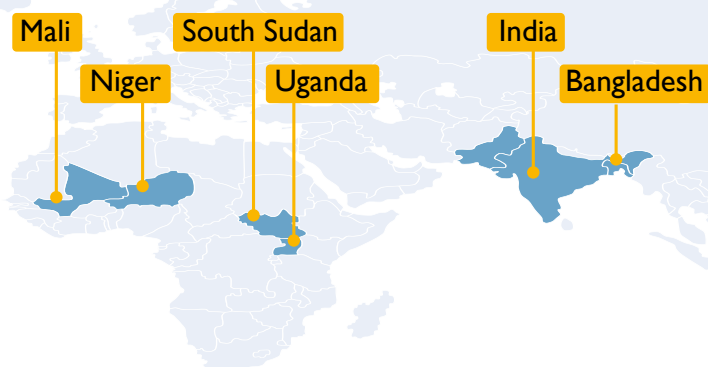




Giving Girls a Voice and a Choice

Reducing Child Marriage and strengthening alternative life choices for girls and young women.

Too many girls do not have the opportunity to set and pursue their own goals and dreams. Too many cannot go beyond roles that are traditionally carved out for them. Many girls are married—often forced to marry—much too early. Our name says it all: adolescent girls are more than brides.



Founded five years ago (2015), the More than Brides Alliance (MTBA) builds on the collective skills and experience of our five organisations—Save the Children Netherlands, Oxfam Novib, Population Council Kenya, Simavi, and Women in Law and Development in Africa - Afrique l'Ouest. We work within fragile contexts where girls aged 10-19 are most at risk for Child Marriage and face the biggest hurdles in making their own life choices. Our focus countries are Mali, Niger, India, South Sudan, Uganda, and Bangladesh.

Together, we tackle the negative impact of Child Marriage on the health and economic wellbeing of girls, their communities, and broader society; and ensure girls enjoy expanded life choices to fulfil their Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR).

OUR JOURNEY SO FAR

In our first five years, we developed three pathways, working with girls in their communities to...

STRENGTHEN GIRLS' AGENCY

- Created and supported girls' clubs: youth-oriented safe spaces to share and learn.
- Organised girl-led workshops to provide girls with information and support to pursue their life choices.
- Built local platforms for implementing campaigns and mobilising girls' collective engagement and influence.

GROW ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ALTERNATIVES...

- Delivered vocational and business skills-training to support girls in realising income-generating opportunities.
- Provided transportation to attend school.
- Increased access to quality, youth-centered Sexual & Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services.

...AND INFLUENCE SOCIAL NORMS

- Initiated parent and community conversations about positive gender roles and viable futures.
- Engaged educators, policymakers, governments and law enforcement in understanding and supporting positive change.
- Trained healthcare workers in providing gender and youth-aware services.



...AND REALISED SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS:



Established 3,000 youth groups to inform and empower 126,438 girls and boys on SRHR.



Engaged 79,690 parent organisations and community leaders on the benefits of keeping girls in school. In Mali, the average years of girls' education increased from 4.2 to 4.3 years.



Trained 1,129 representatives from law enforcement, judiciary, and legal aid, and 2,755 healthcare workers on Child Marriage laws and impacts, and delivering youth and gender-sensitive services.



Organized activities for 19,072 girls to learn income-generating skills.



India: Girls' marriage rates decreased from 68.9% to 43.5% in Bihar and from 51.5% to 28.6% in Odisha.

Niger: The average age of Child Marriage rose by 0.5 years; saw a 33% increase in contraceptive awareness.



Overall, 2,322 girls successfully advocated for themselves to delay marriage.

"With the support of the MTBA Programme, I have clear goals and am financially independent. I have drawn up my life project to become the village's trader, and I hope to make it a reality within three years." – Aminata, Mali

"We knew adults had rights. I had never heard of children having rights. We have the right to decide when we want to marry, when we want to have children." – Sapna, India

"I have seen so much change as girls now have become more ambitious. Back then all they wanted to be was a mother and a wife." – Zione, Malawi

READ MORE: "Stories of Change" <https://morethanbrides.org/stories/>



GOING FURTHER

Over these first years, our programme's has become increasingly more girl-centered and girl-led. Now with over 3000 girls' and youth clubs as a solid base, we will strengthen their sustainability and capacity for change, through three initiatives:

"MY CHOICE, MY VOICE"

- Guiding established girls' clubs in developing advocacy initiatives and collective action with local civil society organisations.
- Testing a grassroots fundraising programme to foster the sustainable independence of girls' clubs.
- Extending networking capabilities among and between clubs for implementing campaigns and mobilising influence.
- Building foundations in new countries, leveraging what we have learned.

"ARE YOU LISTENING?"

Launched as an awareness campaign on COVID-19's impacts on adolescent girls at risk of Child Marriage, we will transform this into a platform for advocacy action and training.

- Focusing initially on urging government and civil society organisations to make girls central to their pandemic response.
- Deploying a digital platform where girls can train in using both on- and offline spaces to network, learn, and build advocacy movements, now and in the future.

"MAKING THE MOST OF WHAT WE KNOW"

- Programme to expand and deepen the limited research on the impact of Child Marriage on girls' SRHR and their communities.
- Leverage the existing knowledge and connections of our local partners in shaping a learning vision.
- Develop youth-led research initiatives and train young researchers.

Ultimately, we are working towards a world where girls can effectively unite their voices and power, advocate for their rights and decisions, and truly have a voice and a choice in their lives.



ABOUT THE MORE THAN BRIDES ALLIANCE

The collective strength and experience of the five organisations enables us to develop a unique, comprehensive, and holistic approach to address Child Marriage.



Save the Children Netherlands is key player in the field of children's rights and girls' empowerment and brings an extensive network of Save the Children organisations in 120 countries.



Oxfam Novib brings a wealth of experience in the field of women's rights and gender equality as well as an extensive network of Oxfam organisations and partners in over 90 countries.



Population Council Kenya brings decades of experience in research that strengthens the links between policy and practice and between evidence, advocacy and SRHR Programme, particularly related to adolescent girls, sexual- and gender-based violence, harmful cultural practices, and other topics influencing the health and wellbeing of adolescents, families, and communities.



Simavi is a health organisation specialised in water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) and SRHR with over 90 years of experience working with communities, providing them services, and bringing their stories to the attention of the public and authorities.



Women in Law and Development in Africa, Afrique de l'Ouest (WILDAF-AO) is the West Africa sub-regional chapter of Women in Law and Development in Africa, which is a Pan-African network bringing together organisations and individuals with the goal of promoting a culture that respects women's rights in Africa.

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