

# External Evaluation Report of *Girls Not Brides'* Learning Work 2020-2023.

## Executive Summary

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# 1 Executive summary

This executive summary presents the key findings and recommendations from an independent evaluation of *Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage's* learning work from 2020 to 2023. The evaluation aimed to assess the relevance, effectiveness and impact of *Girls Not Brides'* initiatives to leverage knowledge, learning and evidence to address child marriage.

## Background

As a partnership of more than 1,400 civil society organisations in over 100 countries, *Girls Not Brides* stands at the forefront of efforts to end child marriage<sup>1</sup> and promote girls' rights. The global Partnership is supported by a secretariat. The *Girls Not Brides* Secretariat Strategy 2022-2025 outlines learning objectives to position *Girls Not Brides* as an effective shared learning and knowledge hub that generates, shares and facilitates the uptake of insights and evidence to drive impact, and enables stronger coordination of global, regional and national evidence generation to accelerate change to end child marriage.

To evaluate the impact of its learning work and identify areas for improvement, *Girls Not Brides* commissioned an external evaluation of its learning work from 2020 to 2023. The evaluation employed a mixed methods approach consisting of two multilingual surveys, focus group discussions (FGDs), and key informant interviews (KIIs). These tools assessed four key domains:

- **Domain 1 – Broad offer resource production and sharing:** Focused on learning products and spaces for all members, like briefs, reports, toolkits and webinars.
- **Domain 2 – Learning for influencing and programming:** Explored tailored learning support for member organisations, and National and State Partnerships and coalitions to integrate evidence into programming and advocacy.
- **Domain 3 – Leadership and influence:** *Girls Not Brides'* role as a thought leader on the child marriage agenda.
- **Domain 4 – Research coordination and uptake:** Assessed the Child Marriage Research to Action Network (CRANK) for sharing evidence and coordinating stakeholders.

## Objective and methodology

The core evaluation objectives were:

- To assess the level of access and uptake of *Girls Not Brides'* learning resources by member organisations, donors, partners and other key stakeholders in the sector, and how these have informed their work.
- To assess the role of *Girls Not Brides* as a thought leader, sharing learning, evidence and recommendations around addressing child marriage and supporting girls who are – or have been – married (ever-married girls), building a global understanding of the issue and what works to address it.
- To draw recommendations for improving the *Girls Not Brides* knowledge, evidence and learning work in the next phase of strategy implementation.

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<sup>1</sup> The term “child marriage” refers to all forms – formal and informal – of child, early and forced marriage and unions where at least one party is under age 18; we use this term throughout this report. In sections regarding Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), we use the full term “child early and forced marriage and unions, CEFMU” to align with the reality and preference of *Girls Not Brides* member organisations in LAC, where informal unions are more common than formal marriages among those under age 18.

The evaluation design was structured in several phases, commencing with a **desk review**, followed by two **co-creation workshops** facilitated by the evaluation team in collaboration with relevant *Girls Not Brides* team members. The outcomes of these workshops and the design phase guided the evaluation through sampling, data collection, data cleaning and data analysis. A mixed methods approach was used for the data collection, and a purposive sampling method was used by *Girls Not Brides* to identify the participants.

For the collection of **quantitative data**, two surveys were employed as an efficient and fast method for gathering reliable quantitative data directly from a large sample of users, thus ensuring comprehensive data collection. A “member survey” was designed to gather data under Domain 1, Domain 2 and Domain 3. A separate survey, exclusively for CRANK members, was created to collect data under Domain 4, specifically examining the coordination, dissemination and uptake of evidence. Survey Monkey provided basic statistical analysis of the quantitative data. This analysis was reviewed, cleaned, and supplemented by manual numerical analysis of basic statistics such as averages and percentages.

The collection of **qualitative data** involved conducting Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with *Girls Not Brides* and CRANK members and Key Informant Interviews (KII) with strategic partners and donors. FGDs were employed to collect data relevant to both Domain 2 and Domain 4. Open-ended responses from the surveys provided additional qualitative data. The data analysis process was wrapped up through two **co-validation exercises** with *Girls Not Brides* team members and representatives from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), where key findings were shared, and meaning was co-created through collective discussion and consolidated through the report writing and finalisation process.

## Key findings

Conducting a thorough analysis of the data collected, this segment emphasises the responses and insights provided by *Girls Not Brides* member organisations and other key stakeholders. The findings have been organised around the evaluation questions for each domain, and include syntheses regarding the relevance, effectiveness and impact of *Girls Not Brides*' learning initiatives. The objective in this section is to ensure accountability and capture actionable recommendations based on systematic stakeholder input to inform future efforts.

### Domain 1 – Resource production and dissemination

Analysis of domain one focussed on the extent broad offer learning products developed by *Girls Not Brides* (e.g., briefs, learning series, toolkits, reports, webinars) are relevant, high-quality and useful. It looked at how dissemination channels used by *Girls Not Brides* (e.g., newsletters, webinars, [Learning and Resources](#) web pages, [Resource Centre](#)) are relevant and effective in reaching and engaging the intended users.

Overall, findings demonstrate that *Girls Not Brides* offers a wide range of learning products, which are highly relevant, of high quality and valuable to member organisations.

#### Relevance

Learning products were clearly relevant to member organisations' work. They align well with member organisations' organisational objectives, themes and interests, and are highly useful for their advocacy, proposal development and programming work. The content reflects member organisations' contextual and programmatic experiences to a considerable extent.

There were differing opinions on the inclusion of member organisations' context and level of regional representation; Some suggested that more regional representation and a greater focus on context specific content is needed, with supporting examples and case studies. Some also

recommended more extensive engagement at the local and/or country level, including more focus on local and country engagement in online global learning spaces and in-country learning events.

### *Quality*

Learning content – including learning products and online learning spaces – was rated highly for quality and satisfaction; it is understandable, informative, well-structured, contextualised and supported by examples, so enhancing understanding.

### *Usefulness*

*Girls Not Brides* learning products are widely accessible and frequently used by respondents, who expressed high satisfaction with their formats. However, some would also like shorter, more concise, visual and easy-to-understand products like audio-visual materials, infographics and animations.

### *Access*

A significant majority of respondents found it easy to access and participate in *Girls Not Brides'* online learning spaces. Many gained new learning and insights – including from other member organisations – and used this in their organisational programming and advocacy work. Language accessibility is positively viewed, though there is demand for additional languages to be included.

Fewer respondents reported having the opportunity to contribute their own experiences or engage with other organisations in online learning spaces. There is also a request to make learning more accessible for young people and people with disabilities.

To further enhance these learning spaces, recommendations primarily focus on addressing barriers to internet access, facilitating knowledge sharing between member organisations, improving communication and reminders – with a particular focus on young people and people with disabilities – and engaging with local contexts by involving local leaders, sharing data with grassroots organisations, and conducting in-country learning events.

## **Domain 2 – Learning for influencing and programming**

The member survey and case studies provide strong evidence that *Girls Not Brides* has effectively supported member organisations, National Partnerships and coalitions by providing tailored learning support. This capacity enhancement has strengthened civil society actors' abilities to undertake evidence-based programming and influencing efforts to address child marriage.

The survey revealed high participation rates, satisfaction levels and perceived capacity gains across diverse learning modalities including workshops, peer exchanges and webinars. These spaces played a pivotal role in fostering vital collaboration, knowledge exchange and collective action among member organisations.

The three cases showcased complementary models of tailored support aligned to member organisations' needs:

- Facilitating participatory research to generate evidence and equip member organisations with data for advocacy (LAC brief development)
- Providing intensive organisational development support to National Partnerships embarking on strategic planning processes (Uganda co-creation project)
- Conducting skills training workshops and exchanges to enhance capabilities for evidence-based advocacy (EOL-funded workshops in West Africa)

However, the evaluation also identified priorities for strengthening *Girls Not Brides'* capacity building approaches. This includes expanding high-demand training, promoting more in-person peer exchanges, customising workshops based on organisations' unique contexts, and prioritising building

capacity among grassroots and youth groups with the greatest needs. Additional recommendations are fostering ongoing communities of practice for knowledge sharing and enhancing follow-up support after workshops to aid practical application.

By refining learning approaches based on systematic member input and tailoring capacity enhancement to critical needs, *Girls Not Brides* can further deepen civil society expertise. This will empower organisations to undertake even more effective, evidence-based programming and advocacy on child marriage going forward.

### **Domain 3 – Leadership and influence**

Globally, *Girls Not Brides*' role as a thought leader that uses evidence to influence policy and programmatic interventions to end child marriage is widely recognised. *Girls Not Brides* is doing well on sharing learning, promoting promising practices and contributing to shaping the debate around the child marriage agenda. Continue this strong work.

The findings point towards continuing to strengthen *Girls Not Brides*' leadership role in spotlighting critical insights. Leveraging *Girls Not Brides*' vital role as a convenor in bringing together diverse child marriage stakeholders from different sectors, constituencies and regions is critical to build common understanding.

Key informants emphasised *Girls Not Brides*' convening role. Data also highlighted *Girls Not Brides*' distinct value in continuous efforts to unite disparate voices. The findings encourage the organisation to proactively focus efforts on increasing its leadership and influence at the regional level, by investing in convening regional actors and amplifying region-specific priorities.

### **Domain 4 – Research dissemination and coordination**

The CRANK is effectively serving its core objective to disseminate evidence on child marriage priority topics and deepening many stakeholders' understanding of child marriage evidence, solutions and emerging priorities. Its role in evidence sharing is highly valued by diverse respondents.

The data confirms the CRANK's role in production of timely synthesis of evidence resources and meeting round up materials in an accessible and engaging format that allow stakeholders worldwide to benefit and draw from the latest evidence and discussions on child marriage to support and inform their programmatic, research and advocacy efforts, identify research gaps and learn from the content and discussions of research meetings even if unable to directly participate.

The survey and FGD data converge to underline one of the CRANK's core strengths as an inclusive platform for disseminating the latest evidence on child marriage and facilitating global knowledge exchange between diverse stakeholders. The data affirms the CRANK's value in connecting actors across regions to shape a dynamic, shared understanding of priority issues and solutions related to addressing child marriage globally. The African perspectives underscore the CRANK's role in shaping regional and national efforts.

The survey results demonstrated a high satisfaction with the CRANK's evidence and knowledge exchange role amongst its diverse stakeholders including researchers, practitioners, advocates and policymakers. The CRANK was also considered effective in communicating technical information in a clear format to global audiences, with CRANK resources considered effective for informing members' work. The CRANK is successful in facilitating the sharing and discussions on priority research topics and identifying research priorities and gaps, ensuring there is a clear focus on evidence that provides learnings on solutions and what works to end child marriage and support married girls.

The CRANK successfully highlights valuable research, yet findings indicate additional emphasis could be placed on deriving practical lessons and recommendations from this evidence to catalyse research uptake. However, developing implementation guidance tailored to different users may

require efforts beyond the CRANK's current scope and is likely better situated at regional and national levels.

## Recommendations

Recommendations in this segment have been built on the information from the respondents and relating to the findings that have come through the different data collection tools. Some of the recommendations could be interconnected and relevant for multiple domains and are being highlighted here as integrated areas of work.

Continue doing more of:

- Producing more “action-oriented” multimedia, multilingual learning products like briefs, toolkits, and videos. This can make the learning products be more accessible and contextual to younger, non-academic and even community-based stakeholders who can also make more use of these products within their own working areas.
- Leveraging inclusive online/in-person convenings for knowledge exchange and networking, to engage more stakeholders in the broader movement space. So, even those who are not directly engaging on CEFMU issues, can still find value in engaging with *Girls Not Brides* platforms and resources and be able to understand the connection with their areas of work and interests.
- Delivering tailored capacity building aligned with organisations' unique needs, contexts, and interests. This can be around topics like women's economic empowerment, climate change issues, or fundraising, that can enhance how the organisations are able to engage and build up their own portfolio of work.
- Asserting leadership by spotlighting critical issues and bringing together diverse voices. As a convener *Girls Not Brides* brings value to the discourse and advocacy areas in the movement space, both globally and at the regional level.
- Generating accessible evidence review resources like CRANK meeting summaries and research spotlights. These products have shown to be quite valuable as an evidence-based resource which is being used by organisations for knowledge sharing and uptake for programming and advocacy engagements.

Start doing:

- Adopt targeted digital marketing strategies beyond membership to engage broader audiences, like young advocates and community-based organisations in the broader movement space, who are not directly working on CEFMU issues. This can help to expand alliances and interconnected working relationships.
- Strengthen expertise sharing and leadership on child marriage at regional and national levels. Building on the role that *Girls Not Brides* play at a global level, encouraging more regional and national leadership for more active participation and engagement of the platforms.
- Increase accessibility of knowledge products to users with different access needs and disabilities, to have a bigger outreach for users of the learning products.
- Have more country and regional specific learning products, highlighting practical and contextual practices. In particular, to strengthen its role as a knowledge broker to facilitate inclusion of evidence and knowledge from the global South.
- Provide long-term learning support to National Partnerships and coalitions. There is an ask from members for a long-term strategy that focuses on sustained technical and financial support for national partnerships and their members.
- Provide more implementation guidance to translate CRANK evidence into practical tools for end users. Strengthening practices towards a more equitable knowledge system that can

address systemic inequities which currently limit a diversity in the evidence (particularly evidence from grassroots organisations, southern-based research institutes, etc).

- Diversify CRANK coordination by establishing localised chapters focused on context-specific priority setting, could be based on themes or regional focus areas. This can also encourage more regional or national-level engagement of knowledge creation which will be more locally-based and contextual.

## Conclusion

The evaluation affirms *Girls Not Brides*' vital role as a knowledge leader and its effectiveness in ensuring member organisations can access current, context-relevant evidence through diverse learning initiatives. But findings reveal opportunities to amplify impact by adopting more inclusive, locally attuned, context-specific approaches that encourage more local and youth participation. By refining strategies based on systematic stakeholder feedback, *Girls Not Brides* can continue nurturing a dynamic evidence ecosystem that fuels progress towards ending child marriage and supporting ever-married girls worldwide.

*For the full version of this evaluation report, please contact [info@GirlsNotBrides.org](mailto:info@GirlsNotBrides.org).*