Taking action to address child marriage:
the role of different sectors

Education

The vast majority of those affected by child marriage are girls, and the practice has a significant, negative, and complex correlation with education. Whether child marriage causes school dropout or vice versa is not always straightforward, but what is clear is that child marriage very frequently undermines investments in education by hindering girls' ability to attend school, acquire new skills and knowledge, and put existing ones to use. The reduced educational attainment related to child marriage has significant economic impacts, not only for girls on an individual level, but also on a national scale. A recent study by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) and the World Bank, for example, estimated that if Niger were to eliminate child marriage, the associated increases in educational attainment and declines in fertility rates could lead to benefits of more than $25 billion between 2014 and 2030.

For many girls, marriage or pregnancy may cause school dropout. Their husbands, in-laws, increased duties in the home, and, in many cases, social norms may not permit them to continue their education. In many contexts, girls who are married and/or pregnant may be barred from school through formal or informal rules. Marriage is not always the reason girls leave school. Other reasons may include real or perceived safety threats in or on the way to school (including sexual harassment or abuse by peers and/or teachers), school fees, lack of proper sanitation facilities in schools, or poor quality of teaching. Some families may feel that when a girl who is not performing well in school, or who is not learning material they feel will be valuable to her long-term success, they are justified in pulling her out of school and entering her into marriage. Once out of school, girls become

significantly more vulnerable to child marriage. In fact, girls who possess only a primary school education are twice as likely to marry or enter into a union before they turn 18 compared to those with secondary or higher educational attainment. Worse still, girls with no education are three times more likely to marry early than those with secondary or higher education. Truncated education affects not only girls, but has intergenerational impacts as well: mothers who are illiterate are less likely to be knowledgeable about proper health and nutrition for themselves and their children than better educated mothers. Children of educated mothers have higher rates of immunisation and overall survival, lower rates of stunting and wasting, and are more likely to be better educated and have delayed rates of marriage themselves than do children of young less-educated mothers.

When girls leave school early, they lose access to education, economic opportunities, social support, and health information. Even where non-formal educational and vocational services are available, married girls may not have access to, time for, or be aware of them.

Integrating child marriage prevention and response into education programmes

Education is one of the most powerful tools available to prevent and respond to child marriage. Girls who are in school are not only protected, in many cases, from child marriage, but gain the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed throughout their lives. School attendance also reinforces to families and communities that girls are still children. Programmes that enhance girls' enrolment and attendance can aid in decreasing their vulnerability to child

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marriage, particularly during the transition from primary to secondary school and throughout adolescence. Programmes that increase the quality of education and ensure that schools are a safe place for girls also possess great potential to stem child marriage. In times of conflict and crisis (please see the *Conflict and humanitarian crisis* brief for more detailed information), the risk of child marriage is heightened, and access to education becomes increasingly important as a way to keep girls engaged in activities that offer alternatives to marriage. For girls in all contexts, education expands girls' options and, whenever possible, should be linked to viable market-based opportunities (please see the *Economic growth and workforce development* brief for more detailed information) that translate into workforce participation opportunities for girls.

In general, programmes that address norms around the value of girls, challenge students (both girls and boys) to think critically about and challenge inequitable gender norms, roles, and relations (including child marriage), and encourage girls and their families to keep girls in school, have the greatest potential to affect change. Such programmes can shift what families and communities envision as possible and acceptable for girls, who should be given the opportunity to stay in school longer and develop the information, skills, and resources needed for their success.

Strategies for integrating child marriage

- Alternative, informal education for out-of-school girls
- Safe spaces for both at risk and married girls
- Livelihoods and vocational training
- Economic support and incentives to help families overcome financial barriers to school attendance
- Community mobilisation around the importance of girls' education
- Initiatives to increase physical accessibility to school, such as building schools or providing transportation
- Initiatives to increase quality of education, such as teacher training and/or gender equitable, locally relevant curriculum development.
- Improving school safety, such as training teachers on non-violent pedagogy and/or monitoring school campuses
- Adequate, separate sanitation facilities for girls

Programme examples

Ishraq, a programme implemented in Upper Egypt, targets girls who are out of school and most vulnerable to child marriage. Ishraq has been implemented since 2001 by Save the Children, Population Council, the Ministry of Youth and the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM), Caritas, and the Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA). Girls meet three to five times a week in a safe space and gain literacy and numeracy skills that will allow them to return to the formal education system. The programme also provides life skills, English language skills, financial literacy training, and sports activities. These offerings give girls knowledge, social skills, social networks and resources that provide support and encouragement, thereby enabling them to return to and succeed in school. Ishraq has improved girls' self-confidence and encouraged families to see their daughters as capable of learning and making valuable contributions. Some 92 per cent of the girls who graduated from the programme passed the re-entry exam for the formal school system, and fewer instances of child marriage were reported.

Let Girls Learn is a $250 million U.S. Government initiative that builds on USAID's initial Let Girls Learn education programming and brings together the girls' empowerment initiatives of the U.S. State Department, USAID, the U.S. Peace Corps, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation. The investment will focus on evaluating existing programmes, leveraging public-private partnerships, and challenging organizations and governments to expand their focus and invest in programmes that more comprehensively meet the needs of adolescent girls. USAID's efforts will focus on increasing access to quality education by providing safe access to schools for students and teachers, especially during conflict or crises; reducing barriers to education, including early pregnancy, malnutrition, gender-based violence, and tuition and other costs of attending school; and empowering adolescent girls by advancing their rights, training them to be leaders, and providing them with financial and digital literacy.

Education is a powerful entry point for preventing child marriage and improving the lives of married girls. To best serve girls who are married or at risk of child marriage, education programmes can incorporate specific child marriage goals and objectives. In countries with a high prevalence of child marriage, funders should include preventing and responding to child marriage in education initiatives. Child marriage-related outcomes should be incorporated into monitoring and evaluation to better understand the link between education and child marriage.

Monitoring and evaluation: illustrative examples
An initial and powerful way to integrate child marriage prevention and response into programming is by measuring changes related to child marriage, learning how these changes impact other programme areas, and then adjusting programming accordingly. The following are sample indicators that can be used in education programmes to understand child marriage-related impacts. For a more complete list of indicators, please refer to the USAID Child, Early, and Forced Marriage Resource Guide or *Girls Not Brides'* Measuring Progress: recommended indicators.

Monitoring and evaluation: illustrative indicators

Indicator	Data source and notes
Primary, secondary, and tertiary education completion rates by sex, age, and marital status.	Data are collected and made publically available by UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). More localised data could be collected via administrative or community-, school-, or programme-level surveys.
Dropout rate in primary and lower secondary general education, by sex, age, and marital status.	Data are collected and made publically available by UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). More localised data could be collected via administrative or community-, school-, or programme-level surveys.
Percentage of married girls who report that their marriage was a major factor for dropping out of school.	A survey of married, out of school girls/women in the target population.
Percentage of community, traditional, and religious leaders who say they support their daughters completing their education or returning to school.	A survey of individuals in the target population.
Indicator: Percentage of unmarried girls who are confident in their ability to pursue alternatives to child marriage.	Data source: Survey of individuals in the target population.
Indicator: Percentage of married girls who return to school.	Data source: Survey of married girls in the target community.
Availability of educational opportunities within an accessible distance.	This list may be compiled using sources such as government offices (ministry of education or equivalent), NGOs, websites or telephone directories, and informants in the community. A survey of the target population could yield information about girls' perceptions of educational opportunities to them.
Percentage of schools that provide safe and girl-friendly environments (e.g. separate toilets with doors for girls, safe passage to/from school and extracurricular activities).	A survey of schools, based on a probability sample of schools in a region or country (if possible).

Suggested further reading

The briefs in this series are based on the Child, Early, and Forced Marriage Resource Guide (2015), written for USAID by Allie Glinski, Magnolia Sexton and Lis Meyers on behalf of Banyan Global and ICRW. References, programme examples and further information can be found in that guide, located here: https://www.usaid.gov/documents/1865/child-early-and-forced-marriage-resource-guide.

For additional information, see:

Boyle, M.H., Racine, Y., Georgiades, K., Snelling, D., Hong, S., Omariba, W.,... Rao-Melacini, P. (2006). **The influence of economic development level, household wealth and maternal education on child health in the developing world**. *Social Science & Medicine, 63*(8), 2242–2254.

High-Impact Practices in Family Planning (HIPs). (2014). **Educating girls: creating a foundation for positive sexual and reproductive health behaviors**. Washington, DC: USAID. Available at: http://www.fphighimpactpractices.org/resources/educating-girls

Malhotra, A., Warner, A., McGonagle, A., & Lee-Rife, S. (2011). **Solutions to end child marriage: what the evidence shows**. Washington, DC: ICRW. Available at: http://www.icrw.org/files/publications/Solutions-to-End-Child-Marriage.pdf

UNESCO. (2015). **Education for all 2000-2015: achievements and challenges**. Paris, France: UNESCO. Available at: http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002322/232205e.pdf.

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