GIRLS NOT BRIDES | The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage

Addressing child marriage through education:
What the evidence shows

1. Introduction

The scale of child marriage is huge: 15 million girls a year are married before the age of 18. One in four girls globally is married before the age of 18. If there is no reduction in the practice of child marriage, 1.2 billion women alive in 2050 will have married in childhood – that is equivalent to the entire population of India.[1] The continuing practice of child marriage undermines efforts to improve girls' education and must be addressed to make progress on global education goals. At the same time, keeping girls in school is a critical strategy to prevent child marriage.

While there is strong evidence of the positive effect that education has on delaying marriage for girls, less is known about the kinds of education policies and programmes that are most effective in reducing child marriage. Several landmark reports in the past ten years have shed light on what works to keep girls in school.[2] [3] This brief draws on these to summarise what we know about addressing barriers to girls' education, including examples of strategies that have been shown to work.

Examples range from government policy initiatives to programmes implemented at scale to smaller pilot programmes which have shown some evidence of success. As this brief draws from existing research, the examples highlighted have all been documented in published literature and previous evidence reviews. In some cases these examples have explicitly shown impact on child marriage. However, too often the impact of initiatives on child marriage has not been tracked so more research is needed.

The brief begins with a recap of the links between child marriage and education and the importance of investing in girls' education. It then outlines common barriers to girls' education and strategies to address them, highlighting policy initiatives, programmes, and evidence gaps or inconsistencies. It concludes with a set of policy recommendations for how the education sector can contribute to ending child marriage.

2. Why invest in girls' education to end child marriage

Huge progress has been made on global education goals in recent decades as education has been increasingly recognised as a smart investment. Countries with the highest levels of education achieve, on average, up to 5 percentage points more annual growth per capita than countries with the lowest levels of education.[4] Yet, there is still a major financing gap in education. As such, the Global Partnership for Education has called on governments to allocate 20% of public spending to education.[5]

[1] UNICEF, *Ending Child Marriage. Progress and prospects,* 2014 (Accessed 19 August 2017).

[2] G.Sperling and R.Winthrop, *What Works in Girls' Education: Evidence for the World's Best Investment*, Washington DC, Brookings Institution Press, 2016 (Accessed 10 September 2017).

[3] E.Unterhalter et.al., Interventions to enhance girls' education and gender equality. Education Rigorous Literature Review. Department for International Development, 2014 (Accessed 10 August 2017).

[4] World Bank, *World Development Report 2018: Learning to Realize Education's Promise*, Washington, DC: World Bank, 2018 (Accessed January 2018).

[5] The Global Partnership for Education/ Funding, The Global Partnership for Education, 2018 (Accessed 20 December 2017.

Girls' face greater barriers to education than boys.[6] While there has been significant global progress in closing the gender gap at primary level education, at secondary level girls continue to lag behind, which is when they are most risk of child marriage.

Child marriage is both a cause and a consequence of poor educational attainment, particularly for girls. On the one hand, girls who marry young are more likely to drop out of school. On the other hand, girls who are not in school or who have lower levels of education are more likely to marry young. Of the world's 131 million out of school girls, the vast majority are living in regions where child marriage rates are highest: sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.[7]

Investing in girls' education is a critical strategy to end child marriage and support married girls. Educating girls is not only a human rights obligation for countries who have ratified the Convention of the Rights of the Child, but also a smart investment. The economic impact of child marriage was shown most recently in a 2017 report by the World Bank: in countries where child marriage rates are high, girls' educational attainment is low, which in turn leads to reduced lifetime earnings and lower GDP.[8] By investing in efforts to reduce barriers to girls' education, governments could make huge strides towards ending child marriage, and make significant savings.

Child marriage and education: key statistics:
- Girls with secondary or higher education are 3 times less likely to marry as children compared to girls with no education.
- On average, every additional year of schooling reduces the risk of marriage before age 18 by six percentage points.[8]

Economic impact of child marriage and loss of education for girls on labour force participation: key statistics:
- On average child marriage contributes to losses in earnings for women of 9% across the 15 countries studied.[8]
- By ending child marriage, Burkina Faso could create $179 million per year in increased earnings and productivity. Due to their larger populations and role of women in the economy, Bangladesh could create an additional $4.8 billion, and Nigeria an additional $7.6 billion in increased earnings and productivity.[8]

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[6] S.Psaki, K.McCarthy, and B.Mensch, _Measuring Gender Equality in Education: Lessons from Trends in 43 Countries_. Population and Development Review. doi:10.1111/padr.12121, 2017 (Accessed 3 January 2018).

[7] UNESCO, _Reducing global poverty through universal primary and secondary education, Policy Paper 32 / Fact Sheet 44_, 2017 (Accessed 29 September 2017)

[8] Q.Wodon et al., _Economic impacts of child marriage: global synthesis report (English). Economic Impacts of Child Marriage_. Washington, D.C., World Bank Group, 2017 (Accessed 10 October 2017)

3. Tackling barriers to girls' education: Strategies and evidence gaps

Barriers to girls' education include both supply-side barriers (availability and accessibility of quality education) and demand-side barriers (perceptions of the value of girls' education, relevance of the education to girls' needs etc.). To make progress on ending child marriage and educating girls, both of these must be addressed. Secondary-level education for girls is critical, as in many countries the transition from primary to secondary school sees increased dropout rates among girls. To make real progress towards realising girls' rights and achieving gender equality, girls' education must be seen as just as valuable as boys' education, and women must enjoy equal opportunities in the workplace. To begin to make progress toward these goals, we will highlight here some of the strategies that have been shown to work in addressing barriers to girls' education.

Barriers to girls' education:
- Families don't see value in educating girls
- Inaccessibility of schools
- Direct and indirect costs of schooling
- Safety concerns for girls
- Lack of girl-friendly environment in schools
- Low quality education

3.1. Negative perceptions of the value of girls' education
The issue: Accessibility and quality of schools are irrelevant if parents – and sometimes girls themselves – do not consider girls' education a worthwhile investment. This is particularly true in societies with limited economic and employment opportunities for girls and women, or where gender biases regarding women working outside the home are high. In addition, girls often face higher opportunity costs than boys when it comes to education: in short, time spent in school could be spent cleaning, working or looking after siblings.[2] In many places, parents also perceive marriage to be a more cost-effective option than schooling, and one that provides more economic security for their daughters than education would.

Strategies to improve the perceived value of girls' education
Strategies to change perceptions of girls' education fall into three groups: those that improve the transition from education to work, those that make parents and community members more aware of the returns of education – including better jobs, income and health for girls and their families – and those where a government actively seeks to make education compulsory. If parents are aware of alternatives to early marriage they will be more likely to support and invest in schooling for their daughters. Some countries have trialled compulsory, education for girls, which has helped to increase the age of marriage and send a message to parents that girls' education is important.

Policy initiatives
- In Turkey, a law passed in 1997 extended the duration of compulsory schooling from five to eight years, with the result that girls not only completed more schooling, but the average age of first marriage and first birth increased. The probability of marriage by the age of 16 fell by 44% and the probability of first birth fell by 36%.[9]

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[9] M.Kirdar, M.Tayfur, and I.Koc, (2011), as cited in, G.Sperling and R.Winthrop *What Works in Girls' Education: Evidence for the World's Best Investment*, 2016 (Accessed 10 September 2017)

Programme examples

- A programme delivered by CAMFED (Campaign for Female Education) in Ghana, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe sought to increase girls' enrolment and the quality of education and learning outcomes by engaging with whole communities to change norms around girls' education. The programme has supported 500,000 girls to go to secondary school since 2014.[10]
- In India, a programme connected women in 80 rural villages to recruitment and placement services to increase awareness of and access to jobs.[11] In the four years of delivery (2003-2006), results included (i) increased employment among young women in the communities, (ii) girls aged five to 15 in the target villages were 3 to 5 percentage points more likely to be in school than girls in other villages, and (iii) girls who took part in the programme were more likely to look for paid work and delay marriage.

Evidence gaps and inconsistencies

Some countries, such as the Gambia and Sierra Leone, have included large scale strategies to change the perceived value of girls' education in national education plans.[12][13] Examples include community dialogue to increase awareness of the benefits of education and compulsory secondary education. However, there are few rigorous evaluations of such large scale initiatives,[14] and even fewer that measure their impact on child marriage. Further research is needed to understand how campaigns and initiatives to change the perception of girls' education could be improved and/or replicated, their cost-effectiveness, and the impact they have on rates of child marriage.

3.2. Inaccessibility of schools

The issue: Availability and access to schools is still a concern in many countries, particularly in rural areas where transport is limited and safety is a concern. Gender norms which require girls to be taught by teachers in separate rooms from boys further compound infrastructure shortages where there are few teachers, schools or classrooms.[15] Additionally, girls often bear the brunt of unpaid labour (often in the form of heavy domestic work), which leads to school absenteeism and drop-outs.[16] Lastly, married, pregnant and/ or girls with children are often prevented from remaining in or re-entering education due to school or government policies which specifically exclude them.

Strategies for overcoming barriers to access

At the most basic level, building more schools in rural areas makes it easier to access education, particularly for girls.[17] Community schools, that is, schools which are created locally and have a high degree of community involvement in school management, may represent a more accessible alternative to traditional, government run schools and can increase girls' enrolment.[18] Where new schools are not

[10] Camfed International, *Camfed International Annual Report 2016*, 2017 (Accessed 10 September 2018)

[11] R.Jensen, *Do Labor Market Opportunities Affect Young Women's Work and Family Decisions? Experimental Evidence from India.* Quarterly Journal of Economics 127, no. 2: 753–92, 2012 (Accessed 13 November 2017)

[12] Republic of the Gambia Department of State for Education, *Education Policy 2004-2015,* 2004 (Accessed 18 December 2017).

[13] Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, *Sierra Leone Education Sector Plan, a roadmap to a better future 2007-2015,* 2007 (Accessed 18 December 2017)

[14] B.Snilstveit, et al., *The impact of education programmes on learning and school participation in low- and middle-income countries: a systematic review summary report,* 3ie Systematic Review Summary 7. London: International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) 2016 (Accessed 12 November 2017)

[15] Human Rights Watch, *I won't be a doctor and one day you'll be sick, Girls' Access to Education in Afghanistan*, 2017

[16] K., Stoebenau. A.,Warner, J., Edmeades, M., Sexton, *"Girls are like leaves on the wind": How gender expectations impact girls' education - A closer look from West Nile, Uganda.* Washington: International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), 2015 (Accessed November 23 2017).

[17] D.Burde, and L. Linden, *The effect of proximity on school enrollment: Evidence from a randomized controlled trial in Afghanistan*, National Bureau of Economic Research, Published working paper 18039, 2012 (Accessed October 17 2017)

[18] Y.Miller-Grandvaux, and K.Yoder, *A Literature Review of Community Schools in Africa*. Washington: USAID, 2002 (Accessed November 19 2017)

possible, improving transportation links to existing schools, for example, by providing bicycles or school buses, can increase enrolment. Policies that explicitly support pregnant, parenting and married girls to remain and/or return to school are essential. These may include offering flexible schedules, providing childcare, and initiatives to change attitudes of teachers and parents towards married girls and young mothers re-entering the classroom.

For girls who are unable to stay in or return to school, due to responsibilities such as work, domestic labour, childcare or pregnancy for example, non formal education can provide a viable and flexible alternative. Some programmes act as a bridge for girls to eventually re-enter formal education, while others have been shown to provide some of the same skills and benefits of formal education, including reduced incidence of child marriage and early pregnancy.

Policy initiatives
- In Zambia, a national-level return to school policy for pregnant girls, launched in 1997 in combination with communications activities and teacher training, changed social attitudes toward girls' school re-entry.[19] Although 69% of teachers were initially against school re-entry for pregnant girls, 84% expressed a positive attitude after receiving the training. Parental opposition to re-entry also decreased from 53% to 25%. A review of census data in 2010 showed that, on average, adolescent mothers completed more years of schooling than before the policy was implemented, and rates of pregnancy also declined among girls with more than six years of education.[20]

Programme examples
- A government programme distributing bicycles to all girls enrolled in Grade 9 in Bihar, India, reduced the gender gap in secondary school enrolment by 40%.[21]
- A Population Council programme, Powering Up Biruh Tesfa, delivered second chance schooling to 3,159 girls aged seven to 18 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It combined basic literacy training, life skills and wellness check-ups in girls-only safe spaces. In communities where the programme was implemented, attendance in non-formal schooling among older girls increased from 6% to 49%, and attendance of formal schooling increased from 0% to 38%. [22]
- Another Population Council programme, Ishraq, targeted out-of-school Egyptian girls aged 12 -15 (including already married girls) and combined traditional educational modules, such as literacy and life skills, with more innovative subjects such as sports and financial education. Over the 10-year delivery period, the programme reached a total of 3,321 girls in 54 villages. In total, 81% of participants who took the national literacy exam passed, with more than half going on to formal schooling. Participants were also more likely to want to delay marriage and limit childbearing: 89% agreed that the appropriate age for marriage should be 18 or older (compared with 63% in the control group) and 62% reported wanting three children or fewer (compared with 36% in the control group).[23]

[19] FAWE, Keeping Girls In School, *FAWE Zambia's Campaign for an Enabling Readmission Policy for Adolescent Mothers*, 2004 (Accessed 2 December 2017)
[20] McCadden, D, *An Assessment Of The Impact Of Zambia's School Re-Entry Policy On Female Educational Attainment And Adolescent Fertility, a master's thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Georgetown University*, 2015 (Accessed 3 December 2017)
[21] K.Muralidharan and N.Prakash, 2017. "Cycling to School: Increasing Secondary School Enrollment for Girls in India," American Economic Journal: Applied Economics, American Economic Association, vol. 9(3), pages 321-350, July. 2015 (Accessed 25 September 2017)
[22] A. Erulkar, and G.Medhin, "*Evaluation of Health and Education Impacts of a Girls' Safe Spaces Program in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*," Addis Ababa: Population Council, 2014 (Accessed 12 December 2017)
[23] Selim, M, *The Ishraq Program for out-of-school girls: from Pilot to scale-up*, Cairo, Population council, 2013, (Accessed 15 December 2017)

- The Empowerment and Learning for Adolescents (ELA) programme in Uganda, which ran from 2008 to 2010, combined life skills, vocational training and mentorship for high school-age girls. The evaluation tracked 4,800 girls and found that not only were participating girls more likely to reenrol in formal schooling, they were also 58% less likely to marry or cohabit and 26% less likely to have children.[24]
- The Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children (BEHTRUWC) programme in Bangladesh was a national level programme which ran from 2006 to 2013 and combined education, life skills (including information on puberty and early marriage) and livelihood training for slum children in eight cities. At the end of the programme girls who took part in the programme were less likely to be married than those who had did not.[25]

Evidence gaps and inconsistencies

More evidence is needed to understand the impact of transport schemes, such as those that provide bicycles to girls to decrease their journey time to school, on rates of child marriage. Similarly, more research is needed on the impact of flexible schooling and provision of affordable childcare. Lastly, there is limited research on the relative cost-effectiveness of different initiatives to improve access to schooling.

3.3. High cost of schooling for families

The issue: The direct costs of schooling, such as school fees, textbooks and materials, uniforms and, in some cases, transportation and boarding fees, all present obstacles to education for girls in poor communities.[26] In the ten lowest performing countries for girls' education, over 60% of the poorest girls have never been to school.[27] As child marriage is strongly associated with poverty, girls whose parents cannot afford to send them to school are among the most at risk of child marriage. There are also indirect costs of schooling, particularly for girls, who are often tasked with household work.

Strategies to reduce the cost of schooling

Strategies that reduce the cost of schooling for all children will reduce costs for girls at risk of child marriage. However, as the opportunity cost of sending girls to school is often higher than for boys, there is a particular need for policies and programmes that specifically target girls. These may include, among others, abolishing school fees and offering scholarships, free transportation and cash transfers. Cash transfers may be unconditional (UCT) or conditional (CCT) on staying in school or other aspects of a girl's development, such as remaining unmarried or not getting pregnant. There is strong evidence that cash transfers increase school enrolment, though only if programmes are designed well and informed by the local context.[14] However, the evidence is less conclusive related to the impact of cash transfers on child marriage. The cost-effectiveness of cash transfer programmes depends on finding the lowest payment value that will assure meaningful effects. They are more cost-effective in settings where schools are accessible and of reasonable quality.[14]

[24] Bandiera, O et al. (2014), as cited in G.Sperling and R.Winthrop, *What Works in Girls' Education: Evidence for the World's Best Investment,* 2016 (Accessed 10 September 2017)

[25] S.Basgall, Y.Ahmed, M.Haq, and Z.Sabur, *Final Evaluation of the Bangladesh to Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children (BEHTRUWC) 2nd Phase,* Polytechnics International New Zealand (PINZ), 2014 (Accessed 9 December 2017)

[26] E.King and R.Winthrop, *Today's Challenges for Girls' Education,* Global economy & development working paper 90, Global Economy and Development at Brookings, 2015, (Accessed 5 September 2017)

[27] The poorest young women have spent less than a year in school in the bottom ten countries, The Global Education Monitoring Report Website, 6th March 2017 (Accessed 7 November 2017)

Policy initiatives
- A nationwide, government-led programme in The Gambia exempted all girls attending public secondary schools from paying school fees. The programme led to an 8 to 9% increase in female secondary school enrolment.[28]

Programme examples
- The Oportunidades programme in rural Mexico provided cash grants to poor families in exchange for attendance at school or visits to health clinics. Girls and boys who took part in the programme were 12% and 25% respectively less likely to be married six years later.[29]

Evidence gaps and inconsistencies
Few studies have looked at the impact of cash transfers on age of marriage as well and school attendance, and those that show mixed results in terms of long-term sustainable impacts.[30] For example, the Apni Beti Apna Dhan programme in India provided cash transfers to girls on condition of them remaining unmarried until the age of 18, but led to higher numbers of girls getting married when they turned 18 as families saw the cash transfer as a way of paying dowry costs.[31] Recent evidence has also shown that cash transfers may be less effective for older girls, who are at higher risk of marriage.[32] They can also cause tensions within the community if the process of selection for participation is not transparent, as seen in Sierra Leone and Djibouti.[3] While cash transfers may improve school attendance, more evidence is needed to understand their impact on learning outcomes for both girls and boys.[33]

There are increasing numbers of scholarship-based education programmes for girls, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, but, again, more rigorous evaluations of these programmes are needed to understand their relative cost-effectiveness.

3.4. Concerns about girls' safety and security
The issue: Girls face high levels of harassment and violence in and around schools. School-related violence ranges from dangers on the journey to school (particularly where girls must travel long distances across remote areas), harassment by fellow pupils and teachers demanding sex in exchange for better grades or punishing students who reject sexual advances. Violence can be physical, sexual or psychological, and concerns about girls' safety can result in absenteeism or parents keeping girls away from school.

Strategies that make schools safer for girls
Making schools girl-friendly means eliminating acts or threats of sexual, physical or psychological violence against girls – both in and around schools – as well as creating a respectful, supportive, and safe environment more broadly. There is evidence that appropriately designed group education – both in and

[28] Gajigo, O., *Closing the Education Gender Gap: Estimating the Impact of Girls' Scholarship Program in The Gambia,* Working Paper Series N° 164 African Development Bank, Tunis, Tunisia, 2012 (Accessed 11 November 2017)

[29] IEG (2011) as cited in G.Sperling and R.Winthrop, *What Works in Girls' Education: Evidence for the World's Best Investment,* 2016 (Accessed 10 September 2018)

[30] S.Baird, C.McIntosh, and B.Özler, *Cash or Condition? Evidence from a Randomized Cash Transfer Program,* Policy Research Working Paper 5259, Impact Evaluation Series No. 45, The World Bank Development Research Group Poverty and Inequality Team, 2010 (Accessed 26 September 2017)

[31] P.Nanda and P.Das, *Making Change with Cash? Impact of a Conditional Cash Transfer Program On Age Of Marriage In India,* International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) 2015, (Accessed 28 November 2017)

[32] A.Erulkar, G.Medhin, and E.Weissman, The Impact and Cost of Child Marriage Prevention in Three African Settings, Addis Ababa; New York: Population Council, 2017 (Accessed 24 August 2017)

[33] UNESCO, Education For All 2000-2015: Achievements and challenges, Global Monitoring Report, 2015 (Accessed 3 September 2017)

out of the classroom – can lead to shifts in attitudes and, and in some cases, behaviours regarding gender-based violence.[34] Teachers, school administrators, community leaders and parents can all be trained and supported to end gender-based violence in schools and communities.

Programme examples
- Promundo's "H" and "M" programmes (named after the Portuguese words "homen" and "mulher" for man and women respectively) consist of workshops in schools and communities which challenge gender roles, sexual behaviour and attitudes towards gender based violence. Since their launch in Brazil in 2002, the programmes were extended to two states, reaching 2,100 teachers and 5, 000 students, and resulted in more gender equitable attitudes and decreased tolerance of gender-based violence in schools.[35] They have been replicated in over 20 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.[36]
- The International Center for Research on Women's (ICRW) Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS) violence prevention programme was delivered to 12-14 year-old girls and boys in schools between 2008 and 2011 and built on the programme H and M methodologies.[37] It was piloted in 45 schools in Mumbai and, due to its success in both reducing support for violent behaviours and actual reported violence, as well as reducing support for child marriage, was scaled to 25, 000 schools in India and is now being piloted in Vietnam and Bangladesh.[38]
- Action Aid's Stop Violence Against Girls in School programme, which ran from 2008 to 2013 in Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique, strengthened cooperation between schools and the police, raised awareness of reporting mechanisms and engaged with teachers and community members. Participating girls reported 20% fewer beatings from parents, teachers, and peers in Ghana, and 25% fewer in Kenya, and school enrolment in all three countries increased.[39]

Evidence gaps and inconsistencies
There is strong evidence that large scale programmes that challenge social norms around gender-based violence can lead to shifts in attitudes. However, with the exception of ICRW's GEMS programme and a few other small-scale projects, most interventions focus on measuring *attitudes* towards violence, rather than the incidence of violence itself. There is little information on the cost of implementing anti- violence interventions in schools.

3.5. Inadequate sanitation at schools
The issue: School toilets in many countries often lack privacy and are too few in number to meet the needs of students. In Malawi, girls at schools where toilets lacked privacy were more than twice as likely to miss school during menstruation as girls at schools where toilets were private.[40] Girls in poor and rural

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[34] D.Peacock and G.Barker. Working with Men and Boys to Prevent Gender-based Violence: Principles, Lessons Learned, and Ways Forward. *Men and Masculinities*. Vol 17, Issue 5, pp. 578 – 599. December 12, 2014 (Accessed 4 November 2017)

[35] F.Aguayo, E.Kimelman, P.Saavedra, and J.Kato-Wallace, Engaging Men in Public Policies for the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls. Santiago: EME/CulturaSalud. Washington, D.C.: Promundo-US. Panama City: UN Women and UNFPA. 2016 (Accessed 11 November 2017)

[36] V.Fonseca, and C.Ricardo, Between Us: Opportunities And Limitations Of Education Activities To Promote Gender Equality In Schools Of Rio De Janeiro And Salvador, Brazil, Promundo, 2012 (Accessed 15 December 2017)

[37] Barker, G. et. al., Boys and education in the global south: Emerging vulnerabilities and new opportunities for promoting changes In gender norms, , THYMOS: Journal of Boyhood Studies, Vol. 6, No. 2, Fall 2012, 137-150., Men's Studies Press, 2012 (Accessed 11 December 2017)

[38] Achyut, P., et. al., . Towards gender equality: The GEMS journey thus far. New Delhi, International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) 2016 (Accessed 5 January 2018)

[39] ActionAid, Stop Violence Against Girls in School Success Stories, 2013 (Accessed 19 December 2017)

[40] M.Grant, C.Lloyd, and B.Mensch (2013), as cited in A.Kuhlmann, K.Henry, and L.Wall Menstrual Hygiene Management in Resource-Poor Countries. Obstetrical & Gynecological Survey. 2017;72(6):356-376. doi:10.1097/OGX.0000000000000443. 2017 (Accessed 20 December 2017)

areas often lack access to sanitary napkins or towels, and many live in societies where girls and women are not permitted in public while menstruating. In Amhara province in Ethiopia, more than half of schoolgirls reported absenteeism during menstruation, and those who did not use sanitary pads or tampons were more than five times more likely to miss school.[41] Many facilities also lack adequate means for disposing of used sanitary materials.

Strategies to help schools meet girls' sanitation needs

Providing clean, private toilet facilities helps to make schools more girl-friendly and safer for girls. The evidence shows that supplying girls with sanitary pads leads them to feel better about themselves, less anxious about others knowing they are menstruating, and more confident about participating in school.[42] Interventions that promote menstrual hygiene have been shown to make girls feel more comfortable about going out in public during their periods.

Programme examples
- In Kenya and India, providing new toilets led to an overall improvement in school attendance, with girls' attendance increasing more than boys.[43]
- A school based intervention to improve menstrual hygiene practices among 11 to 16 year old girls in Bangladesh led to improved menstrual knowledge, beliefs and practices, and less absenteeism: Girls who took part in the intervention 5 percentage points more likely to attend school during their menstruation than before.[44]

Evidence gaps and inconsistencies

While it is clear that improving sanitation facilities and menstrual hygiene management makes girls feel more comfortable and secure at school, the evidence is mixed as to whether it increases attendance. A recent systematic review of menstrual hygiene interventions found that, while they improve knowledge, beliefs and practices, documenting their effect on school attendance and dropout rates is much more difficult.[45] More broadly, there is also a general lack of information on the cost of implementing improved sanitation in schools.

3.6. Challenges to ensuring high quality education

The issue: Simply being in school is not enough to transform girls' lives, as the education they receive at school needs to be high quality and relevant to their lives.[26] Many countries suffer a severe shortage of teachers (an estimated 5.1 million more teachers are needed globally to achieve universal lower secondary education by 2030).[46] Shortages of female teachers are particularly problematic in contexts where social norms require gender segregation and parents will not accept their daughters being taught by a male teacher. Where teachers are available, low levels of training impact the quality of education

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[41] T.Tegegne, and M.Sisay, *Menstrual hygiene management and school absenteeism among female adolescent students in Northeast Ethiopia*. BMC Public Health. 2014 (Accessed 20 December 2017).

[42] Dolan et al. (2014), Jewitt and Ryley (2014) and Oster and Thornton (2011) as cited in G.Sperling and R.Winthrop, *What Works in Girls' Education: Evidence for the World's Best Investment*, Washington DC, Brookings Institution Press, 2016 (Accessed 10 September 2017).

[43] Freeman et al. (2012), and (Adukia 2014), as cited in [43] B.Snilstveit, et.al., *The impact of education programmes on learning and school participation in low- and middle-income countries: a systematic review summary report,* 3ie Systematic Review Summary 7. London: International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) 2016 (Accessed 12 November 2017)

[44] Haque, S., et al., *The effect of a school-based educational intervention on menstrual health: an intervention study among adolescent girls in Bangladesh.* BMJ Open. 2014;4(7):e004607. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2013-004607. 2014 (Accessed 30 November)

[45] A.Kuhlmann, K.Henry, and L.Wall *Menstrual Hygiene Management in Resource-Poor Countries*. Obstetrical & Gynecological Survey. 2017;72(6):356-376. doi:10.1097/OGX.0000000000000443. 2017 (Accessed 20 December 2017)

[46] UNESCO, *Teaching and Learning: Achieving Quality for All—EFA Global Monitoring Report 2013/4.* Paris, UNESCO, 2014 (Accessed 29 September 2017)

that children receive. Persistent absenteeism on the part of teachers is also a significant problem, with teachers in some countries absent for up to a quarter of school days.[47] [48]

In addition, the subjects taught at school often do not adequately prepare children to enter the workforce or, therefore, to reap the benefits of staying in school for longer. This contributes to the perceived low value of educating girls mentioned above. Extensive research shows that, around the world, school textbooks often promote gender inequitable norms and stereotypical views of men and women. [49] Furthermore, norms around adolescent sexuality often act as barriers to providing sex education in schools.

Strategies to improve the quality of education
Ensuring an adequate supply of qualified teachers who attend school regularly and engage students in their lessons improves education quality. Policies which design entry requirements and remuneration to encourage the best candidates to apply, while also balancing the need to recruit candidates from diverse backgrounds, including rural and ethnic-linguistic minority communities, also help.[26] Teaching quality has been shown to improve through on the job teacher training, and attendance and retention improved through incentives.[26]

More female teachers can help girls get into and stay in school,[50] [51] especially in contexts where there are concerns about the safety of female students around male teachers. For example, in Yemen, where only 27% of teachers are female, a 2005 study found that increasing the share of female teachers led to sustained gains in gender parity in enrolment.[52] Taking steps to ensure the safety of female teachers (for example, through provisions of secure accommodation and transportation) helps to attract more young women into the profession.[50] However, requiring all teachers, regardless of gender, to use gender-sensitive pedagogy and express gender egalitarian attitudes is strongly correlated with girls' academic performance.[26]

Beyond improving the quality of teachers and teaching, gender-sensitive curricula which is delivered in the native language of students is proven to improve learning outcomes among both girls and boys.[4]At the most basic level, school curricula which provide adolescent girls with numeracy, literacy and cognitive skills equip them to enter the labour force. In addition, extra -curricular programmes which provide livelihoods training, financial literacy and life skills training have helped to make the transition to the workforce easier.[53] Lastly, there is strong evidence that providing comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education in schools reduces sexual risk taking and increases girls' confidence to reject unwanted sexual advances.[54]

[47] Kremer, M., et al, _Teacher Absence in India: A Snapshot_ Journal of the European Economic Association, 2005 (Accessed 12 October 2017).

[48] P.Glewwe, I.Nauman, and M.Kremer, _Teacher Incentives._ _NBER Working Paper 9671_. Cambridge, Mass.: National Bureau of Economic Research. http://www.nber. org/papers/w9671, 2003 (Accessed 20 October 2017).

[49] Blumberg, R._, Gender bias in textbooks: a hidden obstacle on the road to gender equality in education._ New York, New York: UNESCO, 2007 (Accessed 12 October 2017).

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Programme examples

- The Burkinabé Response to Improve Girls' Chances to Succeed (BRIGHT) was a multi-component programme designed to improve girls' educational outcomes in 10 provinces of Burkina Faso. The programme, which ran from 2005 to 2012, included school construction, teacher training and support, gender sensitivity training, incentives and the mobilisation of community support for girls' education. Results showed immediate and sustained positive effects on girls' school enrolment and aptitude.[55]
- The Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support (MTPDS) programme, which was delivered in Malawi from 2012 to 2015, provided intensive coaching to teachers to help them improve their teaching skills, as well as continued support to teachers in the form of classroom support and teaching materials. Participating students achieved significant gains in academic performance.[56]
- In Rajasthan, India, teachers in 60 schools were offered incentives based on the number of days they attended school, and their actual attendance was rigorously monitored. After two years, teacher absenteeism had reduced by 21 percentage points, and student achievement improved.[57] A similar programme in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh offered teachers bonuses based on students' performance. After two years, students tested better on languages and maths, as well as critical thinking skills.[58]

Evidence gaps and inconsistencies

While it is clear that having more female teachers increases girls' school enrolment and retention, more evidence is needed as to why this is the case and if, and how, being taught by female teachers may improve girls' learning outcomes. There is also a need for more research into the impact of teacher training initiatives and adaptations to curricula on child marriage.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

There is substantial evidence that strategies which address obstacles to girls' education are critical for ending child marriage. Research suggests that strategies that work across multiple levels are most successful: For example, those that improve availability and access to schools in combination with efforts to improve quality teaching, shift social norms around the value of girls and provide incentives to support families to send girls to school.[49] The right combination will depend on different country contexts.

What is clear is that there are still too few examples of large scale initiatives that track their impact on child marriage. There is also little comparative research available on the most cost effective strategies for not only keeping girls in school and out of marriage, but improving educational outcomes for girls. This research and evidence is important to inform decisions about priority investments education sector actors can make to address child marriage.

However, the evidence shows the importance of investing in a number of strategies which can help to address child marriage and enable girls to reach their potential.

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1. **Ensure girls' access to primary and secondary education by:**
   - Guaranteeing access to free, compulsory primary and free / low-cost secondary education for all girls and boys, including married girls.

2. **Ensure girls' safety in and on the way to school by:**
   - Supporting initiatives to increase girls' access to schools, such as building schools, particularly in more remote/rural areas, and providing safe and affordable transport (by working with education, transport and infrastructure sectors).
   - Establish mechanisms for reporting violence in schools, and make girls aware of them.
   - Training teachers in non-violent teaching methods, being gender-sensitive and providing safe spaces for girls, both married girls and those at risk of child marriage, in the school environment.

3. **Improve quality and relevance of education for girls, and create girl-friendly environments in schools by:**
   - Ensuring education is relevant to the needs of girls to advance their knowledge and life skills.
   - Including comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education in school curricula that explicitly addresses girls' rights and gender inequality.
   - Providing girls with access to safe, private toilets and sanitation facilities needed to manage their menstrual hygiene in school (by working with education, water, sanitation and hygiene sectors), training girls in menstrual hygiene management, and distributing sanitary towels.
   - Developing strong recruitment and retention strategies for teachers, particularly female teachers, and investing in teacher training.

4. **Develop retention strategies such as:**
   - Providing incentives for families to keep girls in school, offering scholarships and stipends, and subsidising or eliminating costs of uniforms, exams, and textbooks.
   - Supporting initiatives to increase the value of girls' education, informing parents and communities of the benefits of girls attending school, including myth-busting and raising awareness of the links between education and future employment.
   - Developing life skills programmes for married girls through targeted outreach and support programmes, initiating evening or part-time formal schooling and vocational training opportunities, and following up with students who drop out of school (and working with education, employment and livelihoods sectors as needed).
   - Ending discriminatory policies and practice of excluding pregnant or married girls from school. This might include offering flexible schedules, providing childcare, and changing the attitudes of teachers and parents through community dialogue and discussion.