alliance partners have worked in 926 villages across 12 states and regions in 5 countries and trained 150,394 young people, of whom 99,895 girls, on sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR) topics, child marriage and communication skills. They have created and strengthened a total of 3,491 youth groups, out of which 2,482 girls' groups, in the programme areas.

Over the course of the MNCP programme, the More Than Brides Alliance (MTBA) has produced a plethora of reports and documentation of its work. The **goal** of this final report is therefore to gather in one place the key information and learnings from the More Than Brides Alliance (MTBA) at the international level and in five countries in order to ensure that MTBA's legacy in the field of child marriage is well articulated and strategically positioned for impact and uptake internationally and at the country level.

The **purpose** of producing a final report is twofold. First is compliance with the requirements of our donor and strategic partner, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), and second is the aspiration and ambition of capturing and positioning MTBA's contribution to the field of child marriage and impact. To achieve this, we have sought to position our work and analysis to contribute to current discussions in the sector.

In this report, we communicate a critical analysis of the five-year period of MNCP, synthesizing the experiences and learnings of the five implementing countries and capturing key, illustrative stories, and examples. Within this, special attention has been given to new developments in the fifth year (2020), including the emergence of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Following the "Guidelines for drafting the annual progress report by the SRHR partners" from June 2016, MTBA has included this report summary as well as sections on context, analysis of results, analysis of partnership, gender and inclusion, and reflections on the theory of change. Lessons learned have been incorporated in each of the sections, so a separate section on lessons learned has not been included in this report. To this, a section on 2020 and COVID-19 has been added at the request of MoFA. This provides more specific information about the last year of implementation and how MNCP has adapted in the context of the global pandemic. In the last couple of years, MTBA has added a report section on sustainability to its narrative reporting, which we feel is an important topic to cover. Since this report marks the closure of MNCP, additional annexes have been included: key indicators for the 5 years of the project; a list of research and knowledge products developed; a brief on costing analysis that was conducted as part of MNCP; a separate visual report capturing the highlights of the MNCP design and its accomplishments; one selected success story for each country; an update on risk analysis, mitigation, and



capacity building, and information about the disposition of assets purchased by the project. The remainder of this summary provides a brief overview of key points from each of the main report sections.

In the section on **Context Analysis**, MTBA presents key contextual trends with importance for girls, their families, and communities. The analysis briefly covers the period prior to the start of the programme (2011 – 2015) and the life of the programme (2016 – 2020) in more depth. This is done in the form of a timeline. Within the timeline, MTBA has identified four processes that, according to our observation and experience, cumulatively have important consequences. Those are: natural disasters and crises, which are increasing due to climate change; unrest and security issues; shrinking civic space; and conservative opposition. The timeline highlights these themes to visualize their frequency and the countries that were concerned. These trends seem likely to continue in the coming years, so it will be important for future child marriage programmes to develop systems and structures that facilitate and encourage flexibility and responsiveness to the environment.

In the section on **Analysis of Results**, MTBA explains that the MNCP programme was implemented in a diversity of ways and with different emphases on the seven outcome areas of the programme, according to contextual realities. This is further explored in the Costing Analysis in annex. In all countries, the programme focused on empowering girls and putting them at the centre, and life skills education was an important tool for this, supporting girls to strengthen their communication and leadership skills. Practicing in a supportive space, they enhanced their ability to speak out, formulate and pursue their life goals, and strengthen their negotiating skills. This resulted in greater self-worth and higher self-confidence. The MNCP endline evaluation shows an increase in the number of girls who agreed that they can disagree with their parents (or husband, if married) about decisions affecting their lives in India, Mali, and Malawi. Also in Punjab, Pakistan, the endline evaluation shows that the MNCP programme positively impacted girls' perceptions of their ability to influence decisions, related to education, work and marriage.

MTBA adopted a variety of innovative activities to ensure progressive change on SRHR, with girls at the centre. These activities contributed to creating an enabling environment for girls to not only access SRHR services, but to be heard, to build their confidence, and to hold accountable those duty bearers who do not take action to promote girls' rights to SRH. Meaningful engagement with men and boys, and intergenerational dialogue has also contributed to breaking down stigma that limits girls' access to SRHR. Between 2016 and 2020, 187 health facilities have improved youth friendly SRH services as a result of MNCP. This entailed training 2,851 health providers on how to deliver youth friendly health services successfully and putting in place 1,050 social accountability systems to monitor health facilities. Moreover, in the MNCP endline evaluation of key indicators on health, the MNCP intervention in India demonstrated impact in increasing the proportion of girls who had knowledge about HIV. In Niger, the MNCP intervention demonstrated impact in increasing knowledge of modern contraceptives. And in Pakistan, the endline demonstrated a positive impact on knowledge of menstruation, birth control methods, the most likely time of conception, and sexually transmitted diseases.

Beyond ensuring that girls could make informed choices, MTBA also contributed to creating viable alternatives to child marriage for girls through economic empowerment, education, and strengthening community-based child protection mechanisms. As poverty is one of the main drivers of child marriage, making girls and their families financially independent was an important pathway to change. Through the programme, 20,943 girls participated in activities to help prepare them for income generating opportunities and 8,458 of these girls were linked with income generating opportunities. The endline

evaluation shows a significant increase in girls working for income in Niger. It also shows positive trends regarding girls' education in India, Malawi, and Pakistan. In Malawi, the number of girls who ever attended school in intervention areas significantly increased, as well as the mean number of years of education completed. In India, the number of girls currently enrolled in school was significantly higher during endline than during baseline. In Pakistan, the evaluation shows that MNCP had a positive impact on girls' attendance of middle school and links this finding to lower rates of child marriage. Girls involved in child protection committees (CPCs) were able to put issues on the agenda that were at stake for them and report cases of violation of their own, and their peers' rights. A total of 1210 girls received mediation from child protection committees, facilitated by the programme.

MNCP worked in parallel on creating an enabling environment for girls to pursue their ambitions and exercise choice. Initially, programme staff faced resistance from communities, as people were reluctant to give up age-old traditional practices or change social norms and attitudes. It took persistent sensitization work and patience to make progress towards changing the prevailing patriarchal mindset. One important tool to achieve this was holding regular community conversations on risks of child marriage and early childbearing in the intervention villages; the programme held 7,522 such conversations over the period of 2016-2020.

Over the past five years, the More Than Brides Alliance (MTBA) has leveraged lobby and advocacy efforts to push for girls' SRHR. This entailed working at different levels according to the ecological model: individual and interpersonal, family / community, district and state, national, and international, as visualised in the infographic on MTBA's advocacy impact. Starting with the setup of the girls' and youth clubs, empowering and collectivising girls, and elevating their voices to various online and face to face platforms, as well as strategically collaborating with Girls Not Brides at national and international level, MTBA has successfully influenced policies and policy-making processes in different contexts. The endline shows increases in girls' knowledge of the legal age at marriage and the negative effects of child marriage in the majority of countries.

Next to youth-led mobilisation activities, local partners have also led social mobilisation together with youth creating a receptive and enabling environment in the communities. Varied edutainment strategies were employed, and The Day of the Girl Child, International Women's Day, and the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence were moments of powerful mobilisation. Local and regional campaigns were organised across the five countries, and girls communicated messages through poems, songs or theatre, during rallies, marches, and conferences. The '#SayEnough Cypher' and the 'Are You Listening?' campaigns elevated these messages to a national and global level. Once hit by COVID-19, all of the programme's work was impacted and had to be readjusted. And while this has created setbacks, it also created an opportunity to pilot new, digital ways of working. Examples are girl-led Zoom sessions on SRHR and menstrual health in India, and youth theatre performances recorded on video and distributed via WhatsApp in Niger.

MTBA partners successfully suggested 113 alternative policy approaches on SRHR and child marriage to key actors (including governmental duty bearers and influencers, global multilateral actors and the private sector). These efforts resulted in 538 cases where important actors endorsed the alternative policy approaches presented by MTBA partners. MTBA's online lobby and advocacy efforts have led to 10,069 (social) media activities to raise awareness.

In total, 1,305 examples of community-driven collective action and engagement to end child marriage and support adolescents' SRHR have been documented in programme areas over the five years. Furthermore, 2,022 influential actors and role models have expressed positive views on SRHR and against child marriage during MTBA events or on platforms and 83 laws, guidelines and policies have changed due to continuous efforts of the programme, leading to a decrease in barriers to SRH, including a reduction in child marriage.

In **2020, the COVID-19 pandemic** greatly exacerbated vulnerabilities already felt by marginalized populations, including those that MTBA sought to reach in its efforts to end child marriage. Respondents of the endline surveys reported various effects of insecurity of the time: financial insecurity, food shortages, struggles with continuing one's studies remotely or online, and mental health challenges.

In responding to the crisis, MTBA partners followed national government guidelines and adapted relevant activities. For example, MTBA worked with youth leaders to put into place digital contact strategies to continue activities and maintain programme staff's communication with girls. Awareness-raising on COVID-19 was mainstreamed into all continuing activities, as well as the provision of hygiene kits, including mask distribution and setting up hand washing stations.

The reliance on technology during COVID-19 brought about benefits and challenges. The shift to mass media such as radio and online channels (where possible) meant we could reach many people in a short time. Interactive, digital platforms allowed for two-way communication. At the same time, some girls' group members did not have sufficient access to mobile phones, radio, and social media channels. Recommendations from the experience of working with technology during COVID-19 include building on current experiences, especially with youth while at the same time continuing to work with more traditional communication methods for offline awareness raising. Another recommendation is to find ways to increase the feedback loops when there is limited opportunity for face-to-face interaction between staff and programme participants.

As stated at the beginning of this section, the More Than Brides Alliance's **Theory of Change** ambition was to empower young people to decide if and when to get married by making informed choices about their SRHR and pursuing alternative life paths in an enabling environment. To achieve this ambition, MTBA developed a holistic approach, seeking change in seven interlinked outcome areas. The theory was that change needed to happen in all areas to realize programme goals and that changes in different areas would mutually reinforce one another. Reflecting on the theory of change at the end of the five years, we find that Outcome areas 1 and 6 (girls' empowerment and SRHR information; community-led social action) remained the core priorities and main areas of investment in each country throughout MNCP. At the same time, the ambition to implement the theory of change in full in each country proved unrealistic. This was mainly a result of not always effectively taking into account the areas of expertise and capacities of implementing partners from the start. Complementarities between Alliance members in each country were not always fully leveraged, and often each Alliance member implemented the full theory of change.

In each country an in-depth desk review on child marriage was conducted at the start, alongside inception workshops to co-design action plans. Despite this, the global ToC did not leave enough space for countries to meaningfully adapt at country level, because it went beyond outcomes to also define outputs at the global level. Over time, there has been a move towards different areas of focus, difference in sequencing



and perceived needs for adjustment in each country. MTBA also reflects that it should have communicated more clearly and strongly to country teams that the global ToC, however detailed it was, should be adjusted at the country-level, especially in the development of causal pathways. In MTBA, we found that different sub-sets of outcome areas were especially linked and mutually reinforcing in different contexts, which can provide opportunities for creating synergy and reflecting on scale and sustainability.

Recent evidence<sup>1</sup> highlights that single-component programmes are at least as, and often more, successful than multi-component programmes at reducing child marriage. Moreover, reaching scale and securing sustainability through for example governmental actors picking up interventions during and after the programme, is more likely to happen with single-component programmes. However, in each of the MTBA countries, Alliance members and implementing partners have found importance in all seven outcome areas. During the programme, the assumption was confirmed that the set of outcomes were interlinked and mutually reinforcing – albeit in each country in different ways and with different sub-sets. It is worthwhile for future programmes to explore the balance between the simplicity of a single-component programme versus responding to difficult and diffuse local drivers and triggers of child marriage through a holistic approach.

MNCP worked to tailor programming to address the root causes of **gender and inclusion** barriers - societally constructed gender norms - and the discrimination that girls experience in their daily lives. Targeting root causes and symptoms alike ensured that gender inequality is approached holistically to systematically shatter its foundations, while acknowledging and treating the impact it has on girls today. One success factor was the creation of safe spaces such as girls' clubs and VSLAs where girls were given skills, competencies, information, and peer support to face daily challenges and build resilience. The MNCP programme utilized gender sensitive and girl centred interventions to involve girls in project design, implementation and monitoring. Special attention was paid to the interconnection of social categories and the needs of different groups of girls. By considering girls by the social dimension of gender as well as the other aspects of their social context and identity, the MNCP programme was able to reach the most vulnerable girls, and marginalized groups were considered during design and implementation.

Many social norms have been addressed as a part of MNCP, such as girls' right to education and access to SRHR services. Still, deeply entrenched and harmful traditional practices, social and gender norms persist and perpetuate gender inequality in communities. Gender inequality requires sustained, targeted and widespread programming to even begin to combat it. Even incremental gender equality gains are extremely vulnerable and susceptible to backsliding, as observed in the report section on COVID-19. When tackling such an ingrained and longstanding issue as gender inequality, the importance of incremental change, and the meaningful improvement it signals for girls, cannot be understated or disregarded. From the experience of MNCP, we see a need to recalibrate our perception of progress on complex issues such as gender inequality and to improve our measurement of incremental change.

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<sup>1</sup> Malhotra, A., Elnakib, S. (2020) *20 Years of the Evidence Base on What Works to Prevent Child Marriage: A Systematic Review*. Journal of Adolescent Health, pp 1-16.

In this report, **partnerships** are conceptualised as ways in which organizations collaborate and work together towards a shared goal. Further, as partnerships funded by MoFA require an alliance structure, and emphasis is increasingly put on the role of southern partners, we are unpacking the concept of partnerships through different levels or alliance structures and by focusing on inputs collected from local partners. In general, local partners see the benefit of being part of the Global Alliance. Survey results reveal that while the combination of agree and strongly agree answers account for a similar value in 2018 and 2020 (96% in 2018 and 97% in 2020), the percentage of those who strongly agree that “benefits of being part of MTBA are worth the effort” increased significantly (from 29% in 2018 to 55% in 2020). Flexibility with planning, low influence on local partners’ workplans, and the increased involvement of local partners in country level decision making all show positive progress in shifting the power. However, partners also recognise that southern leadership was not built into the Alliance structures. The programme was designed in the North, and its set-up was focused on upward accountability driven and fuelled with power imbalances, which meant that a lot of patience and effort was required to build trust. Clear structures for the participation of local partners in decision making were missing. This also caused tensions between the need for consistency of the programme across countries and the intention to contextualise interventions.

While the commitment of MoFA to be more than just a donor is clear, in practice, MoFA is still perceived as a supportive, understanding, and flexible donor rather than a partner. In line with IOB Study<sup>2</sup> findings, the relationship was lacking a clear vision and mutual understanding of what the role of MoFA as a partner, as opposed to a donor, means. Based on interviews with MTBA and MoFA staff, we found that the perceived added value of partnership with MoFA for NGOs is in MoFA’s diplomatic contacts and access to global governance mechanisms. On the other side, the advantage for MoFA of working with NGOs is in access to the voices of youth and communities that development programmes aim to support. Such perceptions seem to have resulted in most of the collaboration efforts between MTBA and MoFA forming around international advocacy.

**Sustainability** refers to the potential long-term efforts of MTBA’s five-year programme intervention. It implies a “rootedness”, durability, or longevity, for impactful change and improvements or efforts that “stick”. This report section summarizes sustainability signals, raise concerns about the likelihood of sustainability, and draws out lessons and recommendations, focusing on sustainability of results, programmatic sustainability, and institutional sustainability.

With regards to sustainability of results, root causes and structural factors including poverty, education and legal frameworks were addressed. Social norm change was important. The key lesson from COVID-19 is that crisis and shocks can quickly worsen structural drivers of child marriage: poverty increases girls’ existing vulnerability and adds new vulnerabilities. Shocks can erode protective mechanisms such as retaining girls in school, and it can reverse gains made in reducing the incidence of child marriage. Furthermore, sustainability of gains made when girls access services can be vulnerable when girls move from served to unserved areas, due to displacement from COVID-19 and the effects of climate change.

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<sup>2</sup> IOB Study No. 431, *Strategies for partners: balancing complementarity and autonomy - Evaluation of the functioning of strategic partnerships between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and civil society organisations*

Programmatic sustainability concerns the continuation of a child marriage focus in the programmatic interventions at organization level. Many signals point to the sustainability of project activities as intentional investments were made. The MTBA programme in all countries was aligned with government priorities and commitment, which bodes well for the likelihood that programme activities will endure through government actions. Throughout the project, efforts were made to build capacity of community groups to operate independently and at the same level of quality after the project closure. Partner organisations used multi-pronged approaches in creating the necessary conditions for child marriage activities to live on in their own organisations. They built the capacity of staff in child marriage issues, embedded child marriage content into flagship programmes, and are seeking project funding from other donors as well as incorporating child marriage activities into ongoing projects. A final sign of sustainability is the practice of using year five as a wind down phase in which project responsibilities are transferred to local actors. A key insight is that programme sustainability requires a commitment by organisations, by local structures, and by the intended beneficiaries.

Country Alliances made consistent efforts to embed child marriage issues into existing structures to create institutional sustainability. This bodes well for child marriage interventions to be rooted in existing national structures and systems. A minimum standard kept by all partners was to align the programme with state policies and priorities such as youth friendly health services as a way to embed and accelerate interventions. Systems were also strengthened through connectivity as a visible MNCP sustainability strategy. All Country Alliances used their considerable connecting and convening power to strengthen the ecosystem of support for efforts to end child marriage.



## Context

Over the last decade, tremendous momentum has been built in drawing attention to adolescent girls' issues, including child marriage. In 2011, Girls Not Brides was founded; the UNICEF-UNFPA Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage launched in 2016. MTBA and its sister child marriage alliances came together in 2015. The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs has played a catalysing role in funding each of these three initiatives. Many more governments and private donors are taking note of this work and are also investing resources in girls' rights and future. In tandem, rates of child marriage have been decreasing globally. Still, progress on child marriage has been uneven, and improvements in global rates mask the fact that in many places, little has changed for girls. Gender and social norms around adolescent girls' sexuality remain deeply entrenched.

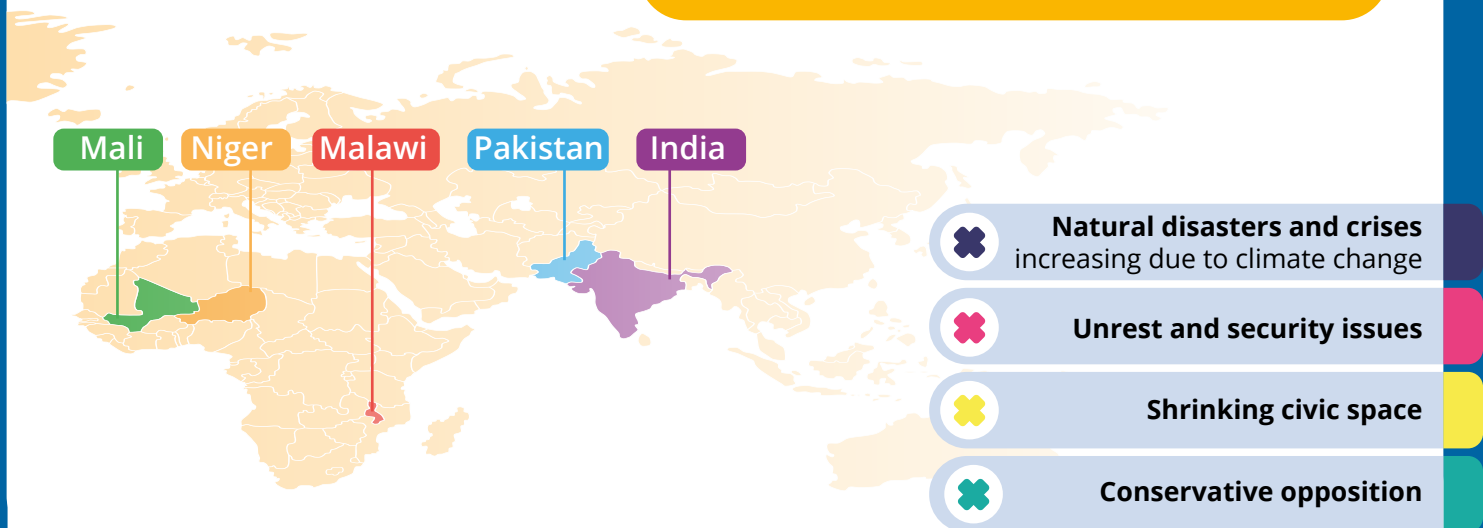
2020 marked the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. And yet, we are losing ground on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Girls Not Brides has pointed out that meeting SDG Target 5.3 and ending child marriage is closely linked to the achievement of at least eight of the SDGs. By the same token, failing to meet Target 5.3 imperils progress on all of the goals. In *The Global Girlhood Report 2020*, Save the Children found that up to 2.5 million more girls around the world are at risk of marriage in the next five years because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In its annual narrative reports and annual workplan narratives (2016 – 2019), MTBA has presented narrative analyses and reflections on relevant contextual trends as they have evolved over time, both internationally and for each of the five countries. For the purposes of this five-year report, we have chosen to present these trends in a visual overview in the form of a timeline. We believe this format will provide the reader with a different type of insight that is appropriate for reflecting on the years of the programme and for forward-looking analysis of key trends that are important for future adolescent girl-focused and child marriage programmes.

The timeline focuses on key events relating to adolescent girls, child marriage, and SRHR internationally and in the five MNCP countries. The period leading up to MNCP (2011 – 2015) is included to provide a glimpse of the context in which the programme was developed and launched, and the timeline provides an in-depth view of developments over the five years of the programme (2016 – 2020). The last page of the timeline includes a table summarizing COVID-19-related restrictions that makes visible the commonalities and differences across the five countries in 2020.

In addition to girl-related events, MTBA partners identified four types of processes that over time and cumulatively have important consequences for girls, their families, and communities: natural disasters and crises, which are increasing due to climate change; unrest and security issues; shrinking civic space; and conservative opposition. The timeline highlights these themes so that the reader can see at a glance their frequency and the countries that were concerned. These trends seem likely to continue in the coming years, so it will be important for future child marriage programmes to develop systems and structures that facilitate and encourage flexibility and responsiveness to the environment. As programmers, we must become increasingly agile and adaptable.

## Context Analysis Timeline



### 2011 - 2015

2011

Girls Not Brides was founded; it became an international charity in 2013

2012

United Nations declared the International Day of the Girl Child

2013

#### **Pakistan**

The provincial administration in Sindh, Pakistan, adopted new legislation around child marriage, the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act 2013. The Sindh CMRA is an amendment of national-level laws around child marriage and raises the legal age when girls can get married from 16 to 18 years. Sindh was the first province in Pakistan to do so.

November 2013

Launch of the African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage (2014 – 2017)

2014

United Kingdom Department for International Development earmarked £40 million for child marriage programming and awarded the [Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence programme](#)

2014

Start of the [Global Early Adolescence Study](#)

January, 2014

#### **India**

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare launched *Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram* (RKSK), its adolescent health programme, which includes sexual and reproductive health, nutrition, gender-based violence, non-communicable diseases, mental health and substance abuse. RKSK made adolescent SRHR and child marriage a priority.

October, 2015

#### **Mali**

Mali launched its national campaign to end child marriage, entitled, “Education for girls, a means to eliminating early child marriage.” The First Lady participated in the event and expressed her support. An ad hoc committee was formed under the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children, and the Family on the topic of child marriage, and a roadmap to end child marriage was developed with the support of UNICEF.

## 2016

2016

Launch of the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, Phase I



February, 2016

### Pakistan

The Punjab Assembly passed the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Bill, despite substantial opposition. The bill provides comprehensive protection to women against a range of crimes, including domestic, emotional, psychological, and economic abuse, stalking and cybercrime for the first time in the history of Pakistan. However, it is silent on child marriages and makes no distinction between women and adolescent girls.

June, 2016

The Southern African Development Community adopted the first-ever Model Law on Eradicating Child Marriage and Protecting Children Already Married. The law calls for strengthening and harmonizing legislation in Southern Africa, in support of the African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage.

July-August, 2016

### Niger

The Special Rapporteur for the African Union for the Campaign to End Child Marriage conducted a monitoring visit to Niger, and following the recommendations of this visit, the Ministry for the Promotion Women and Child Protection set up a National Committee Coordinating Actions Toward Ending Child Marriage.

November, 2016

The Francophonie adopted a resolution on child, early and forced marriage.

December, 2016

The UN General Assembly adopted a second resolution on child, early, and forced marriage to increase global momentum toward achieving SDG Target 5.3 to end child marriage by 2030.

## 2017

2017 - 2020

### Mali

Persistent teachers' strikes led to lengthy periods of school closures. The school year 2018 - 2019 was nearly declared invalid. Without the structure of attending school, girls face an increased risk of child marriage.



2017

### Pakistan

A requirement was added to the Foreign Aid Act 2012 requiring INGOs and NGOs to apply for a No Objection Certificate for travel as well as to implement any project activity. The act already required INGOs and NGOs to obtain an MoU from the Ministry of the Interior after a thorough security screening whereby the geographical coverage by development actors is limited to predefined boundaries.

February, 2017

### Malawi

Parliament amended the Constitution, raising the age of marriage from 15 (with parental consent) to 18 years old for boys and girls. This brought the Constitution in line with the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Bill adopted in February 2017, which set the minimum age of marriage at 18. The First Lady and the National Task Force on the Ending Child Marriage Campaign both played key roles to make this possible.

March, 2017

### India

Rajasthan was the first state to formulate a [State Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent Child Marriage](#), with the goal to become a child marriage free state within 10 years. MTBA and its partner NGOs have played a key role in developing this action plan.





April-June, 2017

### Mali

The efforts of a coalition of organizations including UNICEF, INGOs and local NGOs that was working in close collaboration with *the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children, and the Family* to draft a law covering a range of gender-based violence issues including child marriage were stalled by uprisings of groups of activists. These activists strongly voiced their opposition to revising the constitution. The Government of Mali became even more reticent about these issues and advised the group working on the GBV law to redirect its attention toward the development of a holistic communication plan for raising awareness amongst the Malian population: strengthening the groundwork at the grassroots to build buy-in and support for the eventual passage of a GBV law.

June, 2017

### Niger

MTBA and UNFPA created a platform, "Toward ending child marriage", bringing together a variety of civil society actors. The Platform productively engaged with the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Protection of Children, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of the Interior. Each ministry designated a focal point to participate in the Platform.



August - September, 2017

### India

Bihar State was affected by heavy flooding.

October, 2017

### India

The Supreme Court ruled in a landmark decision that sex with a wife who is under 18 years of age is rape and a crime. Before this ruling, there was an exception in the Section 375 rape law provisions that protected a man who had sexual relations with his wife if she was aged 15 or older. While groundbreaking, the ruling also had its limitations: it only concerned cases of male-female sexual relations and did not acknowledge that adolescents under age 18 may consent to sex.

October, 2017

The African Union Special Rapporteur for ending child marriage visited Mali. Prior to this visit, the previously ad hoc ministerial committee monitoring the African Union Campaign in Mali was formally established, and the members took an active role in organising the visit, raising issues for the Rapporteur's attention.

October, 2017

### Mali

West Africa: the High Level Meeting on Ending Child Marriage was organised in Dakar, Senegal, with government officials from 24 countries in West and Central Africa, the African Union, and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), among others. The result was the [Dakar Call to Action](#).



October, 2017

### Pakistan

the Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Bill 2017 was presented by a senior Senate member which stipulates that the marriageable age for boys and girls should be 18 in Pakistan. However, Pakistan's Standing Committee denied any amendment to the Bill, declaring it contrary to the injunctions of Islam. The bill was referred to the Council of Islamic Ideology for review.

October, 2017

The #MeToo Movement sparked in the United States and trended in 85 countries within two weeks, including India and Pakistan.

December, 2017

### Niger

With the leadership of the Platform, "Toward ending child marriage", the President of Niger adopted a decree concerning the protection, support and accompaniment of girls' education. The President called upon parents to support the new law:  
*"The education of young people, together with the empowerment of women and the promotion of reproductive health, is an important instrument for capturing the demographic dividend and creating the conditions for demographic transition. Equality of opportunity is possible, so a girl is worth as much as a boy and can thus render the same services to her family and to society; that requires knowledge."*

Januari, 2018

**Pakistan**

7-year-old Zainab Ansari was brutally raped and murdered. Her family's initiative to gather evidence and draw attention to her fate led to an unprecedented level of public debate, creating opportunities to communicate about child protection, life skills basic education, and SRHR in communities and with provincial governments.

May, 2018

**Mali**

The African Court of Human and People's Rights condemned the Republic of Mali, following a complaint filed by the Association pour le Progrès et la Défense des Femmes Maliennes (APDF), claiming that Mali is in violation of the Maputo Protocol because of an inconsistency in the Code of Persons and the Family. In Article 281, the age of marriage for girls is 16, or 15 for girls and boys with parental consent. This is in contradiction with Article 609 of the same document, which defines a minor as anyone under 18 years of age. This action strengthened the discourse and advocacy efforts for the abandonment of child marriage.

May, 2018

**Pakistan**

In 2018, the Government of Sindh approved the Sindh Youth Policy, including support for advancement of sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people. Thanks to MTBA's efforts, it also approved the inclusion of life skills-based education in mainstream curricula at district-level and activated a District Monitoring Committee in Larkana District.

May, 2018

**Niger**

The Roadmap ("Feuille de route") 2018-2020 for Comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Education for Adolescents and Youth (« L'Éducation Complète à la Santé de la Reproduction des Adolescents et des Jeunes ») was developed. The Roadmap will help to improve the institutional and sociocultural environment for CSE, strengthen technical implementation structures and the provision of ASRHR services.

July, 2018

A UNICEF report found that during the past decade, the proportion of young women who were married as children decreased by 15%, from 1 in 4 (25%) to approximately 1 in 5 (21%). UNICEF found that the steep decline in India (the proportion of girls getting married before age 18 nearly halved in the last decade) contributed significantly to the observed global trend.



July, 2018

**Pakistan**

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf was elected. The party had a plan of action for its first hundred days with a focus on protection of human rights among other key issues. However, briefly after being installed, the new government issued orders for 18 international aid agencies to close their operations and leave the country, accounting for a loss of at least £100 million (116 million Euros) with a direct effect on communities who were receiving support. INGOs' appeals were not honoured, and they were forced to close operations in October, 2018.

August, 2018

**Malawi**

Launch of the Adolescent Girls and Young Women Strategy, intended to strengthen coordination among various actors working on health, education, and economic opportunities for adolescent girls and young women.

August, 2018

**Niger**

*The Strategic Plan to Eliminate Child Marriage* was validated through a process involving government and civil society actors. MTBA provided technical inputs to the process through its membership in the Platform, "Toward Ending Child Marriage".

August and October, 2018

### Niger

The President of Niger spoke about child marriage in his *Discours à la Nation*, and the First Lady and a young girl leader spoke out in sessions of the African Union and the ECOWAS First Ladies' Side Event, where child marriage was a central theme. During the Second African Girls' Conference in Accra, Ghana the First Lady spoke out about child marriage.

September, 2018

### Malawi

The government introduced free secondary education effective January, 2019. The move is expected to decrease financial barriers for at least some girls and help girls remain in school.

November, 2018

### India

The Chief Minister of Jharkhand released the Jharkhand State Action Plan to End Child Marriage. MTBA and its partner NGOs have played a key role in developing this action plan.

December, 2018

### Mali

After weeks of controversy and popular uprisings led by the President of the High Islamic Council, the Government renounced a plan to implement CSE in the education system. The fact that the curriculum would include the issue of sexual orientation sparked the uproar.

December, 2018

### Niger

Project areas in Tillabéri experienced terrorist attacks, kidnappings, cases of arson in villages, assassinations, and the placement of mines. A state of emergency was declared resulting in restrictions of movement and individual and collective freedoms. This continued through the end of 2020.

2018

### India

The government increased budgetary allocations to adolescent development for 2018-2019, through schemes including 'Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls-SABLA' (+ 400 million INR / 5,1 million Euro), 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' (Save Girls Educate Girls; 40% increase), and 'National Mission for Empowerment of Women' (more than 400% increase).

## 2019

2019

Girls First Fund is founded: a donor collaborative to champion community-led efforts for girls

January, 2019

### Pakistan:

At the beginning of 2019, a strict set of rules, regulatory requirements and new policies went into effect requiring local NGOs implementing foreign-funded projects to have a memorandum of understanding with Economic Affairs Division.

March, 2019

### Malawi

Cyclone Idai left a path of destruction, creating damage and increasing vulnerabilities for an already very poor population. Climate change-induced disasters exacerbate the precarious situation of Malawians, and deepened poverty has serious consequences for SRHR, HIV/AIDS and child marriage.

April, 2019

### Mali

Entire villages were decimated by inter-community clashes led by self-defence groups in central Mali. Non-state armed groups have some presence and influence even in regions they do not control and are on principle against formal (French) education, women's rights and health, women's empowerment, and gender equality.

	May, 2019	<b>India</b> Cyclone Fani hit project areas in Odisha, requiring a shift to emergency response for a few months.
	May, 2019	<b>Malawi</b> Results of national elections in Malawi were heavily contested. The outcome was very close, leading to the involvement of the courts and nationwide demonstrations that ran into 2020.
	July, 2019	<b>Niger</b> The African Union Summit was held in Niamey. The President of Niger mentioned child marriage in his speech, and the Forum of African First Ladies ended with "The Niamey Appeal" in which First Ladies called on Heads of States to do everything possible to make the African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage effective in their respective countries.
	October, 2019	<b>Niger</b> A decree of the Minister of the Interior prohibited the movement of motorcycles in areas of Tillabéri without military escort.
	October, 2019	<b>India</b> Odisha formulated a State Strategic Action Plan 2019-2024, with the goal 'to end Child Marriage in Odisha by 2030' and the vision 'to create an enabling environment for young people especially girls to have rights and make informed choices with equal opportunities to grow, acquire knowledge, skills and access opportunities for a holistic development and an empowered future'. MTBA and its partner NGOs have played a key role in developing this action plan.
	November, 2019	<b>Pakistan</b> The Sindh Assembly passed the Sindh Sexual Healthcare Rights Bill. The main objective of the bill is to promote the reproductive healthcare rights of men and women.
	December, 2019	<b>Niger</b> One of the deadliest attacks on Niger's military in its history took place near the border with Mali. This event was a heavy blow to the country's morale; 71 soldiers lost their lives.
	2019	<b>India</b> CIVICUS downgraded India from "Obstructed" to "Repressed" citing various reasons including reduced space for dissent for activists and journalists as well as the use of restrictive laws.

## 2020


	2020	Beijing+25: Generation Equality 2020 marked the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Conference. Due to COVID-19, activities were postponed to 2021.
	2020	COVID-19 spread across the world. Below is a summary of the COVID-19-related restrictions for each of the MTBA countries.

Figure 1: Covid-19-related restrictions, by country



India



Mali



Malawi



Niger



Pakistan

## School closures

Yes, March 2020 – September 2020  
After this period, states could decide. In November/December few schools partially opened to take exams

Yes, March 2020 – June (exam classes; September for others)

Yes, March-August 2020

Yes, March-June 2020

Yes, March 2020 – 15th September 2020 (Schools again closed in March 2021 to date due to 3rd COVID19 wave)

## Travel restrictions

Yes, tourist visas suspended in March 2020

Yes, flights suspended

Yes, borders were closed

Yes, all land and air borders closed March 2020; Niamey isolated from rest of country until May 15

Yes, flights were suspended in March 2020

## Lockdown or stay at home orders

Yes- (25 March-31 May, 2020 Completed lockdown) national ~ 10 week lockdown  
Lockdown Phase 1 (25 March – 14 April)  
Phase 2 (15 April – 3 May)  
Phase 3 (4-17 May)  
Phase 4 (18-31 May)

Yes, in March 2020 including a curfew until early May

Yes- National lockdown ordered but blocked by injunction; local jurisdictions could issue their own

Yes- March-May; Strictest measures in Niamey

Yes, complete lockdown from March – mid May 2020 followed by Smart lockdown on need basis

## First case documented

30 Jan 2020

25 March 2020

2 April 2020

19 March 2020

26 February 2020

June, 2020

### Malawi

Presidential elections were again held after the results of the 2019 elections were annulled in February, 2020.

June-August, 2020

### Mali

Popular uprisings following the parliamentary elections in April led to a coup d'état and the resignation of the President. ECOWAS imposed sanctions.

August-September, 2020

### Mali

Annual flooding was severe

August-September, 2020

### Niger

Annual flooding was severe: in Niger, more than 226,000 people were forced from their homes. Crops were damaged, threatening food security, and there was increased risk of malaria and cholera.

September, 2020

### India

Within a matter of days, the National Government passed several laws imposing tough new restrictions and requirements, building on the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA). INGOs and national NGOs alike had to act quickly to remain in compliance. The effects of these laws are expected to be far-reaching and could hit grassroots NGOs especially hard.

September, 2020

### Mali

A draft, multisectoral strategy to end child marriage was developed at the end of 2019; however, the pandemic did not allow for holding workshops to finalize it in 2020. To support the process, *the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children, and the Family* issued a decision formalizing a committee to coordinate and monitor African Union Campaign actions to end child marriage.

## Analysis of Results

This section describes the results that the More than Brides Alliance (MTBA) has achieved in the Marriage: No Child's Play (MNCP) programme, highlighting successes, challenges and lessons learnt. The key results of the MNCP programme have been analysed in two parts. The first part, '*Results for Girls*' covers Results Area 1 of the SRHR Partnerships Framework as well as MTBA-specific result areas and looks at results that relate directly to girls: changes in girls themselves, changes related to the environment that girls live in, and changes in services that girls can procure. The second part, '*Voice, influencing and advocacy*' is related to Results Area 4 of the SRHR Partnerships Framework and looks at social change and advocacy undertaken by girls, youth, and communities. It then analyses how capacity for influencing and advocacy has been built throughout the programme. Monitoring data cited in this section is presented for all five countries, combined (see Annex I, Key Indicator Tables for country-specific monitoring data). Selected findings from the evaluations are referenced for individual countries.

### I. Results for Girls

While the Marriage: No Child's Play programme was implemented in five diverse countries, ingrained gender inequality was a common characteristic persistent in girls' lives in all locations. As indicated by our baseline studies, girls were generally perceived as less valuable than boys, and families focused their attention and support primarily on boys. According to traditional gender norms, girls' and women's place in society was in the home<sup>3</sup>, caring for siblings and performing household tasks, while boys were allowed and encouraged to pursue education and career opportunities. Girls were expected to be obedient and to be in service of their family, or after marriage, their in-laws. Gender inequality in all settings influenced girls' ability to stay in school, with many dropping out at primary school level, due to factors such as the low quality of education, fear of harassment on the way to school and in school, or lack of financial means of their families. For girls attending school, insufficient sanitation facilities made the environment less friendly. Similarly, career or vocational training opportunities for girls in all settings were very limited due to persisting gender norms, lack of support and encouragement, social pressure to stay home, or fear of exploitation.

Growing up in an environment where their future was predetermined, with a lack of exposure to role models or opportunities, programme staff at the start of the programme often found that girls lacked self-confidence, or autonomy. Girls did not speak out and share their ideas or needs and often could not clearly formulate and envision their dreams or ambitions. Girls did not feel they had negotiating power within their families over several aspects of their lives and were often likely to accept decisions made on their behalf. At baseline, half of girls in Malawi and about a third in Mali agreed with the statement that there are times when a woman deserves to be beaten, suggesting that girls accepted inequitable gender norms in these countries.

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<sup>3</sup> Baseline numbers show that more than 75% of women in all intervention states in India felt that a woman's most important role is to take care of her home and cook for her family. This number was more than 83% in Malawi and more than 91% in Mali and Niger.



The five programme locations share similarities in drivers of child marriage like poverty and inequality, but also unique differences. For example, in Malawi, pregnancy is an important driver of child marriage, but premarital sex and pregnancy in Niger is extremely rare.

At the start of the programme, in settings such as India and Pakistan, girls did not have negotiation or decision-making power over their education, SRHR, marriage, or employment opportunities, leaving girls without the tools and means to steer their own future. Family members would decide on girls' futures, with marriage predominantly seen as the viable option. Parents whose daughters would move into the houses of their in-laws after marriage did not see the value of investing in the education of their daughters, nor recognise the value in them accessing SRHR information or services. Traditional gender norms, fear for girls' safety and family honour often made parents restrict the mobility of girls and prohibit their involvement in activities outside the household, such as sports, vocational training, or even attending school. In other contexts, girls reported having control over some areas of their lives, for example, over sex and partnerships in Malawi, choice in their (early and child) marriages in Niger, and in Mali, over the decision to migrate, in some cases to avoid early marriage.

### *Empowering girls, putting girls at the centre*

In the period 2016-2020, in the areas where the programme was implemented, MTBA witnessed major changes in girls' lives. In each country and context, there were significant variations in the programmatic approach, and different emphasis was given to different areas of the MNCP theory of change. The Costing Analysis in annex of this report uses financial data from 2018 to show this diversity. The design of the programme **centred around girls** themselves: empowering girls, enhancing their knowledge and building their skills was key. A major component of the programme was to *collectivize girls through the creation of girls' groups*. A total of 3,491 youth groups, out of which **2,482 girls' groups** were created and strengthened in the intervention areas. This provided a safe space for girls to discuss a diverse array of subjects and to gain knowledge on their rights, gender equality, SRHR, the effects of child marriage, financial literacy, planning and management, and more. Girls were empowered through different integrated methodologies that increased their self-esteem and provided them with both a sense of choice and the tools to achieve their goals. Key methodologies include Life Skills for Success (LS4S) training, financial literacy, financial inclusion support through savings groups or village savings and loan associations (VSLAs) and the integration of the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) approach. MTBA partners have trained 150,394 young people, of whom 99,895 girls, on SRHR topics, child marriage and communication skills across the five countries.

Through **life skills education modules**, such as GALS (Mali, Niger, Pakistan), LS4S (India, Mali, Niger, Malawi), Lalita Babu (India) and Life Skills Basic Education (Pakistan) that were adapted to reflect the realities of each country and context, girls worked on their communication and leadership skills. Practicing in a supportive space, they enhanced their ability to speak out, formulate and pursue their life goals, and strengthen their negotiating skills. This resulted in greater self-worth and higher self-confidence. In some of the countries and contexts, girls were exposed to role models they did not have before, and they inspired each other to think beyond marriage and pursue alternative life paths. Supported by their peers



and mentors, girls started to negotiate with their families about delaying marriage, going back to school, or enrolling in a vocational skill building course. The MNCP endline evaluation shows an increase in the number of girls who agreed that they can disagree with their parents (or husband, if married) about decisions affecting their lives in India, Mali, and Malawi. Also in Punjab, Pakistan, the endline evaluation shows that the MNCP programme positively impacted girls' perceptions of their level of ability to influence decisions, related to education, work and marriage.

### *Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, informed choice, quality services*

**Access to information and services** on SRHR is a fundamental pillar to ensuring gender equality. It provides choice, which allows girls to plan and take charge of their future. Prior to MTBA implementation, adolescent friendly services and access to SRHR information was inconsistent, with very little attention given to the linkages between empowerment, livelihoods and access to SRHR information. Health providers had limited knowledge on adolescent services, which resulted in inadequate services for girls, or an absence of adolescent-adapted services. Between 2016 and 2020, **187 health facilities have improved youth friendly SRH services** as a result of MNCP. This entailed training 2,851 health providers on how to deliver youth friendly health services successfully and putting in place 1,050 social accountability systems to monitor health facilities. Moreover, in the MNCP endline evaluation of key indicators on health, the MNCP intervention in India demonstrated impact in increasing the proportion of girls who had knowledge about HIV. In Niger, the MNCP intervention demonstrated impact in increasing **knowledge of modern contraceptives**.

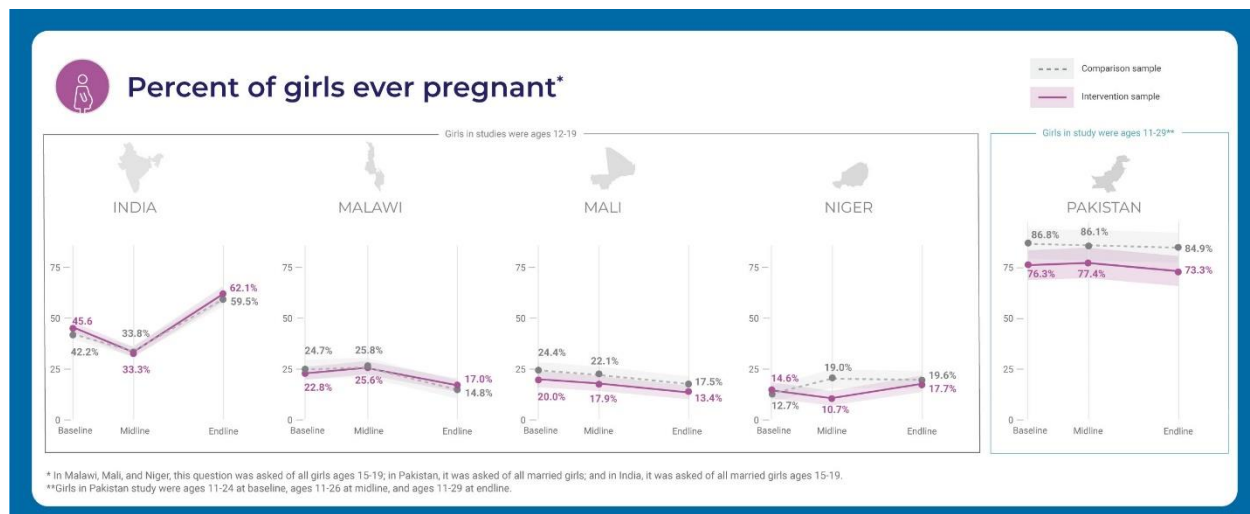
As for Pakistan, the endline demonstrated a positive impact on knowledge of menstruation, birth control methods, the most likely time of conception, and sexually transmitted diseases, especially for girls who were married before they were 18, which was the programme's core



Niger: Bassira is a peer leader of her youth space. She has also taken part in vocational training on sewing and received a sewing machine to start her small business. She now earns money through taking in sewing. Photo credit: Save the Children.

target group for increasing SRHR knowledge in Pakistan.

**Figure 1. Percent of girls ever pregnant**



*Note: this figure shows that pregnancy declined in both comparison and intervention areas in Malawi, Mali, and Niger but rose in India. Reports of ever being pregnant were mostly flat in Pakistan. See figure note for technical specifications.*

In the five years of MTBA, programme staff observed an anecdotal link between the improvement of SRHR services and increased confidence and aspirations of girls. Regular interactive girls' groups, mentorship programmes and SRHR training for girls in conjunction with service provider strengthening on adolescent friendly approaches has not only equipped girls with the knowledge and enhanced access to SRHR, but has had a direct impact on their confidence, autonomy and ability to voice their fundamental rights to SRH. Additionally, the meaningful engagement with men and boys, and intergenerational dialogue has also contributed to breaking down stigma that limits girls' access to SRHR.

Breaking down stigma on girls' sexuality, SRHR and marriageability requires multiple levels of engagement, as well embracing innovative methodologies to **accelerate change** that is sustainable. MTBA adopted a variety of innovative activities to ensure progressive change on SRHR, with girls at the centre. Examples of this included youth caravans and information sharing camps in Mali, art installations challenging menstrual health taboos in India, community score cards led by girls to enhance service delivery on SRHR in Malawi and India, service delivery training to ensure youth friendly approaches, and girls' mentorship programmes. Edutainment interventions included co-creating scripts and plays with you to change norms and at the same time empower the voices of youth. These activities contributed to creating an enabling environment for girls to not only access SRHR services, but to be heard, to build their confidence, and to hold accountable those duty bearers who do not take action to promote girls' rights to SRH.



Malawi: Esnart (19) delivering a session on SRH in Nkhata Bay. Photo credit: Simavi.

There have been significant **challenges** in ensuring a comprehensive approach to SRHR programming in MTBA. The uneven distribution of contraceptive commodities across all countries was one such challenge. Girls have been regularly faced with very limited contraceptive choice at service delivery points. Critical shortages and turnover of health workers has resulted in limited youth friendly service providers, and young people's SRH is seen as low priority in national and regional policy (in particular on actioning national youth friendly strategies). Lastly, SRH for unmarried youth remains taboo in many of the contexts that MTBA programmed in, at times making community awareness sessions or demonstrations of contraception methods, such as condom demonstrations, difficult. These challenges, although remaining, are not impermeable. MTBA has shown that through regular, innovative engagement and training, sustainable action and continued investment in girls' confidence to claim their SRHR, we can make positive, progressive SRHR change a reality for girls in some of the most challenging patriarchal environments.

As described above, a key strategy of MNCP was to equip adolescent girls with accurate SRHR knowledge to enable them to make informed decisions regarding their SRH. However, knowledge is only one element of a successful SRHR programming. The disconnect between increased awareness of SRHR and lack of availability of quality youth SRH services remains a key and persistent barrier. The MNCP endline survey found that there was no significant increase in girls who report that their community has a youth-friendly health centre (though all countries were trending positively). This is also coupled with concerns regarding

quality services specifically for young people. This paints a stark picture where girls have the knowledge of healthy SRHR, but do not have adequate access to quality youth-friendly services or do not feel comfortable accessing these services to exercise their SRHR rights. In future programming it will be key to focus increased time, advocacy, and resources on the issue of **quality and youth- friendly SRHR services**.

#### **Evaluation graphics in the Analysis of Results section**

In this section of the report, we present three synthesis graphics that show three indicators for each of the five countries at baseline, midline, and endline. The indicators are percent of girls ever pregnant (Figure 1), percent of girls who were currently enrolled in school (Figure 2), and percent of girls who were ever married (Figure 3). In analysing these graphics, it is important to be aware that the methodology and the age group of interviewees for the research in Pakistan was different than for the other four countries, so it is not possible to compare results from the two evaluations. In the graphics, this is indicated by the thin grey and green frames around the data for countries included in each evaluation. The evaluation reports provide more in-depth information about the methodology used for each study.

For India, Malawi, Mali, and Niger, the COVID-19 pandemic forced methodology adaptations at endline so as to reduce the risk posed to interviewers and interviewees. This was done through conducting phone surveys rather than face-to-face interviews. In making this adaptation, care was taken to ensure that the samples at baseline, midline, and endline were as comparable as possible. Specifics on the methodology used at endline can be found in Population Council's MTBA Final Evaluation Report. The methodology for Pakistan at endline remained the same as for baseline and midline, using face-to-face interviews.



## Did MNCP show impact?

MTBA showed impact\* on various indicators in different countries. For example:

India: significant impact on percent of girls ever married;

Niger: significant impact on percent of girls working for income;

Malawi: significant impact on educational indicators (ever attended school, mean years of education, literacy);

Mali: impact on increasing mean age at marriage, but no effect on percent ever married;

Pakistan: impact on percent of girls married before 18 years old.

*\*Here we use “impact” to mean that the finding was statistically significant, and that the intervention group performed significantly better than the comparison group in the desired direction.*

It seems likely that the differences in impact across countries are due to a few key differences in the implementation and research design: 1) The evaluation in India and Malawi followed a cluster randomized design whereas the evaluation in Mali and Niger was a match comparison design; 2) India had the largest programmatic reach and correspondingly the largest sample size. This makes it easier to detect impact; and 3) The MNCP ToC was implemented differently in each country and context, placing emphasis on different outcomes. The Costing Analysis presented in annex to this report gives a helpful visual overview of proportions of spending per outcome for each country, reflecting these contextual differences in programming.

For the three key indicators presented for all countries in this report, findings were mixed. In the case of pregnancy, there was a general downward trend in Malawi and Mali, a flat trend in Pakistan, and an upward trend in India. For girls enrolled in school, most countries showed an upward trend, except for Niger. For girls ever married, there was a general downward trend for all countries, and in India, the decline in intervention villages is greater than for comparison villages (with the difference-in-differences being statistically significant). This last finding was particularly surprising and impressive, considering the overall steep trend of decreasing child marriages in India. At a closer geographic examination, we see the comparison areas appear to plateau in child marriage declines from midline to endline, whereas intervention areas continue to decline, suggesting that perhaps the intervention was protective (further analysis needed).

It is relevant to note that the evaluation conducted in India, Malawi, Mali, and Niger followed a more rigorous design than the evaluation in Pakistan, to meet the standard of evidence necessary for publication in peer reviewed journals. The design of the four-country impact evaluation involved conducting comprehensive household listings at each round of the survey and drawing random samples of girls in intervention and comparison communities for individual interviews. In intervention communities, this meant that the random samples included both programme participants and non-participants, such that the findings show the impact of the programme for girls at community level – a substantial step beyond impact for individual programme participants as would be expected in a typical pre/post evaluation with programme participants. As the evaluation in Pakistan was conducted by the lead implementing organization in Pakistan, it was naturally more closely tied to the intervention and served as an important tool for documenting programme impact and improving programming. The design of the Pakistan involved drawing random samples of girls and their household heads in intervention and comparison communities for individual interviews. Different to the impact evaluations in India, Malawi, Mali, and Niger, in intervention communities, the random samples included only the programme participants. Therefore, findings show the impact of the programme for girls and household heads at the individual level.

### *Alternative Life Paths, ambitions, aspirations & opportunities*

Beyond ensuring that girls could make informed choices, MTBA also focused on **economically empowering** girls. As poverty is one of the main drivers of child marriage, making girls and their families financially independent was an important pathway to change. Through the programme, **20,943 girls participated in activities to help prepare them for income generating opportunities** and 8,458 of these girls were linked up with income generating opportunities. The endline evaluation shows a significant increase in girls working for income in Niger, suggesting that the MNCP intervention played a role in successfully connecting girls to work opportunities there. Girls across the programme participated in vocational training courses based on labour market research, where they learned a wide array of skills, from embroidery and tailoring to computer skills and mobile phone repairing. VSLAs were an innovative way to ensure a safe deposit for income, while at the same time providing an opportunity to use loans to start a business or pursue education. With greater financial independence, (married) girls' position in the family improved.



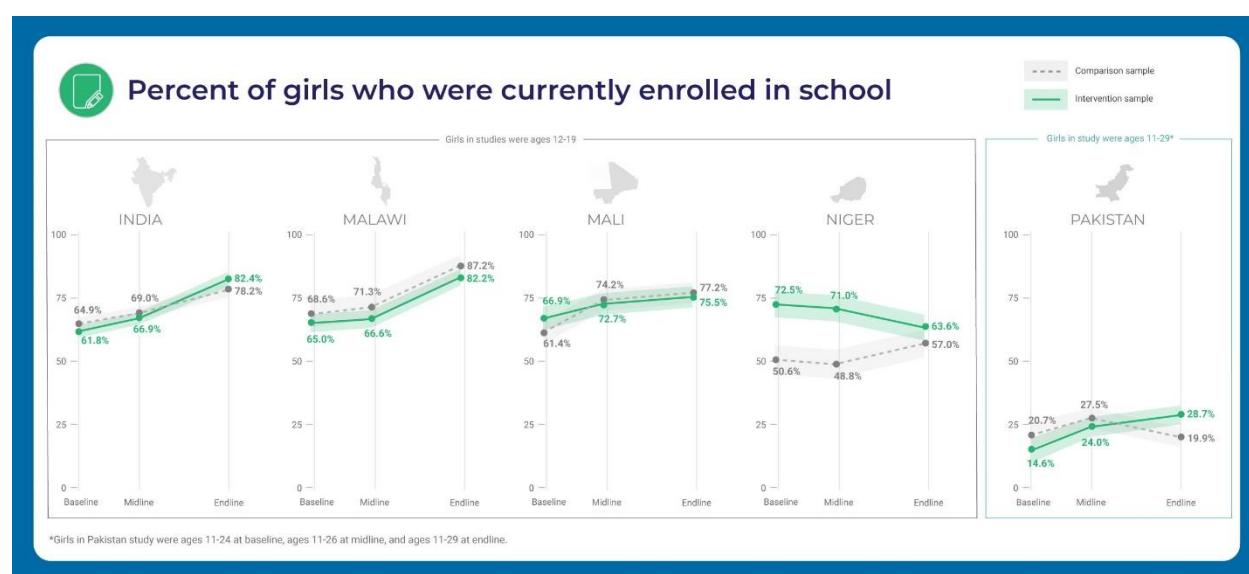
Mali: Fatoumata shows the income generating activity she has undertaken as part of MNCP. Photo credit: Oxfam Novib.

Simultaneously – recognizing that empowering girls alone is not enough – MTBA worked on an **enabling environment** by engaging important decision makers and influential people around girls. Parents, boys and men, traditional and religious leaders were sensitized on similar subjects as girls through one-on-one meetings, group discussions, campaigns and other awareness raising activities, such as theatre forums or radio shows. Initially, programme staff faced resistance from communities, as people were reluctant to give up age-old traditional practices or change social norms and attitudes. It took persistent sensitization work and patience to make progress towards changing the prevailing patriarchal mindset. One important tool to achieve this was holding regular **community conversations on risks of child marriage and early childbearing** in the intervention villages; the programme held **7,522 such conversations** over the period of 2016-2020. The endline in Pakistan shows that the programme positively impacted the personal attitudes of household members regarding child marriage: at the end of the programme more people saw age 18 or older as an appropriate age for marriage than at the beginning. In addition, their normative

expectations also changed positively: they thought that more community members would disagree with marriage before 18.

As community members witnessed the transformation of girls, they started to recognize the advantages of investing in girls. In parenting circles, role model parents shared their experiences about educating their daughters, and parents learned about positive parenting skills. A total of 1,318 parent-teacher associations, school management committees, child parliaments, mother groups and male champions were trained on their role in **supporting girls' education**, preventing school dropout, and promoting girls' safety. The endline research in Pakistan shows a positive impact of MNCP on girls' perceived safety on the way to school. It also demonstrates that MNCP positively impacted household members' attitudes on gender equality, especially those of male household members and of those households in Punjab. Enrolment drives were organized where girls could re-enter school, and families received information on existing governmental support for school-going girls. The endline evaluation shows positive trends regarding girls' education in India, Malawi, and Pakistan. In Malawi, the number of girls who ever attended school in intervention areas significantly increased, as well as the mean number of years of education completed. In India, the number of girls currently enrolled in school was significantly higher at endline compared with the baseline. In Pakistan, the evaluation shows that MNCP had a positive impact on girls' attendance of middle school and links this finding to lower rates of child marriage. In Niger and India, bridge courses were set up for girls who could not re-enter school to catch up and work towards finishing a degree. In other countries, the programme made linkages to bridge courses organised by other actors. **12,545 adolescent girls were linked by the programme to existing social protection schemes, scholarships, or bridge courses to remain in or re-enter school.**

**Figure 2. Percent of girls who were currently enrolled in school**



*Note: this shows that enrolment in school has increased in most intervention areas (green) and in comparison areas in India, Malawi, and Mali. In India, Malawi, Mali, and Niger this is among ever enrolled.*



One of the **challenges** MTBA faced in some of the locations was the availability of quality education and the accessibility of schools for girls. In Pakistan for example, the absence of governmental schools for girls, poor security, absence of female teachers, and the distance to school all were challenges. In Mali and Malawi school safety was an issue, with school-based gender-based violence commonplace. The lack of menstrual health friendly toilets made girls in India drop out from school during menstruation. To address these challenges, MTBA used a variety of strategies: lobby work, inventive work-around solutions, and working towards structural and sustainable change. School management committees were revived to carry out school facility assessments and come up with action plans to make schools more girl friendly. In Malawi, “happiness and sadness boxes” were put in place where students could anonymously voice their concerns. In Mali, MTBA worked together with authorities to establish a teacher code of conduct at school-level to create a safer environment for girls. Some girls in Pakistan, India, and Niger received support in the form of bikes, school uniforms, hygiene kits, or school lunches to overcome barriers to education. In other areas, intensive lobby work took place to change school conditions or establish schools closer to girls.

In these processes, **girls themselves were drivers of change**. They actively participated in school management committees and student governments, and they let their voices be heard through demand charters shared with governmental officials. The involvement of girls in different official structures strengthened their position and influence in society. For example, girls involved in child protection committees (CPCs) were able to put issues on the agenda that were at stake for them and report cases of violation of their own, and their peers' rights. A total of **1210 girls received mediation from child protection committees**, facilitated by the programme.

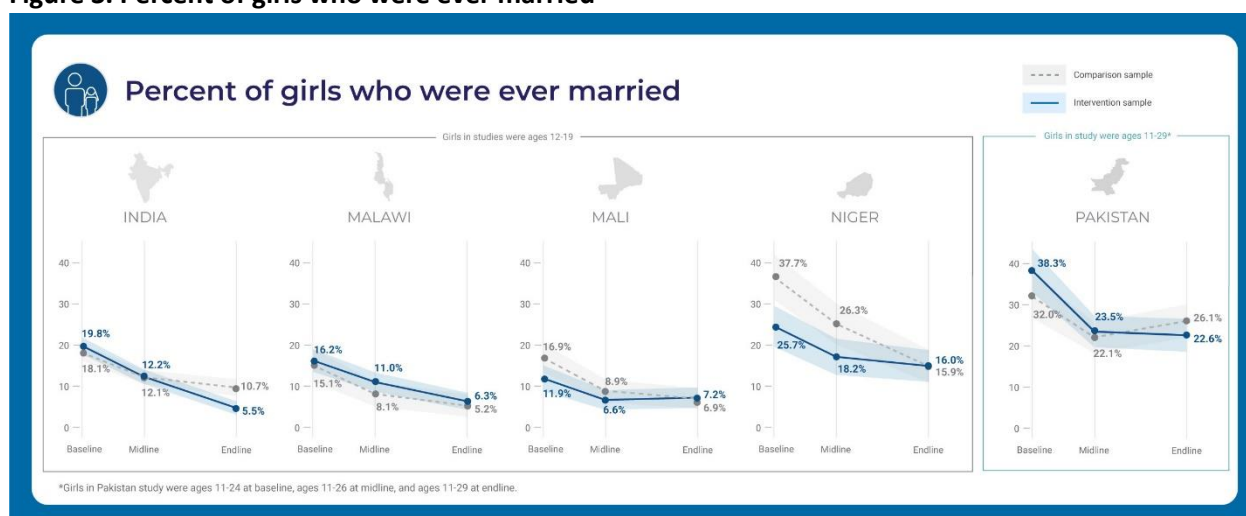
### *Conclusion*

The More Than Brides Alliance faced pervasive and deeply ingrained patriarchal structures and gender norms that put limitations on girls' rights and freedoms. Marriage: No Child's Play centred around girls, giving them the tools, knowledge, and resilience to design their future. Decision makers and social norms were addressed, and progress was made towards an enabling environment for girls. Central to progress toward gender equality, girls have increased access to accurate and youth friendly SRHR information and services. Despite the challenges girls still face, through integrated methodologies, both proven and innovative approaches, persistent sensitization, and girl-centred, empowerment-focused programming, MTBA was able to give girls more tangible choices for their future. Examples from the endline evaluation described above illustrate that MNCP led to significant results for girls in each country, in different areas. The programme also demonstrated results<sup>4</sup> in achieving its main goal: reducing child marriage. The rate of girls married before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday in Pakistan reduced from 26% at baseline to 11% by endline. In Mali, the mean age at marriage had a significant increase in intervention areas. And in India, the programme demonstrated significant impact in reducing child marriage in intervention areas over comparison areas.

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<sup>4</sup> See an overview of key indicators for each country in Annex I.

**Figure 3. Percent of girls who were ever married**



*Note: This figure shows that the percent of girls who were ever married declined in most areas between baseline and endline. In India, we see a steeper decline in intervention areas from midline to endline than in comparison areas (differences are statistically significant). After declines from baseline to midline in Mali and Pakistan, declines plateaued.*

## II. Voice, influencing and advocacy

### *Voice, influencing and advocacy objectives and processes led by girls, youth and communities*

At the start of the Marriage: No Child's Play programme, girls did not commonly participate in decision making processes at the household, nor at community level. Their capacity to raise issues impacting their lives (such as child marriage, their right to education, and SRHR) with parents, or community members and leaders, was very limited. In all of the five countries, social norms around gender and sexuality limited the possibility to discuss these topics, especially between generations. Additionally, there were no safe spaces, platforms, or mechanisms for youth - and more specifically, for girls - to learn, organise themselves and openly discuss gender, child marriage, and SRHR.

### *Influence of girls on community decision making through the MNCP programme*

As a result of five years of MNCP, many girls are now actively participating in decision making processes in their communities, and some girls have become true leaders, supporting others to stand up for their rights. Girls are informed and capacitated to raise their voices. As their position in the community has improved thanks to increased economic status and their ability to express and organise themselves, girls' voices are also being heard. Simultaneously, the openness to discuss sensitive topics such as child marriage and SRHR, and the willingness of a community to listen to girls has increased. The endline shows increases in girls' knowledge of the legal age at marriage and the negative effects of child marriage in the majority of countries. As mentioned earlier, there was also an increase in the number of girls who agree that they can disagree with their parents (or husband, if married) about decisions affecting their lives in

India, Mali, and Malawi. In Pakistan, the endline shows an impact on girls' self-esteem ("power within")<sup>5</sup>, and on girls' perception of whether people like them can change things in their community ("power to"). These positive changes are a result of the MNCP programme's focus on challenging social norms and attitudes in the communities through working with decision-makers close to girls, such as parents, educators, and traditional and religious leaders. These combined strategies are further described below.

Through **2,482 girls' clubs** across the programme countries, girls were empowered, which in turn enabled them to lead or contribute to the social mobilisation of their communities. The safe spaces created by these clubs were a place to share, learn, and start mobilisation. Many of these spaces were entirely youth-led and are perceived as a true asset by the whole community. As an example, in Mali and Niger, a peer educator system was put in place to manage the youth clubs and initiate awareness and mobilisation sessions.

The **1,182 child protection committees** that MTBA activated and strengthened throughout the five countries also played a key role in the programme, including solving individual cases of child marriage. In Pakistan, CPCs were a driving force behind social mobilisation activities.

**Individual empowerment activities** that built the confidence of girls and their financial position within a household were key to the mobilization and influencing power of girls. These activities were initiated by local partners and peer educators in the youth and girls' clubs and ranged from sensitization sessions and dialogues on child marriage, to education for girls on SRHR to be able to make informed decisions, to specific empowerment strategies such as GALS in Mali, Niger, and Pakistan and VSLAs. In Malawi one-on-one mentorships were developed, which helped girls to demand SRH services and engage with national level players on SRHR issues during annual conferences. In India girls took part in sports and participatory photography, which increased their level of confidence in a fun and engaging way.

Once organised and empowered, girls and boys together started **mobilising communities through various strategies**. Across all five countries girls - supported by local partners, girl/youth leaders and artists - used songs, poetry, and radio debates to express themselves and raise issues such as child marriage, right to education and SRHR to key decision makers such as parents, teachers and local or religious leaders. The leadership role of these girls continued in the recent times of the pandemic. In Pakistan for example, GALS champions not only advocated for their own rights but also stood up for others by spreading awareness messages, identifying and distributing food and hygiene kits to those most in need, and organizing sessions within their homes on COVID-19 precautions and the impact of COVID-19 on girls and women.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/a-how-to-guide-to-measuring-womens-empowerment-sharing-experience-from-oxfams-i-620271/>



Mali: Makan is a peer educator who raises awareness about themes such as child marriages, early pregnancy, STIs, and the importance of school enrolment and the retention of girls. He and his peers use skits and inter-generational dialogue to engage youth and community members.

Next to the youth-led mobilisation activities, local partners have also led social mobilisation activities together with youth **creating a receptive and enabling environment** in the communities. Edutainment strategies varied, including continued dialogue with religious leaders and across generations, film screening sessions, and games on the topic of child marriage, education, and SRHR. The Day of the Girl Child, International Women’s Day, and the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence were moments of powerful mobilisation. Local and regional campaigns were organised across the five countries, and girls communicated messages through poems, songs, or theatre, during rallies, marches, and conferences. The ‘#SayEnough Cypher’ and the ‘Are You Listening?’ campaigns elevated these messages to a national and global level. Once hit by COVID-19, all of the programme’s work was impacted and had to be readjusted. And while this has created setbacks, it also created an opportunity to pilot new, digital ways of working. Examples are girl-led Zoom sessions on SRHR and menstrual health in India, and youth theatre performances recorded on video and distributed via WhatsApp in Niger.

One of the continued **challenges** MTBA faced in terms of supporting girls’ collectivizing and enhancing their influence on decision-making was to break the taboos and challenge existing social norms around child marriage, SRHR and gender. It took time in all five countries before these topics were openly discussed, and even more time was required for dialogue across generations and sexes. In some contexts,

aspects of adolescent sexual reproductive health still remain taboo. For example, in Mali it is still not accepted that a girl is sexually active before marriage. Also, in Pakistani girls' clubs, SRHR education cannot be called as such, and some sensitive topics such as same sex relationships or abortion cannot be discussed. However, in all of the five countries a true and open dialogue has started around the topic of child marriage.

### *Influencing and advocacy undertaken by MTBA partners*

Over the five years of Marriage: No Child's Play, MTBA has lobbied and advocated to reduce the negative impact of child marriage on the health and economic wellbeing of girls, their communities, and broader society. MTBA has further lobbied to ensure girls enjoy expanded life choices to fulfil their sexual and reproductive health and rights. Child marriage is a human rights violation and hampers girls' voice, health, education, and economic perspectives. Therefore, MTBA's lobby and advocacy strategy focused on having strong political, financial, and public support at local, national, and international level to reduce the percentage of child marriages and its adverse effects on young women and girls globally, and specifically in India, Malawi, Pakistan, Mali, and Niger. The capacity of girls, communities, government officials, and civil society organizations (CSOs) has been strengthened to advocate on girls' rights and issues including child marriage, and to provide girls with alternative pathways.

In total, **1,305 examples of community-driven collective action** and engagement to end child marriage and support adolescents' SRHR have been documented in the programme areas over the five years. Furthermore, 2,022 influential actors and role models have expressed positive views on SRHR and against child marriage during MTBA events or on platforms and **83 laws, guidelines and policies have changed due to continuous efforts of the programme**, leading to a decrease in barriers to SRH, including a reduction in child marriage. The following are examples of lobby and advocacy efforts during the programme.

**India:** During the MTBA week in November 2017, MTBA members spoke with girls, religious leaders, community members and other stakeholders and organized a joint session on advocacy. MTBA has facilitated mutual capacity-strengthening efforts on lobby and advocacy. Utilising social accountability tools, partners in India developed a community-based monitoring tool in consultation with village health committees. Important insights were collated into briefs and policy notes and presented by adolescents to district- and state-level authorities, who committed to improvements, such as creating monthly health counselling sessions for adolescents.





India: A signature campaign in Odisha state on the International Day of the Girl Child. Photo credit: Voluntary Health Association of India

**Malawi:** MTBA in Malawi has worked closely with the Ministry of Health. At national level a number of strategic meetings were conducted with policy officers, and with support from government officials, MTBA organized Annual Girls Conferences and a 2019 National Symposium on Ending Child Marriages. At district level the programme facilitated implementation social accountability through using score cards on youth friendly service delivery in community clinics. Law enforcement officers were trained on child marriage- and child protection-related laws for effective case management. Magistrates, police, and social welfare personnel at community level participated and co-facilitated awareness sessions on protection of girls against child marriages.

**Mali:** The advocacy strategy in Mali includes the objective of “strengthening the monitoring and advocacy capacities of national CSOs and the media”. As part of MTBA, Malian national youth-led networks and organisations spoke out and advocated on SRHR and child marriage. Leading up to the general election in 2018, these youth organisations have been supported to develop a ‘Children’s Declaration’, advocating candidates to take up key youth issues in the campaign. MTBA in Mali has taken an active role in working with other partners to build the Réseau National pour la Promotion de l’Abandon du Mariage des Enfants au Mali (REPAME), a network of CSOs that is working toward becoming a national chapter of the Girls Not Brides (GNB) network. MTBA focused particularly on facilitating the active engagement of youth-led organisations and networks in REPAME. MTBA in Mali was also actively engaged in advocacy leading up

to the High-Level Meeting in Dakar, Senegal (2017) on child marriage. MTBA together with other allies influenced the agenda and concluding recommendations of the visit of the African Union (AU) Special Rapporteur on Child Marriage, which took place just before the High-Level Meeting. This visit increased the attention for child marriage as an issue of concern and led the Government of Mali to put in place a coordination and monitoring committee to support the AU Campaign to End Child Marriage. This in turn precipitated government action toward drafting of a multi-sectoral National Strategy for the Abandonment of the Practice of Child Marriage.

**Niger:** In Niger, MTBA opened political spaces for discussing child marriage. With UNFPA and local partners, a national platform was established, 'Toward Ending Child Marriage', in 2017. This platform is important for leveraging strengths, sharing insights and experiences, developing joint advocacy strategies, and mutual capacity-strengthening. Its advocacy achievements include national decrees to improve girls' school retention and the establishment of a government-led committee to monitor progress of the African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage. The two MTBA-partner platform members have gained attention for their work on a 2017 Radio France International podcast (SOS-FEVVF) and in a 2018 article in Al Jazeera (SOS-FEVVF and SongES). In June 2019, MTBA organized the first National Forum on Child Marriage in Maradi, Niger, with the collaboration and support of the National Mediator of Niger and the participation of allies including UNICEF, UNFPA, and a variety of INGOs. During this forum discussions with a wide range of stakeholders were held, including religious leaders and girls. In July 2019 - in parallel to the African Union summit - the 'Summit of the African First Ladies' put child marriage as a focal point on their agenda. During this summit, the President of Niger declared that child marriage was an act of paedophilia.

**Pakistan:** MTBA successfully lobbied the then leading party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) to strengthen the country's stance on child protection. This led to the party improving its vision on child protection policies in its manifesto and including new provisions in the manifesto, including on children's social welfare. This in turn offered MTBA a venue to influence key provincial and district level political leaders, holding them accountable for their election commitments such as the implementation of child protection policies in Punjab. Additionally, MTBA Partner Bedari was elected as co-chair of the Ending Violence against Women and Girls Alliance. The Alliance brought together CSOs with the Council of Islamic Ideology through several meetings. One of the results was that the Chair of Council of Islamic Ideology agreed to initiate an internal discussion around putting ending violence against women and girls on their agenda, with support of MTBA and CSOs.

**Linking levels of influence (international):** MTBA engaged during regional and international high-level political events by co-organizing panels and providing opportunities for capacity-strengthening and exchange. Joint preparation by presenters of local organisations, Netherlands-based staff, and Population Council researchers allowed for in-depth thematic discussions linking research and experience, and sharpening advocacy messages. Examples include Association Soro (Mali) and Youth Net and Counselling (YONECO) (Malawi) presenting at an MTBA side event during the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (2017) and panellists from Child in Need Institute (CINI) and NEEDS (India) participating at the 9th Asia Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights (2017).



In January 2021 MTBA organized a Parliamentary Brunch to conclude one of the many global campaigns of the past five years: the 'Are You Listening?' campaign<sup>6</sup>. The campaign had over a million reach and impressions on social media and highlights the importance of including girls' voices into the COVID-19 response and a continued political will to end child marriage. The campaign's call to action was signed by 105 organisations and 188 individuals. With the 2021 Dutch elections ahead, MTBA organized an online brunch event and invited aspiring Dutch parliamentarians to commit to taking forward the MTBA call to action and to being an advocate for strong political and financial support to tackle the negative impact of child marriage and keep the theme on the Dutch Development Aid agenda. The event showcased both MTBA's work and results to a broader audience of policymakers, Dutch parliamentary candidates, civil society, international organizations, and the general public.



India: A march on International Women's Day in Jharkhand. Photo credit: Child in Need Institute.

### *A few critical reflections*

MNCP shows us that there are clear interlinkages between girls' ability to contribute financially to their households and their status in their households, as well as in their community. This status in turn has an impact on their ability to influence decisions around their own lives and their sexual and reproductive health and rights. While the fact that girls have increased their decision-making power is a positive result,

<sup>6</sup> <https://morethanbrides.org/areyoulistening/>

we need to be conscious of the fact that gender equality and equal decision-making ideally should not depend on economic status. Future programmes that combine elements of economic empowerment, social participation and empowerment on decision-making should also integrate research and learning on the interlinkages between these elements.

As a learning from the programme, we recommend more thorough integration of influencing, lobby and advocacy in programme design and to allocate sufficient resources for Alliance-level lobby and advocacy efforts and activities from the start. Although influencing political processes was integrated in MTBA's programme design and ToC, when we now look back, we see that the L&A activities developed more slowly than other activities, and it took time to formulate national lobby and advocacy strategies.

As referenced above, MTBA has realized some regional advocacy engagement, such as the High-Level Meeting in Dakar, Senegal (2017), and the visits of the African Union (AU) Special Rapporteur on Child Marriage to Mali and to Niger. Yet, if we critically look back, MTBA's advocacy efforts would have been strengthened with increased efforts targeting regional political spaces.

In the global lobby and advocacy strategy, MTBA was ambitious in stating its intention to influence global political and human rights spaces. Reflecting on efforts over the last five years, MTBA profiled itself well in political spaces such as Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), Commission on Population and Development (CPD), and High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). However, we did not engage in human rights-oriented spaces like the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), although it was mentioned in the global advocacy strategy. Acknowledging that this is a wide "playing field," perhaps it was better to focus on specific influencing spaces.

## *Conclusion*

Over the past five years, the More Than Brides Alliance (MTBA) has leveraged lobby and advocacy efforts to push for girls' SRHR. Starting with the setup of the girls' and youth clubs, empowering and collectivising girls, and elevating their voices to various online and face to face platforms, as well as strategically collaborating with Girls Not Brides at national and international level, MTBA has successfully influenced policies and policy-making processes in different contexts. MTBA partners **successfully suggested 113 alternative policy approaches** on SRHR and child marriage to key actors (including governmental duty bearers and influencers, global multilateral actors and the private sector). These efforts resulted in 538 cases where important actors endorsed the alternative policy approaches presented by MTBA partners. Additionally, **MTBA trained 1371 law enforcement officers, judicial officers and legal aid lawyers** on child marriage and gender sensitivity as a way to support awareness-raising and improve the implementation of existing policies and laws. MTBA's online lobby and advocacy efforts have led to **10,069 (social) media activities to raise awareness**.



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

INDIVIDUAL AND INTERPERSONAL

INDIA: MTBA facilitated 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



## 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.



## INTERNATIONAL LOBBY & ADVOCACY ENGAGEMENTS

### 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.

### 2<sup>ND</sup> 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.



### 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, Pascale 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.



2017  
10 - 19 July

2018  
16 - 20 April

2018  
12 - 15 November

2019  
3 - 6 Juni

2019  
25 November - 10 December

2020  
20 December

2021  
11 January

2018  
12 - 23 March

2018  
25 - 27 Juni

2019  
8 March

2019  
18 - 19 Juni

2020  
29 Juni - 9 July



### 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.

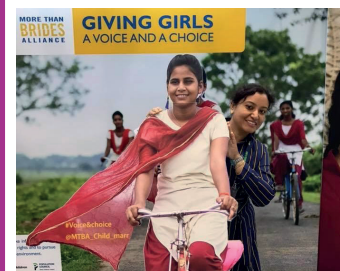
### 2<sup>ND</sup> SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOR CHANGE COMMUNICATION (SBCC) SUMMIT Bali, Indonesia



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.

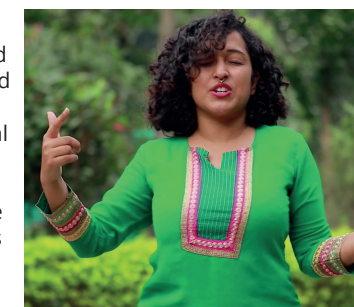
### 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV) 2020 Virtual, Global



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.





## 2020 and COVID-19

### *Introduction*

The novel coronavirus has rapidly spread across the globe since early 2020, claiming lives, disrupting economies, and exposing inequalities present in health systems. As quoted from UNICEF and supported by research by the Population Council, “the health, social, political and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are disproportionately affecting girls and women by exacerbating existing systemic gender inequalities at all levels, with potential implications for the incidence of child marriage.”<sup>7</sup> This chapter describes the consequences of the pandemic for the children and adults we work with, the effects on our activities and results, and how we tried to address challenges and use opportunities.

### *Impact on communities due to COVID-19 and contextual impact*

The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly exacerbated vulnerabilities already felt by marginalized populations, including those that MTBA sought to reach in its efforts to end child marriage. All MTBA countries have been affected by this crisis. Endline results show that over 78% of the respondents in all MTBA countries stated that COVID-19 has negatively affected their finances, resulting in over 80% of respondents reporting experiencing food shortages in Malawi and Niger and over 62% experiencing food shortages in India and Mali. Girls out of school due to school closures are facing significant barriers to completing their studies remotely, particularly in Mali and Niger. 61% of the girls in Pakistan whose school attendance was interrupted by COVID-19 think it is unlikely they will return to school once the schools reopen. The pandemic has also had an adverse effect on mental health of the respondents, especially in Mali and Malawi where over 80% reported feeling depressed since the start of pandemic and in Pakistan where 84% of girls worry about their own health and the health of their loved ones. These changes have already led to increased gender inequalities: girls are spending more time doing household chores and caring for children and the elderly than before. 35% of girls in Pakistan agreed that ‘women and girls are at increased risk of being married off during the COVID-19 lockdown.’ Figures 4 and 5 show the endline results for questions relating to COVID-19 in the five countries.

### *Programmatic adaptations due to COVID-19: High level adaptations (from detailed implementation plans and monthly updates)*

Anticipating adverse effects of the pandemic especially on girls, the MNCP country programmes started adapting their implementing strategies as early as March 2020. 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 crisis.

All MTBA countries faced varied levels of lockdowns, during which no or very limited face-to-face activities could take place. Because of this, engagement at community and girl level was severely affected. Sensitisation and training workshops, which were planned to be held with large groups, were particularly affected. During the lockdown, adaptations were either to cancel or postpone face-to-face activities, limit group sizes, or make 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

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.corecommitments.unicef.org/kp/gp-2020-covid-19-child-marriage-programming-pivot-brief>, accessed 23-2-2021

Figure 4: Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic in India, Malawi, Mali, and Niger

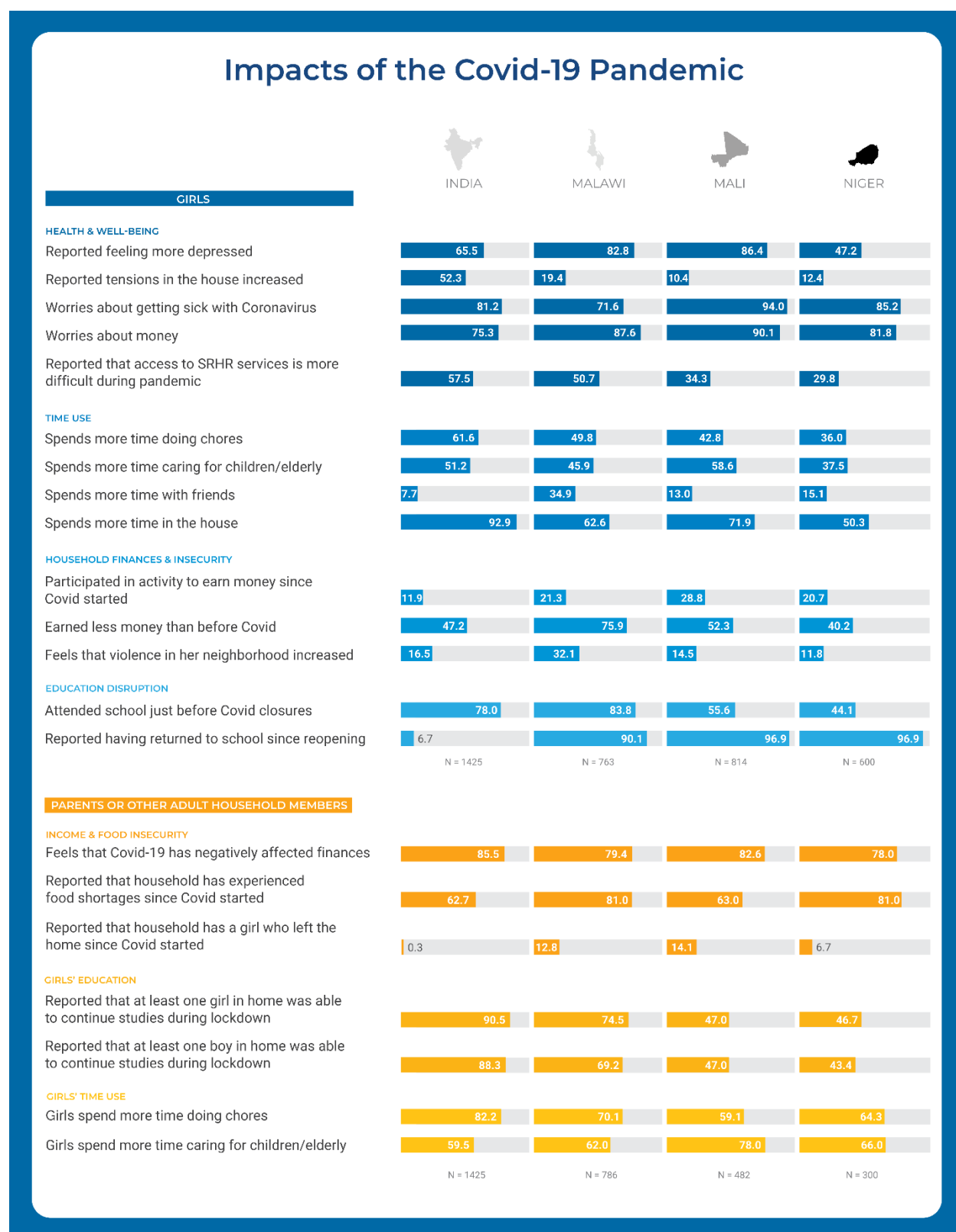
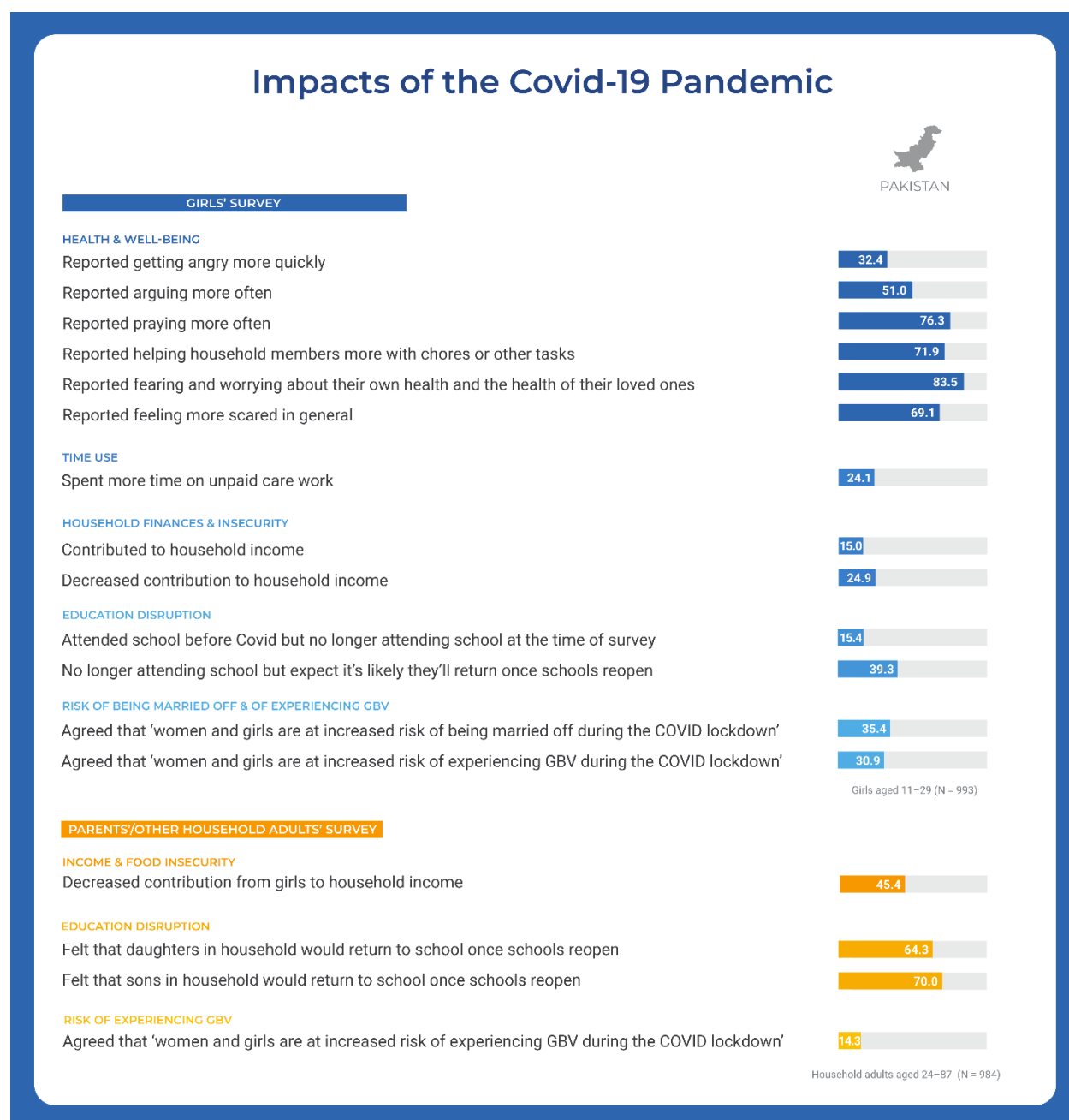


Figure 5: Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Pakistan



in all countries. As much as possible, activities were switched to digital formats such as virtual trainings or done via phone to continue planned activities as much as possible.



MTBA partners shifted to telephonic communication with leaders of various structures such as mentors, youth groups, youth community-based distribution agents (YCBDAs), and community CPCs among others, for sharing and exchanging information on programmatic themes as well as COVID-19. These leaders then cascaded the information received to their group members. Youth and discussion leaders became hubs around whom digital contact strategies developed. These leaders became central in maintaining programme staff's communication with girls. The channels of communication included the use of phone calls, phone messaging (SMS), WhatsApp, Facebook, and/or radio broadcasts. Most of these were already in use but were upscaled and extended. Cell phones and internet credit were provided to group leaders in case they did not have access to them already. Parental consent was taken before the distribution of phones, which ensured that parents had no issues with the activity.

Awareness-raising on COVID-19 was mainstreamed into all continuing activities. Messages ranged from highlighting the seriousness and magnitude of COVID-19 to explaining the impact of COVID-19 on SRHR, to providing guidance on hygiene such as the importance of handwashing and social distancing. This content was shared with community members and group leaders through social media campaigns, awareness raising sessions in communities, IEC materials, informative pictures and videos, and via WhatsApp and other online platforms. Provision of hygiene kits, including mask distribution and setting up hand washing stations, was included in several countries. In some areas, the programme also provided food ration bags to the most vulnerable girls and families during a short period of time. This avoided existing participants dropping out of the programme and in worst case scenario being married off during the height of lockdowns.

School closures in all countries resulted in school-based activities with pupils and/or teachers to be cancelled or postponed or, where allowed, held with smaller groups or online. The funds from these cancelled activities were shifted to COVID-19 awareness activities. All country teams advocated at (sub)national level for resuming education in smaller groups or switching to online education (where possible, e.g. in India) to allow especially girls to continue learning and benefiting from the protective school environment. These efforts were given high priority, because the closure of schools was one of the most widespread impacts of COVID-19 in the early months, and it is feared that school closures and family insecurity will increase the number of girls dropping out of school and also the number of child marriages.

Partners continued with economic empowerment activities as much as possible, and these activities became all the more urgent during the pandemic. Many trainings were shifted to virtual channels, such as the girls' innovation lab in Malawi. In Malawi, due to COVID-19, the seed funds and start-up capital for

#### Story from India

17-year-old Gayatri experienced a dire food situation in her village, due to the stop of food rations during the lockdown in early 2020. She took the initiative to contact local food dealers, who could not offer a solution. As Gayatri is member of a village girls' group set up by MNCP, she then informed the programme team about this problem and provided a list of households in need of food. Gayatri, together with the team, advocated the local authorities for provision of food, which ultimately led to recognition of the brave act of this young girl, broad media attention, and most importantly the actual provision of rations to almost 900 families.

girls' businesses was only distributed in October 2020. In Malawi and India, centres were set up to help girls make masks and sanitary pads as a source of income. In India, girls learned how to grow vegetables in their backyards to address rising food insecurity.

Access to health services was highly affected by the pandemic. Community members avoided health centres not only due to fear of contracting the virus but also due to health resources being diverted to COVID-19 response. For example, in Pakistan, girls and pregnant women lost access to healthcare service because health resources that were previously dedicated to reproductive health were diverted to emergency response. Other MTBA countries such as Mali and Niger experienced the same. In such a situation, MTBA distributed hygiene kits with basic amenities and medicines that can be used during menstruation and pregnancy to girls in Pakistan, Mali, and Niger.

MTBA partners continued working with CPCs, though now only remotely. These structures were especially helpful in keeping track of cases of gender-based violence (GBV) in communities. In Pakistan, these committees played a key role to resolve cases of GBV and ensure girls' safety. In India, MTBA partners approached Child Protection Units in the district and offered support in sensitizing the community and community-based institutions on COVID-19 and the resulting impact on children, especially girls. Partners also put in place a helpline for adolescent girls' groups. In Malawi, the National Helpline was also used as source of SRHR information among young people.

The country teams also adjusted their lobby and advocacy strategy around girls and SRHR by integrating COVID-19 responses. This was done as a way of holistically responding to COVID-19 and its adverse effects, and to reach policy makers who were prioritizing COVID-19 above anything else. Due to the years of collaboration during MNCP and in some cases beforehand, partners had good links with relevant government departments at various levels. This helped in raising the officials' awareness on issues relevant to adolescents during crises. In some countries, partners struggled with government personnel cancelling joint activities due to being engaged in COVID-19 related activities. In others, these activities could continue. Most teams found the online meetings with officials not to be as effective as physical meetings.

### *Use of technology*

During COVID-19, use of technology increased manifolds. Since the lockdown impacted people's mobility and the risk of contracting virus was high, most organizations switched to working remotely. Under MNCP, many programme adaptations were centred around the use of technology, especially for capacity building initiatives, mobilization, and campaigning work. The degree of shift to working remotely and online with youth groups, parent groups and other community-based structures differed per country and within each country. In Mali, the need to fully shift to online channels was not felt due to low infection numbers and lack of availability of internet. Activities could continue in smaller gatherings and with COVID-19 protocols in place. By contrast, in India, the reliance on technology was high due to the total lockdown and more widespread availability of internet.

The reliance on technology brought about many benefits. The shift to mass media such as radio and online channels (where possible) meant we could reach many people in a short time. Interactive, digital

platforms allowed for two-way communication. Community members and girls were very receptive to the information: in Malawi, girls' groups adapted their livelihood activities and club meetings to the new online situation. In India, girls switched to online and social media advocacy towards local authorities and the government on provision of sanitary napkins, food rations, and social protection. In Pakistan, engaging youth in online capacity building workshops, online campaigning, and digital activism was successful. Also in Pakistan, edutainment activities switched to online sharing of messages where possible, and youth with their own mobile phones or that of a (most often male) family member were supported to meet online.

The sudden shift towards technology also presented many challenges. These often revolved around girl group members (other than group leaders) not having access to mobile phones, radio, and social media channels in all countries. Further, radio programmes were not always interactive; virtual meetings with communities were often difficult due to lack of or poor-quality internet (Mali, rural India); accessing electricity to charge devices was a constraint; and use of phone and internet also added to the costs. The distribution of false or contradictory information through online channels was another significant challenge reported by girls in Mali. The MTBA Malawi team learnt that implementation of activities such as awareness campaigns through online means did not work well because only a few people could be reached through phones. In such conditions, communities already experiencing reachability issues related to poor internet connectivity and/or security concerns were doubly hit by travel bans and restrictions on face-to-face interactions imposed by governments in response to COVID-19, and this led to isolation in some contexts.

#### *Lessons learnt and recommendations*

Though COVID-19 disrupted the work in the final year when MTBA had intended to capitalize on the gains of the 5-year programme, it also taught many important lessons about working in challenging situations and using technology for outreach. The following recommendations emerge:

- Continue and potentially upscale the usage of technology for outreach, such as for training, capacity building, and keeping target groups motivated and involved. The tools could be phones, radio, or digital tools and need to be specific to the context.
- Youth, who are often more tech-savvy than adults, can be an entry point for future digital interventions to mobilize communities, and this provides a unique opportunity for them to step into leadership roles in their communities. Through use of technology, youth group members demonstrated their leadership by collecting information, planning and providing support to other members of their community, by raising awareness on prevention against COVID-19, and by taking initiative to signal problems such as food shortages, barriers to accessing SRH services, or stock-outs of SRH commodities.
- The provision of phones helped to stay in touch with target groups where there was a mobile network but few households possessed mobile phones.
- Rely on tried-and-true communication methods such as vans with loudspeakers or radio broadcasts for awareness activities in communities remains relevant to reach a wide audience.

- Find ways to create feedback loops when there is limited opportunity for face-to-face interaction with the target group. For example, it is important to monitor the impact or effectiveness of messages spread through remote means (such as radio, or mobile cinema).
- Continue capacity building of NGO staff to use digital and online tools and platforms to reach out to communities and other stakeholders. Most NGOs were poorly prepared to adapt to digital platforms to reach their stakeholders. Some were able to adapt quickly while others struggled.

#### *Impact on organizations due to COVID-19*

COVID-19 has changed the way organisations work. As stated by the MTBA Niger team: “We needed to adapt and become resilient for an unknown future within a short period”. The shift to working remotely brought many changes and challenges for programme staff, not least the shift to using (much more) digital technology to enable contact and remote collaboration, in many cases also working from home.

Virtual training workshops were held with staff and partners, which in general worked quite well. Staff mastered new, online applications quickly. Organisations informed their staff regularly on new developments, reinforced health measures and developed guidelines to guide behaviour and ensure safety of staff. Some also shared protection kits, such as in Mali. In several countries, part of the travel budget was redirected to new or online activities.

In general, staff based in capitals or larger cities experienced fewer issues with the transition to working remotely than those based in the field and in rural areas. This was due to better internet connection in urban areas. Family conditions at home, instability of internet connections, poor coverage of phone network, and not having the disposal of a laptop/computer at home were some of the challenges reported by staff. Pakistan and Mali teams explicitly mentioned the difficult work-life balance experience by female employees.

## Theory of Change

### 1. Introduction

A *Theory of Change* (ToC) is a tool that details how change happens in a specific context. It is used by programmes and organisations to describe and illustrate how their activities create change. A ToC aims to explain the so-called ‘missing middle’: how interventions will lead to changes, and how these changes contribute will to the ultimate impact a programme strives for. Assumptions play a crucial part in a ToC and explain the causal linkages that are expected. During the implementation of activities, it is important to continuously reflect and challenge these assumptions: can we confirm them, or are they false? This will allow programmes to effectively adjust interventions when needed.

The More Than Brides Alliance ToC was originally developed in 2015 during the programme development phase for MNCP. Our ambition was to empower young people to decide if and when to get married by making informed choices about their sexual, reproductive health and rights and pursuing alternative life paths in an enabling environment.

To achieve this ambition, MTBA developed a holistic approach, seeking change in seven interlinked ‘outcome areas’. Our theory was that change needed to happen in all areas to realize our programme goals and that changes in different areas would mutually reinforce each other. This holistic approach to change is similar to the other child marriage alliances part of the SRHR Partnerships with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>8</sup>

The MTBA outcome areas are as follows (see also the diagram in Annex III):

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

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.her-choice.org/en/strategies/>  
<https://www.rutgers.international/programmes/yes-i-do>

Outcomes 1 and 6 were the key pillars: seeking the empowerment of girls to claim their SRH rights and make informed decisions in an enabling environment in support of SRHR.

Girls Not Brides has developed a comprehensive theory of change that demonstrates the range of approaches needed to address child marriage and how they intersect.<sup>9</sup> Our MTBA ToC can be placed in the theory of GNB; MTBA focuses on girls' voices, alternative pathways to child marriage, and an enabling environment for girls. We focus not only on ending child marriage but also seek the empowerment of girls to voice and claim their SRHR.

## 2. Empowerment and enabling environment as change catalysts

Outcome areas 1 and 6 remained the core priorities and main areas of investment in each country throughout the programme lifetime – responding directly to a key contextual driver of child marriage and acting as a key catalyst for change. This is reflected in the MTBA Costing Analysis: overall, just over half of outcome spending went to SRHR knowledge and empowerment (Outcome 1: 28.8%) and increased community social action (Outcome 6: 22.6%) activities. The empowerment of girl leaders, role models and champions was key to start and inspire collective social action. However, this cannot be done without engagement of men and boys and community mobilization, in which an enabling environment provides safe space for girls to practice their SRHR.

In Mali, the empowerment of youth was the core need for change that nurtured other results. The Alliance members and local partners worked with empowered youth and community members to reframe persistent false beliefs about child marriage and to discuss its harmful effects. In Malawi, early pregnancy was identified as a key driver of child marriage. Developing the knowledge of young people on their sexual reproductive health and their access to youth friendly SRH services was a key priority.

### *Strategy insights...*

In **Malawi**, it was found that girls relied heavily on their peers for information and advice on their sexual and reproductive health. **Investing in safe space and developing the capacity of peer leaders and mentors** proved important to develop the knowledge of girls and young women and to address misconceptions on adolescent sexuality.

Outcomes 1 and 6 were experienced as dependent on each other. A stronger voice of girls and young women created change in social and gender norms in communities, while changing norms and attitudes and joint action in favour of girls' rights enabled a stronger voice of girls. In Niger, the mobilization and engagement of young people could not have been successful without mobilizing and engaging parents, religious leaders, and customary leaders. In India, empowering girl leaders and role models had a core focus from the start and were found to be key to start and inspire collective social action in communities.

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<sup>9</sup> [www.girlsnotbrides.org/theory-change-child-marriage-girls-brides/](http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/theory-change-child-marriage-girls-brides/)



In Pakistan, youth themselves played a key role in achieving results throughout the programme, with key investments from the start on educating and training youth on life skills-based education, child marriage issues and leadership and negotiation skills. Social norms interventions such as edutainment in communities resulted in empowered young girls and boys who actively participated in and led social change initiatives at community level.

***Strategy insights...***

Working with young people and teachers on **Life Skills Based Education (LSBE)** was a crucial strategy in **Pakistan**. The development of life skills has proven to be highly appreciated among young women and men in order to develop their confidence and voice. More than 200 teachers will continue teaching LSBE to thousands of students beyond the life of programme, as we already saw during the COVID-19 pandemic when activities paused, but LSBE continued independently.

**3. A need for true contextualization from the start**

In each country, the theory of change and seven outcome areas were originally envisioned to be implemented in full, placed in the local context. **Yet, the ambition to implement the theory of change in full in each country proved unrealistic.** This was mainly a result of not always effectively taking into account the areas of expertise and capacities of implementing partners from the start. Complementarities between Alliance members in each country were not always fully leveraged, and often each Alliance member implemented the full theory of change. **This has resulted in country teams and partners facing experience ‘gaps’** in outcome areas where they had less expertise to start with.

We can think of the experience in Pakistan, where a lack of expertise of local partners on economic empowerment and child protection resulted in lower investments and results. This made it more difficult at times to create or engage girls in alternative pathways. In Niger, partners reflected that a greater investment in creating access to youth-friendly health services should have been made. The increased demand of youth as a result of the programme was not always satisfied.

Over time, in each country we have seen a move towards different areas of focus, difference in sequencing and perceived needs for adjustment. **A crucial lesson learned for the Alliance was to actively encourage contextualization of the theory of change for each country.** In each country, an in-depth desk review on child marriage was conducted at the start, alongside inception workshops to co-design action plans. However, the global ToC did not leave enough space for countries to meaningfully adapt at country level. Rather, the global ToC should have been developed at outcome level and the countries should have defined the outputs and interventions according to their contexts, expertise and capacities. Alternatively, it should have been more strongly communicated to country teams that that the global ToC, however detailed it was, should be adapted at the country level. This includes contextualizing causality in outcome areas themselves – **customizing the ToC and finding the right entry-points for change proved to be key.** For example, the initial interventions for collective action in communities did not always make for the best

starting point, as local context and sensitivities could differ greatly among countries. In India, some partners reflected that they could have put a greater emphasis on working on the intersection of men and boys, masculinity, and young people's desires.

***Key tipping points...***

In **Niger**, tangible **shifts in highly patriarchal communities** were seen as change catalysts. This ranges from simply being able to address the topic of sexual reproductive health in community dialogues, the involvement of men in activities traditionally reserved for women, and the 'zero tolerance' stance of community leaders to child marriage.

An example of how the theory of change was adapted comes from Outcome 7 - supportive rights-based legal and policy environment against child marriage. While initially the focus was on national actors, the interest and influence of implementing partners was at a different level, namely local, district and regional. In each country, a shift to these levels was operationalized, while at the same time at the international level the link between country influencing and influencing in global conferences was successfully made. Influencing activities focused on improving the legal and policy environment, but also how policies and practices work in local realities. For example, in Malawi legislation making child marriage illegal was shown to drive the practice underground. Working on local social norms and mindsets proved to be a key need.

**Contextualizing the theory of change has also shown importance to determine what success is.** All countries had different starting points. For example, Niger has a far greater prevalence of child marriage compared to other countries. In Pakistan, the social context is highly restrictive and prevents girls from speaking up. In certain states in India, citizens' action was already becoming more common. Different starting points mean different needs and ambitions for success. Contextualizing would have made this sharp from the start and made change more realistic. For example, though key outcome indicators show less impact in Mali and Niger, this does not necessarily indicate that less 'change' was achieved. At the same time, the ambition and focus of the country-level theory of change adapted over time, for example in India where the ambition evolved to setting up larger-scale federations of girls' groups.

#### **4. Interlinkages and sequencing of change pathways**

Although more attention to contextualization of the ToC would have helped the Alliance at the start, Alliance members and implementing partners in each country prioritized outcome areas differently and sharpened their focus over the course of time. While Outcomes 1 and 6 formed the core of the programme, the combination of seven outcomes areas responded to the highly complex nature of the drivers of child marriage. The practical expertise of implementing partners and local context drove the prioritization of the five other outcome areas.

Recent evidence<sup>10</sup> highlights that single-component programmes are at least as, and often more, successful than multi-component programmes in reducing child marriage. Moreover, reaching scale and securing sustainability through for example governmental actors picking up interventions during and after the programme, is more likely to happen with single-component programmes. However, in each of the MTBA countries, Alliance members and implementing partners have found importance in all outcome areas. During the programme, the ToC assumption that the set of outcome areas were interlinked and mutually reinforcing was confirmed – albeit in each country in different ways and with different sub-sets. It is worthwhile for future programmes to explore the balance between the simplicity of a single-component programme versus responding to difficult and diffuse local drivers and triggers of child marriage through a holistic approach.

Building on this, it is important to question what exactly success entails around scalability. Is scaling and ensuring sustainability a continuation of interventions by government actors who can reach larger numbers of beneficiaries? Or do we find scale and sustainability in diverse, local, community-driven interventions: “small is beautiful”? Another reflection is around seeking to reduce child marriage cases as the goal versus seeking to change the root causes of child marriage. Single-component programmes might be equally or more effective in reducing child marriage cases, but will they be able to address the root causes of which child marriage is a consequence?

In MTBA, we have found that different sub-sets of outcome areas were especially linked and mutually reinforcing, which can provide opportunities for creating synergy and reflecting on scale and sustainability. An example is the experience in Mali, where Outcomes 1 (girls’ voice), 3 (economic empowerment) and 5 (SRHR services) were found to be highly interlinked. When girls had more knowledge and confidence this was often linked to more economic independence, and they increasingly started to use improved SRHR services.

***Strategy insights...***

In **Mali**, working with ‘**model fathers**’ was found to be a very effective strategies in a safe environment for girls to voice their rights. The fathers of girls were involved to address gender-based violence. The responsibility of protecting one’s sister was an effective way to open up larger conversations and work in communities with men on changing gender norms.

In Malawi, a similar experience was found but in a different way. In order for young people to become more empowered and act upon their needs and interest, the combination of Outcomes 1 and 3 was crucial. This entailed strengthening the voice and independence of girls while reducing the risk of being coerced by men for economic incentives as well as being seen as an economic burden by their parents in cases where marriage is the only option for survival.

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<sup>10</sup> Malhotra, A., Elnakib, S. (2020) *20 Years of the Evidence Base on What Works to Prevent Child Marriage: A Systematic Review*. Journal of Adolescent Health, pp 1-16.

In Pakistan, there were distinct linkages and mutual reinforcement in working with communities on child protection mechanisms (Outcome 4) and social action against child marriage (Outcome 6). Community leaders in the newly set-up CPCs made it possible to implement interventions under Outcome 6. CPC members took the lead in organizing public events, awareness walks and rallies, mobile cinemas, debate, and sports competitions at community level.

***Key tipping points...***

A key moment of change found in **Pakistan** was **the first case raised to the child protection committees** that the programme helped to establish in communities. CPCs were a tangible mechanism and a catalyst for shifting community perceptions on child marriage.

In analysing our experience on the outcomes that build upon one another in each context, **we have identified important lessons around the sequencing of outcomes and shifts for future programming**. As an example, in Malawi, we found that the economic empowerment of girls started too late during the programme. This affected girls' independence to decide to stay in schools or delay a marriage, because girls depended on families or sexual partners for their livelihoods. In Pakistan, activities on community mobilization were sequenced to start in the third year, but the lack of initial community awareness and support of the programme made activities and participation of access to communities more difficult. In retrospect, programme staff realized that community mobilisation needed to start from the first year onwards.



Pakistan: Girls receiving bicycles to increase mobility. Photo credit: Bedari.

## Gender & Inclusion

Gender inequality and other intersectional dimensions of identity have been integrated into the Marriage: No Child's Play programme from the start. MNCP placed emphasis on the process of girls' empowerment, which includes building agency (the ability to pursue one's goals) and being able to exercise one's agency successfully (e.g. structures, enabling environment, and social factors). MNCP strove for a girl-centred approach focused on empowerment, considering intersectional perspectives, and involving different groups of girls in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programme. The MNCP gender equality approach is in line with the Dutch policy commitments on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls in that it contributes to the pillars of *economic empowerment* and *increased decision-making*<sup>11</sup>. The approach also aligns with the June 2020 compendium on "How Changing Social Norms is Crucial in Achieving Gender Equality", which noted the importance of human agency, individual capabilities, and empowerment in changing social norms<sup>12</sup>.

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*Being empowered means you can represent and sustain yourself and take your own decisions without influence from others.*

*Matpu Traoré: "empowerment is taking charge without the need for others to do so", ~girls in Mali 2020.*

When MNCP began, barriers to girls' empowerment and agency were observable across all countries. At an individual level, girls lacked the self-esteem and self-confidence to raise their voices and actively participate in decision making. At household level, girls faced poverty as well as a huge burden of domestic tasks, such as sibling care, often contributing to high rates of school drop-out. At the community level, girls faced persistent harmful practices, violence, gender discrimination, and harmful social norms. The MNCP programme implemented strategies to combat gender inequality, address root causes and symptoms, integrate youth participation, take a girl-centred approach, and strengthen intersectionality to foster inclusion.

MNCP worked to tailor programming to address the **root causes** of these barriers - societally constructed gender norms - and the discrimination that girls experience in their daily lives. Targeting **root causes** and symptoms alike ensured that gender inequality was approached holistically to systematically shatter its foundations, while acknowledging and treating the impact it has on girls today. One success factor was the creation of safe spaces such as girls' clubs and VSLAs where girls were given skills, competencies, information, and peer support to face daily challenges and build resilience. Girls were empowered through financial literacy, Life Skills for Success (LS4S) training, financial inclusion support through savings groups (VSLAs) and the GALS approach. These enabled girls and women to have real economic and decision-making power at the household and community level (see also the report section [Analysis of Results: I. Results for Girls](#)).

During implementation, the MNCP programme worked to break gender stereotypes through providing training on girls' empowerment and rights at community, household and advocacy levels. Edutainment

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/beleidsnota-s/2018/05/18/pdf-beleidsnota-investeren-in-perspectie>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.unfpa.org/social-norms-change>



activities led to contextual changes through which girls were better able to realize their rights to education, SRH, and economic empowerment. Working with traditional chiefs and religious leaders was a key strategy for gender norm change, strengthening the prioritization of girls' access to education, and collective social action to enact laws.

Understanding and addressing the **root causes** of gender inequality is central to achieving long lasting results, while treating the symptoms provides meaningful change for girls now. Tackling both is the only way to achieve meaningful and lasting change. The important shifts that took place within girls themselves further illustrate the power of tackling gender inequality by targeting root causes and symptoms alike. In all countries one of the biggest changes observed among girls who participated in the programme was their increased self-confidence, which gave them the foundational tools to tackle barriers. At household and community level, the MNCP programme focused on teacher and parent training on gender equality and fair practice in the classroom for the retention of girls in school. Working simultaneously with girls and with key actors in their environment led to MNCP's most inspiring examples of shifts in power, such as girls resisting marriage or being given the space to voice their own wishes to their caregivers and encouraged to do so and being listened to by their parents in many cases. This illustrates the combined impact of the integration of community and girl centred work in MNCP.

The MNCP programme actively engaged **youth and facilitated their participation** in decision making and dialogue, with a particular emphasis on the voices of girls. **Youth participatory approaches** enabled greater gender equality in programming by giving voice to girls and their peers. Simply put, youth deserve the right to represent their own interests. Girls' clubs encouraged dialogue between girls and their parents through door-to-door visits, and this led to increased consultation of children on marriage issues. Girls' clubs and peer educators also conducted advocacy campaigns both at community level and national level. During the International Day of the Girl Child, girls' club representatives engaged with national stakeholders to lobby for issues that affected them, such as access to SRH services. See the [story of Jashoda from India in Annex IV](#) for an inspiring example of the MNCP programme transforming a girls' self-confidence and providing a platform for her voice.

The MNCP program utilized gender sensitive and **girl centred** interventions to involve girls in project design, implementation and monitoring. MTBA strives to live the principle that, for meaningful changes to be achieved **for girls**, programming should also be designed and elevated **with and by girls** themselves. For example, input from girls was integrated into the design phase through workshops in Mali and Malawi, and peer education in girls' clubs and girl mentors were central in all countries at implementation. Further, putting girls at the centre of gender discrimination awareness raising activities in communities is a successful example of **girl-centred programming** and has strong potential to change social norms. In all countries, girls were involved to reflect on best practices and lessons from their perspective in the programme, allowing for continued improvement and programme adaptation to be rooted in the girls' self-identified needs. In MNCP boys and young men were sensitized on gender issues to enable them to discuss and exchange their views but also support women in their household and community. Girls proved to be both beneficiaries and vital resources. In Pakistan, girl champions and mentors trained by the programme identified girls at risk in their areas and helped CPC members in delaying their marriages. Furthermore, in India four girl leaders received United Nations Voluntary Awards in the field of SRHR,



preventing child marriage and promoting gender equality. To respect the voice of girls and make meaningful strides towards gender equality, girls must be put in the driver's seat to dictate the change they would like to see, to determine the best way to achieve change, and to be part of the change they would like to see.

Special attention was paid to the **interconnection of social categories** and the needs of different groups of girls. By considering girls through the lens of the social dimension of gender as well as the other aspects of their social context and identity, the MNCP programme was able to reach the most vulnerable girls, and marginalized groups were considered during design and implementation. For example, in Malawi, girls from child headed households have an extra burden at home and were given special consideration when promoting girls' leadership. Likewise, teenage mothers and girls withdrawn from early marriages also needed special consideration. Just as girls live with the complex challenges of social stigma associated with their combination of social identities, programmatic responses need to approach inclusion through an **intersectional** and holistic understanding of girls' realities.



Malawi: A YONECO radio host. Photo credit: Simavi.

Many social norms have been addressed as a part of MNCP, such as girls' right to education and access to SRHR services. Still, deeply entrenched and harmful traditional practices, social and **gender norms persist** and perpetuate gender inequality in communities; for example, through the unequal distribution of household chores. Through MNCP, many more girls have access to SRHR services; however, social stigma

surrounding girls who access contraceptives persists, and girls are inconsistently supported by community leaders and parents to fully access SRH and equal rights. Similarly, religious leaders are inconsistent in their support for abandoning child marriage at national and local levels. Financial empowerment of girls and youth women married before age 18 is another positive example of the impact of MNCP. Still, girls continue to face challenges to access and exercise their financial freedom. In Mali, girls and young women have the freedom to engage in income generating activities, yet they do not always have total decision-making power over the money they earn. Finally, while MNCP aimed to take a holistic approach, considering intersectionality for inclusive programming, the extreme conservative nature of many contexts in which we worked made it extremely challenging to address certain taboo topics in communities, for example, LGBTQ issues.

Over the last five years, the More than Brides Alliance has learned much about what works well and not when promoting gender equality and inclusion. Firstly, it is important to include the most vulnerable and marginalized girls and young women. Another key lesson is the importance of promoting positive masculinity and actively engaging men and boys in activities. Men are more willing and able to support girls if they are engaged in a discussion to challenge traditional gender norms and roles. VSLAs enabled women to have meaningful economic and decision-making power at the household and community level and functioned as a safe space for girls. Finally, programme staff observed that activities that combined skills acquisition, agency and economic capabilities had a significant impact on gender norms and equality outcomes.

Child marriage and gender inequality are closely interconnected, and MTBA made strides to tackle both issues as part of the MNCP programme. MTBA implemented several key strategies to combat gender inequality, including addressing root causes and symptoms, integrating youth participation, taking a girl-centred approach, and looking at intersectionality to foster inclusion. Implementing these strategies together resulted in positive examples of progress towards greater gender equality and meaningful change for girls participating in the programme. Yet, while significant for these girls and a sign of the effectiveness of the strategies implemented, the change observed was incremental. The endline evaluation of MNCP assessed gender equitable attitudes across the 5 years of the programme and while no significant impact of the programme was found, generally attitudes were trending towards greater gender equity. This finding underscores the fact that gender inequality requires sustained, targeted, and widespread programming to even begin to combat it. Even incremental gender equality gains are extremely vulnerable and susceptible to backsliding, as observed in the report section on COVID-19. When tackling such an ingrained and longstanding issue as gender inequality, the importance of incremental change, and the meaningful improvement it signals for girls, cannot be understated or disregarded. From the experience of MNCP, we see a need to recalibrate our perception of progress on complex issues such as gender inequality and to improve our measurement of incremental change. We must find more meaningful ways to measure progress towards gender equality that resonates for girls' lived realities.

## Analysis of Partnerships

*“Collaboration and mutual trust can bring long lasting results.”*

### Introduction

This report presents the analysis of partnerships within and beyond the More than Brides Alliance. The **purpose** of this report is twofold. First is compliance with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs - it is a funding requirement to produce a narrative report covering the five years of the programme. Second is the aspiration and ambition to harvest learnings from our experience and add to the broader debate about partnerships, southern leadership and the process of shifting the power in the international development sector. In doing this, we reflect and build on the findings of the IOB evaluation published in 2019<sup>13</sup>.

In this report, partnerships are conceptualised as ways in which organizations collaborate and work together towards a shared goal. Further, as partnerships funded by MoFA require an alliance structure, and emphasis is increasingly put on the role of southern partners, we are unpacking the concept of partnerships through different levels or alliance structures and by focusing on inputs collected from local partners.

This report was developed through a broad consultative process and relies on data collected through surveys of respondents from 38 local partners’ staff members, comparative analysis with data from that similar survey conducted during midline evaluation (2018), country reports, 8 semi-structured interviews, and 2 group discussions and collaborative reflections using virtual whiteboards, with members of two Alliance working groups. For the purpose of learning, we have focused on two aspects of partnerships: alliance structures (global and country level) and collaborations beyond the Alliance partners.

While the alliance had a rocky start, with differences in organisational culture and ways of working, quite harmonious relationships were built during the programme implementation by investing in understanding each other’s perspectives and the value add of each organisation. In the following sections, we share this journey by reflecting on the Global Alliance structure and dynamics, Country Alliances, progress towards southern leadership, partnership with MoFA, and collaborations with other actors. Each of these sections contains a short summary of developments, what worked, what did not, our learnings, and potential implications for the future.

### Global Alliance structure and dynamics

At the beginning, Alliance partnership was characterised by the dominance of the lead organisation, the absence of thematic leadership, and the lack of common understanding on principles, philosophies and approaches (i.e. how we understand gender; what is our stance on abortion; what is the role of local organisations and how we work with them). This experience has also challenged the principle of operational and tactical autonomy suggested in the IOB study, as the way of approaching interventions (discursive practices) depends on the way we understand things (ideational background). As a

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<sup>13</sup> IOB Study No. 431, *Strategies for partners: balancing complementarity and autonomy - Evaluation of the functioning of strategic partnerships between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and civil society organisations*

consequence, our Alliance went through a period of a dysfunctional Steering Committee (SC), a low level of trust, and Alliance members working in silos.

However, this has significantly changed. We recognise the following turning points, which enabled us to become a more than functional alliance: changes in the Steering Committee, the establishment of working groups, partners taking the lead role on joint activities (Simavi took the lead on lobby and advocacy – L&A - while Oxfam Novib took on communications), the development of key indicators, and joint L&A efforts for significant policy events.

In sum, the shift in collaboration led to a shared portfolio, efficient working groups, higher visibility, and stronger L&A. The table below shows the main roles and key added values of each Alliance partner in a later stage of the programme:

	<b>SCNL</b>	<b>Oxfam Novib</b>	<b>Simavi</b>	<b>Population Council</b>
<b>Role</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Global Alliance Coordination and support to country Alliances</li> <li>- MEAL</li> <li>- Implementation</li> <li>- Technical Assistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implementation</li> <li>- Research in Pakistan</li> <li>- Alliance Communications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Implementation</li> <li>- Support to country alliances</li> <li>- International L&amp;A</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Research partner</li> <li>- Impact Evaluation</li> <li>- Qualitative research</li> </ul>
<b>Key contributions /added value</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Opening up spaces for partners</li> <li>- Child protection lens</li> <li>- Youth Economic Empowerment</li> <li>- Life Skills for Success approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- GALS</li> <li>- Edutainment</li> <li>- Gender transformative lens</li> <li>- Qualitative research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Southern leadership agenda (Ways of working with local partners)</li> <li>- Progressive SRHR lens</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Network of researchers</li> <li>- Use of research findings for L&amp;A, communications and business development</li> </ul>

Within the Alliance there was also a research partnership between Population Council and local institutes from Mali, Malawi, and Niger engaged in the impact measurement. While these relationships continued over the duration of the MNCP intervention, short-term contractual arrangements (which were the consequence of limited resources allocated for the research component of the programme) caused some fragmentation and limited opportunities for continuous interaction between local research partners and programme implementers outside of data collection periods.

Despite significant improvement, some challenges remained throughout the programme period. These include the disconnect of the Steering Committee from the reality of communities where the programme was implemented; the complex MEAL and reporting, the use of highly detailed implementation plans (DIPs); and limited cross-fertilization across countries and programme components.

While we realise that there are many things that could have been better, we are proud of the considerable progress made. Our commitment to develop a new proposal and continue working together also demonstrates that we have grown into an alliance in which partners feel respected and appreciated.

## Learnings and implications

### **The polder model sometimes doesn't work: a common understanding is important, even if it means agreeing to disagree**

- Vision and openness of the lead organisation can be a significant factor in opening space for other partners. Further, it is important to openly discuss partners' perspectives as well as to invest in understanding each other's culture and actively work towards a joint philosophy of working and cross-alliance infrastructure.
- Governance documents should be developed at the very start, clearly defining roles and relationships. ToRs developed for all bodies of the governance structure should reflect the governance philosophy, principles, and roles.
- Decisions on how and where to programme should not be the matter of politics and power. Rather, they should be based on a common understanding and informed by local knowledge.

### **Transparency and trust are the key**

- While internal organisational philosophies and structures are not likely to change easily and quickly, the attitude and commitment towards stretching our boundaries and making the most of collaboration can lead to a functional alliance.
- Having a finance working group would increase transparency and trust.

### **Sharing responsibilities and jointly planning enables higher effectiveness**

- Joint alliance-level responsibilities should be shared, with different partners leading on different packages in line with their expertise and capacities.
- Time allocation for staff should be balanced and aligned with responsibilities.
- Alliance strategies (L&A, learning, etc.) should be adopted early.

### **Flatter hierarchies are needed for an adaptive and effective programme**

- The SC should consist of country representatives and people involved in day to day business.
- The Programme Coordination Committee (PCC) should also involve people from the implementing countries throughout the programme and have a bigger authority to be able to respond to changes and efficiently manage implementation.
- MEAL system should be greatly simplified, requesting only outcome level reporting at alliance level and giving the autonomy to country teams and implementing partners to develop contextualised monitoring mechanisms.

## Country Alliances

Collaborations among implementing partners at country level were steered by Country Alliance Coordinators (CAC) hosted by one of local organisations or country offices. In addition, some Alliance partners had a part-time MEAL person in country who was engaged in continuous coordination of data collection and analysis among local partners. The efficiency and effectiveness of the set-up was dependant on interpersonal relations and cultural context.

When asked about aspects of Country Alliances that were successful and beneficial, partners have emphasized mutual learning and capacity building. This is particularly seen in the extensive exchange of tools and expertise in specific fields. Further, joint monitoring visits and advocacy initiatives have contributed to stronger country partnerships.

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

On the other hand, local partners suggest that Country Alliances lacked structured coordination, joint planning, autonomy, and resources. This led to sporadic joint activities and a Country Alliance focus on coordination for efficient implementation of programme activities rather than as a mechanism for alignment and collective action. Further, Country Alliances suffered from the tension between organisational and Alliance interests.

*“Partners were mostly suspicious of each other; it could have been the issue of securing donor confidence and funding for their organisation.”*

### *Learnings and implications*

#### **Country Alliance structures can fuel power imbalances among local partners**

- Local partners should be given the opportunity to influence the design of country structures, organise themselves and choose local leadership.
- If country alliance structures are hosted by local organisations, the rotation of lead organisation should be considered.
- Time and resources should be put towards bringing all partners to a common platform, potentially by hiring local partnership brokers.

#### **Countries should have more autonomy and resources**

- A stronger country governance structure should be created and CACs should be given more rights, autonomy, and freedom in order to better run the programme.
- Substantial budget should be allocated for joint Country Alliance activities, L&A initiatives, campaigns, and mutual learning.

#### **Mutual learning and exchanges are key**

- A joint learning agenda at country level should be designed at the beginning of the programme.
- Mechanisms for frequent communication and exchange should be in place from the beginning, co-designed with local partners.

### *Moving towards southern leadership*

In general, local partners see the benefit of being part of the Global Alliance. Survey results reveal that while the combination of agree and strongly agree answers account for a similar value in 2018 and 2020 (96% in 2018 and 97% in 2020), the percentage of those who strongly agree that “benefits of being part of MTBA are worth the effort” increased significantly (from 29% in 2018 to 55% in 2020).

Flexibility with planning, low influence on local partners’ workplans, and the increased involvement of local partners in country level decision making all show positive progress in shifting the power. These are some of the reasons for the slight increase in the score on the level of respect among partners within the alliance. Further, partners recognise added value from the Global Alliance in managing country level tensions, providing capacity building, facilitating learnings among local partners, and enabling exposure to global L&A opportunities and networking. Regular calls organised across the Alliance around adaptations needed to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences were specifically pointed out as a positive example.

However, partners also recognise that southern leadership was not built into the Alliance structures from the start. The programme was designed in the North, and its set-up was focused on upward accountability driven and fuelled with power imbalances, which meant that a lot of patience and effort was required to build trust. Clear structures for the participation of local partners in decision making were missing. This



also caused tensions between the need for consistency of the programme across countries and the intention to contextualise interventions. The fact that Alliance members did not start with a common approach to partnerships and thematic strategies delayed the meaningful engagement of local partners and caused a disconnect between local and international initiatives. On a more practical level, partners responding to the survey mentioned delays with funding transfers and dependency on technical assistance for the implementation of activities as challenges. In the survey, out of trust, respect, and transparency, transparency received the lowest score. Comments on this question referred primarily to finance and budgets but also to decision making.

*“There was too much top-down management, and partner views were never taken seriously because decisions were already made”*

### *Learnings and implications*

#### **Structural changes are needed for southern leadership to materialise**

- Accountability should be balanced, equally appreciating different accountability directions (and balancing upward and downward). MEAL should not only take information from participants but also empower them through feedback loops integrated into the system from the beginning.
- Commonly-used language should change so we do not perceive local partners and primary stakeholders to be lower in a hierarchy (this also applies to the terminology of upward and downward accountability).
- Organically developed partnerships and community responses should be supported instead of imposing northern agendas.

#### **Flatter hierarchies are the next step, and transparency and communication are key**

- Time and resources should be allocated for jointly adopting an Alliance mission and vision.
- Global Alliance Governance structures and implementation bodies should always involve local and country representatives.
- Alliance level planning should be participatory, timely and strategic. Southern partners should have a significant say, not just tokenistic participation, from the very first step in design.
- Primary stakeholders (in MTBA, girls) should be given at least an advisory role.
- Local, national and regional collaboration, learning and exchange should be supported by ensuring sufficient funding, creating mechanisms, and building them into the programme cycle.

#### **The role of INGOs is changing and should primarily be:**

- Opening spaces and allocating the time and effort needed for collaborative decision making.
- Giving up power and addressing root causes of inequalities, including reflecting on and challenging of the privileged position and colonial practices of INGOs.
- Facilitating international exposure and advocacy.
- Supporting country level alliance building.
- Facilitating cross-country and inter-alliance collaboration and learning.
- Facilitating co-design processes instead of imposing readymade solutions (i.e. for tools and methodologies used).

#### **The role of local organisations is changing and should primarily be:**

- Taking up a stronger and more critical role, ownership, and responsibility.
- Leadership through steering the process.

- Working to support organic coalitions and community responses as opposed to uncritically implementing solutions of the North.
- Ensuring legitimacy through local constituency.

#### MoFA in transition, from donor to partner

While the commitment of MoFA to be more than just a donor is clear, in practice, it is still perceived as a supportive, understanding, and flexible donor rather than a partner. The way reporting is organised and the fact that very few, if any, comments were received on submitted reports suggest that the relationship is still focused on compliance.

In line with IOB Study findings, the relationship was lacking a clear vision and mutual understanding of what the role of MoFA as a partner, as opposed to a donor, means. With the lack of clarity and by being anchored in one contact person which changed several times over the programme implementation period, the contribution of MoFA was inconsistent and dependent on the personal interest and engagement of the appointed civil servant. Therefore, building personal relationships was a precondition of good collaboration, for which joint trips to implementing countries have contributed significantly.

Based on interviews with MTBA and MoFA staff, we found that the perceived added value of partnership with MoFA for NGOs is in MoFA's diplomatic contacts and access to global governance mechanisms. On the other side, the advantage for MoFA of working with NGOs is in access to the voices of youth and communities that development programmes aim to support. Such perceptions seem to have resulted in most collaboration efforts between MTBA and MoFA forming around international advocacy. In addition to funding and political support for international advocacy, MoFA also offered social media sharing for key Alliance messages. Netherlands embassies also played a role in facilitating relationships among their partners (Mali) and in solving country level political obstacles (Pakistan).

Three child marriage alliances had a joint thematic relationship with the Ministry. While this gave a stronger voice to the three alliances and helped to streamline programming, it also caused relatively weak bilateral relations between individual alliances and MoFA.

#### *Learnings and implications*

##### **A partnership vision is needed**

- Time and effort is needed for the co-creation of a clear vision on the role of MoFA in general and as a partner in each of the alliances in particular.
- Legal and policy changes might be needed to facilitate a progressive partnership model between the Ministry and NGOs.
- Southern leadership within partnerships should also be reflected in granting procedures, timelines and requirements, enabling NGOs from the south to meaningfully engage in all stages of the programme, particularly during programme design.

##### **A bird's-eye view and cross-alliance engagement of MoFA is under utilised**

MoFA has a unique position in its engagement in all strategic partnerships. Through it, MoFA and embassies could:

- Be more of a linking pin among alliances and processes at country and global level.
- Bring partners together to strategize, plan, advocate, and learn together.

### **Simple but smart procedures and ToRs for all engaged parties can spark stronger partnerships**

- Simplified monitoring is needed, asking only for the information needed for adaptive programming and reporting to the Parliament.
- Financial requirements should be set to the limit necessary to see if the money is well spent and allocated according to the principle of southern leadership.
- Minimum standards for the involvement of all parties, including policy officers and embassies, would help align expectations and contributions.

### **Collaborations beyond the Alliance**

Partnerships beyond the Alliance were mainly with the other MoFA-funded child marriage alliances (Her Choice and Yes I Do), their respective research partners, (University of Amsterdam and KIT Royal Tropical Institute), local research institutes in Malawi, Mali, and Niger, and L&A allies.

Collaboration with the two other child marriage alliances was present throughout the programme period. During the inception phase, we coordinated on the selection of implementation areas to avoid overlap. During the implementation, in some countries there was collaboration on advocacy initiatives and capacity-building. The Alliance Coordinators of the three child marriage alliances coordinated in engaging with the Ministry. Besides that, we have jointly initiated the establishment of a national GNB chapter in the Netherlands as well as some of the implementing countries (e.g. Mali).

The three child marriage alliance research partners additionally collaborated through the Child Marriage Research Alliance. This alliance conducted learning exchange meetings at various points throughout the programme period. While members of the CM Research Alliance enjoyed learning about the work their counterparts in other CM alliances were conducting, the group lacked a clear mandate and more synthesis of learnings could have made this research alliance more beneficial.

Within MTBA, Population Council had ongoing research partnerships with Invest in Knowledge (IKI) in Malawi, the *Centre d'Études et de Recherche sur l'Information en Population et Santé*, (CERIPS) in Mali, and the *Laboratoire d'Études et de Recherche sur les Dynamiques Sociales et le Développement Sociale* (LASDEL) in Niger. These local research institutes lead quantitative data collection for the MTBA impact evaluation and qualitative studies in each country and contributed to study and instrument design, data cleaning and analysis, and development of research products. While the relationship between Population Council and these local research partners was continuous over the course of MNCP, due to constraints in the research budget from the offset of MNCP, contracts with local research partners were only active during periods surrounding data collection. This limited opportunities for more regular exchanges between research and implementation partners in-country, which led to perceptions that the research was too distant from the MNCP programme and/or that it was dominated by northern perspectives.

L&A collaborations were established around campaigns and important international advocacy initiatives. Short-term successes were visible, but longer-term strategic relationships could have led to a greater results.

### **Learnings and implications**

#### **Strategic engagements require more resources, but also bring better results**

- Time and effort should be put towards getting to know each other and strategizing.
- Regular learning exchanges among alliances should be organised.
- Planning joint activities well ahead would increase commitment of allies and partners.

- The Dutch audience, media and private sector should be continuously and strategically engaged.

## Conclusions

Social change processes require the collaboration of many different types of stakeholders within and beyond the Alliance. Healthy partnerships among alliance partners require continuous attention. If not nurtured, relationships can easily turn into power struggles or bureaucratic, transactional relationships. Sharing responsibilities and creating opportunities for each partner to shine through a specific contribution can increase motivation and lead to more effective implementation.

True southern leadership will not happen by simply giving a few seats at the table to strong, established southern NGOs. Rather, it requires an appreciation of community responses and a different way of supporting them. We see that the shift in ways of working toward southern leadership implies mutual capacity building of partners with different ideas and background. This is needed for all partners to recognize and work with power dynamics, requiring northern NGOs to give up long-standing privileges while southern partners need to work on their legitimacy.

To engage with and support this dynamic transformation within the international development sector, MoFA is well positioned by having a partnership role in each of the funded alliances. However, a higher commitment and additional systems changes are needed for the full potential of these partnerships to materialise.

## Analysis of Sustainability

### 1. Introduction

This report presents an analysis of sustainability within and beyond the More than Brides Alliance. Development projects including alliances supported by MoFA have the expectation of sustainability. Sustainability refers to the potential long-term efforts of MTBA's five-year programme intervention. Sustainability implies a "rootedness", durability, or longevity, for impactful change and improvements or efforts that "stick". Accordingly, this thematic discussion focuses on the potential longer-term or lasting effects of MTBA's engagement over five years, based on current observations and experience found in the five country reports on this theme. It considers the likelihood that the advances realized for girls will continue to improve their lives, that project activities will live on, and that the institutions, laws and platforms built and strengthened will continue to be operational and effective. Discussions below summarize sustainability signals, raise concerns about the likelihood of sustainability, and draw out lessons and recommendations.

### 2. Results Sustainability

*To what extent can we expect the impact of the programme to stick?*

The fact that the sustainability of results was not left to chance by the project bodes well for the gains made for girls to last. Root causes and structural factors including poverty, education, and legal frameworks were addressed. Social norm change was key. Studies in Niger and Pakistan<sup>14</sup> identified harmful practices and responded to them. Local activism and leadership were strengthened. We now see child protection committees taking the lead in responding to cases of child marriage. As well, guardians of culture and key influencers (e.g. religious and customary leaders), now trained in SRHR, are training others and being role models. The use of a linkage model for stronger child marriage ecosystems is also having impact. This is achieved through better networking, coordination, and collaboration among actors. Girls are connected to each other through girls' clubs, youth networks, micro-finance institutions, and mentors' systems. For example, in Malawi, mentors trained to pass on the lessons and information bodes well for girls continuing to be aware of their SRH rights. Empowerment, as the key youth engagement strategy<sup>15</sup>, builds the confidence of girls and their power to negotiate their needs and life choices. An example of success is, as we see in Niger, that girls themselves go directly to the village chief or committee to communicate a disagreement between them and their parents regarding marriage. National Alliance partners anticipate that the cohort of empowered girls will continue in their ability to negotiate their rights and in doing so will act as positive deviants and role models for other girls.

Furthermore, progress was made in terms of legal reform as a way to build in sustainable change. YONECO was involved in the task force that worked to change the minimum age of child marriage in Malawi while

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<sup>14</sup> [Van Veen, Saskia; van Moorten, Ronald; Durani, Wasim. \(2018\). \*Marriage Decision-Making; A Family Affair\*. Oxfam Novib: June, 2018.](#) and Djibo, Saley. (2018). *Formative research in the departments of Téra, Bankilaré, Torodi and Say*. Oxfam Novib: 2018. (available on request)

<sup>15</sup> See Halcyon Consulting, Final Report: End of Term Evaluation for the 'Marriage: No Child's Play' Programme (2021)

in India partner strategy was to work at the state level to support governments to develop strategies and action plans on child marriage. A similar tactic was taken in Niger, where it seems quite unlikely that it would be politically viable to change the minimum age, so as an interim strategy to make progress focus was on supporting government strategy development and implementation. Finally, in Mali, these issues are so sensitive at the national level that engagement at local and district levels has been more productive, with efforts focused there.

There are concerns, along with these expectations of results sticking. The biggest risk is that the gains made by child marriage programmes will be rolled back by the COVID-19 pandemic. The key lesson is that crisis and shocks can quickly worsen structural drivers of child marriage: poverty increases girls' existing vulnerability and adds new vulnerabilities. Shocks can erode protective mechanisms such as retaining girls in school, and it can reverse gains made in reducing the incidence of child marriage. Furthermore, sustainability of gains made when girls access services can be vulnerable when girls move from served to unserved areas, due to displacement from COVID-19 and the effects of climate change.

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has compromised the likelihood of sustainability and in particular the hope that community members and institutions sustain activities. Continued awareness raising, training, and monitoring are vulnerable to increased economic hardships at the household and community level, shifting time priorities to earning money rather than attending meetings for community engagement. In short, as conditions of poverty, widely recognised as a key structural driver of child marriage, increase, the vulnerability of girls to child marriage not only increases, but the chances of redressing the problem erode – as the forces acting against change are magnified. In fact, such shocks raise the sustainability stakes. The issue becomes one of seeking to secure – that is maintain or protect – the ground gained by child marriage programming so that the situation at the end of programme has not worsened.

Crisis is not the only concern. Successes in bringing about legislative changes are not fool proof. Numerous factors make the durability of gains insecure. Legal texts can be incomplete, government decrees can be ineffective (e.g., when community members and leaders go around the law), government follow through on action and enforcement can be weak, and gains in legislative changes may be vulnerable when political regimes change. A key lesson is that interventions need to focus on anticipating and managing backlash from community members. Where the risk of civil, religious, and customary laws conflicting is high, attention needs to be given to supporting social accountability mechanisms. The MTBA experience confirms the reality that tackling root causes of a development problem takes time. While child marriage programming mobilises multi-dimensional theories of change to tackle structural drivers, including access to education, girls' empowerment, and SRHR, the underpinning roots are deep. Patriarchy and generational hierarchies that favour the needs of men and boys over women and girls and the voices of elders over youth, are difficult to “shake”. System shifts are a long term and multi-faceted proposition that five-year programme can at best contribute to.



Four blind spots stand out for future child marriage programmes to take into account: 1) the need to stress a “with girls” as opposed to “for girls” approach to programming; 2) the importance of male engagement as critical strategy for challenging patriarchy; 3) centrality of parents in tackling concerns around adolescent sexuality, as a root cause of child marriage; and 4) the benefits of seeding and supporting local mechanisms (e.g. village loan schemes, youth banks or girls’ funds) to support the agency of girls to sustain their clubs. The concerning and uncomfortable truth is that the decision to empower girls brings with it a responsibility to follow through on the consequences of stimulating their agency and vision of new prospects – otherwise the principle of “do least harm” is put at risk. This sheds light on the importance of accompanying girls’ clubs with ongoing financial support mechanisms and of putting in place approaches in the first place that motivate and mobilise girls for activism - such as GALS.

### 3. Programmes Sustainability

#### *To what extent can we anticipate continued action on MTBA programme elements?*

Programmatic sustainability concerns the continuation of a child marriage focus in programmatic interventions at organization level. Many signals point to the sustainability of project activities, as intentional investments were made here.

First and foremost, the MTBA programme in all countries was aligned with government priorities and commitment, which bodes well for the likelihood that programme activities will endure through government actions. With the state recognised by all as the guarantor of child marriage policy, lobbying and advocacy efforts focused on strengthening national strategic plans and legal contexts, and programme interventions were aligned to relevant government policies (e.g. strategic plans to combat child marriage). Furthermore, MTBA partners actively participated in government platforms to support and strengthen policy commitments, and where warranted, bilateral agreements for joint action were signed. This support was further buttressed by working at the operational level supporting sub national- or district-level government structures, staff, and committee members to take action.

Leading from this stakeholder involvement was a core principle. Government officials and community structures were involved in all programme activities, and their technical capacity was strengthened. Training in gender, gender-based violence, child safeguarding, SRHR and accountability was provided, and training methodologies and materials were put into the hands of organisation staff and trained community members. This includes peer educators, protection committee members, model fathers and girls’ champions. Youth engagement at the forefront of project delivery bodes well for young people owning and leading on the issues that affect them.<sup>16</sup> A “with them” rather than “for them” approach allowed partners to cultivate youth leadership by promoting self-empowerment and representation. Partners created spaces for young people (e.g. girls’ clubs); promoted youth participation in political debates and elections, engaged girls in income generation activities, and provided life skills training. Girls themselves were singled out as central to the sustainability of the programme. Many of the activities of

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<sup>16</sup> See Halcyon Consulting, Final Report: End of Term Evaluation for the ‘Marriage: No Child’s Play’ Programme (2021)

the MNCP project encouraged ownership and gave girls the tools to sustain impact. For example, the financial education training of trainers in Malawi was given to sustain and cascade the information beyond the duration of the project. User friendly modules were produced, and relevant manuals remained in the girls' clubs, ensuring that knowledge is sustained.

Throughout the project, efforts were made to build capacity of community groups to operate independently and at the same level of quality after the project closure. Through capacity building sessions and trainings, structures such as girls' clubs were strengthened to operate independently. Another example is where CPC members and district task force members are now voluntarily working without the support of the project staff, which is expected to continue after project closure. In fact, MNCP has already seen examples of programme activities being sustained by teachers, even when implementation has already stopped.

Two other sustainability strategies lead to the expectation that project activities will continue. First, partner organisations used multi-pronged approaches in creating the necessary conditions for child marriage activities to live on in their own organisations. They built the capacity of staff in child marriage issues, embedded child marriage content into flagship programmes, (e.g. child protection help lines and radio programming in Malawi), and are seeking project funding from other donors as well as incorporating child marriage activities into ongoing projects. Finally, some organisations are maintaining office structures at the community level to oversee community ownership. A final sign of sustainability is the practice of using year five as a wind down phase in which project responsibilities are transferred to local actors. Exit meetings, final workshops, the development of action plans by local groups, and signing agreements were convened. Furthermore, capacities were consolidated by transferring skills and resources such as training material, monitoring tools and promotional documentation to local actors. Such determined attempts at "passing the baton" involved government officials, religious leaders, and local committees. In Mali, structures will be used to track and monitor programme achievements and community agreements that were signed as part of taking over ownership to secure the local uptake of activities.

Upon reflection, a key insight is that program sustainability is both an "inside" and "outside job". A commitment has to be made organisations, by local structures, and by the intended beneficiaries. A key concern is that to maximise the traction built over the life of the programme, resourcing could be the factor determining practical uptake and delivery on commitments. Building in financial sustainability of local level commitments to programme activities is likely to be critical to their endurance. Looking forward, financial sustainability could be the "chink in the sustainability chain" that ruins or derails well laid plans. Partners express concern that the involvement of district and community level structures, building their capacity, and securing their ownership through hand over plans is not enough to guarantee that project activities continue. Without resources such as the provision of fuel money, activities are likely to fade away. Some recommend that securing smaller and local tranches of funding could in the future begin in year three of a five-year programme.

Of critical note, adaptive programming necessitated by COVID-19 (see section IV of this report, [2020 and COVID-19](#)), has uncovered digital technology in programme sustainability as an issue deserving greater investigation for its potential and promise. Mobile phone technology used by the India Country Alliance to ensure the continuance of girls' clubs and other activities during lockdown and social distancing measures, reveals its utility as well as its drawbacks: the digital divide and gender bias related to girls' access to smart phones. Use of mobile phones in programming calls for further understanding of their value add, accessibility, and cost effectiveness as a sustainability strategy for increasing the chances of project activities continuing after project closure. This could either be through organic means or uptake by another organisation or project if threshold costs are low, for example compared to the resources required for the replication and delivery of trainings and workshop in situ.

#### 4.0 Institutional Sustainability

*To what extent can we anticipate that child marriage and SRHR systems, policies, procedures, and platforms established by the programme will continue to exist and be effective?*

Country Alliances made consistent efforts to embed child marriage issues into existing structures and institutionalize them. This bodes well for child marriage interventions to be rooted in existing national structures and systems. A minimum standard kept by all partners was to align the programme with state policies and priorities such as youth friendly health services, as a way to embed and accelerate interventions. Programmes were used as demonstration cases with case studies and tools documented to promote uptake and roll out. Lobbying and advocacy efforts targeted laws and policy frameworks. The example of Pakistan is illustrative here: the Country Alliance engaged heavily with District Monitoring Committees, the Women's Development Department, the Girls Not Brides Provincial Chapter, Provincial Monitoring Committees, and the Social Welfare Department. The early signs are that this investment in building institutional capacity bodes well to MTBA Pakistan's work continuing. To illustrate, five-year strategic plans are in place, and marriage registrar systems are strengthened. In addition, the programme invested in sub-local institutions. All partners to varying degrees tapped into indigenous community institutions and structures such as CPCs (which are linked to formal district level committees), and district task forces. Many of these task forces actively mobilised community structures such as parents' clubs and youth groups as ongoing forums where child marriage issues can be tabled and discussed.

Systems were also strengthened through connectivity as a visible MNCP sustainability strategy. All Country Alliances used their considerable connecting and convening power to strengthen the ecosystem of support for efforts to end child marriage. A few examples from all counties are parenting circles, girls' clubs, male champions, community CPCs, and YCBDAs. The different groups were linked to district stakeholders such as the youth, gender, social welfare, community development, and health offices to ensure that the structures are sustained and that programme activities have a long-term effect. MNCP also worked to create sustainable connections among different government partners, for example in Pakistan, among the Social Welfare Department, the Women's Development Department, and local and provincial entities such as the CPCs. Various platforms and networks that MNCP contributed to will remain to continue their efforts, for example in Mali, the national network, REPAME, remains functional. As noted previously in the discussion above on sustainability of results, girls' clubs were widely established to

mobilise, collectivise, and consolidate girls' convening. India's preliminary efforts to federate girls' clubs is an exemplar in the potential for institutionalisation.

While time will tell whether institutionalisation efforts will materialise and result in longer term advances in child marriage programming, at programme closure, we can confirm that institutionalising the More than Brides Alliance entity was not successful. MTBA Country Alliance platforms are dissolving and are unlikely to continue post 2020. This is in part a reflection of their instrumental nature for international aid – as efficient and effective modalities for delivery, as opposed to partnerships emerging on the initiative of local actors in response to a shared objective. This way of getting things done can feel like “forced marriages” in countries on the receiving end, and hence, it is deserted when the programme ends.

Despite considerable efforts in nurturing and maturing, the platform at the Netherlands/US and five country level and supporting efforts to fundraise and in Malawi, to register the Alliance nationally, it will not endure. This could be a positive outcome if the transfer of responsibilities is successful. Be this as it may, this is an uncomfortable fact endemic to the aid system. A key message is that such alliance arrangements are not inherently sustainable and should not be expected to outlast programmes. The authentic bonding and collaboration around a shared cause or agenda when orchestrated to satisfy the way the international aid system prefers to work, does not form the way it does in bottom-up alliances in which members self-select based on shared agenda and interest.

## 5. Conclusions

For MTBA partners, achieving sustainability rests on three elements: results that “stick” (for lasting impact); programmes that live on (for persistent interventions and activities); and institutions that endure (for embedded structures). Country Alliance reflections suggest that striving for sustainability has to be planned for in programme design, inception, and implementation including in monitoring and evaluation systems, and in annual reporting requirements. Checking on strategy effectiveness, risks, and updating the strategy for corrective measures, should happen annually. While not done by all partners, there is greater clarity that this is indeed something they are responsible and accountable for as sustainability does not happen by accident. Furthermore, a key learning is that the conditions for sustainability vary from country to country, and hence a strategy needs to be customized and achievements understood within the context of risk and readiness.

An overriding home truth is that sustainability is aspirational. It is an ambition that a programme can set, yet the programme can only influence sustainability rather than guarantee its eventuality; it is beyond the control of a programme. Sustainability is best seen as a holy grail - something the development system wants very much, but that is in fact very hard to get or achieve. This understanding has led some Country Alliances to recommend that the donor fund a post-project sustainability study to gauge MTBA's impact post-2020. The objective would be to understand how programme components and results evolve and are sustained and adopted after the conclusion of a programme - what, why and how - to distil lessons learned that can inform future programming.

In all of this there is also the suggestion that sustainability is a trap: *Give us the money and we will make it sustainable*. This is not the core problem. The mother of all home truths is that development

interventions within the current international aid system are inherently supply-driven. Problems and their solution are introduced externally. This has fundamental implications from the outset for the expectation of sustainability, durability, rooted uptake, and results that last. This fact is hard to swallow because it problematises sustainability. Still, it constructively reinforces the importance of the global and southern leadership orientation assumed by MoFA and others as the international aid sector is reimagined and role allocation recast in ways that puts those closest to the problem and the solution in the driver's seat. It is only when this happens that sustainability really has a chance.

## Annexes

- I. Key Indicators Tables
- II. Costing Analysis Brief
- III. Marriage: No Child's Play (Legacy Report)
- IV. Success Stories
- V. Implementation Evidence – list + links
- VI. Evaluation Reports – list + links
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## Annex I: Key Indicators Tables

	LEVEL & ID	MTBA Key indicator	INDIA			MALAWI			MALI			NIGER			PAKISTAN		
			Result (2016-2020)	Target (2016-2020)	% Achieved	Result (2016-2020)	Target (2016-2020)	% Achieved	Result (2016-2020)	Target (2016-2020)	% Achieved	Result (2016-2020)	Target (2016-2020)	% Achieved	Result (2016-2020)	Target (2016-2020)	% Achieved
OUTCOME 1: Young people are better informed about SRHR including adverse effects of CM and empowered to voice needs and rights	OUTCOME OC 1.5	# of girls who have convinced their parents to delay a marriage	1731	-	-	813	-	-	20	-	-	88	-	-	433	-	-
	OUTPUT OP1.1	# of youth groups formed under Outcome 1	2872	3244	89%	259	248	104%	85	28	304%	115	94	122%	160	160	100%
		# of girl groups	2277	2632	87%	93	88	106%	0	0	-	32	-	-	80	80	100%
		# of boy groups	595	611	97%	92	86	107%	0	0	-	3	-	-	80	80	100%
		# of mixed groups	0	0	0	74	74	100%	85	28	304%	80	-	-	0	0	-
	OUTPUT OP1.2	# of boys and girls trained by the project on SRHR, CM, communication skills	72157	69697	104%	3397	1825	186%	13853	3800	365%	22722	8000	284%	38265	28800	133%
		# of girls trained	58246	55806	104%	2190	1230	178%	7077	-	-	10048	3720	270%	22334	144000	155%
		# of boy trained	13911	13891	100%	1207	595	203%	6776	-	-	12674	4280	296%	15931	144000	111%
	OUTPUT OP2.1	# of PTAs, SMCs and Child Parliaments engaged by the project	894	1035	86%	125	212	59%	56	40	140%	195	126	155%	48	88	55%

	OUTPUT OP2.3	# parents/caregivers who participated in awareness sessions, organized by project, on how to keep girls in schools and/or readmission into school	68181	32200	212%		2814	1388	203%		503	110	457%		6190	1100	563%		11388	10560	108%
	OUTPUT OP2.4	# 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	9236	13500	68%		838	350	239%		28	10	280%		1977	860	230%		466	5000	9%
OUTCOME 3: Increased access to economic opportunities for girls at risk and affected by child marriage and their families	OUTPUT OP3.1	# girls who participated in activities organized by the project to help prepare them for income generating opportunities	12428	4984	249%		2596	820	317%		1152	360	320%		1474	300	491%		3293	1200	274%
	OUTPUT OP3.2	# girls who were linked up with income generating opportunities through the project	4302	2584	166%		1837	820	224%		1152	175	658%		755	300	252%		412	1040	40%
OUTCOME 4: Increased access to child protection systems	OUTCOME OC4.1	# documented cases of mediation for girls at risk of and affected by child marriage by Child Protection Committees, facilitated by the project	422	-	-		591	-	-		49	-	-		79	-	-		69	-	-

	OUTPUT OP4.3	# CP committees engaged in the programme	960	1004	96%		13	8	163%		39	42	93%		50	42	119 %		120	80	150 %
OUTCOME 5: Increased utilization of SRHR services that are responsive to the needs of young people	OUTCOM E OC5.1	# health facilities with improved Youth Friendly SRH services as a result of project activities	84	-	-		14	-	-		9	-	-		37	-	-		43	-	-
	OUTPUT OP5.1	# health care providers who were trained by the project on how to deliver youth friendly services successfully	2477	1869	133 %		75	66	114%		117	50	234%		75	69	109 %		107	90	119 %
	OUTPUT OP5.2	# social accountability systems used by the project to monitor health facilities	950	690	138 %		32	60	53%		14	7	200%		54	22	245 %		0	3	0%
OUTCOME 6: Increased engagement and collective action against CM and in support of ASRHR	OUTCOM E OC6.2	# documented examples of community driven collective action and engagement against CM and in support of ASRHR	477	-	-		598	-	-		108	-	-		54	-	-		68	-	-
	OUTPUT OP6.1	# of community conversations organized by the project on risks of child marriage and early childbearing	3098	3152	98%		151	98	154%		3006	54	5567 %		897	316	284 %		370	572	65%
	OUTPUT OP6.2	#{social) media activities to raise awareness	1702	326	522 %		1080 2	84	12860 %		179	48	373%		286	320	89%		17	14	121 %
	OUTPUT OP6.3	# of influential stakeholders/role models/frontrunners expressing positive views on	1454	1059	137 %		34	16	213%		109	108	101%		350	150	233 %		75	70	107 %

		SRHR and CM during events/ on platforms organized by the project																			
OUTCOME 7 : Supportive rights-based legal and policy environment against CM	OUTCOME OC7.1	# laws, guidelines and policies changed leading to a decrease of barriers to SRH, including CM	59	-	-		20	-	-		1	-	-		2	-	-		1	-	-
	OUTCOME OC7.2	# cases of influentials / duty bearers endorsing alternative policy approaches presented by MTBA partners towards ensuring SRHR of women and girls, including CM	272	-	-		46	-	-		7	-	-		201	-	-		12	-	-
	OUTPUT OP7.1	# alternative policy approaches on SRHR/CM presented by MTBA partners to duty bearers and influencers of governments, global governmental actors and the private sector	73	-	-		19	-	-		1	2	50%		12	4	300 %		8	2	400 %
	OUTPUT OP7.2	# law enforcement officers, judicial officers and legal aid lawyers trained by the project on child marriage laws and legislations and gender sensitivity	600	282	213 %		19	20	95%		166	87	191%		165	95	174 %		421	145	290 %

Note: The table gives the % of targets achieved (2016-2020) by programme countries under the key indicators for seven outcomes in the intervention zones. For indicators at the outcome level, the project did not define targets. For output-level indicators, all targets reported are as defined in the inception report. If the targets were not defined in the inception report, the initial targets if defined by the implementing partners, have been reported. Please note that the inception report targets were set using conservative estimates. These targets were reviewed and where needed revised annually using the ToC approach based on community reception, monitoring reports and budgets. Revised targets can be shared upon request.

Table 2: Key Indicators from Baseline, Midline and Endline Survey Data																	
	LEVEL & ID	MTBA Key Indicator	INDIA			MALAWI			MALI			NIGER			PAKISTAN		
			Baseline	Midline	Endline	Baseline	Midline	Endline	Baseline	Midline	Endline	Baseline	Midline	Endline	Baseline	Midline	Endline
IMPACT: Young people are able to decide if and when to marry and pursue their SRHR in a supportive environment	I0	% of married girls	19.8	12.2	5.5	16.2	11.0	6.3	11.9	6.6	7.2	25.7	18.2	16	37.5	23.8	22.7
	I1	% of married girls who married before the age of 15 years	53.7	40.6	24.1	18.5	17.2	12.0	31.3	14.3	16.7	46.8	31.5	50.9	21.6	20.9	9.7
	I2	% of married girls who married before the age of 18 years	95	90.9	100*	92.5	89.1	84.6	97.9	79.3	96.7	96.1	96.3	94.6	67.6	72.2	47.8
OUTCOME 1: Young people are better informed about SRHR including adverse effects of CM and empowered to voice needs and rights	OC 1.1	% of girls with basic knowledge of SRHR	13.6	15.4		38.3	50.6		36.9	39.6		17.7	17.7		-	-	-
	OC 1.2	% girls who know and can tell the legal minimum age of marriage	61.9	81	88.5	44.5	64.2	59.5	4.4	5.4	3.4	18.9	19.1	31.9	18.6	69.1	68.0
	OC 1.3	% of girls who can name at least 3 adverse effects of early marriage before [legal age of marriage]	24.0	39.9	45.8	9.0	13.0	29.8	13.6	22.0	22.0	15.0	29.7	29.6	21.6	63.9	47.6
	OC 1.4	% (ever) married girls who say they did not want to marry	9.3	23.4	7.8	0	1.3	0	6.4	7.1	6.7	7.8	5.6	1.8	-	18.1	27.4
	OC 1.6	% girls who are able to	51.3	57.3		36.2	46.1		26.0	22.1		15.7	20.7		-	-	-



		voice their concerns regarding CM and SRHR															
	OC 1.7	% girls who started menstruating, with basic knowledge about menstruation	2.3	4.1		4.3	4.7		14.7	13.6		5.5	7.5		0	8.0	13.2
OUTCOME 2: Increased access to formal education	OC 2.1	% of girls who have ever been to school	93.3	95.3	98.9	95.9	96.2	97.8	67.2	69.4	78.6	70.3	74.7	76.1	52.4	63.4	62.8
	OC 2.2	Mean number of years of schooling completed among girls who ever attended school	7.5	8	8.4	4.1	4.6	4.5	6.3	6.2	6.0	5.3	5.0	6.3	-	-	-
	OC 2.3	% adolescent girls benefitting social protection schemes or scholarships	1.5	2.6		0.9	0.3		<1	<1		<1	1.3		-	-	-
	OC 2.4	% of girls in school	57.7	63.8	6.0	62.3	64.0	60.6	45.0	50.5	59.0	51.0	53.0	41.6	15.2	24.6	28.5
OUTCOME 3: Increased access to economic opportunities for girls at risk and affected by child marriage and their families	OC 3.1	% girls currently involved in income generating activities	29.0	19.6	54.0	13.2	18.7	39.0	45.1	37.8	57.1	23.8	45.8	67.1	7.9	11.7	17.6
OUTCOME 5: Increased utilization of SRHR services	OC 5.2	% of girls who are aware of youth friendly health services in their	<1	<1	32.9	0.0	11.5		11.1	9.9		10.0	8.7		30.1	22.3	20.6

that are responsive to the needs of young people		communities and have accessed them when needed															
OUTCOME 6: Increased engagement and collective action against CM and in support of ASHR	OC 6.1+	% girls who believe in gender equitable values on four dimensions (child marriage, education, violence, gender equality)	9.4	6.3	4.6	24.8	24.3	34.1	25.3	28.7	24.0	39.0	41.0	29.3	-	-	-

Note: This table shows Key Indicators collected from baseline, midline and endline surveys from the intervention villages. For India, Malawi, Mali, and Niger, data was collected from girls ages 12-19 and sampling was done at community level so the participants of the surveys include target and non-target beneficiaries. Some fields are left empty because data for these indicators was not collected from these countries. For impact analysis of these indicators please refer to the evaluation reports.

For India, Malawi, Mali, and Niger:

Note: \*Sample size <25

Note: Proportion ever married in India was reported as lower at baseline because we had not included girls for whom the gauna ceremony had not yet occurred. Based on our understanding from the programme and from qualitative work done in 2017, these girls are essentially married and thus have been added back in to each time period (BL-ML-EL).

Note: Gray cells were not asked at endline due to shortened instrument and switch to remote data

Note: At endline, school attendance question was asked about attendance just prior to pandemic-related school closures.

Note: + believe in ALL the following: boys say no to marriage; girls say no to arranged marriage; woman deserves to be beaten. This variable was re-calculated based on what was available at endline.

Note: At baseline, Niger data for % married before age 15 included those age 15 in error. This has been revised downward from previous data presented.

Note: Indicator OC 1.4 was originally calculated as “% who reported they did not want to marry AND they voiced this concern to parents”. This was changed to “% who said they did not want to marry” at endline due to available data, so numbers have changed since previously reported.

For Pakistan: notes on indicator calculation

OC 1.4: When you got married to your husband, how did you feel about the marriage?

1= “I did not want to get married” OR “I wanted to get married later”

0= “I wanted to get married”

OC 1.7: 1= Did you know about menstruation before it happened to you? = “Yes”; AND During a menstrual cycle, when is a girl more likely to get pregnant? =

“Within 10-20 days of menstrual cycle” 0= (During a menstrual cycle, when is a girl more likely to get pregnant? =! “Within 10-20 days of menstrual cycle” OR = “During menstruation”

OR = Within first 10 days of menstrual cycle” OR = “Within last 10 days of menstrual cycle”) OR Did you know about menstruation before it happened to you? = “No”

NB: indicator only for those girls >= 14 years old.

OC 2.1: 1= Highest achieved level of education >= “Primary school” OR Do you currently attend school? = “Yes” 0= Highest achieved level of education = “No education”

OC 2.4: Do you currently attend school?

1= "Yes"

0= "No"

OC 3.1: What is his/her share of income to total income?

0= "No contribution"

1= "1-20%" OR "21-40%" OR "41-60%" OR "61-80%" OR "81-100%"

OC 5.2: 1= Where do you go if you have any SRHR problems? = Girls list at least 1 service (government hospital OR union council house health centre OR lady health worker OR private clinic OR NGO clinic)

0= Have you ever make use of such services when having SRHR problem? = Girls do not mention any services or say "I don't know"

Table 3: Narrative Explanation Table 1				
			Indicator calculation notes	Overall Narrative
OUTCOME 1: Young people are better informed about SRHR including adverse effects of CM and empowered to voice needs and rights	OUTCOME OC 1.5	# number of girls who have convince their parents to delay a marriage	This indicator was collected during youth group meetings, whenever any girl reported successfully delaying her marriage through conversation with adults.	In Mali and Niger not seeing high number of this indicator as this indicator was too sensitive to capture through youth group meetings due to cultural sensitivity around the topic of marriage. The issue of delaying marriage always involves intermediaries such as peer educators and protection committees and so these cases are captured in OC4.1.
	OUTPUT OP1.1	# of youth groups formed under outcome 1	Number of youth groups formed with primary purpose of informing members about their SRHR including adverse effects of CM and empowered to voice needs and rights. Does not include economic empowerment groups	Only India has not been able to achieve targets. This is because for India, during the inception report target setting the idea was to also operate in control villages in second half of the project. However, this was decided against due to contamination of control villages and to preserve research design. Thus the under achievement of target is due to this reason.
	OUTPUT OP1.2	# of boys and girls trained by the project on SRHR, CM, communication skills	Boys and girls participating in trainings delivered by the project on SRHR, CM, communication skills.	Mali and Niger operated on the peer educator model. These numbers not only calculate the discussion leaders (DLs) that were trained by the project but also the peers trained by these DLs. This is why the overachievement of targets.
OUTCOME 2: Increased access to formal education	OUTPUT OP2.1	# of PTAs, SMCs and Child Parliaments engaged by the project	# of PTAs, school management committees, child parliaments, mother groups and (male champions) trained on their role in supporting girls education, preventing drop outs and promoting girls safety	The project engaged and trained as many committees as were present in the intervention schools. Under achievement of targets was mainly due to the assumption made in inception report that at least 2 committees will be present in each school, which was not always the case.
	OUTPUT OP2.3	# parents/caregivers who participated in awareness sessions, organized by project, on how to keep girls in schools and/or readmission into school	Training of community (parents) on positive parenting skills to support girls' education	Since these are awareness sessions were organized at community level by the project team, double counting may have happened while counting parents of the adolescents over the project year. Resulting in over-achievement of results.

	OUTPUT OP2.4	# 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	Number of girls who got sensitized and got access to the various govt. social protection schemes and any other access of social protection scheme in order for them to remain or re-enter school through the project	<p>In India and Pakistan, achievement of targets was hindered by school closures due to COVID.</p> <p>In Pakistan, slow start of this activity in initial years resulted in underachievement of targets. For 2020, preparations were made to link 750 girls to bridge courses; however, this did not materialize due to school closure due to COVID-19. The team did manage to link 252 girls to government social protection schemes instead, thus seeking to support families in times of crisis and protect girls from early marriage (and permanent school dropout) due to economic reasons.</p>
OUTCOME 3: Increased access to economic opportunities for girls at risk and affected by child marriage and their families	OUTPUT OP3.1	# girls who participated in activities organized by the project to help prepare them for income generating opportunities	These activities involved some type of skills building e.g. financial literacy trainings, training on development of business plans etc.	Overall an overachievement of targets is observed in Outcome 3, due to the success of these interventions with the community members. In most cases, the targets at inception report were kept low since the project did not know how these interventions will be received by the community. Over the years, these targets were revised and increased in all countries.
	OUTPUT OP3.2	# girls who were linked up with income generating opportunities through the project	Includes girls who participated in Village Savings and Loans Associations, vocational trainings (market-oriented skills training), Gender Action Learning groups organized by the project. And through were able to participate in income generating opportunities.	In Pakistan, the % realization is lower than planned for this indicator, due to high physical and/or cultural barriers to female employment and lack of suitable work environments for girls. Further, due to COVID, almost no jobs are available in the labour market and small businesses are also shutting down, creating a further challenge.
OUTCOME 4: Increased access to child protection systems	OUTCOME OC4.1	# documented cases of mediation for girls at risk of and affected by child marriage by Child Protection Committees, facilitated by the project	# cases when the mediation was facilitated by the CPCs engaged in the programme and these cases were documented by the Child Protection Committee	Since outcome level indicator, so no target was set by the project.
	OUTPUT OP4.3	# CP committees engaged in the programme	CPCs that were trained and provided with strengthening support for the entire programme period by the programme	In Malawi, overachievement of results is due to very low targets set in the inception report.

OUTCOME 5: Increased utilization of SRHR services that are responsive to the needs of young people	OUTCOME OC5.1	# health facilities with improved Youth Friendly SRH services as a result of project activities	This indicator was reported upon through the use of social accountability systems, setting up focal points, placing registers in the health centres, holding community forums to evaluate the quality of health care delivery	Since outcome level indicator, so no target was set by the project.
	OUTPUT OP5.1	# health care providers who were trained by the project on how to deliver youth friendly services successfully	Training of SRH service providers including frontline health workers, health facility level staff and multipurpose workers on youth-friendly SRHR	Mali has achieved its targets by more than double. This is because during inception phase, outcome 5 was not planned to be implemented in 12 of 42 intervention villages as these villages already had another project providing similar intervention. However, in third year of the project it was decided to implement outcome 5 in all intervention villages due to its successful midline evaluation results. This resulted in overachievement of results.
	OUTPUT OP5.2	# social accountability systems used by the project to monitor health facilities	Examples of social accountability systems included village SRHR report card, community score card to girls groups, patient satisfaction surveys etc.	In Malawi, the social accountability systems were not implemented as often as were planned during the inception report due to late start of this activity.  In Pakistan, the sensitivity around SRHR for adolescents rendered it not possible to conduct patient satisfaction surveys.
OUTCOME 6: Increased engagement and collective action against CM and in support of ASRHR	OUTCOME OC6.2	# documented examples of community driven collective action and engagement against CM and in support of ASRHR	Number of actions organized by the community (march, rally, pledge, petition, etc.) and not organized by the project	Since outcome level indicator, so no target was set by the project.
	OUTPUT OP6.1	# of community conversations organized by the project on risks of child marriage and early childbearing	Project facilitated discussions and engagements (events, competitions, galas) on child marriage and related issues with community members (esp. mother/fathers/parents/ in-laws/ men and boys)	In Pakistan, slow start of this activity in initial years resulted in underachievement of targets. In 2020, the funds from this activity were redirected towards activities that raised awareness regarding COVID  In Mali, overachievement of results is due to very low targets set in the inception report. During the course of the project, this activity was very well received by the community members and so the targets were revised.



	OUTPUT OP6.2	#(social) media activities to raise awareness	This includes SMS, radio broadcast, theatre shows, social media engagement (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter), newspaper insert, media report, website update as a separate activity	Targets were not well-defined during inception report, especially with regard to ease of publication on social media over the years of the project.
	OUTPUT OP6.3	# of influential stakeholders/role models/frontrunners expressing positive views on SRHR and CM during events/ on platforms organized by the project	This indicator includes influential stakeholders, such as community leaders, parliamentarians, political leaders, policy makers, celebrities being engaged by the project to speak in public fora on SRHR and CM.	The project successfully engaged with influential stakeholders in all countries, thus meeting its targets.
OUTCOME 7 : Supportive rights-based legal and policy environment against CM	OUTCOME OC7.1	# laws, guidelines and policies changed leading to a decrease of barriers to SRH, including CM	Total number of changes/desired results achieved in policies, laws and guidelines after continuous effort made towards the realization of the alternative approaches (objectives) mentioned in (OP 7.1).	Since outcome level indicator, so no target was set by the project.
	OUTCOME OC7.2	# cases of influentials / duty bearers endorsing alternative policy approaches presented by MTBA partners towards ensuring SRHR of women and girls, including CM	Total number of influentials (community leaders, parliamentarians, political leaders, policy makers, celebrities)/ duty bearers (govt. officers) who responded positively towards the advocacy alternative approaches/objectives presented by MTBA partners	Since outcome level indicator, so no target was set by the project.
	OUTPUT OP7.1	# alternative policy approaches on SRHR/CM presented by MTBA partners to duty bearers and influencers of governments, global governmental actors and the private sector	This indicator includes the total number of advocacy alternative approaches/asks/objectives for which continuous effort was made by the project	Each country created their out lobby and advocacy strategy which laid out the alternative policy approaches pursued by the project. For India, these asks were more than other countries due to the project working in 4 states with distinct CM asks for each.
	OUTPUT OP7.2	# law enforcement officers, judicial officers and legal aid lawyers trained by the project on child marriage laws and legislations and gender sensitivity	Number of law enforcement officers, judicial officers and legal aid lawyers trained by the project on child marriage laws and legislations and gender sensitivity	In some countries, overachievement of target is due to demand for this activity by the law enforcement offices.

## Annex II: Costing Analysis Brief

See separate attachment.

## Annex III: Marriage: No Child's Play (Legacy Report)

See separate attachment.

## Annex IV: Success Stories

### *India: A change in perception transforms lives*

Jashoda is a 16-year-old girl from Rajasthan. She is now attending high school, which is 8 kilometres away from her village. She is the first girl from her village to go to high school. Every day, she boards a bus – alone – to travel the distance.

Until now, it was unthinkable that a girl from the village would attend high school and would be allowed by her family to avail public transport. Moreover, Jashoda was already engaged to a boy a year older living in another village 25 kilometres away.

Her ‘journey’ has had many challenges. Initially it was resistance by her father, who is a labourer in a quarry, to let her continue her studies to high school, because it is located outside the village and no previous girl from her community would be permitted to do that. It was when Jashoda was invited to attend a 5-day Lalita-Babu training by MTBA that she learnt about the values of education, especially for the girl child. She has two elder brothers who are pursuing studies.

Jashoda is a brave and friendly girl who loves to take Lalita and Babu Life Skills Education sessions in her 10-14-year-old adolescent group formed under MNCP in her village. She came in contact with MNCP as an adolescent discussion group member in May 2017 and later on became a discussion leader of life skills education in June 2018.

Jashoda enjoys dancing in her free time but is determined to become a police officer. Given her pioneering spirit and confidence, she would make a fine policewoman indeed. Last year, when she was travelling in a bus, some boy tried to grope her. Jashoda promptly slapped him and scolded him and since then that boy has maintained his distance from her. Recently, when a girl was being teased in her school, Jashoda was called upon by her friends to help her. She went up to the boys who were troubling the girl and warned them to stay away or she would report them to the authorities. Not surprisingly, the boys heeded her advice.

“It is thanks to the trainings and direction provided by Save the Children and Urmul that my confidence has gone up,” says Jashoda. “My family, including my elder brothers and I could never have imagined that I would be so bold as I am now.”

Jashoda is a member of the school management committee and also a member of the children’s parliament. She motivates students to put their suggestions in the suggestion box installed at school by project and helped in redressal mechanisms for student complaints and suggestions.

Moreover, she is health secretary of block level girls’ federation. She speaks with girls on issues of menstruation, changes during adolescence, and gender openly. She plays a catalytic role linking girls with health service providers in the village for girls’ health related issues. Her active participation has motivated other girls in her school and community to join adolescent discussion groups. She participated in INCP Meet (Inclusive National Children’s Parliament) organized by Nine is Mine from the 30th January to 1st February 2019 in New Delhi, which is conducted to bring the brilliant young minds of India to a united national forum where they can discuss child rights issues of our country and was elected as health minister of the child parliament.

Marriage: No Child's Play (locally known as "Ananya") has resulted in the formation of 169 adolescent groups in Jodhpur District, and Jashoda is a discussion leader. Change that began with her is spreading across the remote district and breaking centuries-old social taboos.



#### *Malawi*

MTBA has used economic empowerment activities as a tool to strengthen girls' position within their families, create greater independence for girls to pursue their dreams and provide them with alternatives to child marriage. Financial literacy training, vocational skill courses and start-up businesses were stimulated and supported through the girls' clubs run by the programme.

The \*\*\* Girls Club in Nkhata Bay, Malawi started in 2016 and has 35 members between the ages of 15 to 24. The girls in the club came up with the idea of starting a business in beehives. Memory (24) who chairs the girls club recalls: "We were approached by GENET in 2019 to identify a sustainable business, apart from fishing and irrigation farming. We settled for bee-farming because it has already a market." GENET arranged training for the girls in bee keeping skills and provided start-up support. The club now has a total of 20 beehives. Projected figures show that the club can make over MWK 1,000,000 annually (approximately 1,100 euro) as they will be harvesting honey twice a year. The club's secretary, Esitere (18) says that the money realized from the sales will help in supporting the girls who face challenges in accessing quality education. "This club was founded to encourage each other about education, end unwanted pregnancies, child marriages and also to be self-reliant by doing businesses. We don't want any girl from this area to fail to attain education because of challenges like fees or school materials. Currently we are using funds from the savings and loans amounting to MWK 87,000 (95 euro) to assist six needy girls with fees, uniforms and learning materials" she said.

Members of ^^^ Girls Club in Nkhata Bay combine income from various businesses into a VSLA and also have as their primary objective to support the education of vulnerable girls. "We pay fees, buy school

material and uniforms, among others, so that more girls from this area can go and remain in school, for them to become productive citizens in the future” says Alineya, the club’s chairperson. Girls in the club create income by their different small businesses, like selling tomatoes or fish to grocery shops. “In 2016 we started with 20 members, by now we are with 30. We wanted to be economically empowered and GENET supported us with MWK 453,000 (approx. 500 euro) as start up support. This was provided in two chunks, MWK 300,000 and later MWK 153,000. We set up a group business of selling tomatoes and fish and in a month, we make about MWK 30,000 (32 euro) profit” Alineya says. Jessica, the club’s treasurer adds that most members have also created their own businesses, which facilitated the establishment of the village savings and loans (VSL) in August 2020.

“Every member buys one share of MWK 500 (54 eurocents), or up to MWK 2,000 (2,20 euro), when we meet on Wednesdays. We want through the savings to be empowered economically so that we can be self-reliant and support girls’ education. Currently we have MWK 567,000 (615 euro) savings in our account, but this figure is likely to go up since the due date for sharing is February 2021” says Jessica. Meanwhile, Mlakondwa, another member of the group, says the VSL is easing access to business loans in their area. “Twice I have had to rely on the group savings to revamp my hawker shop where I sell groceries. It is very easy and convenient to borrow money to sustain my business. I also make sure that during the Wednesday meetings I buy shares at MWK 2,000 because that is the best way to save money” says Mlakondwa. In September 2020, she has pocketed MWK 70,000 (75 euro), a considerable amount compared to the other girls. ^^^ Girls Club plans to venture into the maize selling business, buying from their district and reselling in their locality.

The bakery run by \*\*\* Girls Club opened up in August 2019 in Nkhata Bay District, plans of which already started in 2016. Chairperson of the club, Gladys (22), says economic transformation is the only way to adequately support education of girls, hence the decision to venture into entrepreneurship. GENET provided MWK 702,000 as capital that the club used to buy start-up materials like a drum, trays and baking flour. “We are the only ones who are operating a bakery business here. Our products are on a high demand around this area as well as in the neighbouring area. We are selling different products, like buns, but we also bake wedding and birthday cakes, depending on the order. We make a profit of about MWK 30,000 (33 euro) a month, using one oven, but before the year ends, we will add two more ovens, which will increase our profit.

“The money that is realized from the business is transforming our lives. We are supporting five girls with school uniforms and fees. We want to continue with this initiative because only girls who are economically empowered can overcome issues of early marriage” says Gladys.

GENET linked the group to a training institute to train two of its members: Thandiwe and Tabitha, who then trained 18 other members before setting up the bakery. \*\*\* Girls Club has 20 members out of which 17 are school-going girls, with ages between 10 to 22.

According to one of the girls, Mwale, although they are doing bakery business, next to that they are also mentoring one another on various issues, including issues of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). “We believe in information sharing especially on issues of SRHR in order for informed decisions. And in case of any sickness, the group has a social fund to help cheer up such members” she says.

## Mali

Aminata, 18 years old and unmarried, lives in Mali and joined the programme at the age of 13 (2016). She is the sixth daughter and the ninth child; she has 5 elder sisters, 3 older brothers and a younger sister. Aminata is a GALS champion and peer educator who trains young girls, women, men, and boys on GALS, informs young people on the consequences of early marriage and the use of male and female condoms to avoid unwanted pregnancies and sexual diseases. She is the chairperson of a savings group for girls. Thanks to her, a cousin and a nephew attend the medersa, and another cousin is in school.

Even though through MNCP she realized her rights and the importance of going to school, she decided to focus on educating others on GALS and Savings for Change, empowering her younger family members and enabling them to go to school.

*My name is Aminata, president of the \*\*\* girls' group. I was taken out of school when I was only in the second year. The first cycle school, which I attended, started as a community school and it was my mother who paid 1,000 CFA francs (equivalent of 1,50 euros) a month as my contribution to support the community teacher. All the family expenses were her responsibility; as my father did not help her, she decided to withdraw me from the school.*

*The first children my mother had in the beginning were all girls (6 in total), so there was no able labour force to work the fields. As my mother only had daughters, my father disconnected himself from her and that's where their misunderstanding started. There was no communication between them, nor between him and us children; he would beat her every time in front of us. The boys, like our father, thought they were superior to the girls.*

*I was poorly dressed and often cried for my mother to buy me basic necessities. For this, despite my young age, I would go and do chores with people who, after my services, would give me 100 francs CFA or less. My mother, despite my young age, used me in her garden to make ends meet and she often paid for my necessities from this income.*

GALS helped Aminata to formulate her vision. Within a year she planned and bought her bridal set, normally the responsibility of her mother, but she lacked the means. Her next vision was to start up a small business.

Her older brother and mother helped her to pay her weekly contribution at the beginning of the savings scheme. The moment she started taking loans in her group, she started to stand on her own feet. With the earnings from successfully using the business tools and Savings for Change, she started a small business combining gardening and goat rearing. She managed to buy an electric lawnmower and save the earnings on the side. During the rainy season, these funds were used to buy farm inputs and contribute to other family expenses.



Aminata showing her Gender Balance Tree.



*Thanks to the support of the MTBA programme, I am lucid and financially autonomous; I have therefore drawn up my life project, which aims to become the reference trader in the village, and I hope to make it a reality within three years.*

Before GALS, interaction between people was very difficult, the poor had no access to credit, they did not join savings groups out of fear, early marriage was very common among us. *I was isolated, I did not know GALS, I had never imagined that from a development plan I could improve the economic situation of my family.*

*Today, have brought change in my family. My elder brother is doing GALS, and this training has strengthened the links between my elder brother and me. I am listened to now and my activity is considered by my family members.*

*I received an education that helped me to be autonomous and help other people. Now I practice commerce, I master the commercial techniques and my income has improved, I ensure my needs, I bought a hairdressing machine for my four brothers, my wishes are fulfilled. The income generated in the family allows us to pay our taxes and provide condiments for our mother.*

With GALS/MNCP, early marriage decreased, unwanted pregnancies are prevented because the girls who used to migrate are either in school or in the savings groups. Men are interested in the dialogue and are joining the GALS and savings groups. GALS brought social cohesion.

*At first condoms were misunderstood in our community as it did not fit in with our cultural values. It is important to persevere in persuading the community to change their behaviour, to continue with the project to help us achieve all our goals for the development of our communities.*



*Aminata at the age of 18 (2020)*

## Niger

Roumana is a young student who is now 21 years old. She was taken out of school at the age of 15 (in class 4) by her parents to be given in marriage to a Nigerian man close to her family who lives in Ghana, as a 4th wife. When she joined this husband, who is much older than her, she was bitterly surprised to find out that this man has daughters who are older than her. This revolted her but she could not do anything about it as she was far from her parents in another country. As time went by, she got tired of this marriage that she did not want, so she ended up fleeing to seek the help of other Nigeriens living in Ghana who helped her to return to the country, but with a two-month pregnancy.

After returning to Niger, with the support of her school principal who knew her to be quite bright, she went back to school and eventually passed the third grade and was admitted to the BEPC, a diploma that opened the doors to professional training. It was then that she discovered the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) approach and set her sights on becoming a forestry officer. She enrolled in a school called IPDR (Institut Pratique de Développement Rural), although this school was not free. Inspired by the GALS approach, she started a small food business with her mother from a bag of cereals that she took on credit. After each sale, she repaid the loan and saved the profit, then resumed the loan cycle until she had her own capital, which allowed her to grow her small business, have enough money to finance her studies, and also to help her mother, who had no resources. Roumana did not stop there; in her school she shared the GALS approach with her friends and helped six girls to formulate their vision and to map out a life path.

## Pakistan: Hira – GALS Champion & Community Activist

*“Women in Pakistan live an extremely restricted life; they can’t leave their homes, they have to stay covered at all times, and worst of all they can’t financially support their families. Living like a man, I get to defy all these expectations from society.”*

### Living a man’s life

Hira<sup>17</sup>, 17, was born and raised in Punjab, where she spent a happy childhood and moved to a village in Muzaffargarh with her family only two years ago. As a child, Hira says she always felt different from other girls her age. “It felt right dressing up like a boy and spending most of my time out of home”, she says. Hira was lucky, however, because despite social restrictions on women in Pakistan, her father gave her the complete freedom to live life on her own terms. More so, identifying as a man also gave her the privilege of providing a helping hand to her family whenever needed – going to the market on her own, accompanying her sisters when they left the house. “At first, my uncles were disdainful of my lifestyle and protested my decision to live like a man; but with my father by my side, they were forced to step back”, she says.

### Series of tragic events

Hira has five siblings, the eldest of whom passed away shortly after childbirth. “Maria [sister] was married too early, so when I heard that she had become ill, I knew my family had been wrong to push her into the decision”, Hira says. After her eldest sister’s demise, Hira’s family moved to Muzaffargarh. During this

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<sup>17</sup> The name has been changed to protect the subject’s identity.

time, her father had a heart attack and remained home bound for the next several months. “When my brothers fell back on their responsibilities, my family looked up to me to support them”, she recalls. But owing to the family’s financial circumstances, Hira had to drop out of school after completing Matric (10<sup>th</sup> grade) and take time off from her education.

#### First encounter with MNCP

It was at the height of her personal life difficulties that staff from Oxfam’s partner Bedari visited Hira’s neighbourhood to conduct a GALS training as part of the ‘Marriage No Child’s Play’ project. Convinced by a friend to come along, Hira attended the session and, for the first time in her life, seriously thought through her life goals. “I made a vision journey and decided to become a banker”, Hira shares. From living aimlessly and without a purpose, Hira’s attitude about life had completely changed. She was now training more girls in her community, had re-joined school and started home tuition classes (Grades 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>), traveling from place to place to earn a decent living.

#### Paying it forward

Hira’s subsequent interaction with Bedari’s staff members, and the ideas they shared were an eye-opener for her. “It made me realize my strengths, which I used to get my cousins (girls) back into school”, she says. This turned out to be quite a feat as she says her uncles were adamant in protecting their daughters from unsafe public spaces. So, Hira used her own example to demonstrate the endless possibilities which men can open for girls by being trusting and supportive of their life choices.



### Bringing change one step at a time

Today, Hira rides a motorcycle around the city, often taking her sisters along and helping her parents with household tasks when her brothers aren't available. "My brother-in-law rides a rickshaw and makes a living through a school pick and drop service. When he isn't available, I ride the students to school, so he wouldn't lose his earnings for the day", Hira shares happily. Early marriage is common in Hira's village because she says people consider girls a burden on the family. But Hira's life stands testament to the fact that girls can not only achieve complete independence, but also become an anchor for their families, if they are given the freedom and support.

## Annex V: Implementation Evidence

Country	Report Name and link	Date of Publication	Author	Objective
India	<a href="#">Strengthening the National Adolescent Health Programme in India</a> (English)	March 2021	CINI, Needs, BVHA, VHAI, Save the Children India, Simavi	To capture and share learnings from the MTBA model's alignment with India's National Adolescent Health Programme
India	<a href="#">Addressing Child Marriage and Changing Lives Through Alternative Pathways</a> (English)	March 2021	CINI, Needs, BVHA, VHAI, Save the Children India, Simavi	To capture and share learnings from implementing the MTBA model
India	<a href="#">Working with and Engaging Communities to End Child Marriage</a> (English)	March 2021	CINI, Needs, BVHA, VHAI, Save the Children India, Simavi	To capture and share learnings from implementing strategies to engage community groups and members
India	<a href="#">Innovative Practices: Marriage: No Child's Play</a> (English)	March 2021	CINI, Needs, BVHA, VHAI, Save the Children India, Simavi	To share learnings from innovative approaches piloted through MNCP programme
Niger	Evaluation innovative approaches (Edutainment and GALS) (Français)  Available on request	September 2020	Oxfam Niger	To review and learn from Edutainment and GALS approaches as applied to the theme of child marriage in MNCP
Mali	Evaluation innovative approaches (Edutainment and GALS) (Français)  Available on request	October 2020	Oxfam Mali	To review and learn from Edutainment and GALS approaches as applied to the theme of child marriage in MNCP
Mali	Capitalization of MNCP (Français)	March 2021	Save the Children Mali	This capitalization study aims to measure the impact of the project's interventions since 2016 on the reduction of child marriage in its target areas. It aims to analyse

	Available on request			the intervention logic of the project as a whole by meeting general capitalization criteria: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, viability, to which the gender dimension must be added.
Mali, Niger, Pakistan	Edutainment in the Marriage: No Child's Play Project: Learning about the process, effects, and impact (English)	March 2021	Katinka Moonen with contribution from Ruben de Winne: Oxfam Novib	A learning document focused on the process and results, social norm change, mobilization, associated with implementing entertainment education, or 'edutainment' strategies as part of MNCP in Mali, Niger, and Pakistan.
India, Malawi, Mali, Niger	Knowledge management and learning related to YEE (Youth Economic Empowerment) under MTBA (English)	January 2021	Jared Penner: Save the Children Netherlands	A qualitative assessment of YEE components of the MNCP programme implemented by Save the Children and assess if and how this component has helped to improve SRHR outcomes for young people.



## Annex VI: Research and Evaluation Reports

Country	Reports and Publications	Dates of data collection	Author	Methods	Topics
India	<a href="#">More than Brides Alliance: Baseline Report, India</a> (English)	November – December, 2016	Population Council	Household listing (n=16,106), individual interviews with girls (n=2,982)	Education, livelihoods, social life of adolescents, SRHR, premarital relations, marriage, motherhood, gender attitudes
Niger	<a href="#">More than Brides Alliance: Baseline Report, Niger</a> (English)  <a href="#">More than Brides Alliance (MTBA) : Le Mariage n'est pas un jeu d'enfant Rapport de Référence Niger</a> (Français)	January, 2017	Population Council	Household listing (n=2,949), individual interviews with girls (n=600)	Education, livelihoods, social life of adolescents, SRHR, premarital relations, marriage, motherhood, gender attitudes
Niger	Formative research in the departments of Téra, Bankilaré, Torodi and Say (Français)  Available on request	April 5 <sup>th</sup> 2018	SALEY Djibo : Recherche formative, Oxfam, 2018	225 Household questionnaires, 183 child questionnaires, 34 discussions with administration representatives and 28 discussion groups with children and adults.	Socio-cultural, economic, political, and legal factors related to child marriage

Malawi	<a href="#">More than Brides Alliance: Baseline Report, Malawi</a> (English)	November – December, 2016	Population Council	Household listing (n=7,604), individual interviews with girls (n=1,020)	Education, livelihoods, social life of adolescents, SRHR, premarital relations, marriage, motherhood, gender attitudes
Mali	<a href="#">More than Brides Alliance: Baseline Report, Mali</a> (English)  <a href="#">More than Brides Alliance (MTBA) : Le Mariage n'est pas un jeu d'enfant Rapport de Référence Mali</a> (Français)	July – August, 2016	Population Council	Household listing (n=2,831), individual interviews with girls (n=855)	Education, livelihoods, social life of adolescents, SRHR, premarital relations, marriage, motherhood, gender attitudes
Pakistan	<a href="#">More than Brides Alliance: Baseline Report, Pakistan</a> (English)	September-October 2016 and February 2017	Oxfam Novib	Individual interviews with girls (n=591) and heads of household (n=583)	Education, livelihoods, SRHR, decision making, marriage, motherhood, gender attitudes, social action, social norms
India, Malawi, Mali, Niger	<a href="#">More Than Brides Alliance: Midline Evaluation Report</a> (English)  « <a href="#">More than Brides Alliance (MTBA) » : Mariage n'est pas un jeu d'enfant Rapport</a>	July - December 2018	Population Council	Individual interviews with adolescent girls 12-19 (India: n=2801, Malawi: n=1029, Mali: n=829, Niger: n=599)	Education, livelihoods, social life of adolescents, SRHR, premarital relations, marriage, motherhood, gender attitudes

	<a href="#">d'Evaluation a Mi-parcours au Mali et au Niger</a> (Français)				
Pakistan	<a href="#">More than Brides Alliance: Midline Report, Pakistan</a> (English)	October and November 2018	Oxfam Novib	Individual interviews with (panel study of) girls (n=1594) and heads of household (n= 1579)	Education, livelihoods, SRHR, decision making, marriage, motherhood, gender attitudes, social action, social norms
India, Malawi, Mali, Niger	More than Brides Alliance: Endline Evaluation Report (English)  More than Brides Alliance : Rapport d'évaluation finale (Français)	August - December 2020	Population Council	Individual interviews with adolescent girls 12-19 (India: n=1479, Malawi: n=764, Mali: 819, Niger: 620) and with parents of adolescent girls or other adult members of adolescent girls' households (India: 1479, Malawi: 786, Mali: 479, Niger: 329)	Education, livelihoods, social life of adolescents, SRHR, marriage, motherhood, gender attitudes, impact of COVID-19 pandemic on health & wellbeing of girls and their households
Pakistan	Study on impact of covid-19 on lives of women and girls	November 2020	Oxfam Novib	Individual interviews with girls (n= 993)	Education; unpaid care work; GBV; risk of being married off; mental health stress
Pakistan	More than Brides Alliance: Endline	November 2020	Oxfam Novib	Individual interviews with (panel study of) girls (n=2584) and heads of household (n= 2541)	Education, livelihoods, decision making, marriage, motherhood, gender attitudes, social action, social norms

	Report, Pakistan (English)				
India, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Pakistan	End of Term Evaluation for the 'Marriage: No Child's Play' Programme	October, 2020 – March 2021	Halcyon Consulting	Mixed methodologies including desk review of programme documents, interviews and roundtables with programme staff, focus group discussions with girls in India and Malawi, and a small-scale, participatory photographic evaluation component (in all countries except Pakistan)	<p>Objective 1: Assess how the MNCP programme strategies and implementation methodologies in adolescent work have been relevant, effective and (likely) sustainable in empowering adolescent girls to make informed life choices, including choices related to their SRHR. What factors aided or hindered achievement of results?</p> <p>Objective 2: Assess the key lessons learned and establish recommendations for future child marriage and SRHR programmes.</p>

## Annex VII: Research Articles

Country	Reports and Publications	Dates of data collection	Author	Methods	Topics
India	<a href="#">Pandey, N., Saxena, K., Melnikas, A.J. 2019: Examining Early Marriage in India: Qualitative Findings. Population Council.</a> (research brief)	November – December, 2016	Population Council	Focus group discussions	Knowledge of child marriage-related laws, influence of laws on behaviour, education and livelihoods, parental expectations about marriage, girls' assets, girls' mobility
Niger	<a href="#">Saul, G., Diarra, A., Melnikas, A.J., Amin, A. 2021: Voice without choice? Investigating adolescent girls' agency in marital decision-making in Niger. Progress in Development Studies, 20(4), 270-281.</a> (peer reviewed publication)	October – November, 2018	Population Council	Focus group discussions	Adolescent girls' perceptions of agency related to partner choice and marital timing, perceptions of social pressures related to marriage, sexual security, gender roles
Malawi	<a href="#">Melnikas, A.J., Mulauzi, N., Mkandawire, J., Amin, S. Perceptions of minimum age at marriage laws and their enforcement: qualitative evidence from Malawi. BMC Public Health 21, Article number 1350.</a> (peer reviewed publication)	April – June, 2018	Population Council	Focus group discussions, key informant interviews, ethnography	Pregnancy, transactional sex, early marriage; consequences of legal enforcement of marriage age

Malawi	“Then I will say that we have to marry each other”: A qualitative look at pathways to early marriage in Malawi (Rejected from first submission; will resubmit to another journal) (peer reviewed publication)	April – June, 2018	Population Council	Focus group discussions, key informant interviews, ethnography	Pregnancy, transactional sex, early marriage
Mali	<a href="#">Engebretsen, S. Gueye, M., Melnikas, A.J., Fofana, S., Fané, B., Amin, S. 2020: Adolescent girls’ migration and its impact on early marriage: Qualitative findings in Mali. PLoS ONE, 15(3): e0230370</a> (peer reviewed publication)	March, 2017	Population Council	Focus group discussions, in-depth interviews	Migration, marital transactions, SRHR
Pakistan	<a href="#">Van Veen, Saskia; van Moorten, Ronald; Durani, Wasim. (2018). Marriage Decision-Making; A Family Affair. Oxfam Novib: June 2018.</a>	October, 2017 – March, 2018	Oxfam Novib	Individual interviews using vignettes	Social norms around early marriage, marriage decision-making process
Pakistan	<a href="#">Influences, considerations and attitudes helping transform social norms around child marriage in selected districts in Punjab and Sindh, Pakistan. A qualitative study exploring cases of positive deviance.</a>	December 2019	Oxfam Novib	Individual in-depth interviews using time line drawing	Social norms, positive deviance, child marriage, alternatives, experiences
Pakistan	Youth empowerment and joint action as perceived by youth in Pakistan: A study on the impact of the Marriage: No Child’s Play project.	November 2020	Oxfam Novib	Peer to peer interviews	Youth, empowerment, GALS, peer educators, social action



Annex VIII: Blogs / Briefs / Conference Presentations / Posters

Country	Type of product and where presented if relevant	Date of publication / presentation	Author	Methods	Topics	Title and link, if available
India	Poster presentation at the International Conference on Family Planning in Kigali	November 2018	Population Council	Data from MTBA quant evaluation (adolescent interviews)	CSE, SRHR, child marriage; The association between exposure to comprehensive sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health knowledge and practices among unmarried and married adolescent girls in India	<a href="#">The association between exposure to comprehensive sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health knowledge and practices among unmarried and married adolescent girls in India</a>
India	Poster presentation, International Conference on Family Planning in Kigali	November 2018	Population Council	Data from MTBA quant evaluation (adolescent interviews)	CSE, SRHR, child marriage; The association between exposure to comprehensive sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health knowledge and practices among unmarried and married adolescent girls in India	<a href="#">The association between exposure to comprehensive sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health knowledge and practices among unmarried and married adolescent girls in India (Poster presentation at International Conference on Family Planning in Kigali)</a>

Mali, Niger	Poster presentation for the 2018 Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America, PAA	April 2017	Population Council	MTBA evaluation data (quant) and qualitative data from focus group discussions	Poster compares marriage characteristics and covariates to explore drivers of CM in West African settings	<a href="#">Child Marriage in Mali and Niger: Timing, Processes, and Transactions</a>
Pakistan	Blog	June 2020	Oxfam Novib, UvA, KIT	Comparative post combining data from MNCP in Pakistan (baseline and midline) with data from Her Choice and Yes I Do in Pakistan		<a href="#">Ready to marry? Exploring the dynamics of Child Marriage in Pakistan</a>
Pakistan	Comparative learning series of MNCP Pakistan	2020	Oxfam Novib	Based on the baseline and endline studies and two qualitative studies on social norms and family honour	Protective mechanisms, social norms, maturity, mobility, family honour, consequences, positive deviance	Three learning products have been developed: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="#">Exploring protective mechanisms to child marriage in Pakistan</a></li> <li>2. <a href="#">Unpacking concepts of maturity, mobility and family honour in relation to child marriage in Pakistan</a></li> <li>3. <a href="#">Consequences of positive deviance in child marriage and the breaking of social norms in Pakistan</a></li> </ol>

Multi-Country	Brief; MTBA learning days panel discussion	November 2018	Population Council	Data primarily from Focus Group Discussions	Sexuality, social norms, GBV, transactional sex, value placed on virginity, family honour, value placed on high fertility	<a href="#">"What's Sex Got to Do With It?-- Exploring the links between female adolescent sexuality and child marriage"</a>
Multi-Country	Paper Presented at 2018 Annual Meeting of the <i>International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, IUSSP</i>	2018	Population Council	Comparative analysis of Baseline results in India, Malawi, Niger, and Mali	Marital transactions and processes	<a href="#">Early Marriage in Malawi, Mali, and Niger: A Comparison of Marital Transactions</a>
Multi-Country	Poster presentation, 2019 Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America, PAA	April 2019	Population Council	Baseline prevalence data, focus group discussions in Malawi, Mali, and Niger	Motivations for adolescent migration, perceptions of adolescent migration, impacts of adolescent migration on child marriage	<a href="#">Adolescent Migration and Marriage: Examples from Malawi, Mali and Niger</a>