



A FEMINIST VISION FOR ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE IN EASTERN AFRICA

ROAD MAP 2023–2027

The Women’s Refugee Commission (WRC) improves the lives and protects the rights of women, children, and youth displaced by conflict and crisis. We research their needs, identify solutions, and advocate for programmes and policies to strengthen their resilience and drive change in humanitarian practice.

Rozaria Memorial Trust (RMT) works to support girls and women living in rural communities in Zimbabwe through innovative initiatives that promote education, health, and entrepreneurship. For over 15 years, RMT has invested in community activities in Mashonaland East and Central provinces, while actively engaging in advocacy and policy influencing work at the national, regional, and global levels.

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Executive Summary

Child marriage, which is rooted in deeply entrenched gender inequality, affects as many as one in five girls globally. Evidence suggests that child marriage tends to increase during conflicts and displacement. Yet the prevention of and response to child marriage is still not prioritised across all phases of humanitarian action. Prevention and risk mitigation strategies employed during preparedness efforts have weak linkages with national disaster management and surveillance systems. In addition, they often deprioritise the strengthening of local capacity to address the myriad of contextual drivers that are impacted by conflict and displacement. Programming responses during emergencies and protracted crises lack a sufficient evidence base to promote strategies that fully respond to the needs of adolescent girls in all their diversity,ⁱ including those who have already experienced child marriage and are currently married, child mothers, widowed, or divorced.

Child marriage must be addressed across all phases of humanitarian action, supporting place-based actors during preparedness and longer-term recovery, which are both often overlooked. Recognising that significant action remains to be taken under the *Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies*, specifically to end child marriage, the Women's Refugee Commission, King's College London, and Rozaria Memorial Trust set out to promote gender equality in humanitarian action through the strengthening of partnerships with local civil society organisations, particularly feminist, women-led, and/or women's rights organisations.ⁱⁱ As a new consortium of feminist and women's rights organisations, **our goal is to drive change and foster accountability, inviting governments, donors, international organisations, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), national civil society, and the private sector to endorse a new feminist vision and road map for ending child marriage in Eastern Africa.**

i Adolescent girls in all their diversity also include those with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC).

ii Defined herein as civil society organisations with an overt women's or girls' rights, gender equality, or feminist purpose. Feminist or women's rights organisations play a central role in challenging patriarchy and driving change in support of gender equality.

This measurable and actionable five-year plan aims to meet the need for enhanced collaboration with and leadership of place-based feminist and women's rights organisations in disaster planning, management, and response through the following outcomes:

1. **Feminist and women's rights actors are well trained, well resourced, and well positioned to transform practice and policies** that drive humanitarian preparedness and response through local to regional spaces.
2. **High quality, evidence-based gender-transformativeⁱⁱⁱ services and programmes are implemented in each phase of an emergency** by place-based actors that are responsive to the needs and priorities of girls in all their diversity.
3. **Intra- and inter-governmental mechanisms that govern disaster prevention and response are strengthened to improve functioning and coordination** of national systems critical for women and girls, including social protection, health, education, and justice.
4. **Justice systems are strengthened through transparent processes** to support girls and their families.
5. **Funding is available for child marriage prevention and response for each phase of an emergency** and in a manner that prioritises localised capacity strengthening and implementation.

By collectively mobilising our action towards achieving these outcomes, consortium members are able to navigate an ever-changing policy environment in the region and respond in real time together to ensure disaster planning, management, and response center the role of place-based feminist and women's rights actors as leaders across the humanitarian continuum of action.

Addressing child marriage is lifesaving work. Collective action and investment in girls, their communities, and societies are needed to ensure girls are valued, safe, able to reach their full potential, and are fully empowered to make their own decisions about if, when, and whom to marry.

iii Gender-transformative services and programmes are designed to challenge unequal gender and power relations, address the causes of gender-based inequalities, and promote gender equality through the transformation of harmful gender roles, norms, and power relations.

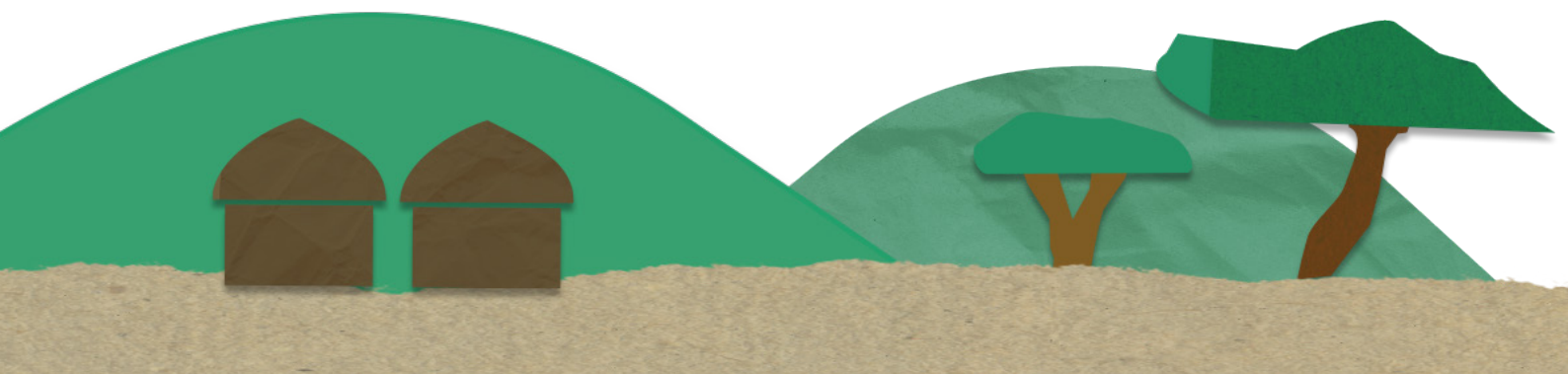
Introduction

Across the humanitarian sector, there is a call to ensure that civil society organisations, particularly women-led organisations, that serve displaced and crisis-affected populations drive the solutions to the humanitarian crises impacting their lives. In addition, there is an emerging understanding that humanitarian response must be planned for, developed, and delivered in a broader context that includes longer-term development and peace processes, commonly referred to as the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Together, these calls for gender equality and an understanding of longer and integrated processes of change provide an important opportunity for the humanitarian sector to contribute more effectively to the transformative change needed to create just and sustainable disaster risk reduction, responses, and impacts.

However, progress is slow and falling short on advancing gender equality at the individual and systemic levels of humanitarian response. Indeed, global frameworks such as the *Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies (Call to Action)*^{iv} are essential, as the needs and rights of marginalized groups are still overlooked

in humanitarian preparedness and response, and the participation and leadership of women and girls and other marginalized communities remain largely unrealized. The prevention and reduction of gender-based violence (GBV) is predicated on the advancement of gender equality. The former cannot be achieved without the other.

Recognising that significant action still remains under the *Call to Action* and specifically in relation to ending child marriage, **the Women’s Refugee Commission (WRC), King’s College London (King’s), and Rozaria Memorial Trust (RMT) set out to promote gender equality in humanitarian action through the strengthening of partnerships with local civil society organisations, particularly feminist, women-led and women’s rights organisations.** Through this engagement, evidence was generated to underpin collective advocacy for the mechanisms and processes necessary to advance efforts and expedite progress towards the elimination of child marriage by working to bridge sectoral siloes and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.



iv The Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies is a multi-stakeholder initiative launched in 2013 to fundamentally transform the way gender-based violence is addressed in humanitarian emergencies. <https://www.calltoactiongbv.com/>.



Laying the Foundation for the Road Map

In January 2021, the Women’s Refugee Commission, King’s College London, and Rozaria Memorial Trust launched a new initiative to end child marriage with experts and practitioners from feminist, women-led, and women’s rights civil society organisations (CSOs) in Eastern Africa to learn how to enhance coordination and collaboration within regional and local disaster planning, management, and response. Over the course of two years, the initiative identified gaps in existing practice that must be addressed, as well as promising evidence-informed strategies that can be used to prevent child marriage and respond to the needs of those who have already experienced child marriage.

Recognising the urgency for action in humanitarian settings, **the consortium developed a new road map to expedite progress towards ending child marriage by 2027, three years earlier than the 2030 milestones laid out in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**¹ We did this by amplifying feminist and women-led place-based civil society actors as leaders in disaster risk reduction and management. We began the processes of creating the new road map with an extensive review of the evidence on existing approaches to prevent child marriage in crisis-affected communities. Learnings gleaned from the review were used to inform a multi-stage Delphi^v study with representatives from feminist and women’s rights organisations in Eastern Africa to develop consensus on our goal, interlinked objectives, and pathways of action towards a shared set of outcomes. The road map and its participatory process are outlined herein.

The Problem

Child marriage is a prominent public health concern and human rights violation rooted in deeply entrenched gender inequality. It affects as many as one in five girls globally.² Eastern Africa^{vi} is home to over 30 million girls who have been married before the age of 18, with Ethiopia having by far the most.³ In addition to ongoing and escalating conflicts, the region is prone to recurring climate-related disasters, including floods, increased temperatures, droughts, and agricultural pest infestations, that contribute to economic instability, food insecurity, and displacement.⁴ While there is extensive, and growing, literature on child marriage around the world, much less is known about how climate-related disasters and conflicts impact rates and patterns of drivers or about effective prevention and risk

mitigation strategies for child marriage to support girls impacted by humanitarian emergencies in Eastern Africa.

The consequences of not addressing child marriage are devastating for adolescent girls, with pregnancy- and childbirth-related complications leading causes of death and injury for child mothers and associated with decreased survival of their infants.⁵ With access to good quality sexual and reproductive health (SRH) care hindered in conflict and disaster-affected settings, girls and women facing an unplanned pregnancy may turn to unsafe abortion with increased risk of disability and death.⁶ In addition, the consequences of child marriage carry lifelong impacts related to increased rates of intimate partner violence and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, poorer overall psychological well-being, and reduced earning potential as a result

v The Delphi technique is a structured method of soliciting expert opinions and developing consensus among study participants.

vi Indicator used: Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before age 18 for countries in Eastern Africa, Burundi, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Somaliland, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. These are likely underestimates, given a lack of available data within the last decade in several countries and including humanitarian settings.

of school drop-out and reduced alternative vocational opportunities.⁷

To date, studies highlight a myriad of factors that drive child marriage practices during conflict, including the use of marriage as a means of coping with displacement-induced stressors, such as economic strains, increased protection concerns, and a lack of educational or vocational opportunities.⁸ Less is known, however, in relation to natural disasters.⁹ School closures, economic stress, essential SRH and protection service disruptions, and parental deaths due to the COVID-19 pandemic are putting the most vulnerable girls at increased risk of child marriage.¹⁰ While the long-term effects of the pandemic are unknown as of now, it is estimated that over the next decade, up to an additional 10 million girls will be at risk of child marriage as a result.¹¹

Recent evidence from humanitarian contexts demonstrates the need for reform across the humanitarian continuum—from preparedness to longer-term recovery. Humanitarian actors need to move beyond their own confines and reach out to development actors and national and subnational civil society and governments.¹² Humanitarian actors are seldom cognizant of pre-existing marriage patterns, its drivers, and how displacement impacts these. Lack of awareness and capacity to strengthen existing systems of support, care, and protection for adolescents challenges the ability of humanitarian practitioners to effectively respond with gender-transformative prevention and risk mitigation programming. Operational restrictions in place due to the pandemic create further challenges.

As a result, contextual drivers of child marriage are often unaddressed, leading to growing gender inequality and poor health, psychosocial, developmental, and protection outcomes for adolescents and their offspring. Without extending the circles of accountability to include the broader host community, governments, and other individual duty bearers^{vii}, adolescent girls impacted by conflict and displacement will not be able to enjoy rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.¹³ They will continue to lack access to critical systems that support prevention and response efforts, including justice systems and birth and marriage registries that work to strengthen services for child brides and increase visibility of those to be held accountable.¹⁴

As conflicts become increasingly protracted and natural disasters increase in severity and frequency due to climate change, innovative strategies are required to speed up progress on key SDG indicators related to gender equality and bolster political will to end child marriage. The *Call to Action* recognizes that humanitarian crises continue to present complicated and overlapping consequences for those affected, providing a renewed search for innovative strategies to prevent and mitigate the risk of child marriage. Such strategies must be both inter-sectoral and span from the immediate to longer-term approaches to provide the systemic-level improvements required to achieve gender equality. Greater coordination and collaboration are required by humanitarian practitioners, with civil society actors leading in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery efforts, to break down sectoral silos and initiate an adaptive system approach to support girls holistically as needs evolve.

vii These would include community leaders and elders, education professionals, medical providers, and law enforcement officers.

Current State of Practice

The past decade has seen substantial commitment to document the impact of programmes to support adolescent girls and prevent child marriage. Despite a flurry of evaluations, challenges and gaps remain in effectively addressing child marriage among forcibly displaced and crisis-affected communities in Eastern Africa.

Conducted in March–July 2021 and updated in April 2022, our systematic scoping review^{viii} builds on several other systematic reviews⁴⁵ that have been undertaken in the last decade and aims to gather the latest evidence on the aspects of and barriers to interventions designed to prevent girl child marriage in both humanitarian and development settings across the globe. The review explores contributing factors critical to programmatic success or failure within the published literature from the past decade, and systemically identifies interventions with documented measurement of changes in behaviour, knowledge, or attitudes on child marriage among girls at risk of child marriage, their parents, and/or religious or community leaders.

This extensive review of academic peer-reviewed literature and grey literature revealed four critical aspects where efforts should be made to ensure the timely and comprehensive response to child marriage in crises:

- Disconnect between gender equality and child marriage:** Child marriage is deeply rooted in gender inequality and patriarchal norms that lessen the value of women and girls in societies around the globe. While gender equality and empowering girls are often critical objectives of child marriage programmes, evidence from the systematic scoping review indicates that few existing child marriage programmes are underpinned by a clear gender justice or gender-transformative approach that works to break structural barriers to address harm experienced by women and girls. Gender equality programming must be a central part of the work with a more comprehensive set of indicators used to track its progress. This should include an analysis of the legal landscape impacting girls, including gender-discriminatory laws (for example, nationality laws) that exacerbate girls' vulnerability while perpetuating sexist, patriarchal norms.¹⁶
- Weak linkages of humanitarian practice with national systems and local actors:** The underlying drivers of child marriage are deeply entrenched within cultures and communities and are impacted by conflict and displacement in a range of ways. A more dynamic approach to prevention of child marriage is needed and must be addressed across all phases of humanitarian action, strengthening the capacity of and positioning place-based actors during preparedness and longer-term recovery, which are both often overlooked.
- Lack of localised theories of change and durable solutions:** There is not one approach or combination of approaches that effectively prevents child marriage. Across the 30 programmes cited in this review, a diverse range of approaches, combinations of approaches, and activities was enacted under each approach that positively impacted child marriage practices. This suggests that programming needs to be guided by a localised theory of change and the dominant drivers within a particular context. Targeted programming to specific groups of girls (such as those who are out of school) is essential. The process of contextualising programmes is facilitated through meaningful discussions with local governments and communities (including those lacking legal identity¹⁷), and requires further attention to effectively support cross-sectoral linkages to provide a comprehensive package of services for adolescent girls.
- Insufficient evidence base on effective prevention programming and response for girls who have already experienced child marriage:** There is some evidence to suggest that multi-component programming addressing drivers across different levels of the child's social ecology^{ix} were more commonly used and have a better success rate at delaying age of marriage when compared to single-component programming. More research that evaluates the effects of multi-component programming on child marriage prevention should be conducted. In addition, more attention should be given to enhance coordination and collaboration that enable different agencies, sectors, and humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding actors to work together to facilitate these multi-component child marriage programmes at the local, sub-national, and national levels.

viii Our scoping review is currently in peer review and will be available to review the full methods and results in 2023.

ix The social-ecological model describes the complex interplay between individual, relational, communal, and societal factors that guide our understanding of problem identification and solutions to support children.

As the evidence and practice continues to grow, we need evaluators and programme implementors to be more explicit about the mechanisms that facilitate the desired changes on child marriage (such as community engagement, safe spaces, peer educators, use of technology), as well as the measurements of that change, to further help us to understand the localised and dominant drivers of child marriage and better facilitate the process of programme contextualisation. The evidence base for effective approaches to prevent child marriage in humanitarian settings remains poor, with even less evidence to support the needs and priorities of girls who have already experienced child marriage, including child mothers and widowed and divorced girls.

Co-Creation of an Agenda and Road Map for Action

Reaching Consensus and Affirming the Goal and Objectives

Collaboration and integrated working across sectors, and across the nexus, to address child marriage is experienced as patchy (at best) by grassroots feminist and women’s rights activists across the region. While actors are most likely to actively and frequently collaborate with like-minded actors in their own sector, it is critical to invest in pioneering work to facilitate meaningful, inclusive, and effective spaces for cross-sector and cross-nexus collaboration that opens up new ways of integrated working together. To that end, we have joined together to establish a new consortium dedicated to better positioning feminist and women-led civil society organisations in disaster planning, management, and response locally, nationally, and regionally across Eastern Africa.

Through a multi-stage participatory action research process,^x the voices and experiences of feminist actors and their understandings of gender transformation and patriarchy were elevated to advance discussions on durable solutions to child marriage that are equity driven and culturally and contextually grounded. Drawing from a shared understanding of the problem and challenges to effective engagement with civil society actors in disaster planning, management, and response, we joined together to affirm the goal of this road map and identified five objectives critical to its successful implementation and ability to end child marriage in Eastern Africa ahead of the SDG deadline of 2030.

Goal

The goal of this road map is to expedite progress in Eastern Africa towards the elimination of child marriage through:

- 1. Better integration of sectoral programming** to address needs holistically and confront systemic barriers that inhibit the participation and rights of children, in particular adolescent girls;
- 2. Meaningful inclusion of place-based feminist and women’s rights actors** at the forefront of preparedness and response activities undertaken with communities impacted by crises; and
- 3. Positioning women and girls (including child mothers) as leaders and change makers in communities and in national, regional, and global positions** to improve or advance policies that uproot gender inequality and its related impacts.

Objectives

- 1. Mobilise, strengthen, and support feminist actors in humanitarian settings** to transform approaches and drive humanitarian prevention and response.
- 2. Enable high quality, evidence-based services and programmes that are accessible to children who are at risk of or who have already experienced child marriage and ensure that they are available throughout all phases of humanitarian action**—from preparedness to response and recovery.
- 3. Promote the protection of women’s and girls’ human rights and strengthen national and regional systems that govern disaster preparedness and response** to implement gender-transformative approaches in humanitarian settings.
- 4. Foster and monitor accountability to existing commitments to gender equality and justice** while enhancing transparency, trust, and access to justice systems.
- 5. Increase funding, resources, and capacities of feminist and women’s rights organisations** to strengthen multi-sectoral linkages across the phases of humanitarian action.

^x Participatory research methods and key learnings from the systematic scoping review are available for download from our resource hub. See <https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/research-resources/resource-hub-integrating-the-response-to-child-marriage-in-east-africa-initiative/>.

Outcomes to be achieved by 2027

Consortium members worked together to develop a five-year plan for the road map to expedite progress in Eastern Africa towards the elimination of child marriage, with the goal of achieving the following target outcomes by 2027. This timeline allows for consortium members to demonstrate and assess meaningful progress towards the outcomes over the intermediate term, with achievement planned for three years ahead of the 2030 SDGs.

Outcome 1.

Feminist and women's rights actors are well trained, well resourced, and well positioned to transform practice and policies that drive humanitarian preparedness and response through local to regional spaces.

Outcome 2.

High quality, evidence-based gender-transformative services and programmes are implemented in each phase of an emergency by place-based actors that are responsive to the needs and priorities of girls in all their diversity.

Outcome 3.

Intra- and inter-governmental mechanisms that govern disaster prevention and response are strengthened to improve functioning and coordination of national systems critical for women and girls, including social protection, health, education, and justice.

Outcome 4.

Justice systems are strengthened through transparent processes to support girls and their families.

Outcome 5.

Funding is available for child marriage prevention and response for each phase of an emergency and in a manner that prioritises localised capacity strengthening and implementation.

“Collaboration is a road map to achieve sustainable development towards a specific goal. Through collaboration in sectors, we increase productivity towards a common goal, which is to reduce inequalities and achieve equal and empowered societies and communities that respect and protect girls’ and women’s rights.”

– Grassroots feminist actor from Kenya

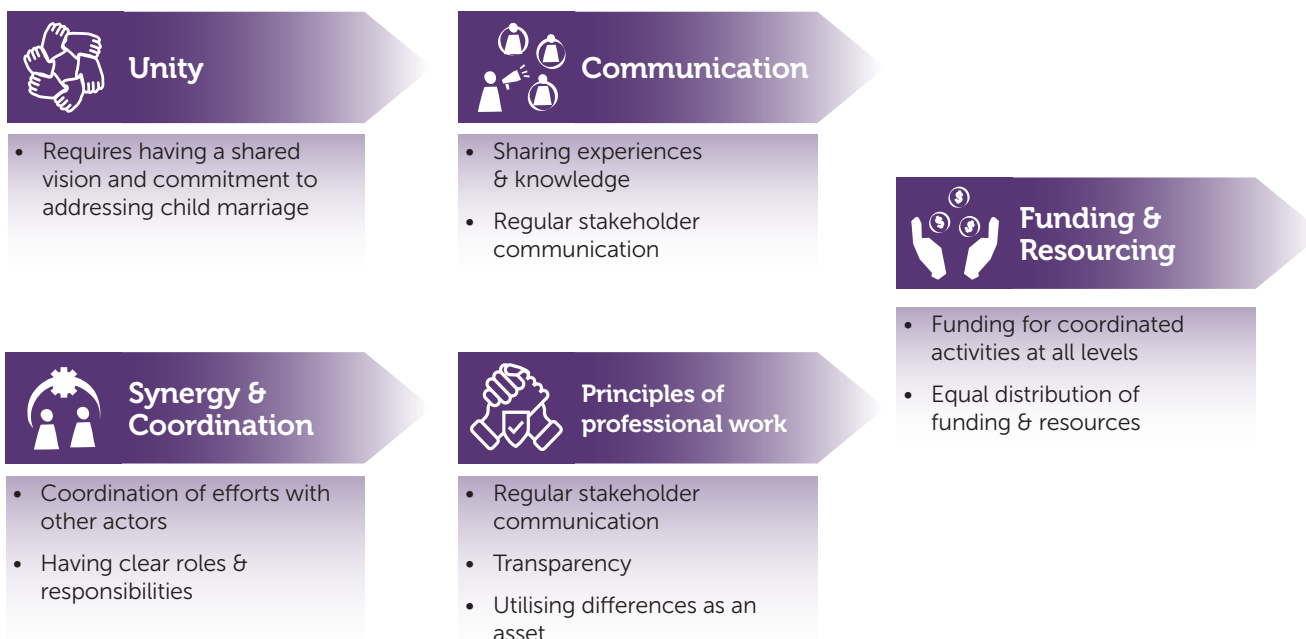
Driving Change through Collective Action

By collectively mobilising our action towards achieving these outcomes, consortium members are able to navigate an ever-changing policy environment in the region and respond in real time together to ensure disaster planning, management, and response center the role of place-based feminist and women’s rights actors as leaders across the humanitarian continuum of action. Key learnings from this initiative have identified five areas foundational for effective collaboration and coordination that will enable consortium members to achieve these outcomes (see Figure 1).

Effective collaboration requires a shared vision (expressed through this road map) and commitment to addressing child marriage underpinned by transparent

relationships built on trust and respect. Coordination of efforts requires regular communication, a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities of members, and a coordinating body (such as a secretariat) to facilitate collective action. Enhanced communication will alleviate challenges in information sharing between sectors and between local actors and those working at various levels (e.g., within humanitarian system, national policymakers) in order to ensure practical support and full engagement of local groups. Collaboration needs to be funded with particular attention paid to equal distribution of funding and resources to enhance inclusion of a wide range of stakeholders, in particular grassroots civil society organisations.

FIGURE 1. Essential enablers to support collaboration and coordination across sectors and across the nexus



The Road Map for Action to Expedite Progress to End Child Marriage in Eastern Africa

The following road map lays out the key action areas prioritised by consortium members to achieve the target outcomes by 2027. Each outcome includes a set of interconnected actions and identifies the stakeholders needed to ensure successful implementation and/or promotion of an enabling policy and resource environment that supports these actions.

Stakeholder Groups

To guide collective action, a participatory exercise was conducted with consortium members to explore stakeholders needed to achieve outcomes under the road map. These are identified by abbreviated terms below and noted in relation to each key action area:

Families

- Girls, including child mothers, married and unmarried girls
- People with diverse SOGIESC
- Spouses, caregivers, and in-laws
- Men, boys, and allies/champions

Communities, including those impacted by humanitarian emergencies

- Traditional and religious leaders, customary justice actors
- School administrators, principals, teachers, guidance counselors, parent teacher associations (PTAs), police, judiciary
- Health professionals, including mental health providers, and social workers
- Community-based child protection mechanisms/groups
- Grassroots groups, including groups led by youth and persons with disabilities

National civil society

- National nongovernmental organisations (NNGOs)
- Women's rights organisations (WROs)
- Community-based organisations (CBOs) and local community groups
- Local and national media outlets (e.g., radio broadcast networks)

States

- Ministries and government bodies dedicated to justice, gender, health, education, social welfare, data and statistics, finance, legislation, and disaster risk management
- Local government authorities
- Academic institutions

International nongovernmental organisations (INGOs)

- Humanitarian organisations (e.g., Plan International, Save the Children, World Vision, International Medical Corps)

International organisations (IOs)

- United Nations agencies (e.g., UNHCR, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women, WHO, World Bank)
- Global and regional bodies and networks
- African Union and other regional bodies that provide policy and funding to support humanitarian action
- Private donors and foundations
- Regional feminist networks (e.g., Feminist Humanitarian Network (FHN))
- Girls Not Brides Global Partnership
- Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children

Key Action Areas

Outcome 1.			Feminist and women’s rights actors are well trained, well resourced, and well positioned to transform practice and policies that drive humanitarian response.					
Key Action Areas		Key Stakeholder Groups	Supporting Stakeholder Groups	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
1-1	Resource and support secretariat ^{xi} to coordinate key action areas and activities under the road map.	States/Donors, Global and Regional Bodies	National Civil Society	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1-2	Strengthen technical capacity of feminist and women’s rights organisations to support implementation and advocacy objectives.	National Civil Society	States/Donors, International Organisations, International Nongovernmental Organisations, Global and Regional Bodies, Academia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1-3	Document impact of road map implementation and its contextualisation into action plans at national and local levels.	National Civil Society	States/Donors, International Organisations, International Nongovernmental Organisations, Academia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1-4	Increase representation of feminist and women’s rights actors in humanitarian cluster and national disaster preparedness and management systems.	States/Donors, International Organisations, International Nongovernmental Organisations	National Civil Society, Communities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Indicator 1a: % funding secured for secretariat to coordinate key action areas and implementation of road map activities (linked to Action 1-1)

Milestone(s) 80% by 2025 Target 100% by 2027

Indicator 1b: % of action plans successfully contextualised at local and national levels (linked to Action 1-3)

Milestone(s) 80% by 2025 Target 100% by 2027

xi See below for details on the secretariat, page 19.

Outcome 2.

High quality, evidence-based gender-transformative services and programmes are implemented in each phase of an emergency by place-based actors that are responsive to the needs and priorities of girls in all their diversity.

Key Action Areas		Key Stakeholder Groups	Supporting Stakeholder Groups	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
2-1	Develop guidance for humanitarian practitioners on how to position CSOs to develop and lead gender-transformative approaches across different contexts and sub-populations (e.g., child mothers).	National Civil Society, Communities, Families	States/Donors, Global and Regional Bodies, Academia, International Organisations, International Nongovernmental Organisations	✓				
2-2	Implement, evaluate, and report on the use of gender-transformative approaches (including legal analysis) to prevent and mitigate risk of child marriage and support the needs of girls who have already experienced child marriage and populations with diverse SOGIESC.	National Civil Society, Communities, Families, International Organisations, International Nongovernmental Organisations	States/Donors, Global and Regional Bodies, Academia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2-3	Build local, national, and regional capacity to design and evaluate effective child marriage prevention and response programmes.	National Civil Society, Communities, Families	States/Donors, International Organisations, International Nongovernmental Organisations, Global and Regional Bodies	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2-4	Strengthen capacity of CSOs and communities to understand and use evidence to inform policy and programming decisions.	National Civil Society, Communities, Families, International Organisations, International Nongovernmental Organisations	States/Donors, Academia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Indicator 2a: % of resourced community members and civil society actors trained to understand and use evidence to inform policy and programming decisions (linked to Action 2-4)

Milestone(s) 80% by 2025

Target 100% by 2027

Indicator 2b: % of resourced local, national, and regional actors trained in programme design and evaluation (linked to Action 2-3)

Milestone(s) 80% by 2025

Target 100% by 2027

Outcome 3.

Intra- and inter-governmental mechanisms that govern disaster response are strengthened to improve functioning and coordination of national systems critical for social protection, health, education, and justice.

Key Action Areas		Key Stakeholder Groups	Supporting Stakeholder Groups	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
3-1	Strengthen technical capacity of first responders and CSOs on effective strategies for child marriage prevention and response in emergencies.	National Civil Society, International Organisations, International Nongovernmental Organisations, Global and Regional Bodies	States/Donors	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3-2	Develop guidance on collaboration to support better linkages between first responders, national government actors, and CSOs.	National Civil Society	States/Donors, Global and Regional Bodies, Academia, International Organisations, International Nongovernmental Organisations	✓	✓			
3-3	Update existing gender analysis and/or multi-sectoral assessment tools to strengthen systematic collection of relevant data to inform child marriage prevention and response.	International Organisations, International Nongovernmental Organisations, National Civil Society	States/Donors		✓	✓	✓	✓
3-4	Strengthen existing national systems for surveillance of drivers of child marriage, including civil registration, legal status, primary healthcare, education, and social assistance for crisis-affected populations.	States/Donors	National Civil Society, International Organisations, International Non-government Organisations,		✓	✓	✓	✓

Indicator 3a: % of first responders and resourced civil society actors trained to effectively respond to child marriage in emergencies (linked to Action 3-1)

Milestone(s) 80% by 2025

Target 100% by 2027

Indicator 3b: % of existing data systems in each country evaluated with accurate and timely surveillance of child marriage drivers among crisis-affected populations (linked to Action 3-4)

Milestone(s) 80% by 2025

Target 100% by 2027

Outcome 4.								
Justice systems are strengthened through transparent processes to support girls and their families.								
Key Action Areas		Key Stakeholder Groups	Supporting Stakeholder Groups	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
4-1	Identify specific gaps in the legal and justice system at community and national levels	National Civil Society, Communities, Families	Academia, International Organisations, International Nongovernmental Organisations	✓				
4-2	Strengthen already existing justice systems and provisions in legislations, and/or develop new structures and provisions that ensure transparency and accountability.	States/Donors, Global and Regional Bodies, National Civil Society	National Civil Society, Communities, Families, Academia, International Organisations, International Nongovernmental Organisations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4-3	Strengthen capacities of humanitarian actors and enhance mechanisms of accountability in responding to protection against sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA).	International Organisations, International Nongovernmental Organisations	States/Donors, National Civil Society, Communities, Families, Academia,	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4-4	Develop shared awareness campaigns and feedback mechanisms to communicate information about laws and policies to girls, parents, and communities.	National Civil Society, Communities, Families	Academia, International Organisations, International Nongovernmental Organisations		✓	✓	✓	✓
4-5	Strengthen capacities of government officials, law enforcers, and humanitarian actors in the implementation of laws, policies, models for ending child marriage, and PSEA.	National Civil Society	Academia, International Organisations, International Nongovernmental Organisations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4-6	Monitor existing and new commitments of governments on the implementation of laws, policies, and models for ending child marriage.	National Civil Society	Academia, International Organisations, International Nongovernmental Organisations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Indicator 4a: % of government officials, law enforcers, and humanitarian actors who have received capacity trainings on risks associated with child marriages and sexual abuse cases (linked to Action 4-5)

Milestone(s) 80% by 2025

Target 100% by 2027

Indicator 4b: % of existing and new government commitments met (linked to Action 4-6)

Milestone(s) 80% by 2025

Target 100% by 2027

Outcome 5. Funding is available for child marriage prevention and response for each phase of an emergency that prioritises localised capacity strengthening and implementation.								
Key Action Areas		Key Stakeholder Groups	Supporting Stakeholder Groups	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
5-1	Identify barriers and strategies to accessing funds to support action on child marriage that center women’s rights and community groups as first responders.	National Civil Society	States/Donors, Global and Regional Bodies	✓		✓		
5-2	Strengthen technical capacity of local feminist and women’s rights organisations to receive and manage large-scale grants.	National Civil Society	States/Donors, Global and Regional Bodies	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5-3	Identify or develop new funding streams to enable rapid implementation of funds to local organisations for disaster response.	States/Donors, Global and Regional Bodies	National Civil Society	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5-4	Develop and implement advocacy strategies and communications for prioritising and funding child marriage programming.	National Civil Society	States/Donors, Global and Regional Bodies	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5-5	Ensure budget monitoring and accountability through capacity strengthening at local and national levels.	States	National Civil Society, Donors	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Indicator 5a: % of feminist and women’s rights organisations that have increased capacity to receive and manage large-scale grants to support child marriage prevention and response programming and advocacy (linked to Action 5-2)

Milestone(s) 80% by 2025

Target 100% by 2027

Indicator 5b: Amount of multi-year funding increases over time that is dedicated to support feminist and women’s rights organisations to lead disaster planning, management, and response across Eastern Africa (linked to Action 5-3)

Milestone(s) 80% by 2025

Target 100% by 2027

Summary of Indicators and Targets

Outcome	Indicator	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Outcome 1. Feminist and women’s rights actors are well trained, well resourced, and positioned to transform practice and policies that drive humanitarian response.	% of funding secured for secretariat to coordinate key action areas and implementation of road map activities			80%		100%
	% of action plans successfully contextualised at local and national levels			80%		100%
Outcome 2. High quality, evidence-based gender-transformative services and programmes are implemented in each phase of an emergency by place-based actors that are responsive to the needs and priorities of girls in all their diversity.	% of resourced community members and civil society actors trained to understand and use evidence to inform policy and programming decisions			80%		100%
	% of resourced local, national, and regional actors trained in programme design and evaluation			80%		100%
Outcome 3. Intra- and inter-governmental mechanisms that govern disaster response are strengthened to improve functioning and coordination of national systems critical for social protection, health, and justice.	% of first responders and resourced civil society actors trained to effectively respond to child marriage in emergencies			80%		100%
	% of existing data systems in each country evaluated with accurate and timely surveillance of child marriage drivers among crisis-affected populations			80%		100%
Outcome 4. Justice systems are strengthened through transparent processes to support girls and their families.	% of government officials, law enforcers, and humanitarian actors who have received capacity trainings on risks associated with child marriages and sexual abuse cases			80%		100%
	% of existing and new government commitments met			80%		100%
Outcome 5. Funding is available for child marriage prevention and response for each phase of an emergency that prioritises localised capacity strengthening and implementation.	% of feminist and women’s rights organisations that have increased capacity to receive and manage large-scale grants to support child marriage prevention and response programming and advocacy			80%		100%
	Amount of multi-year funding increases over time and is dedicated to support feminist and women’s rights organisations to lead disaster planning, management, and response across Eastern Africa			80%		100%

Implementation of the Road Map

The following areas have been identified for further investment to ensure successful implementation of the road map.

Establishment of a Secretariat to Facilitate Coordinated, Collective Action

Inadequate planning for collaborative activities is a barrier to engagement and collaboration across the phases of humanitarian action. Differing priorities and the dominance of large or international organisations are key barriers preventing the coordination and collaboration of feminist and women’s rights actors working to address child marriage. Having a shared vision articulated in this road map provides opportunities to coordinate across many different actors, within and across sectors, to mitigate some of the existing challenges faced. Thus, the establishment of a secretariat in the region to lead coordination efforts of members to implement the key action areas laid out in the road map will be critical to its success. The secretariat will manage essential operating activities, including communications, general support to members, coordination and support for contextualisation of local and national action plans, hub for task teams and resources, collective advocacy and research, and fundraising.

Strengthening Trust, Transparency, and Accountability through Inclusion and Partnership Development

Within the consortium, there is a need for relationships built on trust, transparency, and harnessing our differences as assets in our mutual efforts. It is not just what we do to collaborate, but also the nature of that collaboration that is equally critical to ensure that relationships and communication pathways are transparent and strong. To facilitate engagement across the consortium, a participatory mapping of needs, capacities, values, and operating principles for each participating member is needed in line with increased opportunities to convene and build new or bolster existing partnerships to undertake key action areas of the road map together. Second, mechanisms to facilitate partnerships must be more inclusive of youth-led processes and groups, and smaller organisations with fewer resources, those based in rural areas, those with limited fluency in the dominant language, and other regions—including Southern Africa—where intergovernmental commitments overlap and support collective efforts. To facilitate participation, investments should include grants to fund in-person participation or strengthen online engagement, ensure translation during all meetings, and support meeting over digital platforms that are more easily accessed and sustained

in these settings. Space will be created for organisations and practitioners to share their work and experiences, as well as other mechanisms for collective/shared learning. The road map will act as a connection point and shared vision to facilitate and orientate collaboration.

Establishing Local, National, and Regional Action Plans to Expedite Progress

Strengthening technical capacity of feminist and women’s rights organisations to support the implementation and advocacy objectives is paramount to the successful implementation of the road map. The consortium intends to prioritise the development of local and national action plans to contextualise this road map in the first two years. With the support of the secretariat, national organisation consortium members will convene to map their existing capacities, needs, and values, contextualise their objectives and monitoring plans for implementation, and set up task teams to spearhead action areas based on the child marriage landscape in their context.

Funding and Resources for Collective Action

Funding and resourcing are vitally important and key enablers to support strong collaboration in relation to multi-level and multi-sector working to prevent and respond to child marriage. Funding work at subnational, national, and regional levels, especially for organisations working at the community level, must be prioritised, as well as direct funding to support the coordination and key action areas of the consortium. The inclusion of place-based actors in disaster planning and response coordination events, including cluster meetings, should be prioritised and resourced. Similarly, it is essential that efforts are made to enhance transparent funding and that resources are more evenly and equally distributed across sectors that are directly engaging with girls and those who have experienced child marriage.

ANNEX 1: Founding Consortium Partners

The signatories below have endorsed the roadmap and/or made specific commitments to act. It is hoped that others will add their names to this list.

AISE Consulting Group

Rozaria Memorial Trust (RMT)

Alpha and Omega Reconciliation and Peace Building (AREPEB)

Soroti Girls Rights Initiative

Children’s Dignity Forum (CDF)

Tanzania Ending Child Marriage Network (TECMN)

Girl Child Network (GCN)

Women’s Probono Initiative (WPI)

Girls Not Brides

Women’s Refugee Commission (WRC)

Integrating Capacity and Community Advancement Organization (ICCAO)

Women Students Mentorship Association (WOSWA)

Light Ethiopia

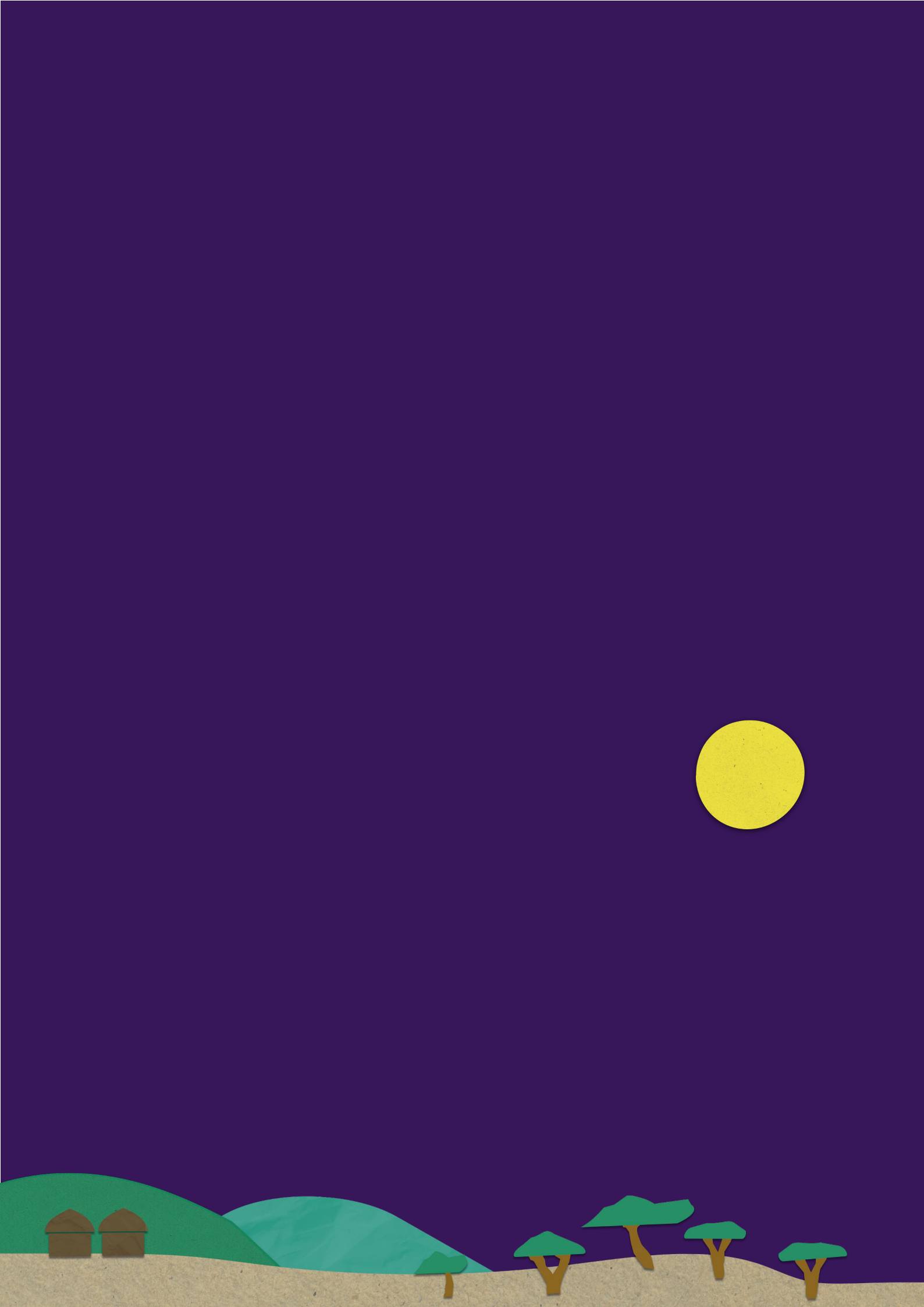
Young Women in Action (YWA)

Morogoro Saving the Poor Organization (MOSAPORG)

ANNEX 2:

Initiative Research Briefs

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Overview of participatory action research with feminist and women-led organisations

PARTNERS

The Women's Refugee Commission
Rozaria Memorial Trust
King's College London



NOVEMBER 2022

In 2021, the Women's Refugee Commission, Rozaria Memorial Trust, and King's College London set out to engage feminist and women-led civil society organisations, experts, and practitioners to learn how best to enhance coordination and collaboration with humanitarian actors to expedite progress towards ending child marriage and supporting already married girls within and across the humanitarian system in East Africa. This brief gives an overview of participatory action research that has been undertaken to support an iterative process of reflection amongst 80 grassroots actors in Eastern Africa working with feminist or women-led organisations that engage in child marriage prevention and/or response efforts with crisis-affected communities in the region.

Research methods

Through the initiative's multi-stage participatory action research process (see Figure 1), the voices and experience of feminist actors and their understandings of gender transformation and patriarchy were elevated to advance discussions on durable solutions to child marriage that are equity driven, and culturally and contextually grounded:

- The systematic scoping review (completed July 2021) provided an enhanced understanding on aspects of successful child marriage interventions that work to prevent child marriage in both humanitarian and development settings and across the globe.
- A series of interactive online workshops (completed October 2021) facilitated rich reflection and discussion between East African actors on programming and collaboration across sectors and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus; the evidence from this stage provided a critical foundation for designing the Delphi survey rounds.
- The Delphi surveys (completed December 2021, March 2022, and May 2022) were administered to participants to identify shared priorities, divergences, and gaps in practice. Each survey contained questions about key enablers and barriers to addressing child marriage in East Africa, as well as key enablers and barriers to collaborative working across sectors and across the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus. Through engaging with the same participants over three rounds, we were able to ascertain levels of consensus around each of these enablers and barriers, and their prioritisation for action to successfully address child marriage across East Africa in the future.
- At the end of the research phase, two in-depth interviews with key actors in the region were undertaken to discuss the implications of the findings for addressing child marriage, from a feminist perspective.

Research Findings

The key findings from the research can be found within a series of thematic briefings focused on education; justice; awareness raising; economic empowerment and livelihoods; community engagement in programming design and implementation; gender-transformative approaches; safe spaces and peer-to-peer education; sexual and reproductive health and rights; and collaboration across sectors and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

Figure 1. Research design and process

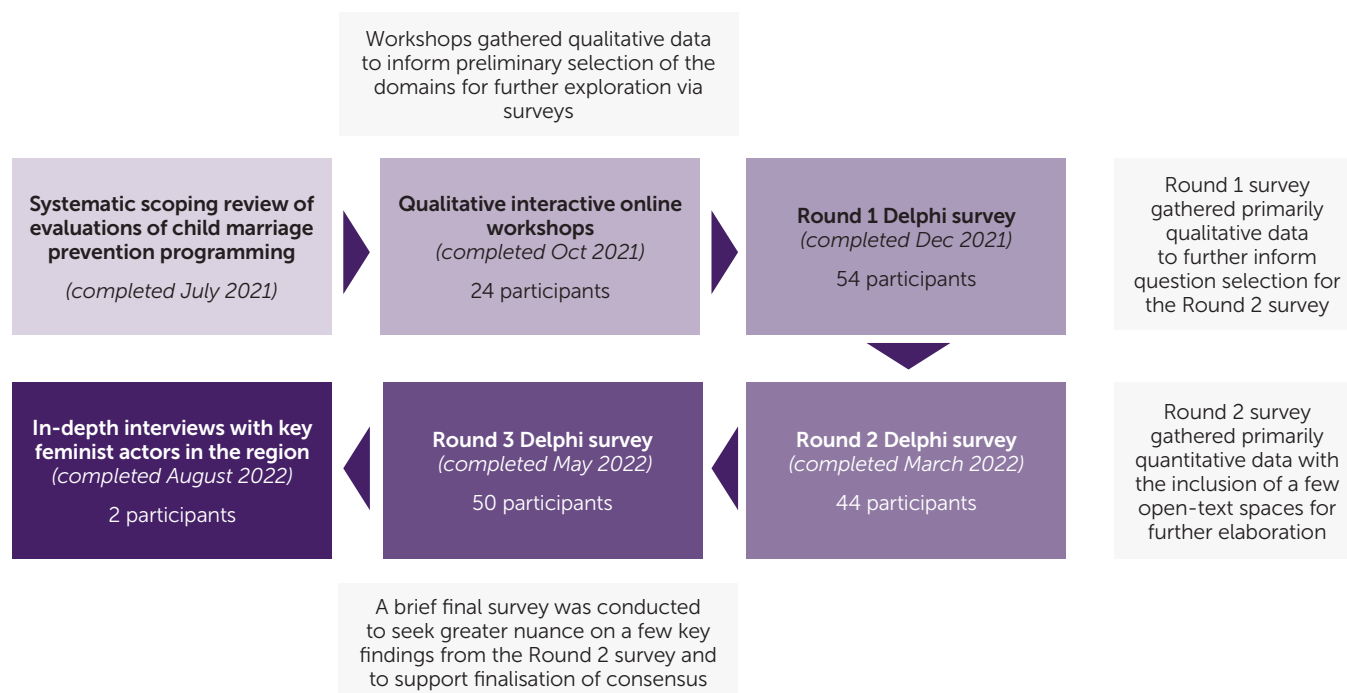
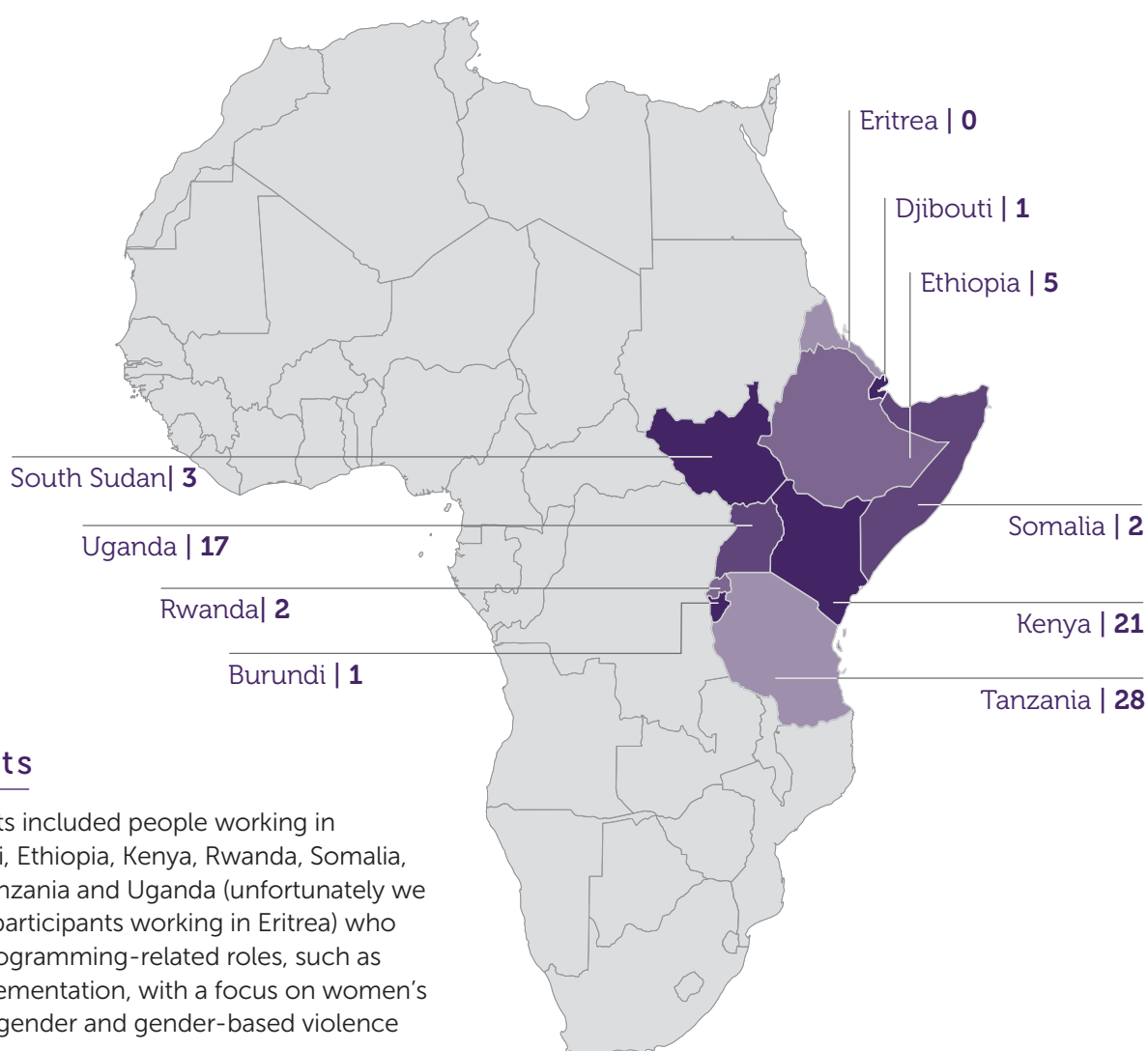


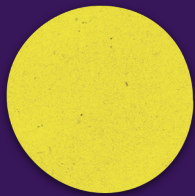
Figure 2. Number of research participants, by country



Participants

Study participants included people working in Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda (unfortunately we did not get any participants working in Eritrea) who specialised in programming-related roles, such as design and implementation, with a focus on women's empowerment, gender and gender-based violence sectors.

FINDINGS TO PREVENT CHILD MARRIAGE



In this section, we present key findings from the initiative's participatory action research by theme. The themes that study participants identified as priority for preventing child marriage include:

Access to Justice

Awareness raising

Economic empowerment and livelihoods

Education

Engaging communities in programme design and implementation



BRIEF

A feminist vision on accessing justice for preventing child marriage

PARTNERS

The Women's Refugee Commission
Rozaria Memorial Trust
King's College London



NOVEMBER 2022

Participatory action research using consensus-building methods was conducted from 2021-22 with feminist and women-led civil society organisations, experts, and practitioners to learn how best to end child marriage and support already married girls in forcibly displaced and crisis-affected communities in East Africa. This brief summarises findings on accessing justice, which study participants identified as a priority for **preventing child marriage**. Direct quotes from participants are included in italics throughout. For additional details about the study, this brief can be read in conjunction with a separate brief outlining the research process.

CONSENSUS DATA FROM GRASSROOTS FEMINIST ACTORS IN EAST AFRICA



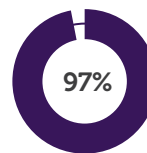
Agree that developing and strengthening strong systems of justice should be a prerequisite for child marriage prevention programming.



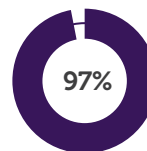
Agree that they collaborate across sectors to ensure access to justice.



Agree that collaboration across sectors and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is essential for developing and strengthening systems of accountability.



Agree that there needs to be training of community law enforcement officers, including the judiciary, to ensure child marriage prevention is successful.



Agree that collaboration across sectors and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is required to develop and strengthen strong systems of justice.



Agree that the lack of implementation of child marriage laws and policies acts as a barrier to preventing child marriage and transforming harmful gender norms.

Weak access to justice systems; lack of law implementation; absence of laws and policies and/or delay in legal reform of existing laws and policies; and lack of support and reporting mechanisms were highlighted as critical barriers to child marriage programme success.

WHY IS ACCESS TO JUSTICE ESSENTIAL FOR CHILD MARRIAGE PREVENTION AND TRANSFORMING GENDER NORMS?

- Laws do not always ensure that child marriage is illegal, as sometimes different laws create contradictions, exceptions, or loopholes. It is crucial that laws work harmoniously to prevent child marriage and that they are created without exceptions.
- Enactment, implementation and enforcement of child marriage laws and policies can discourage child marriage.
- Child marriage is discouraged in communities where people report illegal child marriages and action is taken to bring perpetrators to justice.



RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

For child marriage efforts to be successful, a multi-pronged approach to justice should include the existence of laws, advocacy for legal reform, and communication of rights.

Feminist actors note that working directly with justice institutions, the media, and local leaders who are working closely with justice institutions works well to support effective cross-sector collaboration and secure justice within communities.

Social media and networking groups are helpful for disseminating information about child marriage (i.e., what is permissible under the law), which helps facilitate justice at a local level.

Our participants highlighted justice-related enablers for preventing child marriage, which included:

- *'training of key government officials in the judiciary, law enforcement officers';*
- enhancing access to and reach of existing mechanisms that support birth and marriage registration;
- *'access to justice mechanisms that are well understood and articulated with clear collaborations with the law enforcement sector.'*

CRITICAL ISSUES

Our participants believe that lack of government goodwill to publicly address child marriage, lack of gender protection at national level, corruption, weak access to justice systems, poor enforcement of laws, lack of reporting mechanisms and delays in reform of existing laws and policies all act as barriers to preventing child marriage.

Existing laws are often *'poorly enforced or superseded by customary and religious laws'*, and therefore it is particularly important to work with community leaders, members of the law enforcement and the justice sectors. Some respondents felt that child marriage laws and policies are *'unclear'*, *'unfriendly'*, and *'unharmonized.'* Laws can also be contradictory and create loopholes for child marriages to be permissible.

Girls and their families often do not know about justice mechanisms and may rely on the support or advice from community members who are not appropriately informed or trained and may give *'inaccurate advice to seek justice or help.'* At times *'local authorities are unwilling to enforce laws due to unintended consequences'*, such as arresting the perpetrator who is the breadwinner for other family members and creating a situation where *'seek[ing] justice for one person'* could potentially create risks for an entire family falling into poverty.

ACCOUNTABILITY

If girls, families, and community members are expected to report acts of child marriage, then the justice and legal system should be held accountable to guarantee that the process for reporting and achieving justice is accessible, fair, secure, and handled with respect to the rights of girls as both victims and survivors.

Transparent systems and structures of accountability are needed at all levels, including within families, in communities and through the different levels of government.

Documentation of births and marriages plays a key role in accountability as it *'elevates the issue of child marriage beyond communities and alerts local governments'* to cases of child marriage, survivors can prove the union took place, access more services and hold someone accountable for allowing the marriage to take place.

LEARNINGS FOR ACTION

- Justice systems must be held accountable for addressing child marriage violations.
- Systems and structures of accountability need to go beyond individual cases of child marriage that are resolved through systems of justice and hold those who facilitate 'cultures' of child marriage to account.
- Cross-nexus collaboration with the justice system is particularly critical for crisis affected populations who are more vulnerable to rights violations, including child marriage.



BRIEF

A feminist vision on awareness raising for preventing child marriage

PARTNERS

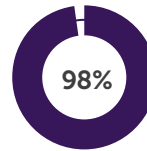
The Women's Refugee Commission
Rozaria Memorial Trust
King's College London



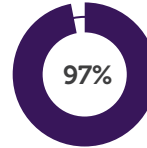
NOVEMBER 2022

Participatory action research using consensus-building methods was conducted from 2021-22 with feminist and women-led civil society organisations, experts, and practitioners to learn how best to end child marriage and support already married girls in forcibly displaced and crisis-affected communities in East Africa. This brief summarises findings on awareness raising, which study participants identified as a priority for **preventing child marriage**. Direct quotes from participants are included in italics throughout. For additional details about the study, this brief can be read in conjunction with a separate brief outlining the research process.

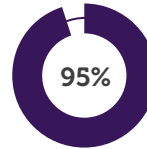
CONSENSUS DATA FROM GRASSROOTS FEMINIST ACTORS IN EAST AFRICA



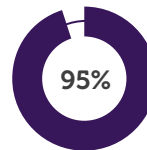
Agree that advocacy and awareness raising/creation led by married girls are essential components of child marriage prevention programmes.



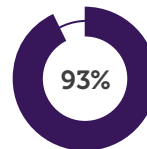
Currently collaborate across sectors to support community awareness and rights knowledge.



Agree that awareness raising at multiple levels (i.e., individuals, communities, society) is an essential component of child marriage prevention programmes.



Agree that working together on awareness campaigns contributes to effective cross-sector collaboration and collaboration across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.



Agree that communities should be involved in designing information and awareness to prevent child marriage.



Agree that lack of community awareness acts as a barrier to addressing child marriage and transforming gender norms.

WHY IS AWARENESS RAISING ESSENTIAL FOR CHILD MARRIAGE PREVENTION AND TRANSFORMING GENDER NORMS?

- Child marriage is often driven by gendered customs and traditions, and therefore, awareness raising, advocacy and media engagement support the process of social norms change.
- Awareness raising may create and instill a sense of responsibility to prevent child marriage at societal and community levels.
- Awareness raising that involves communities and emphasises the harms and impacts of child marriage can encourage community-based and community-led responses that provide girls with *'a support system that they desperately need'* at an individualised and local level.



RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

Awareness raising on child marriage occurs at different levels, with various target groups, and employs numerous approaches. Our participants believe that it needs to take place with individuals, households, communities, and at national and regional levels.

Awareness raising can encompass legal and justice information, negative consequences associated with child marriage, children's rights, gender equality, discussions of consent, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) information, and programmatic efforts to address child marriage.

The definition of awareness raising is not entirely clear, and sometimes it is referred to as 'advocacy' or 'awareness creation'.

A range of awareness-raising methods was mentioned by our participants, including media and social media engagement, community-based seminars, radio and television programming, visuals, documentaries, visiting rural communities, sports tournaments, school debates and engaging with faith-based actors and high-level officials.

Most of our participants (84%) agree that including child marriage as a session within girls' empowerment or life skills programming is the most effective form of awareness raising for preventing child marriage.

CRITICAL ISSUES

Due to the wide range of awareness-raising approaches, questions of what approach to use and which approach may yield the most impact are critical. It is also difficult to know which approach might be the most effective because awareness raising is difficult to evaluate, particularly at the community and national level. Additionally, some awareness-raising approaches may not be culturally appropriate or long-lasting in specific contexts. For example, one of our participants from Kenya said: *'I think for a long time, awareness raising has been seen as a western response. We see NGOs with many international managers coming into communities—it's important for communities to see these campaigns as their own, we need to eliminate those colonial ways of working. Therefore, working with local activists to design and implement awareness-raising campaigns is so important.'*

Our participants noted that there are challenges when communities *'deliberately choose not to listen'*. Some of our participants highlighted that rural communities may be too isolated for awareness-raising efforts and vital information regarding child marriage prevention initiatives to reach them.

Collaboration across sectors and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is complex but essential in prevention of child marriage. Participants note the barriers to collaboration include lack of momentum, lack of access or relationship with other actors and sectors, and limited opportunities for girls and women at all levels.

LEARNINGS FOR ACTION

- Collaborative and joint awareness-raising programmes across sectors and across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus provide an opportunity to demonstrate unity and strength of convictions about child marriage.
- Communities should be involved in the design of information and awareness-raising approaches to ensure that efforts are harmonious and contextually grounded.
- Investment must be made in promoting the voice and agency of girls as part of awareness raising to *'build the blocks'* to support girls as self-representing feminist actors throughout their lives.
- Actors working across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus at the regional level should strive to understand the nature of socio-cultural norms, traditions and religion within all settings and how they may present in various contexts and within different communities. This can provide critical cross-contextual learnings regarding which awareness-raising approaches may be most appropriate and effective.



BRIEF

A feminist vision on economic empowerment and livelihoods for preventing child marriage

PARTNERS

The Women's Refugee Commission
Rozaria Memorial Trust
King's College London



NOVEMBER 2022

Participatory action research using consensus-building methods was conducted from 2021-22 with feminist and women-led civil society organisations, experts, and practitioners to learn how best to end child marriage and support already married girls in forcibly displaced and crisis-affected communities in East Africa. This brief summarises findings on economic empowerment and livelihoods that study participants identified as priorities for **preventing child marriage**. Direct quotes from participants are included in italics throughout the brief. For additional details about the study, this brief can be read in conjunction with a separate brief outlining the research process.

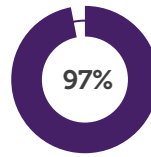
CONSENSUS DATA FROM GRASSROOTS FEMINIST ACTORS IN EAST AFRICA



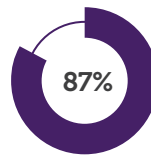
Agree that collaboration across sectors and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is essential for reducing poverty.



Agree that poverty acts as a barrier to addressing child marriage and transforming gender norms.



Agree that programming must address the root causes of child marriage, such as poverty.



Agree that widespread economic insecurity hinders the effectiveness of child marriage programmes.

WHY IS ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT ESSENTIAL FOR CHILD MARRIAGE PREVENTION AND TRANSFORMING GENDER NORMS?

- Economic and livelihood opportunities enable girls and youth to contribute financially to their households through work rather than marriage, increasing their value in households and their autonomy.
- Cash and asset transfers can offer incentives for behaviour change, such as families prioritising girls' education over marriage.
- Empowering girls economically and socially increases their autonomy, their influence and their voice in households and communities.
- Reducing household poverty enables girls from families below the poverty line to meet basic needs instead of getting married to acquire food, clothing, medicines, etc.
- Reducing household-level poverty can contribute to parents no longer viewing girls as a *'source of income through bride price'* or as a financial burden.



RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

Household poverty manifests itself as a driver of child marriage in different ways; through an inability to care for, feed, clothe, house, and school girls sufficiently; through being unable to meet the extra needs that adolescent girls have (e.g., provision of menstrual products); through the opportunity to receive extra financial gain through a bride price; through arranging several child marriages at the same time to reduce the burden of high ceremony costs; and the potential of saving of money when a girl marries and moves away.

Cash and asset transfers (conditional/unconditional) can be used as an additional option or approach to delay marriage or keep girls in school; they are often small and regular sums of money, oil, or livestock, sometimes accompanied by the payment of school fees.

Economic empowerment programmes targeting young girls often include economic education, life skills, vocational training, setting up bank accounts and facilitating work opportunities. Providing girls with entrepreneurship skills and available loan opportunities can help girls run their own business.

There are also many livelihoods programmes that target households, but many of these do not have indicators in line with gender-transformative change goals.

CRITICAL ISSUES

Poverty, and lacking basic needs such as food, clothes, shelter, health care, and education is a very powerful driver of child marriage. Short-term financial benefits that come from marriage are very influential, especially to people living in a humanitarian crisis. This increases the risk of child marriage as a form of sexual exploitation and trafficking where perpetrators use bribery or the promise of financial reward to expedite marriage or prevent justice for survivors.

Families may view child marriage as the only option to escape poverty or to ensure the security of their daughters' futures. Preventing child marriage requires specific programming but also a focus on addressing poverty as a cross-cutting issue that impacts individual, household, and community levels. Thus, for widespread change, economic programming needs to be substantial, multi-level, and long-lasting.

Only 64% of our Delphi participants agreed that conditional cash transfers should be part of essential programming to prevent child marriage, prioritising other types of programming above cash transfers. Although there is a reasonable evidence base that conditional cash transfers can be successful in preventing child marriage, there have also been concerns raised about their sustainability, and whether they facilitate long-term transformative change rather than short-term behavioural change. While providing financial transfers is often a key part of the solution to prevent child marriage, it is often not the only solution, and is most impactful when paired with other multi-level and multi-sectoral approaches.

LEARNINGS FOR ACTION

- Coordinated responses to the impact of poverty on women and girls are critical, across different organisations, sectors, and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, which might include national systems of social protection for low-income households and pro-poor social policies, community-based economic and livelihoods programmes for households, and also programmes targeted at young women.
- Education and economic empowerment programmes can break the cycle of poverty. These programmes need to be underpinned by a gender-transformative approach that takes into account the girls themselves, their families, their communities, and structural influences; and maps out how these activities will ultimately change the long-term power relations between men and women in society.



BRIEF

A feminist vision on education for preventing child marriage

PARTNERS

The Women's Refugee Commission
Rozaria Memorial Trust
King's College London

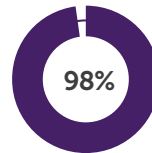


NOVEMBER 2022

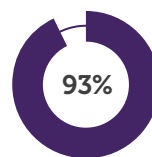
Participatory action research using consensus-building methods was conducted from 2021-22 with feminist and women-led civil society organisations, experts, and practitioners to learn how best to end child marriage and support already married girls in forcibly displaced and crisis-affected communities in East Africa. This brief summarises findings on education that study participants identified as a priority for **preventing child marriage**. Direct quotes from participants are included in italics throughout the brief. For additional details about the study, this brief can be read in conjunction with a separate brief outlining the research process.

This briefing focuses on formal education; however, it was noted that formal education for girls can also be strengthened by informal education, life skills training and vocational training, which are also efficient in the case of girls that have dropped out of school.

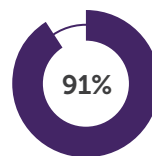
CONSENSUS DATA FROM GRASSROOTS FEMINIST ACTORS IN EAST AFRICA



Agree that mentors and peer educators are an essential component for child marriage prevention programming.



Agree that formal education is an essential component for child marriage prevention programming.



Agree that high rates of school dropout act as a barrier to addressing child marriage, which is why there is a need for collaboration across sectors and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus to reduce these rates.

WHY IS EDUCATION ESSENTIAL FOR CHILD MARRIAGE PREVENTION AND TRANSFORMING GENDER NORMS?

- Education provides an alternative to marriage for girls.
- Education creates other opportunities and aspirations for girls, showing them what alternatives to marriage are available, and what might be possible to achieve when they marry later in life.
- Education empowers girls and informs them of their rights. As such, it should be used to form part of a larger set of programming, such as life-skills training and empowerment, talking about rights, and enabling girls to thrive.
- Education of boys is critical for challenging patriarchal perspectives.



RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

Our participants said that the following elements are critical for preventing child marriage and keeping girls in school:

- building and developing aspirations of girls;
- ensuring schools are safe and free of gender-based violence (GBV);
- provision of counselling, career guidance and psycho-social support through schools;
- actively following up on non-attendance of girls in schools;
- hosting gender-transformative programmes and awareness sessions on GBV within curriculums;
- building relationships with families to keep girls in school;
- providing feminine hygiene products in school, such as pads and soaps;
- engagement with parents, especially in the case of early pregnancy;
- providing safe access to schools (i.e., schools are

located near girls' homes).

Other elements that enable the prevention of child marriage through education are radio sponsored programmes for girls' education, scholarships for best performing girls, and organising girl-specialised funds.

CRITICAL ISSUES

Most of our participants (93%) agreed that high rates of school dropouts act as a barrier to preventing child marriage, especially in humanitarian crises. It was also highlighted that *'Covid lockdowns, climate change, and conflict are also leading factors in closure of schools and key drivers of child marriage in [conflict] affected populations'*.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) education was also consistently highlighted by participants as a key component for preventing child marriage, especially where pregnancy is a common precursor to marriage as it is in some sub-Saharan countries. Participants believed there is a gap in investment in, and provision of, child- and adolescent-friendly SRHR education.

LEARNINGS FOR ACTION

- Some programmes work differently for girls who are out of school compared to girls who are in school (with some critique that girls who cannot go to school miss out on conditional cash transfer schemes), and this needs to be taken into account when developing school-based programmes and contextualising interventions.
- Increased collaboration between the education in emergencies sector and protection actors is required to further enhance gender-transformative approaches to preventing child marriage within formal schooling systems.
- More research needs to be conducted on the impact of education programming which goes beyond the provision of fees, uniforms, materials, such as a girls' tracking system, school safety policies, training of school staff, child marriage awareness sessions in schools, strengthening school governance, girl-friendly schooling and comprehensive SRHR curriculums.



BRIEF

A feminist vision on engaging communities in programme design and implementation for preventing child marriage

PARTNERS

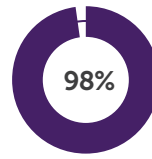
The Women's Refugee Commission
Rozaria Memorial Trust
King's College London



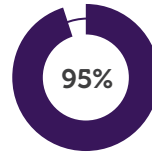
NOVEMBER 2022

Participatory action research using consensus-building methods was conducted from 2021-22 with feminist and women-led civil society organisations, experts, and practitioners to learn how best to end child marriage and support already married girls in forcibly displaced and crisis-affected communities in East Africa. This brief summarises findings on engaging communities in programme design and implementation that study participants identified as a priority for **preventing child marriage**. Direct quotes from participants are included in italics throughout the brief. For additional details about the study, this brief can be read in conjunction with a separate brief outlining the research process.

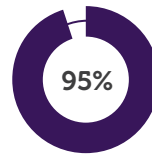
CONSENSUS DATA FROM GRASSROOTS FEMINIST ACTORS IN EAST AFRICA



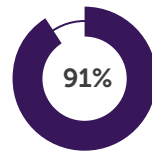
Agree that the involvement of whole communities and stakeholders in the **design** of programmes is essential for preventing child marriage and transforming gender norms.



Agree that the involvement of whole communities and stakeholders in the **implementation** of programmes is essential for preventing child marriage and transforming gender norms.



Agree that collaboration and joint working across sectors and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus are essential for meaningful community engagement in the design and implementation of programming.



Agree that the involvement of whole communities and stakeholders as **target groups** of programmes is essential for preventing child marriage and transforming gender norms.

WHY IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN PROGRAMME DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION ESSENTIAL FOR CHILD MARRIAGE PREVENTION AND TRANSFORMING GENDER NORMS?

- Community involvement is often the principal starting place for effectively connecting and engaging with girls and the wider community.
- Community engagement increases durable solutions.
- Involvement of key community members, including community leaders (e.g., religious and traditional leaders), parents and girls, creates a sense of community ownership among various stakeholders that can lead to collective agreement and understanding of child marriage programming, and promote *'positive behaviour change'*.



RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

Important community-based actors include:

- young men and young women;
- leaders of faith-based groups;
- government officials (including women members of parliament, councils for children and women, and law makers);
- teachers;
- doctors;
- customary justice actors;
- traditional leaders.

These actors should be engaged at all the programmatic stages. Getting key actors involved following programme design may be too late.

Community-based actors should be involved in:

- influencing peers;
- suggesting adjustments to programming;
- engaging with parents;
- providing evidence of the consequences of child marriage;
- providing safe spaces for girls;
- collaborating with government officials;
- designing awareness-raising information and identifying/establishing role models for girls.

This 'grounding' of programming within communities can create a sense of community ownership and initiative towards creating shared social change goals that capitalises on consensus and understanding of approaches.

CRITICAL ISSUES

Child marriage programmes should elevate children and young people's voices through '*involving [them] in the design and implementation*' phases and centring their experiences in the programme to '*ensure the solutions are youth-friendly and youth-appropriate*'. Moreover, programming needs to make significant efforts to include girls and women in the community, whilst intentionally harnessing the support of men and boys as key allies in the fight to end child marriage.

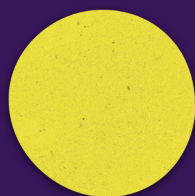
Practitioners and organisations cannot work within communities without gatekeeper approval from leaders. Yet, these leaders may not agree with preventing child marriage. Participants highlighted the difficulty of '*convincing*' community leaders of the impact that child marriage has on girls, as many are '*retrogressive to change*'. It was particularly felt that '*community leaders in rural settings are against initiatives*'.

Drawing on socio-ecological models, social and behaviour change communication models, and targeted dialogues involving men, can be effective strategies for engaging with reluctant community members. It is also important to have community-based feedback mechanisms and the information from these mechanisms should be included in humanitarian response plans

LEARNINGS FOR ACTION

- Programmes should work to centre the experiences of girls within their approaches and engage in collective and collaborative efforts to transform harmful patriarchal norms at individual, household, community and societal levels. There needs to be particular emphasis on strengthening of communities to support collective gender norms change.
- Community engagement must be conducive for including girls, young women and married girls as well as a wide range of other adults (particularly religious leaders and government officials) and attention paid to power relationships between different actors.
- Coordinating community engagement with other organisations and sectors will enable more holistic, efficient, responsive and coordinated programmes that address child marriage and support more meaningful engagement by a range of community members.

FINDINGS TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF MARRIED GIRLS



In this section, we present key findings from the initiative's participatory action research by theme. The themes that study participants identified as priority for addressing the needs of married girls include:

Access to Justice

Economic empowerment and livelihoods

Education



BRIEF

A feminist vision on accessing justice for meeting the needs of married girls

PARTNERS

The Women's Refugee Commission
Rozaria Memorial Trust
King's College London



NOVEMBER 2022

Participatory action research using consensus-building methods was conducted from 2021-22 with feminist and women-led civil society organisations, experts, and practitioners to learn how best to end child marriage and support already married girls in forcibly displaced and crisis-affected communities in East Africa. This brief summarises findings on accessing justice, which study participants identified as a priority for **meeting the needs of married girls**. Direct quotes from participants are included in italics throughout. For additional details about the study, this brief can be read in conjunction with a separate brief outlining the research process.

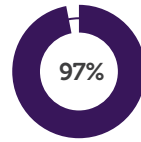
CONSENSUS DATA FROM GRASSROOTS FEMINIST ACTORS IN EAST AFRICA



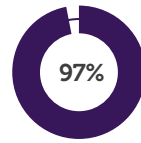
Agree that the application and enforcement of existing laws that protect married girls is essential for meeting their needs.



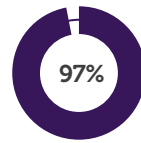
Agree that access to and provision of legal aid and support is essential for meeting the needs of married girls.



Agree that the training of community law enforcement officers, including the judiciary, is required to meet the needs of married girls.



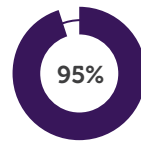
Agree that access to justice mechanisms should be enhanced.



Agree that collaboration across sectors and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is essential for facilitating the enforcement of existing laws that protect married girls (e.g., minimum age of marriage laws).



Agree that collaboration across sectors and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is essential for ensuring provision of legal aid for married girls.



Agree that provision of free and accessible services for girls to report cases of child marriage is needed.



Agree that reporting and referral platforms between organisations need to be strengthened.

WHY IS ACCESS TO JUSTICE ESSENTIAL FOR WORKING WITH AND MEETING THE NEEDS OF MARRIED GIRLS?

- Ensuring that girls and families are aware of, and have access to, available justice mechanisms encourages them to report perpetrators and instances of child marriage. The justice system should be held accountable to guarantee that the process of reporting and achieving justice is accessible, fair, secure and respectful of the rights of girls as both victims and survivors.
- The justice system has a responsibility to attain justice for victims of child marriage, which includes arresting the perpetrator of the child marriage, ensuring the parents are aware of the legal consequences and promoting the rights of the survivor throughout the entire process.



RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

Justice for survivors of child marriage includes prosecution of perpetrators while protecting and supporting girls and their families once proceedings begin.

Justice mechanisms that should be enhanced include:

- creation and implementation of child marriage laws and policies that are centred around the experiences of married girls;
- access to birth and marriage registration;
- strong response to perpetrators of child marriage enforced by formal and informal justice systems;
- training of community-based law enforcement officers, including the judiciary;
- accessible information about marriage and rights;
- clear reporting mechanisms;
- provision of/access to free legal aid;
- support through the legal process (i.e., financial and psychosocial);
- a transparent and trustworthy legal process.

Dedicated free lines for girls to report cases of child marriage have been found to be effective, especially when supported by peer mentors. When girls are sensitised to their rights and the appropriate reporting procedures, they can be empowered to access support and justice for themselves and their peers.

It is also critical that mechanisms of justice, including mobile courts, are accessible for girls; they should link to the national justice system through NGOs working in communities, and justice and legal services should be decentralised through integration into local justice systems.

Increasing the voices of married girls in developing the justice system and holding the justice system to account is also crucial.

Cross-sectoral collaboration with other actors can support key information sharing about new cases of child marriage.

CRITICAL ISSUES

Participants use both the terms *'victims'* and *'survivors'* when talking about access to justice, recognising that girls are both victims and survivors at the same time,

indicating a tension in the terminology used in this field and how this reflects the position of affected girls.

Weak implementation of policies and weak legal systems act as a barrier to meeting the needs of married girls. For example, several participants felt that current child marriage laws are *'unclear'*, *'unfriendly'*, *'contradictory'* and *'unharmonized'* and do not work to effectively to ensure justice for child marriage survivors.

Transparent and safe reporting systems are required, as several participants noted that the limitations of the justice system lie in the fact that the reporting process itself effectively causes girls and families to *'fear coming out to report and even follow through the cases'*. Girls need to be ensured that appropriate justice mechanisms are in place and are working.

The economic status of the perpetrator and the girl's family may cause the perpetrator to use bribery and economic power to interfere in the realisation of justice.

It is important to work with community leaders and members of the law enforcement and the justice sectors to ensure that customary and religious laws do not override or replace existing laws.

Lack of funding or resourcing across all sectors working with married girls was cited as a barrier to upholding justice for child marriage survivors. Sufficient funding is needed in the health, education and protection sectors to support the reporting process, hold others to account for enforcing laws, as well as providing married girls access to services and legal education.

The robust systems of marriage and birth documentation *'elevates the issue of child marriage beyond communities and alerts local governments'* to cases of child marriage and means child marriage survivors can prove the union took place, access more services and hold someone accountable for allowing the marriage to take place.

It is particularly challenging for conflict-affected married girls and their families to access justice. Strengthening community and faith-based reporting mechanisms, as well as child safeguarding systems, in humanitarian structures and corridors may provide pathways of support to survivors.

LEARNINGS FOR ACTION

- Multi-sector-led training on gender justice and safe implementation of marriage laws is required for key government officials in the judiciary, law enforcement officers and religious leaders.
- Enforcement of registration of all births and marriages is required to support effective implementation of laws on minimum marriage age.
- Access to justice mechanisms for girls and their families that are well understood and articulated with clear collaborations with the law enforcement sector are necessary and fundamental to ensuring married girls can access legal support.



BRIEF

A feminist vision on economic empowerment and livelihoods for meeting the needs of married girls

PARTNERS

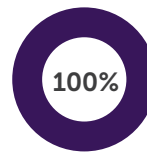
The Women's Refugee Commission
Rozaria Memorial Trust
King's College London



NOVEMBER 2022

Participatory action research using consensus-building methods was conducted from 2021-22 with feminist and women-led civil society organisations, experts, and practitioners to learn how best to end child marriage and support already married girls in forcibly displaced and crisis-affected communities in East Africa. This brief summarises findings on economic empowerment and livelihoods that study participants identified as a priority for **meeting the needs of married girls**. Direct quotes from participants are included in italics throughout the brief. For additional details about the study, this brief can be read in conjunction with a separate brief outlining the research process.

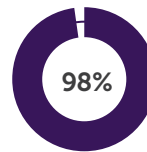
CONSENSUS DATA FROM GRASSROOTS FEMINIST ACTORS IN EAST AFRICA



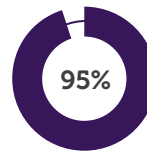
Agree that poverty acts as a barrier to meeting the needs of married girls.



Agree that economic empowerment and livelihoods opportunities are essential components of programming for married girls.



Agree that collaboration across sectors and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is essential for reducing poverty.



Agree that collaboration across sectors and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is essential for facilitating economic empowerment and livelihoods opportunities for married girls.



Agree that essential programming includes life skills and empowering married girls so they are able to voice their needs and wishes, and are involved in the decisions that affect their lives.

WHY IS ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT ESSENTIAL FOR WORKING WITH AND MEETING THE NEEDS OF MARRIED GIRLS?

- Economic empowerment enables married girls to meet their needs and support their children and partners.
- Empowerment programmes embedded within life skills training and rights-based education can turn married girls' vulnerabilities into leadership at grassroots level.
- Economically empowering married girls supports them to become financially independent and earn a living independently of their partners, strengthening their autonomy and decision-making capacity.



RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

Economic empowerment and income-generating activities reduce the impact of poverty on women and girls, enabling married girls to provide for themselves and their families, and to develop skills, social networks and an identity outside of the family home.

Critical enablers of economic empowerment for married girls are:

- access to financial assets and credit;
- access to land/property rights, markets for their local products;
- group-based income-generating activities (e.g., cooperatives to support enhanced access to resources and safe spaces);
- and for married girls affected by conflict, there should be *'engagement with devolved government officials to allocate affirmative action funds to support them as beneficiaries'*.

CRITICAL ISSUES

Economic empowerment and livelihoods activities that are available for married girls are usually those which are available for unmarried girls, which can sometimes overlook the specific needs of married girls.

There was 100% agreement that child marriage programming should be organised in a way that takes into account the situation and needs of married girls.

This includes taking into account:

- childcare needs;
- the roles and responsibilities they have at home;
- supervision and transport needs so they can travel from their homes;
- consent from their husbands and in-laws.

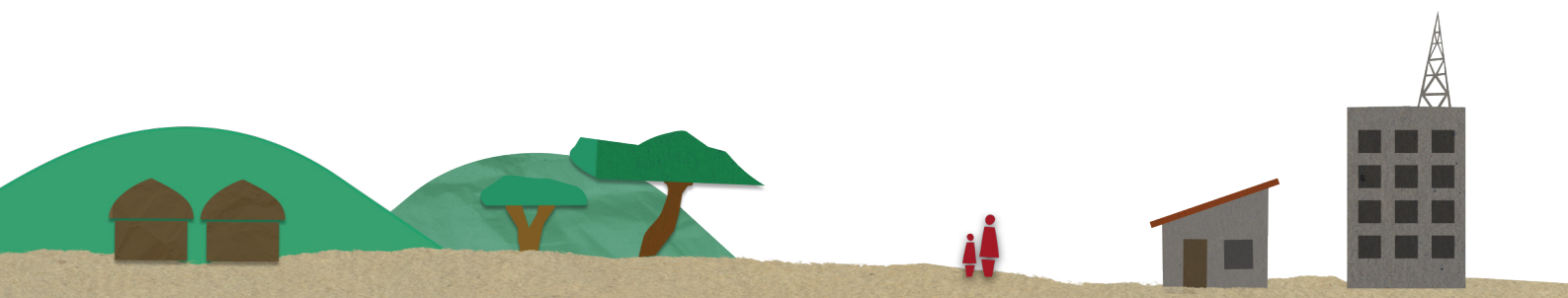
Other elements that ensure married girls effectively generate income and have control over it are:

- financial literacy;
- livelihoods opportunities that are appropriate and safe for them;
- home-based income-generating activities;
- decision-making power in selecting a livelihoods activity;
- knowledge of rights;
- support from community leaders;
- access to bank and savings accounts.

While our participants advocate for group- and home-based income-generating activities, it was highlighted that there are potential issues with home-based activities as it presents *'increases social isolation'* and potentially *'inadvertently perpetuat[es] patriarchy, [through] women not [being] allowed to work outside the home'*.

LEARNINGS FOR ACTION

- Critical enablers of economic empowerment need to be underpinned by a gender transformative approach that takes into account the needs of married girls and amplifies their voice and their experience.
- The coordination of services for married girls is critical to ensuring that economic empowerment and livelihoods opportunities are complemented by other services that are required to meet their needs (e.g., education, health, legal aid and justice).





BRIEF

A feminist vision on education for meeting the needs of married girls

PARTNERS

The Women's Refugee Commission
Rozaria Memorial Trust
King's College London



NOVEMBER 2022

Participatory action research using consensus-building methods was conducted from 2021-22 with feminist and women-led civil society organisations, experts, and practitioners to learn how best to end child marriage and support already married girls in forcibly displaced and crisis-affected communities in East Africa. This brief summarises findings on education that study participants identified as a priority for **meeting the needs of married girls**. Direct quotes from participants are included in italics throughout the brief. For additional details about the study, this brief can be read in conjunction with a separate brief outlining the research process.

CONSENSUS DATA FROM GRASSROOTS FEMINIST ACTORS IN EAST AFRICA



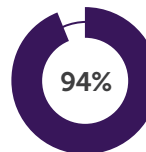
Agree that access to formal education is an essential component of programming for married girls.



Agree that collaboration across sectors and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is essential for ensuring married girls access formal education.



Agree that lack of services designed to specifically address the needs of married girls hinders their re-entry in education.



Agree that programming for married girls must include health and nutrition education for young mothers and their children.



Agree that encouraging school retention is an essential component of programming for married girls.

WHY IS EDUCATION ESSENTIAL FOR WORKING WITH AND MEETING THE NEEDS OF MARRIED GIRLS?

- Education is a right of all children, including married girls.
- Supporting education re-entry for married girls can provide a *'second chance'* for girls to expand their reach and potential, see what alternatives are available to them, and have access to opportunities to enable them to thrive.
- Education is a way of obtaining skills for future employment – and also skills for life as an *'empowered'* and *'autonomous'* woman.



RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

Forty-one per cent (41%) of our participants believe that a shared learning environment created through formal education processes with both unmarried girls and boys is better than formal education for only married girls or informal education only.

Priority should therefore be given to facilitate the return of married girls to school. Multiple elements need to be in place, such as:

- girl-safe schools;
- flexible schooling options;
- decision-making power for girls;
- national legislation to mandate married girls to return to school;
- provision of school materials;
- childcare;
- rooms in schools for lactating mothers;
- access to menstruation hygiene products.

CRITICAL ISSUES

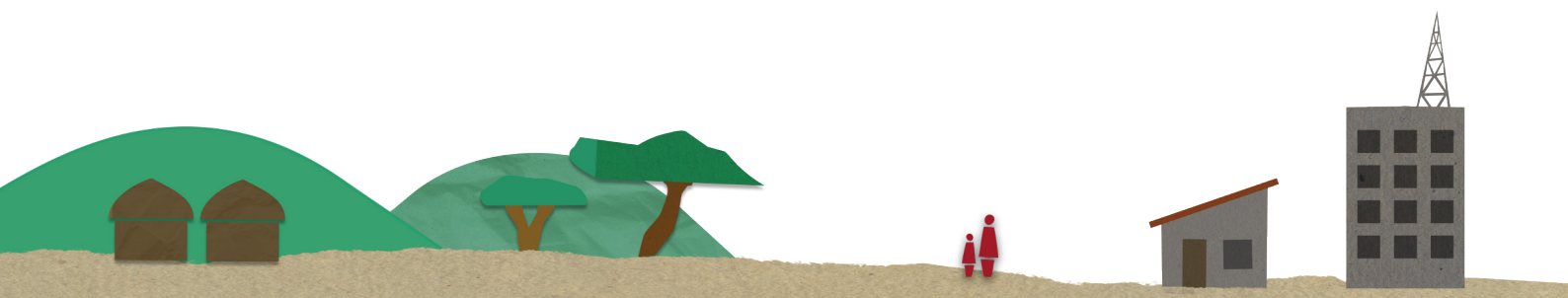
There are many barriers to girls returning to school at many levels, including:

- policies that prevent them from accessing formal education;
- lack of support from their husband and/or his family;
- child care responsibilities.

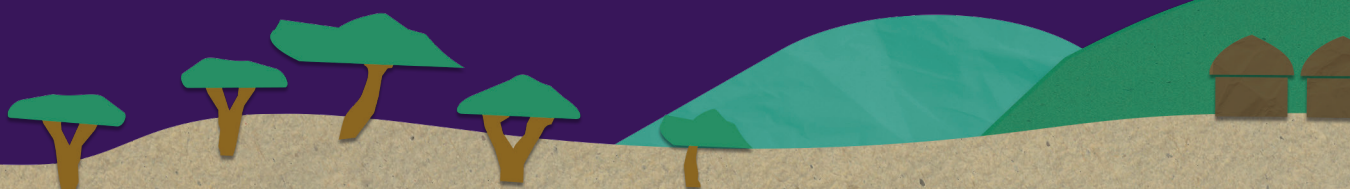
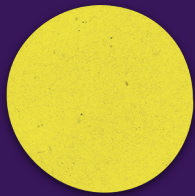
Safe spaces that also offer education (boarding schools) are needed for those who have experienced child marriage, as education can increase their socio-economic empowerment.

LEARNINGS FOR ACTION

- Specific attention to education for married girls is needed, as currently there is very little evidence of sufficient programmes, funds and approaches.
- Supporting married girls' re-entry to formal education requires strengthened working that is informed by a gender-transformative lens across the education and GBV sectors and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.
- Specific policy and legal changes need to be made at the national level to explicitly state that married girls must continue their education. This must be complemented by concrete administrative policy changes within schools to reduce girls' barriers to accessing education.



FINDINGS TO PREVENT CHILD MARRIAGE AND SUPPORT MARRIED GIRLS



In this section, we present key findings from the initiative's participatory action research by theme. The themes that study participants identified as priority for preventing child marriage and addressing the needs of married girls include:

Gender-Transformative Approaches

Safe Spaces

SRHR

Collaboration across Sectors and the Nexus



BRIEF

A feminist vision on gender-transformative approaches for preventing child marriage and addressing the needs of married girls

PARTNERS

The Women's Refugee Commission
Rozaria Memorial Trust
King's College London



NOVEMBER 2022

Participatory action research using consensus-building methods was conducted from 2021-22 with feminist and women-led civil society organisations, experts, and practitioners to learn how best to end child marriage and support already married girls in forcibly displaced and crisis-affected communities in East Africa. This brief summarises findings on using a gender-transformative approach that study participants identified as a priority for **preventing child marriage and meeting the needs of married girls**. At their heart, gender-transformative approaches shift the power relationships between women and men at all levels of society through social activism towards the realisation of gender equality. Direct quotes from participants are included in italics throughout the brief. For additional details about the study, this brief can be read in conjunction with a separate brief outlining the research process.

CONSENSUS DATA FROM GRASSROOTS FEMINIST ACTORS IN EAST AFRICA



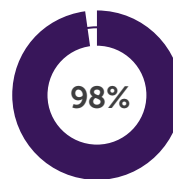
Agree that empowering girls, young women and young mothers is an essential component of child marriage prevention programming.



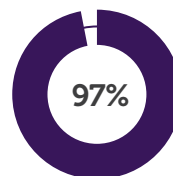
Agree that utilising a gender-transformative approach is essential for confronting power dynamics and transforming harmful gender norms to successfully prevent child marriage.



Collaborate across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus to advocate for gender equality.



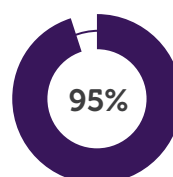
Agree that using a girls-centred approach is essential for preventing child marriage and transforming gender norms.



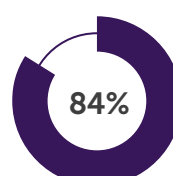
Agree that collaboration across sectors and across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is essential for empowering girls, young women and young mothers.



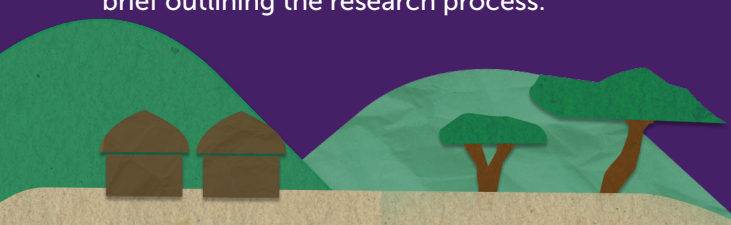
Agree that collaboration across sectors and across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is essential for utilising a gender-transformative approach.



Agree that collaboration across sectors and across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is essential for ensuring that the voices of girls and women are elevated at all social ecological levels and within community, national, regional and global spaces.



Agree that girl-friendly schools require gender-transformative approaches that enhance education quality and retention, and expand girls' reach and potential.



WHY IS A GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH ESSENTIAL FOR PREVENTING CHILD MARRIAGE, MEETING THE NEEDS OF MARRIED GIRLS AND TRANSFORMING HARMFUL GENDER NORMS?

- Child marriage is the result of gender inequality and patriarchy. Gender-transformative approaches push for long-lasting and structural *'change that empowers girls and women in all their diversity and really achieves gender equality'*.
- Girls who are at risk of experiencing child marriage confront a multitude of oppressions that require long-term strategic action to achieve social change. A gender-transformative approach goes *'beyond preventing child marriage'* and invests into the *'wholeness of a girl or young woman's life'* by facilitating gender equality in all spaces at all levels.
- Promoting positive gender relationships will enable girls to exercise and own their rights, and will create long-lasting change that empowers other girls within the community.

RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

Gender-transformative approaches often seek to raise awareness on the *'rights of children, women and girls through targeting parents, local leaders and girls themselves'*. Many participants found this approach has proved successful in addressing child marriage through community engagement to further *'understand and challenge the existing social norms that perpetuate inequalities between men and women, or boys and girls, as well as engaging all stakeholders to support girls' decisions to stay at school and delay early marriages'*.

Gender-transformative approaches also include individual/group-focused empowerment work with girls. Ninety-four percent (94%) of our participants agreed that empowering married girls is essential so they are able to voice their needs and wishes and are involved in the decisions that affect their lives. The act of 'empowering' was described as girls *'understanding their rights and advocacy skills... so that girls can stand up and speak out when their rights are infringed'*.

Investment in the voices and agency of girls and young women is also needed to *'build the blocks'* for a *'sustainable feminist movement'* in the future as these girls mature into potential leaders, wives, mothers and grandmothers.

CRITICAL ISSUES

A gender-transformative approach recognises girls as active decision-makers and amplifies their voices. As part of a gender-transformative approach, it is important to shift power to girls and women within programming. Participants noted that having girls and young women in leadership roles whilst *'resourcing the priorities that they [girls and young women] find most useful'* complements a gender-transformative and girl-centred approach. It is also important to recognise *'the complexity of layers of discrimination and oppression (race, class, gender, disability, identity)'* that also require transformation.

Gendered power relationships will not be transformed without commitment from, and collaboration with, all sectors involved in addressing child marriage at all levels. However, violence against women, gender inequality and patriarchy are not always recognised or prioritised as key drivers of child marriage by all sectors. Our participants view collaboration across sectors and the nexus as an opportunity to address child marriage through promoting gender equality and strengthening the voice of girls.

LEARNINGS FOR ACTION

- Grassroots feminist organisations play a key role in advocating for, and leading, gender-transformative approaches to address child marriage and require continued capacity building and support to do this more effectively at scale.
- Collaboration and joint working across sectors and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is essential for increasing the use of gender-transformative approaches to address child marriage across different sectors and thereby empowering girls, young women, and young mothers at scale.
- Attention should be paid to working alongside girls and women facing *'different experiences and realities'* in various contexts using a gender-transformative and intersectional approach that recognises multiple forms of oppression and discrimination.



BRIEF

A feminist vision on safe spaces and peer-to-peer education for preventing child marriage and addressing the needs of married girls

PARTNERS

The Women's Refugee Commission
Rozaria Memorial Trust
King's College London



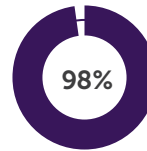
NOVEMBER 2022

Participatory action research using consensus-building methods was conducted from 2021-22 with feminist and women-led civil society organisations, experts and practitioners to learn how best to end child marriage and support already married girls in forcibly displaced and crisis-affected communities in East Africa. This brief summarises findings on safe spaces and peer-to-peer education that study participants identified as priorities for **preventing child marriage and meeting the needs of married girls**. Direct quotes from participants are included in italics throughout the brief. For additional details about the study, this brief can be read in conjunction with a separate brief outlining the research process.

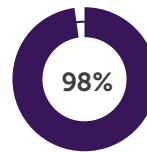
CONSENSUS DATA FROM GRASSROOTS FEMINIST ACTORS IN EAST AFRICA



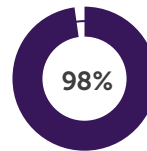
Agree that safe spaces for unmarried and married girls are an essential component for child marriage prevention and mitigation programming.



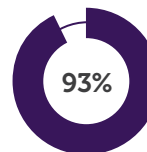
Agree that communities should be involved in offering girl safe spaces within their communities.



Agree that mentors and peer educators are an essential component for child marriage prevention programming.



Agree that collaboration and joint working across sectors and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is essential for creating safe spaces for unmarried and married girls.



Agree that communities should be involved in establishing community role models.

WHY ARE SAFE SPACES AND PEER-TO-PEER EDUCATION ESSENTIAL FOR CHILD MARRIAGE PREVENTION, TRANSFORMING GENDER NORMS & MEETING THE NEEDS OF MARRIED GIRLS?

- Safe spaces provide girls with a secure environment to share experiences, learn from each other, strategise and mobilise and access support. They often act as an 'entry point' to reach girls with messaging concerning sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and gender-based violence prevention.
- Community role models serve an important role for girls and parents '*to look up to as an example of success*'; these role models or peer mentors often engage with girls within designated safe spaces.



RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

The use of safe spaces and peer-to-peer educators, role models or mentors were mentioned by our participants as key programmatic components when preventing child marriage and working to meet the needs of married girls.

Safe spaces are typically known or familiar community-based locations for girls and their families (e.g., schools, recreational/community centres, health centres, youth associations). They are interchangeably referred to as 'safe spaces' or 'girl clubs' and can also include 'safe houses'. Some spaces are set aside just for girls; other spaces will be used for different groups at different times.

Safe spaces go beyond serving as a physical space within communities. These spaces increase girls' access to information, trusted adults, peers and services. Generally, safe spaces are utilised for empowerment-based programmes, life skills, or informal education.

Programming or sessions held in safe spaces are often delivered by peer-to-peer educators. These are usually female educators close in age to the girls participating in the programming and (ideally) well-known to girls and their families. Training and supervision of peer educators is crucial to ensuring educators are prepared and well-suited to programmatic goals. Our participants highlighted that safe spaces are

places where girls can feel protected and know that whatever they choose to share is treated respectfully and confidentially. They are spaces where girls are able to speak freely without the perpetrator or family members who are potentially encouraging marriage.

CRITICAL ISSUES

The inclusion of communities in identifying and offering safe spaces for girls is critical to ensuring success and increasing the mobility of girls. Involvement of community members in this process should be prioritised so any potential barriers to girls' participation and access to the safe space can be addressed.

Additionally, it is important that peer educators or mentors are accepted and known to the wider community so they can effectively discuss child marriage and related issues with community members. Sourcing appropriate and capable peer mentors can be a challenge in specific contexts (e.g., humanitarian settings). Moreover, conducting sufficient training for peer mentors may not be feasible depending on resources and timing of programming. Ensuring that educators are well-equipped and well-trained may considerably improve programme outcomes.

Safe spaces for married girls need to consider the constraints these girls may face related to access. Responsibilities and duties of being a wife and often a mother may impede on their availability and capacity (e.g., childcare provision incorporated within safe spaces may enable married girls to attend sessions).

LEARNINGS FOR ACTION

- Establishment of safe spaces for unmarried and married girls requires collaboration and joint working across sectors and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. This collaboration can support building of resources and mitigation of potential issues, for example, the accessibility of safe spaces and sourcing of appropriate peer mentors.
- Communities should be involved in the identification of safe spaces and choosing community peer-educators or mentors to ensure that there is community ownership of safe spaces, and trusted and respected relationships with educators or mentors.
- Programming that engages with married girls should endeavour to address any challenges that may prevent married girls from accessing a safe space and any related sessions, information, services, etc. The voices and perspectives of married girls should be prioritised when developing and establishing a safe space and recruiting peer educators or mentors.



BRIEF

A feminist vision on fulfilling sexual and reproductive health and rights for preventing child marriage and addressing the needs of married girls

PARTNERS

The Women's Refugee Commission
Rozaria Memorial Trust
King's College London



NOVEMBER 2022

Participatory action research using consensus-building methods was conducted from 2021-22 with feminist and women-led civil society organisations, experts, and practitioners to learn how best to end child marriage and support already married girls in forcibly displaced and crisis-affected communities in East Africa. This brief summaries findings on meeting sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), including comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) and accessing SRH services, which study participants identified as a priority for **preventing child marriage and meeting the needs of married girls**.

Direct quotes from participants are included in italics throughout the brief. For additional details about the study, this brief can be read in conjunction with a separate brief outlining the research process.

CONSENSUS DATA FROM GRASSROOTS FEMINIST ACTORS IN EAST AFRICA



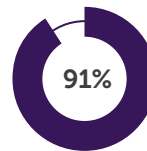
Agree that access to, and provision of, comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is an essential component for child marriage prevention and mitigation programming.



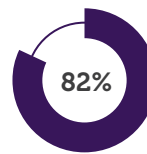
Agree that SRH services are required to meet the needs of married girls.



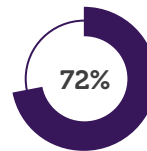
Agree that collaboration and joint working across sectors is essential for access to, and provision of, CSE.



Agree that the provision of CSE by schools promotes girl-friendly formal education.



Agree that CSE is the most effective form of awareness raising for preventing child marriage.



Agree that national governments should be accountable for providing CSE and SRH services for all girls.

WHY IS FULFILLING SRHR ESSENTIAL FOR CHILD MARRIAGE PREVENTION, MEETING THE NEEDS OF MARRIED GIRLS AND TRANSFORMING GENDER NORMS?

- A lack of CSE is considered to be a common driver of child marriage, particularly in relation to unintended pregnancy.
- Married girls will be expected to be sexually active. CSE and SRH services are required to meet the needs of married girls, particularly in relation to consent, gender-based violence, sexually transmitted infections, and early childbearing.
- CSE and inclusive access to SRH services can support access to other services needed by married girls, such as empowerment, protection and education, and facilitate access to justice.



RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

Child marriage is commonly covered as a topic within CSE and other SRHR education programmes.

Critically, SRH services often target married women/ mothers and not adolescent girls, leaving a gap in investment in and provision of child- and adolescent-friendly SRHR education and services.

Ninety-four percent of our participants stated that CSE and SRH services integrated into mother and child health education is a key contributor for fulfilling SRHR.

SRHR-based programmes need to include;

- access to family planning
- CSE and training opportunities
- girl-friendly approaches

There is a need for capacity building for service providers to support girls seeking family planning services and to recognise their unique position and needs. Girls should be able to access SRH services through family planning centres, with responsive providers and girl-friendly receptions. The costs of family planning should be lowered, and support given to girls during unplanned pregnancies.

It is also essential to engage boys and men as champions and participants in education and training programmes, supporting norms change among men. Therefore, SRHR education should also be available to boys and men.

CRITICAL ISSUES

Our participants stated that the lack of appropriate funding to SRHR-based programmes acts as a barrier ^{for}

child marriage prevention programmes, noting specific funding gaps for multi-sectoral services that include CSE and SRH services. This gap hinders the capacity and progress of CSE, which would effectively *'complement campaign advocacy work against child marriage'*.

Poor SRHR funding, education and services reflect misogynistic policies as reflected in the statement made by one participant: *'As most girls who are victims of early child marriages often lack knowledge about sexual relations, their bodies and reproduction, exacerbated by the cultural silence surrounding these subjects. This denies girls the ability to make informed decisions about sexual relations, planning a family, and their health, yet another example of their lives in which they have no control'*.

Approval from partners/spouses to engage with SRH services and CSE is an essential consideration, but there can be many cultural and religious barriers to this.

Access to abortion also has a significant impact on girls' ability to make decisions for themselves.

One respondent contributed the following comment which provides some important context and emphasises the need for CSE: *'In most East African countries, the root cause of child marriage is unintended pregnancy. Comprehensive sexuality education implementation remains a challenge; hence, more girls will continue to get pregnant and enter into child marriage. Thus, there is a need to support pregnant and parenting girls to return to school or take up vocational training. It is also vital to educate on SRHR to prevent repeat pregnancy, IPV [intimate partner violence], etc. When we do all these, we are not only empowering girls; we are also altering the trajectory of child marriage for their children'*.

LEARNINGS FOR ACTION

- Governments should be accountable for providing CSE and SRH services for all girls, including married girls, with an emphasis on girl-friendly provision.
- Donors should prioritise funding for addressing child marriage through SRHR-based programmes, education and services.
- Multi-sector partnerships with the mother and child health sector, as well as the SRHR sector, could provide an important entry point to meet the needs of girls at risk of child marriage and child marriage survivors.

A feminist vision for collaboration across sectors, and across the development-peacebuilding-nexus, for preventing child marriage and addressing the needs of married girls



PARTNERS

The Women's Refugee Commission

The Women's Refugee Commission (WRC), a research and advocacy organization that works to advance equitable and inclusive transformative change for women, children, and young people in the response to crises and displacement, WRC serves as the initiative's coordinating lead and provides technical support to the research and consortium-building components.

Rozaria Memorial Trust

Rozaria Memorial Trust (RMT) is a non-profit that supports girls and women in East and Southern Africa through innovative initiatives that promote education, health, and entrepreneurship. In this initiative, RMT works to conceptualize and translate research into action with partners, fostering strong, local commitment and ownership as well as deeper collaboration and coordination.

King's College London

King's College London (King's) is an academic institution that has a large number of research projects, across all Faculties, which are contributing to progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. In this initiative, King's provides technical support to the initiative's action research on implementing effective child marriage programming across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and sectors.

NOVEMBER 2022

'[We collaborate] to acquire comprehensive, accurate, evidence-informed and appropriate information on addressing child marriage. We collaborate to gain in-depth skills on a range of topics that are important for us to know, including those that may be challenging in some social and cultural contexts. Our collaboration supports us to improve our analytical, communication and other life skills for addressing sexual and gender-based violence, child rights protection, and sexual and reproductive rights, to purposely improve the health and well-being of girls.'

– Grassroots feminist actor from Tanzania

Background

In 2021, the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC), Rozaria Memorial Trust (RMT), and King's College London (King's) set out to engage feminist and women-led civil society organisations, experts, and practitioners to learn how best to enhance coordination and collaboration with humanitarian actors to expedite progress towards ending child marriage and supporting already married girls within and across the humanitarian system in East Africa.

This brief presents key learnings from participatory action research used to support an iterative process of reflection amongst 80 grassroots actors in Eastern Africa working with feminist or women-led organisations that engage in child marriage prevention and/or response efforts with crisis-affected communities in the region. Direct quotes from participants are included in italics throughout. The findings presented here focus on the critical nature of integrated responses that support structural changes to the humanitarian system to include development actors in child marriage response and prevention programming.

Methodology

The participatory action research process consisted of several stages, including a systematic scoping review to explore the effectiveness of existing child marriage prevention and response programming; online participatory workshops to identify core domains

necessary to address child marriage holistically; three rounds of structured surveys to identify shared priorities, divergences and gaps in practice; and qualitative interviews to explore nuances in reported gaps and priorities and divergences in response patterning.ⁱ

Study participants included people working in Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda (unfortunately we did not get any participants working in Eritrea) who specialised in programming-related roles, such as design and implementation, with a focus on women's empowerment, gender and gender-based violence sectors. Through the research process, the voices and experience of these feminist actors and their understandings of gender transformation and patriarchy were elevated to advance discussions on durable solutions to child marriage that are equity-driven and culturally and contextually grounded.

Support for integrated approaches to address child marriage and support married girls

'Collaboration is a road map to achieve sustainable development towards a specific goal. Through collaboration in sectors, we increase productivity towards a common goal, which is to reduce inequalities and achieve equal and empowered societies and communities that respect and protect girls and women rights.'

– Grassroots feminist actor from Kenya

The critical nature of integrated efforts—bringing together multi-sectoral and cross humanitarian-development-peace nexus efforts under one umbrella to address child marriage—was established at the early stages of the research. All study participants agreed, with 83.3% strongly agreeing, that multi-sector coordination and collaboration were essential for preventing child marriage and transforming gender norms. Participants highlighted a myriad of drivers underpinning child marriage in the region, including poverty, gender inequality, poor educational access, poor access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education and care, and conflict—all of which require attention to address child marriage. One participant

noted that *'child marriage is a multi-sectorial challenge that requires involvement of a significant number of stakeholders and aspect from all the disciplines'*. Another participant remarked that *'many health and social outcomes are driven by multiple determinants, meaning that programmes to address these health and social issues must be multipronged'*.

There was also consensus that essential approaches for working with, and meeting the needs of, already married girls (including subsequently single/divorced/widowed girls) must include a multi-sectoral and multi-organisational approach. Needs cited by participants included prevention and response services to domestic violence, early pregnancy, social isolation and poor mental health, as well as access to education, marriage registration, justice and livelihoods. Married girls are likely to have multiple needs and risks based on intersecting risks and vulnerabilities (such as educational access, maternal health care and protection from violence). Integrated responses that bring together different sectors to meet the needs of married girls holistically at an individual and community level were considered critical by participants.

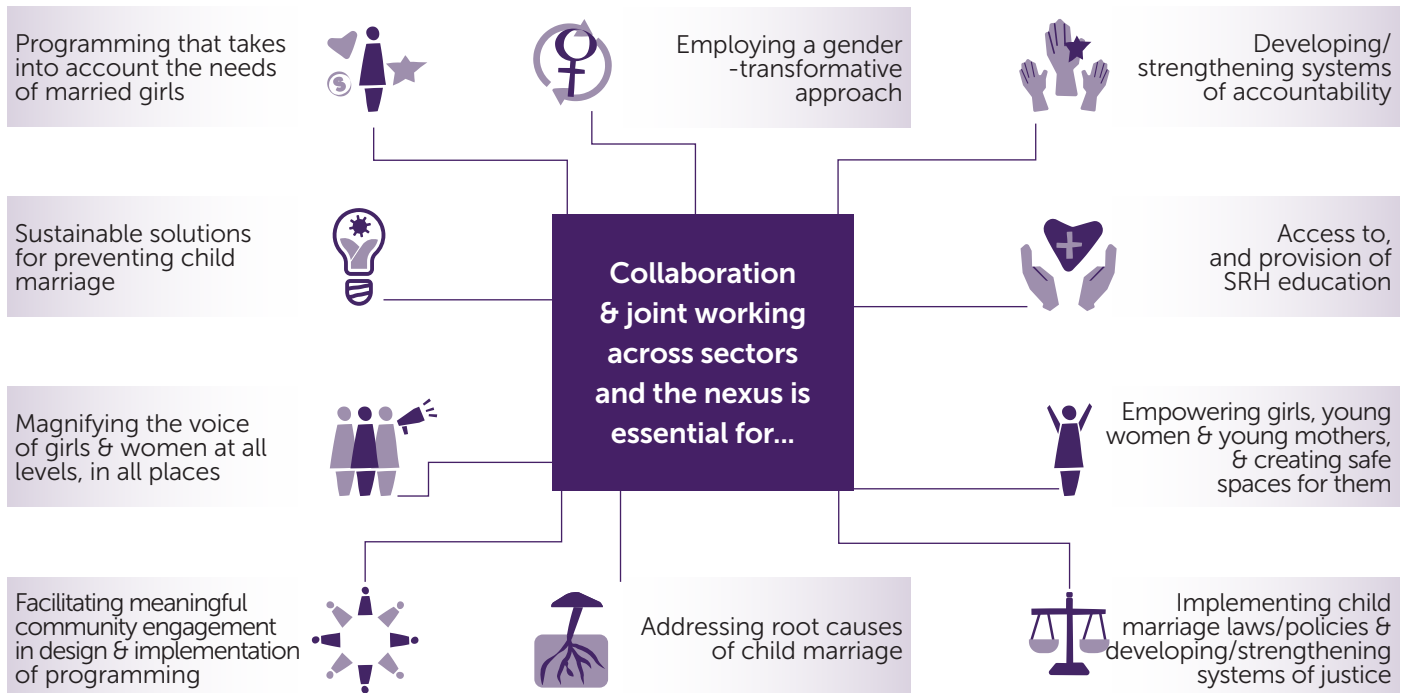
'We are just starting a new project in humanitarian settings and it is clear that effective implementation will require involvement of multiple sectors – e.g., those who work in health, those who work in social protection, government departments that oversee refugee camps, etc. And populations in the humanitarian settings themselves.'

– Grassroots feminist actor from Kenya

Effective integration requires coordination and collaboration across sectors as well as across the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus. It was noted that no one organisation can sufficiently meet the needs for even one married girl or girl at risk of child marriage, let alone the many millions affected across East Africa. This collaboration and joint working across sectors and the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus form the basis of integrated approaches that are essential for addressing the root causes of child marriage through gender-transformative approaches while also meeting the needs of married girls, developing and strengthening systems of accountability, and enhancing access to and provision of SRH services amongst others (see Figure 1).

ⁱ Further information on the initiative's multi-stage participatory action research is available in a separate briefing.

FIGURE 1. Collaboration and joint working across sectors and across the nexus



There was broad consensus among study participants that collaborative efforts to address child marriage, across sectors, should be prioritised to mitigate risk for adolescent girls and support the needs of already married girls.

Other reasons to collaborate noted by feminist actors include amplified efforts to implement programming across sectors, collective advocacy initiatives, evidence generation and sharing of knowledge and experience (see Figure 2).

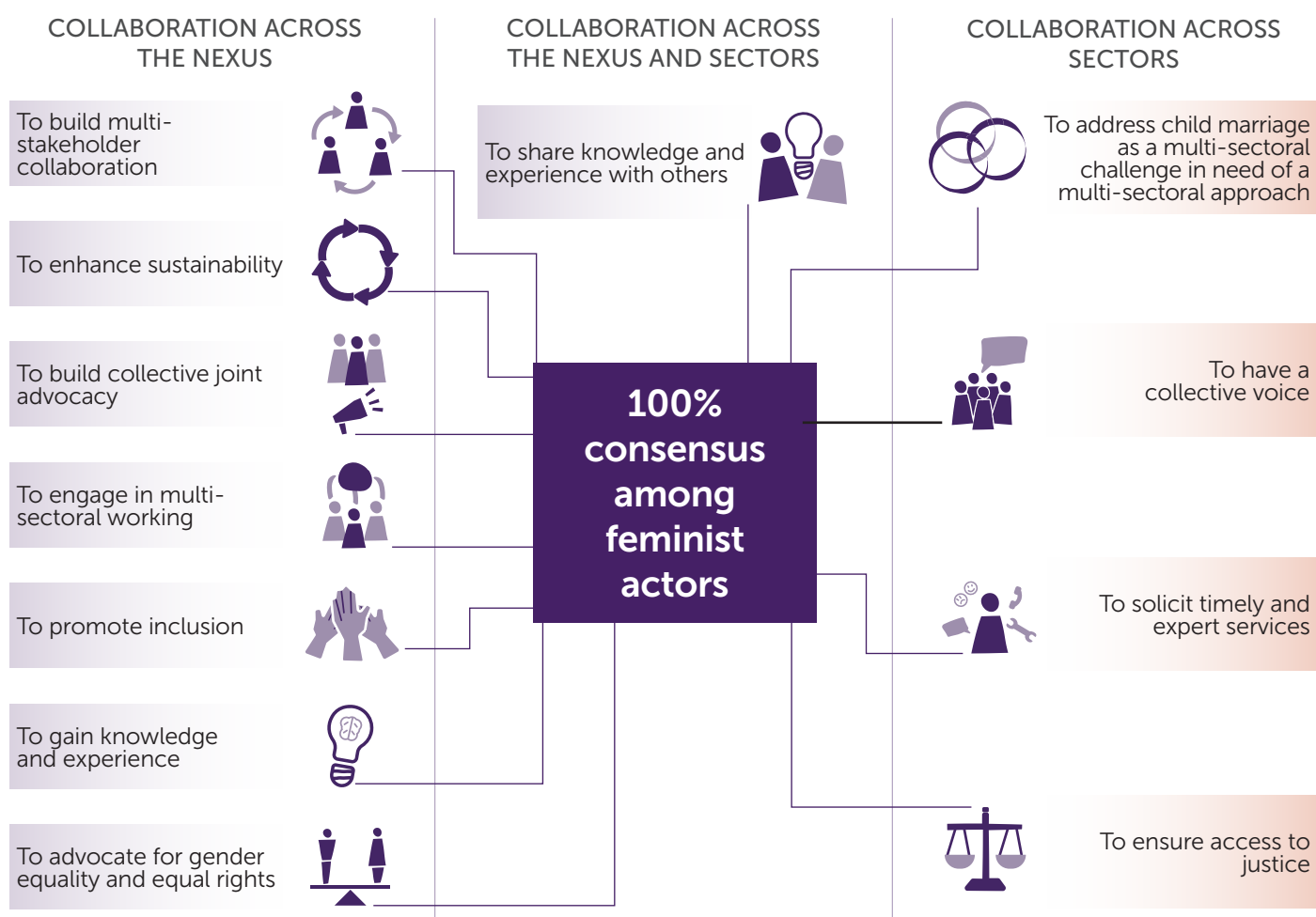
Collaboration can help fasten responses to issues around early child marriage, domestic violence and GBV cases. There is a need to strengthen coordination mechanism among regional, national and local actors through conducting annual, bi-annual, quarterly meetings to inform planning, monitoring and evaluation process. Inclusion of affected persons of concern in regional dialogues and planning can help shape collaboration in cross-sectoral levels.'

– Grassroots feminist actor from Uganda

While 'integrated working' is clearly desired and considered essential by feminist actors for addressing child marriage effectively in East Africa, participants did not use the term 'integrated working' at any stage, nor did they describe frequently 'working together' with other sectors to design, develop and implement programmes and interventions or develop a shared agenda to address child marriage. Participants rather spoke about coordination and collaboration to share information, research and experience, to reduce duplication of efforts and to learn what others are doing. Participants frequently referred to working with others on advocacy campaigns and messages, but not necessarily with those from other sectors or across the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus.

Participants also spoke about the need for '*holistic*', '*joined up*', '*multi-level*' working rather than 'integrated working'. While participants had a vision for integrated working, the different terminology used indicates a disconnect between humanitarian practice and grassroots experiences. Developing shared understandings and shared terminology which draws on the perspectives of grassroots actors is critical for humanitarian practitioners as they reach out to development actors for durable and holistic solutions to end child marriage and support girls who have already experienced child marriage.

FIGURE 2. Reasons for collaboration across sectors and the nexus



Current state of collaboration on child marriage responses

The table below describes the current state of collaboration on child marriage responses as perceived by participants. Improvement is particularly required

at the national and East African regional level. Only a minority of study participants (under 40%) noted that collaboration is currently working well at any level, across sectors and across the nexus (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3. Current cross-sector and cross-nexus collaboration on child marriage responses at different levels

	Perceived collaboration among participants		
	Working well	Sufficient	Needs improvement
Local/community level	37.2%	20.9%	41.9%
	27.9%	32.6%	39.5%
Sub-national level	23.3%	34.9%	41.9%
	25.6%	34.9%	39.5%
National level	18.2%	20.5%	61.4%
	16.3%	27.9%	55.8%
East African regional level	9.3%	18.6%	72.1%
	9.3%	32.6%	58.1%

Legend: CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION CROSS-NEXUS COLLABORATION

Study participants frequently mentioned siloed working as a barrier to effective collaboration across sectors, raising concerns about *'lack of access or relationships with other sectors'* and *'those in other sectors not understanding or appreciating the need for a multi-sectoral approach to ending child marriage'*. Study participants also noted that their most functional relationships were with other feminist or women-led organisations, or with those in the same sector, as shown in Figure 4 below.

Enabling integrated approaches to address child marriage

Participants noted several factors essential to collaboration that would enable integrated programming that effectively addresses child marriage across sectors and across the nexus (see Figure 5). These factors and their linkages to each other are discussed in the following paragraphs.

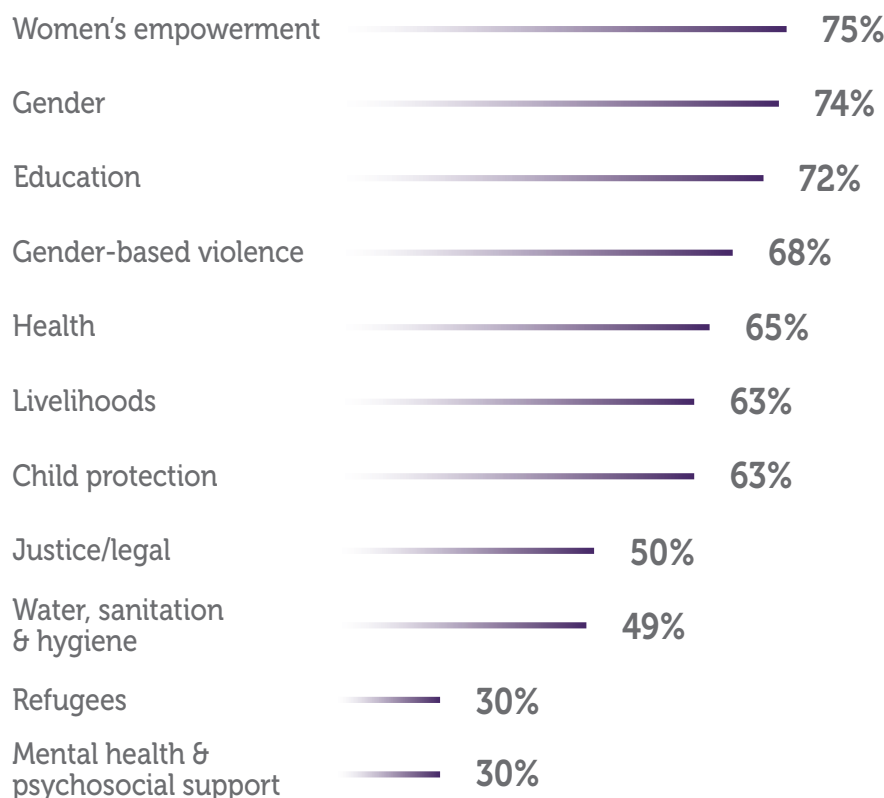
Agreeing and displaying a commitment to collaboration is particularly important for cross-sector working because it indicates to others that different sectors are openly engaged in working to address child marriage. Participants expressed the desire for sectors to engage with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or another type of written agreement to delineate

what issues sectors are addressing/collaborating on and the responsibilities of each sector. Establishing commitment also instils and nurtures a sense of unity and ownership which may result in increased engagement and budgetary allocation to issues such as child marriage. Participants associated the act of unity with having a shared vision or a common agenda, with one participant stating (see below) that *'working out of the vision and agenda across sectors'* is critical to successful collaboration when working in humanitarian crises.

'...It should not just be the health sector talking, or education or child protection, but it should encompass everyone. So I'm looking at the question and we're talking about all these sectors should be at the same table condemning it or at the same table supporting the survivors and creating the space that is needed. And of course amplifying the voice.'

– Grassroots feminist actor from Kenya

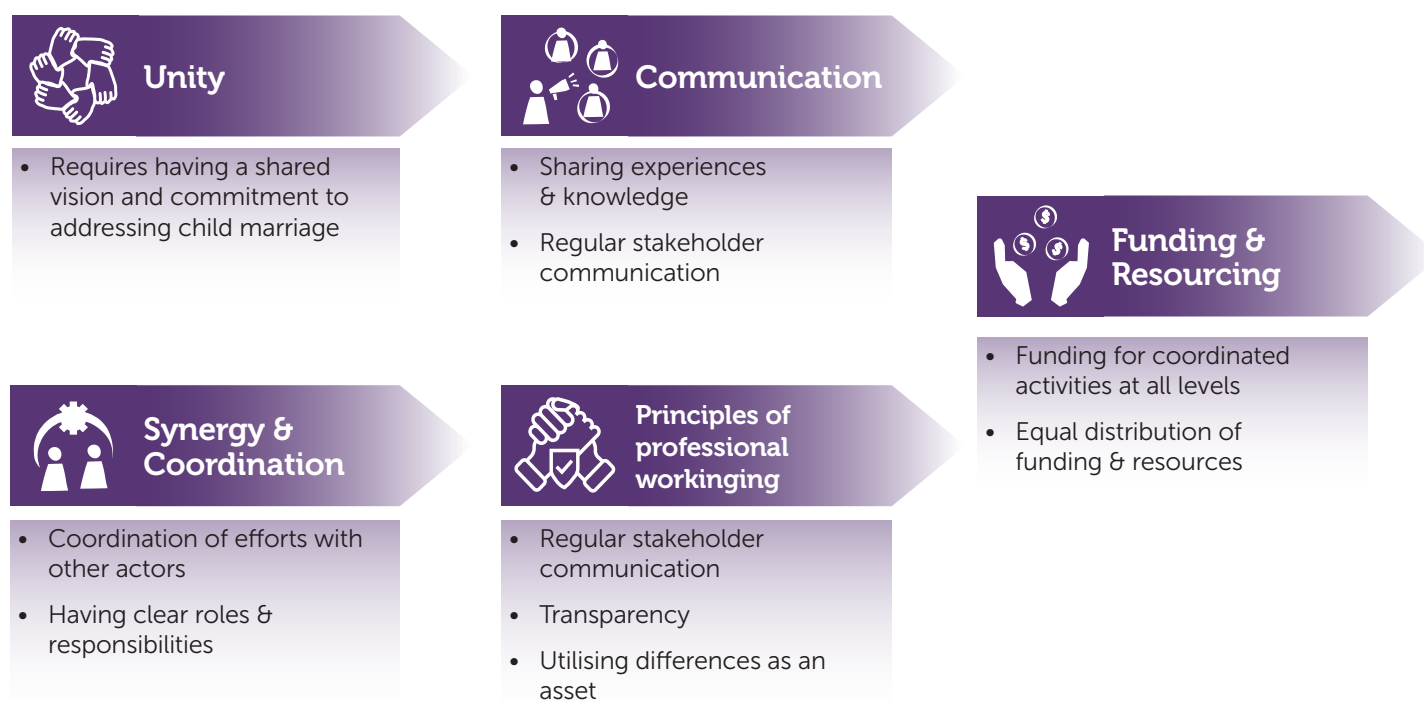
FIGURE 4. Relationships with other sectors that are working well/sufficiently to address child marriage



Key Finding:

While there is potential for relationships across all sectors to be improved, for the grassroots feminist actors we engaged with, they note a particular weakness in their relationships with those working to improve mental health and psychosocial support and with those who work specifically with refugees.

FIGURE 5. Essential enablers to support collaboration across sectors and across the nexus



All aspects received 95–100% agreement

Synergy and coordination were referenced frequently in relation to cross-sector collaboration. Synergy is seen as essential to ensure efforts are not duplicated and that sectors are joined up in their responses. It was suggested that there should be a platform that *'brings together actors from different sectors to jointly contribute to programming from inception to implementation'*. The establishment of clear roles and responsibilities of each sector was also thought to be essential for supporting cross-sector engagement to ensure that all sectors *'know what they are doing and why they are doing it'*. Overall, participants felt that sectors should be more in tune with one another and that efforts to combat child marriage can only be strengthened through proactive coordination.

Study participants agreed that sharing experiences and knowledge is one of the primary reasons they engage in cross-nexus working. Additionally, grassroots feminist actors expressed that exchanging experiences and knowledge is a key enabler to support effective collaboration across the nexus. Development actors may have an established relationship with local communities and relevant stakeholders at multiple levels, which is valuable for humanitarian actors when responding to specific contextual issues or needs. Ensuring that there is not a gap in information sharing and increasing the reach of communication across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is critical as actors may possess valuable knowledge relevant to

working within particular communities. One participant expressed that effective collaboration across the nexus includes *'having an active community of practice in the child marriage space. Learning what other partners or government agencies are doing to address ending child marriage'*. Sharing knowledge is also a key element of relaying important information regarding available resources and support across the nexus.

Regular stakeholder involvement is viewed as a key component that supports effective communication across sectors. Engaging in timely and frequent communication with stakeholders includes communicating with those at all levels impacted by or working to address child marriage (e.g., local community leaders, girls, activists, police officers, and ministries). The study found that grassroots feminist actors place considerable value on frequent, timely and regular consultations, reflective opportunities or coordination meetings between sectors. Regular communication was felt to include *'speaking with government agencies and partners in different sectors either about current needs of girls, or updates on how we are responding, and where the gaps still exist'*. Enabling and organising regular stakeholder communication allows for a sense of shared accountability amongst actors and sectors and reinforces commitment to action and integrated coordination.

While the study found high levels of consensus for practical mechanisms to facilitate effective collaboration across the nexus and across sectors, higher levels of agreement were given to the need for relationships built on trust, transparency and utilising differences as an asset. These principles of professional working were of considerable value to participants when collaborating with other actors and stakeholders. These principles were most commonly referenced in relation to engaging in collaboration across the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus, and this may be directly linked to the power and resource dynamics found within humanitarian and development contexts. In essence, it’s not just what we do to collaborate, but also the nature of that collaboration which is equally critical to ensure that relationships and communication pathways are transparent and strong.

Funding and resourcing were mentioned repeatedly as key enablers to support strong collaboration in relation to multi-level and multi-sector working. Participants felt that there needs to be funding for coordinated activities at all levels, with a particular emphasis on *‘funding to work at subnational, national and regional levels, especially for organisations working at community level’* as most coordination events are held in capital cities and often *‘limit participation to the usual suspects and often not the young women and girls who have lived experience’*. Similarly, it is essential that efforts are made to ensure funding and resources are more evenly and equally distributed across sectors that are directly engaging with girls and married girls. An interesting reflection was provided from one respondent who felt that once the issue of resourcing across sectors is addressed, everyone will *‘believe and*

understand that saving a girl child is the right thing to do’. This highlights the urgency for resource provision and availability to join up sector resources and shift the focus to supporting girls’ lives and protecting their rights holistically.

Barriers to effective collaboration

The study highlighted several critical barriers preventing effective collaboration across sectors and across the nexus. Participants often referenced the interconnected enablers for collaboration as the solution to the current barriers they face in their work on child marriage.

Inadequate planning for collaborative activities was a recurring barrier in relation to cross-sector and cross-nexus engagement. There is the sense that in cross-sectoral working *‘interventions [are developed] independently of other sectors’*. This is a critical issue as sectors may approach the issue of child marriage with different perspectives and risk creating gaps in response and prevention work and duplicating efforts. When working across the nexus, attention needs to be given to lack of cross-border engagement and *‘coordination of action at national level[s]’*. Differing priorities and the dominance of large or international organisations are key barriers preventing the coordination and collaboration of actors working to address child marriage. This is particularly challenging in the cross-nexus context as grassroots organisations feel that within the collaboration they *‘provide very little in the relationship and big brothers and sisters bulldoze [them] left and right to undertake initiatives that are not tailored towards the community needs’* and often there are considerable difficulties to building trust amongst diverse

FIGURE 6. Barriers to collaboration across the nexus and across sectors



* All aspects received 78-89% agreement

and larger stakeholders due to a *'fear of the big players in humanitarian, development and peace-building contexts'*. This study found that the fear and lack of trust among actors, and particularly sectors, leads to intense *'competition', 'selfishness'* and ultimately *'fragmented interventions'* that do not sufficiently support community or gender-transformative initiatives.

LEARNINGS FOR ACTION

- Collaboration and integrated working across sectors, and across the nexus, to address child marriage is experienced as patchy (at best) across the region by grassroots feminist actors. Organisations/actors are most likely to actively and frequently collaborate with like-minded actors in their own sector. Investment is required in pioneering work to facilitate meaningful, inclusive and effective spaces for cross sector and cross nexus collaboration and integrated working.
- While collaboration might be considered as a necessary (or even optional) process to develop and facilitate responses to child marriage, engagement in multi-agency cross-sector and cross-nexus spaces, at all levels, was often considered as a type of intervention in itself for grassroots feminist actors; because of the opportunity this provides to advocate for gender equity, a gender-transformative approach and for the voices of girls and women to be prioritised and heard at all levels. At every level, grassroots actors use spaces of collaboration that include key stakeholders/actors/agencies to increase their commitment to ending child marriage and meeting the needs of married girls. Dedicated and equitable funding for collaboration across sectors and across the nexus is therefore required.
- Not all actors have equal access to the collaborative spaces, to information-sharing platforms, to conferences, networks or meetings and not all organisations have equal power, voice and influence in collaborative spaces, or when working together. Mechanisms that facilitate cross-sector and cross-nexus working must become more inclusive of smaller organisations with fewer resources, those based in rural areas and those with limited fluency in the dominant language (i.e., insert comma please English). This might include grants to fund in-person participation or strengthen online engagement, always providing translation, meeting over WhatsApp rather than Zoom or Teams.
- The amplification of girls' voices in collaborative spaces is critical and requires strengthening.
- The creation of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) can be useful way to increase ownership and commitment, to help build trust, to establish a shared vision and common goal underpinned by shared principles, particularly as child marriage is not always understood in the same way across different sectors/actors.
- Increased mechanisms for collaboration can create more transparency about what different sectors are doing, and plan to do and the impact of their work. This also increases systems of accountability, where sectors and organisations have to account for what they are doing to address child marriage. Complementary spaces for conflict management are also required to support these processes.
- Empowering governments to lead on coordination mechanisms at local and sub-national and national levels that bring together governmental and non-governmental actors from different sectors is critical for meeting their responsibilities to end child marriage as part of commitments made to the Sustainable Development Goals, and through the African Union.

ANNEX 3:

Endnotes

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ANNEX 4:

Abbreviations

CBOs	Community-based organisations
GBV	Gender-based violence
INGOs	International nongovernmental organisations
IOs	International organisations
NGOs	Nongovernmental organisations
NNGOs	National nongovernmental organisations
RMT	Rozaria Memorial Trust
SRH	Sexual and reproductive health
WRC	Women’s Refugee Commission
WROs	Women’s rights organisations

