



BRIEF

A feminist vision on education for preventing child marriage

PARTNERS

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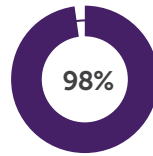


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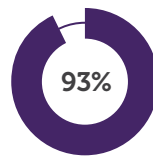
Participatory action research using consensus-building methods was conducted from 2021-22 with feminist and women-led civil society organisations, experts, and practitioners to learn how best to end child marriage and support already married girls in forcibly displaced and crisis-affected communities 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.