

MORE THAN BRIDES ALLIANCE

MIDLINE EVALUATION FINDINGS

BACKGROUND

Despite declines in recent years, child marriage, or marriage before the age of 18, remains a significant issue. In response to the need for targeted community-level interventions to delay marriage and improve sexual and reproductive health for adolescent girls in India, Malawi, Mali, Niger, and Pakistan, the More than Brides Alliance (MTBA) was formed, bringing together the strengths of a diverse team skilled in adolescent program implementation and research.

This brief reports on findings from a midline evaluation conducted in 2018 to assess progress to-date. In this brief we present findings from India, Malawi, Mali and Niger. The full report and findings from Pakistan are available at morethanbrides.org.

METHODS

We use data from baseline (2016) and midline (2018) surveys with girls ages 12 to 19 in selected intervention and comparison areas to assess program impact thus far. For each survey, we selected a new random sample of girls in each community (rather than following the same girls prospectively). We then analyze the data by comparing the changes observed in the intervention areas with those observed in the comparison areas over time.

RESULTS

From baseline to midline, we found that the proportion of girls 12-19 who were ever married declined in all samples. We observed declines

ranging from 29% to 47% across countries (representing declines of 3-11 percentage points overall). As Figure 1 shows, the proportion married is declining, but it is declining in both comparison and intervention areas. This suggests that there may be larger factors beyond the reach of the MTBA program that are driving changes in marriage across countries.

Proportions of girls married before age 18 declined in all samples from baseline to midline

In general, we find that knowledge related to child marriage and SRHR is improving in intervention areas. For example, in Niger and Malawi, we saw large increases in modern contraceptive knowledge in intervention areas (by 33% in Niger and by 29% in Malawi) while in comparison areas, contraceptive knowledge increased only slightly (by 3% in Malawi) or even declined (by 3% in Niger). As another example, we also found that knowledge of legal age at marriage improved in both intervention and comparison areas in Malawi and three Indian states (Bihar, Jharkhand, and Rajasthan), but was only attributable to the program in one state in India (Odisha), where increases were observed in intervention areas but not in comparison areas.

Results show that the MTBA program improved knowledge of legal age at marriage in Malawi and India and improved knowledge of modern contraceptive methods in Niger and Malawi.

Figure 1. Percentage Change in Key Indicators, by Country and Intervention Status

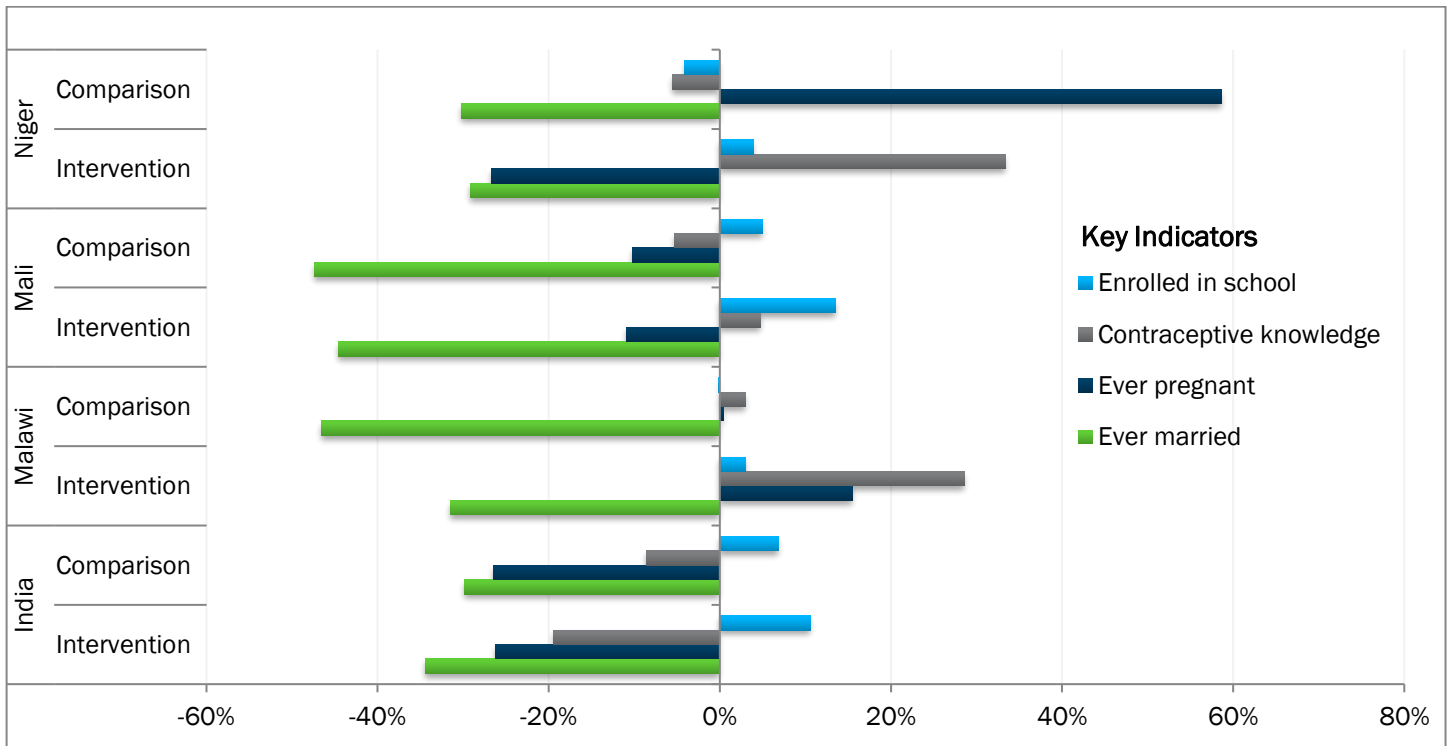


Figure 1 shows proportion changes on key indicators related to marriage, pregnancy, schooling and contraceptive knowledge.

into possible programmatic adaptations that could help MTBA achieve desired outcomes by endline in 2020.

CONCLUSIONS

This midline analysis offers the opportunity to see changes that have occurred in communities exposed to the MTBA approach on measures related to marriage, pregnancy, education, livelihoods, and gender-equitable attitudes. The midline findings provide both validation that some MTBA approaches are working to improve outcomes for girls in these communities and suggest direction for areas that may require increased attention over the last years of the intervention (MTBA program runs through 2020).

In the full MTBA Midline Report, we assess the successes of the intervention to-date, to contextualize findings in light of larger social trends that may explain changes on some indicators (such as increased political pressure to end child marriage), and consider adaptations to programmatic strategies based on midline findings. As we take stock of the program at its midpoint, we look to the data to provide insights

ABOUT THE INTERVENTION

The more than brides alliance empowers young people to determine if and when to get married by making informed choices about their sexual reproductive health and rights and pursuing alternative lifepaths in an enabling environment. MTBA is led by Save the Children Netherlands with Oxfam Novib, Simavi and Population Council as alliance partners and is implemented by numerous local NGOs in each county.

