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### **Promotion and protection of the rights of children: promotion and protection of the rights of children**

## **Issue of child, early and forced marriage\*\***

### **Report of the Secretary-General**

#### *Summary*

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [75/167](#) of 16 December 2020 on child, early and forced marriage. Covering the period from June 2020 to May 2022, it builds on the previous report of the Secretary-General on the same subject ([A/75/262](#)), providing an update on progress made towards ending child, early and forced marriage in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The present report contains an overview of the way the pandemic has affected the key factors influencing child, early and forced marriage. It illustrates, for instance, that child, early and forced marriage may have been used as a way for economically vulnerable families to reduce their financial burden by downsizing the household and gaining immediate access to financial benefits, such as the bride price. It reviews the various measures taken to address the issue, including in the context of COVID-19 related restrictions, and highlights the main challenges. In the present report, the Secretary-General also discusses research initiatives and data collection. It provides a set of recommendations on measures to be taken by States, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, aimed at eliminating the practice of child, early and forced marriage.

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\* [A/77/150](#).

\*\* The present report was submitted after the deadline so as to include the most recent information.



## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 75/167 of 16 December 2020, the General Assembly expressed deep concerns about the adverse impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on the root causes of child, early and forced marriage, the inadequate attention and resources devoted to ending it and the disruptive effects of the pandemic on programmes to address it, especially at the local level. Consequently, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive, evidence-based report to the Assembly on progress made towards ending child, early and forced marriage worldwide, including in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as best practices for programmes aimed at ending the practice and supporting already married girls and women affected by the practice.

2. A note verbale was sent on 22 December 2021 requesting information from Member States and other stakeholders. As at 30 May 2022, 47 responses had been received from 24 Member States,<sup>1</sup> two United Nations entities,<sup>2</sup> four national human rights institutions<sup>3</sup> and 17 civil society organizations.<sup>4</sup> The present report is based on those submissions – which are available in full on the website of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) – as well as on additional research.<sup>5</sup>

3. Since June 2020, human rights treaty bodies have made recommendations to States parties to take effective measures to end the practice, raise awareness of its harmful effects on physical and mental health and well-being, and encourage the reporting of it to establish protection schemes for victims who file a complaint.<sup>6</sup>

4. Child, early and forced marriage is a human rights violation rooted in gender inequalities and in discriminatory social and cultural norms that consider women and girls to be inferior to men and boys. Long-standing customs are often invoked to justify these harmful practices, ignoring the discrimination and violence they engender, which are in themselves serious human rights violations and forms of gender-based violence.<sup>7</sup> These customs also often intersect with other forms of unequal marriages and family relations and can result, for example, in an increased prevalence of domestic and family violence, both during marriage and after divorce

<sup>1</sup> Submissions were received from the following Member States: Albania, Algeria, Australia, Azerbaijan, Croatia, Cuba, Egypt, El Salvador, Guatemala, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Libya, Luxembourg, Mali, Mexico, Nepal, Netherlands, Poland, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand and Türkiye.

<sup>2</sup> The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) office in Jordan, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNFPA offices in India and the UNICEF office in Lebanon.

<sup>3</sup> National human rights institutions from Albania, Argentina, Egypt and India.

<sup>4</sup> Civil society organization submissions were received from Aide Rapide aux Victimes de Catastrophes, Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust, Centre for Legal Aid Assistance and Settlement (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland branch), Equality Now and others (joint submission), Fundación para Estudio e Investigación de la Mujer, Girls Not Brides Bangladesh, Independent Thought, Laura Davidson, Jubilee Campaign, Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights, Minorities Alliance Pakistan, Narrow Gate Ministries, Partners for Law in Development, Plan International, Save the Children, Women's Legal Centre and World Vision International.

<sup>5</sup> The submissions are available at [www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2022/call-input-reports-issue-child-early-and-forced-marriage-general-assembly](https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2022/call-input-reports-issue-child-early-and-forced-marriage-general-assembly).

<sup>6</sup> See CRC/C/MDG/CO/5-6; CEDAW/C/DOM/CO/8; CEDAW/C/PER/CO/9; CEDAW/C/KGZ/CO/5; and CCPR/C/KEN/CO/4.

<sup>7</sup> Joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2019) on harmful practices, para. 6.

or separation.<sup>8</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic has undermined hard-won gains achieved in ending harmful practices, including child, early and forced marriage, further compromising the realization of the human rights of women and girls and the ability of States to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. More than two years since the start of the global pandemic, evidence continues to emerge concerning the multiple negative impacts of COVID-19 as well as of the measures adopted by States to contain it. The evidence shows that impacts are felt in societies at large but have affected the most marginalized in particular.<sup>9</sup>

5. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused disruptions to programmes and service delivery and closures of schools. It has led to increased risks of domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence, economic hardship, the disproportionate share of unpaid family care responsibilities, and difficulties in gaining access to health services. All of these factors have had a negative impact on the effort to eliminate child, early and forced marriage. New and exacerbated challenges have required the adaptation of existing interventions to address this harmful practice. Those challenges have also shown the importance of strong, pre-existing child-sensitive and gender-sensitive systems as a basis for effective responses to the practice in a crisis.

6. The present report is a reminder of the need to overcome the challenges that the pandemic has triggered leading to child, early and forced marriage and to learn from the crisis. In the present report, the Secretary-General calls for strengthening the protection of women and girls from these harmful practices and their negative impact on the enjoyment of human rights for women and girls. This protection should be reinforced at all times, in particular in the context of crises and emergencies, such as conflicts, pandemics, natural disasters, environmental crises and increasing global hunger and food insecurity.<sup>10</sup>

## II. Impact of COVID-19 on child, early and forced marriage

### A. Current data on child, early and forced marriage

7. In 2021, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimated that approximately 650 million girls and women alive worldwide had been married before reaching 18 years of age.<sup>11</sup> Significant progress has been made in reducing the prevalence of child, early and forced marriage. Overall, the prevalence rate of this practice has declined in most regions in the past decade, resulting in a 15 per cent decline in the proportion of girls married before 18 years of age, from nearly one in four to one in five. However, existing data show that, at the current pace of progress, target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which involves ending the practice by 2030, will not be met in any region of the world,<sup>12</sup> and the impact of COVID-19 could push that target even further away.

<sup>8</sup> See Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendation No. 29 (2013) on the economic consequences of marriage, family relations and their dissolution.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022*; World Bank and UNICEF, "The impact of COVID-19 on the welfare of households with children", 2021; and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Government Responses to COVID-19: Lessons on Gender Equality for a World in Turmoil* (2022).

<sup>10</sup> See Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and others, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World* (Rome, 2022).

<sup>11</sup> UNICEF, *Towards Ending Child Marriage: Global Trends and Profiles of Progress* (New York, 2021), p. 12.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

8. The region with the highest prevalence of child, early and forced marriage is sub-Saharan Africa, where 34 per cent of women were married before reaching 18 years of age.<sup>13</sup> However, some countries in the region, such as Ethiopia, experienced a significant decline between 1991 and 2016.<sup>14</sup> South Asia, with 28 per cent of women married when they were under 18 years of age, has the second highest prevalence rate. South Asia and the Middle East and North Africa have made significant progress in reducing child, early and forced marriage over the past 25 years, but within the past decade progress appears to have slowed. Latin America and the Caribbean is the only region where rates have been stagnant for at least two decades,<sup>15</sup> and the region also has a high prevalence of early and adolescent pregnancy.<sup>16</sup>

9. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated gender inequalities and deepened poverty,<sup>17</sup> both of which are root causes and drivers of the practice of child, early and forced marriage. Its consequences are likely to be felt for at least another decade.<sup>18</sup> As a result, the marginalized women and girls in some regions are at greater risk of falling victim to child, early and forced marriage, which would endanger their rights and future economic opportunities. UNICEF estimates that by 2030 the pandemic could put up to 10 million more girls at risk of child, early and forced marriage, particularly those from poor households and rural areas. This is in addition to the 100 million girls who were already at risk before the pandemic.

## **B. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the factors influencing child, early and forced marriage**

10. The harm that child, early and forced marriage causes to women and girls goes beyond its immediate physical and mental consequences and often undermines the recognition, enjoyment and exercise of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. Its adverse impact also affects the dignity, physical, psychosocial and moral integrity, participation, health, education and economic and social status of its victims.<sup>19</sup>

11. In contexts of crises, child, early and forced marriage is associated with a wide range of consequences that have been analysed in previous reports.<sup>20</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly exacerbated or altered the negative social behaviour associated with decisions about child, early and forced marriage, reinforcing conditions supporting the practice, in a context of significantly weakened protective mechanisms, destabilization of family and community structures and a weakening of other protective factors.<sup>21</sup>

### **1. Economic insecurity**

12. Various studies have documented evidence of a strong correlation between the issue of child, early and forced marriage and economic insecurity, poverty and lack

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>16</sup> UNICEF, "A profile of child marriage and early unions in Latin America and the Caribbean", 2019.

<sup>17</sup> World Bank, *World Bank Report: Finance for an Equitable Recovery* (Washington, D.C., 2022), pp. 27–30.

<sup>18</sup> UNICEF, *COVID-19: A Threat to Progress against Child Marriage* (New York 2021) p. 16.

<sup>19</sup> Joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2019) on harmful practices, para. 15.

<sup>20</sup> See [A/HRC/41/19](#) and [A/75/262](#).

<sup>21</sup> Girls Not Brides, "COVID-19 and child marriage: a year on", July 2021, pp. 1–2.

of income opportunities.<sup>22</sup> Some families may resort to child, early and forced marriage as a survival strategy in the absence of viable livelihood alternatives.<sup>23</sup> With increased financial pressure and loss of income-generating opportunities owing to the pandemic, child, early and forced marriage may have been used as a way for families to reduce their financial burden by downsizing the household. It is also seen as a means of gaining immediate access to financial benefits, especially when there is a bride price paid by the groom's family to the bride's family.<sup>24</sup> One study found that children who had experienced hunger in the previous four weeks were 60 per cent more likely to be married than those who had not.<sup>25</sup> Past experience shows that, in the aftermath of the crisis, girls are likely to continue to be more affected and face challenges in returning to school. In West Bengal, India, families cited economic hardship owing to lockdown as a reason for marrying off their underage daughters.<sup>26</sup>

13. Child marriage and early motherhood can severely curtail educational and employment opportunities and are likely to have a long-term, adverse impact on girls and their children's quality of life.<sup>27</sup> The pandemic has further intensified women's unpaid care and domestic workloads and has jeopardized their livelihoods and economic security,<sup>28</sup> in particular for those in woman-headed and girl-headed households. In this context, women in general have been exposed to more job losses, in particular in the informal economy, and have borne the burden of family responsibilities, leading to greater economic insecurity and less autonomy.<sup>29</sup> For instance, a survey conducted by Azim Premji University found that Indian rural women in the informal economy accounted for 80 per cent of job losses in India between March 2020 and April 2021.<sup>30</sup>

## 2. Barriers to education

14. States have obligations to ensure the universal right to high-quality education and to create an enabling environment to empower girls.<sup>31</sup> However, pandemic related measures, such as school closures, have deepened pre-existing gender inequalities in access to education.<sup>32</sup> Studies have also shown that the education of girls and women is essential to reducing the prevalence of child, early and forced marriage. A study in the Sahel region found that 95 per cent of married adolescent girls were not attending school and that young women with no education were 10 times more likely to have married before 18 years of age than their peers.<sup>33</sup> UNICEF determined that school

<sup>22</sup> See A/HRC/41/19, paras. 14–15 and Margaret E. Greene and Ellen Stiefvater, "Social and gender norms and child marriage: a reflection on issues, evidence and areas of inquiry in the field", paper prepared for Advancing Learning and Innovation on Gender Norms (ALiGN), London, April 2019, p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> A/HRC/41/19, paras. 14–15 and World Vision International, *COVID-19 and Child Marriage: How COVID-19's Impact on Hunger and Education is Forcing Children into Marriage* (2021), p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> UNICEF, COVID-19, p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> World Vision International, *COVID-19 and Child Marriage*, p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> Save the Children, "Global girlhood report 2021: girls' rights in crisis", 2021, p. 13.

<sup>27</sup> Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, para. 7.41.

<sup>28</sup> See A/HRC/44/51, para. 9.

<sup>29</sup> UN-Women and UNDP, *Government Responses to COVID-19*.

<sup>30</sup> UN-Women, "Your questions answered: women and COVID-19 in India", 27 July 2021.

<sup>31</sup> Joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2019) on harmful practices.

<sup>32</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), *When Schools Shut: Gendered Impacts of COVID-19 School Closures* (Paris, 2021) and World Bank, UNESCO and UNICEF, *The State of the Global Education Crisis: A Path to Recovery* (2021), p. 27.

<sup>33</sup> UNICEF, *Child Marriage in the Sahel* (New York, 2020).

closures increased the risk of child, early and forced marriage by 25 per cent annually.<sup>34</sup>

15. The economic impact of the pandemic may have also led to girls dropping out of school in order to engage in child labour and other family care responsibilities.<sup>35</sup> The interruption of education programmes further exposed girls, including those who were married, to a heightened level of family and domestic violence, as women and girls spent more time at home and lost access to support networks that in some cases were available in education institutions.

16. Schools in some countries resorted to digital learning as a way to ensure continuity in education. However, girls' limited access to digital equipment and an Internet connection has been an obstacle for them in some countries and may have resulted in them dropping out of school completely.<sup>36</sup> Adolescent pregnancies linked to reduced access to sexual and reproductive health information and services could have also compromised adolescent girls' return to school after schools reopened.<sup>37</sup>

17. Moreover, having spent a long time out of school, girls may have experienced additional pressure to get married, often in the absence of alternatives or because of prevailing gender stereotypes about the role of women and girls in society.<sup>38</sup>

### 3. Increased risks of sexual and gender-based violence

18. Girls who are married are at particular risk of domestic violence. This is the case in particular in contexts where new brides move in with the grooms' family and where they are not able to maintain contact with their families owing to restrictions of movement.<sup>39</sup> Lockdown measures linked to the pandemic have resulted in a surge in gender-based violence, especially in the home.<sup>40</sup> With the closure of schools and restrictions of movement, women and girls have been likely to spend more time in their homes, sometimes in an abusive environment. Lockdown measures have also increased the exposure of girls to sexual violence and unintended pregnancies, which may create pressure to marry and increase the risk of child, early and forced marriage.<sup>41</sup>

19. In humanitarian settings, the breakdown of family, social and community networks contributes to an increase in the number of girls being married. Moreover, the fact that girls are at a higher risk of being subjected to sexual violence, and that this can be considered in some instances to be a "damage to family honour", leads some families to marry girls at an early age.<sup>42</sup> In some humanitarian settings, the Global Protection Cluster network documented a rise in gender-based violence in response to COVID-19 lockdowns and an increasing risk of child, early and forced marriage as an economic coping strategy in most countries with a high prevalence of the practice.<sup>43</sup> Studies conducted in the northwest of the Syrian Arab Republic, for example, revealed that every single girl interviewed shared the experience of living in fear of being raped and sexually assaulted, and 86 per cent of all stakeholders found

<sup>34</sup> UNICEF, *COVID-19*, p. 14.

<sup>35</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), "COVID-19 and women's human rights: guidance", 15 April 2020, available at [www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Women/COVID-19\\_and\\_Womens\\_Human\\_Rights.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Women/COVID-19_and_Womens_Human_Rights.pdf).

<sup>36</sup> UNESCO, *When Schools Shut*, p. 37.

<sup>37</sup> UNICEF, *COVID-19*, p. 24.

<sup>38</sup> UNESCO, *When Schools Shut*, p. 50.

<sup>39</sup> UNICEF, *COVID-19*, pp. 7–8.

<sup>40</sup> UN-Women and UNDP, *Government Responses to COVID-19*, p. 35.

<sup>41</sup> UNICEF, *COVID-19*, p. 24.

<sup>42</sup> A/HRC/41/19, para. 8.

<sup>43</sup> Global Protection Cluster, "Aftershock: abuse, exploitation and human trafficking in the wake of COVID-19", paper prepared as a global protection update, November 2020.

that child marriage had reached an alarming level as a consequence of protracted conflict – a level that has been exacerbated by the pandemic.<sup>44</sup>

#### 4. Limited access to programmes and services

20. Health-care systems around the world have been overwhelmed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and this has severely hampered women's and girls' right to have access to information and health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health services. Pandemic related restrictions have increased difficulties for girls and women in gaining access to a range of services that protect them from child, early and forced marriage and its consequences in terms of sexual and reproductive health. These services include contraception, maternal and newborn care, treatment of sexually transmitted infections, safe abortion care and effective referral pathways. For instance, at the beginning of the pandemic, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) identified that, in 114 low-income and middle-income countries, women could not gain access to family planning services during a period of on average 3.6 months, resulting in a projected 7 million unintended pregnancies.<sup>45</sup> Even before the pandemic, less than a third of all countries recognized adolescent girls and young women as a group with specific needs, and only 14 per cent recognized the need for and included specific services for that group.<sup>46</sup>

21. As resources have been diverted to the COVID-19 pandemic response, the already fragile health-care systems have become further burdened, with more limited human resources capacity available owing to the outbreak,<sup>47</sup> and with restrictions of movement orders affecting supply chains and hindering access to facilities. In some contexts, this may have resulted in unintended pregnancy and increased pressure on girls to marry early. Overall, maternal and postnatal health has worsened during the pandemic, with an increase in maternal mortality, stillbirths, pregnancy complications and maternal depression. This is of particular concern for girls and young women under 20 years of age, who face higher risks during pregnancy.<sup>48</sup>

22. The availability and accessibility of services for survivors of gender-based violence have also been disrupted. Among survivors of child, early and forced marriage, girls and women facing intersecting or multiple factors of discrimination, such as those with unclear immigration status, refugees, internally displaced persons, those living in remote areas and those with disabilities, could see their access further limited.<sup>49</sup>

#### 5. Weakened legal protection

23. As of January 2019, 170 countries in the world had adopted laws establishing 18 years as the minimum age of marriage, but only 34 of those admitted no exception

<sup>44</sup> Ending Payne, "Northwest Syria gender analysis: a comprehensive gender and age analysis for the northwest Syria humanitarian response", paper prepared for World Vision International, March 2020 and Nathan McGibney and Nadine Haddad, "Stolen future: war and child marriage in northwest Syria", report prepared for World Vision International, June 2020.

<sup>45</sup> UNFPA, "Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on family planning and ending gender-based violence, female genital mutilation and child marriage", interim technical note, 27 April 2020.

<sup>46</sup> World Health Organization, *Addressing Violence against Women in Health and Multisectoral Policies: A Global Status Report* (2021), p. 32.

<sup>47</sup> UNFPA, "COVID-19: a gender lens: protecting sexual and reproductive health and rights, and promoting gender equality", technical brief, March 2020.

<sup>48</sup> Girls Not Brides, "COVID-19 and child marriage", p. 3.

<sup>49</sup> African Union and others, "Gender-based violence in Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic", policy paper, December 2020, p. 6.

to the rule.<sup>50</sup> There are, however, powerful factors that compromise the enforcement of such legislation, including the possibility of underage unions with parental or judicial consent, the coexistence of customary or religious laws that allow a lower age for marriage,<sup>51</sup> and the social recognition of non-registered unions. With pandemic related restrictions, unions may have become underground, and opportunities for girls to prevent and or challenge child, early and forced marriage in courts have become even slimmer than before.<sup>52</sup>

24. For victims of gender-based violence, including girls married before 18 years of age, COVID-19 related lockdowns and other restrictions have hampered access to legal protection services, as court activities have been suspended or delayed and most legal aid centres have closed.<sup>53</sup> Support services, including effective referrals and avenues to safety, for victims and survivors of gender-based violence were not necessarily prioritized in the context of the crisis, nor was information on hotlines and online services systematically included in COVID-19 messaging.<sup>54</sup>

### **III. Mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on child, early and forced marriage**

25. Ending child, early and forced marriage, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath, requires addressing the driving factors of this practice in addition to structural discrimination and gender inequalities that underpin it. A global gender tracker identified more than 1,600 gender-sensitive measures that had been implemented in 196 countries and territories to respond to the effects of the pandemic, ranging from social benefits to child protection services addressing gender-based violence.<sup>55</sup> Information received through the submissions and available reports highlights promising ways to ensure risk mitigation and an effective response in tackling the practice.

#### **A. Strengthening social protection and poverty alleviation measures**

26. Women and girls can build their economic assets from programmes that offer an economic incentive to postpone marriage until after 18 years of age, such as microcredit programmes or savings schemes.<sup>56</sup> Many of the submissions acknowledged the importance of such measures, in particular in the context of the pandemic. As of January 2022, 3,856 social protection and labour measures had been reported to be planned or implemented by 223 countries and territories in response to the pandemic, of which 60 per cent were for social assistance. However, only a small proportion of these measures seem to have targeted women's economic security and child protection, according to 2021 data. The adoption of new measures has slowed down

<sup>50</sup> WORLD Policy Analysis Center, "Child marriage", WORLD database, available at [www.worldpolicycenter.org/topics/child-marriage/policies](http://www.worldpolicycenter.org/topics/child-marriage/policies), accessed on 19 July 2022.

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, Claire Mason, "Married by exception: child marriage policies in the Middle East and North Africa", report prepared for Save the Children International, 2021, p. 12.

<sup>52</sup> UNICEF, *COVID-19*, p. 8.

<sup>53</sup> United Nations, "The impact of COVID-19 on women", policy brief, 9 April 2020, p. 17 and African Union and others, "Gender-based violence in Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic", p. 5.

<sup>54</sup> OHCHR, "COVID-19 and women's human rights".

<sup>55</sup> UNDP, "COVID-19 global gender response tracker, Data Futures platform", available at <https://data.undp.org/gendertracker/>, quoted in UN-Women and UNDP, *Government Responses to COVID-19*, p. 19.

<sup>56</sup> Joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2019) on harmful practices.



since March 2020,<sup>57</sup> and many gender-sensitive measures have been discontinued,<sup>58</sup> thereby putting an end to their potential to prevent child, early and forced marriage.

27. Financial cash transfers have proved to be a key tool in low-income and middle-income countries to counter the economic shock of the pandemic by expanding pre-existing programmes and targeting vulnerable households. They have been used in Latin America and the Caribbean and in sub-Saharan Africa in particular, but to a much lesser extent in Asia, in particular in Central and Southern Asia.<sup>59</sup>

28. Financial transfers have been allocated to workers in the informal economy, with a dedicated focus on women married before 18 years of age. For instance, in Burkina Faso the Government targeted the informal sector for cash transfers, including fruit and vegetable vendors, the majority of whom are women.<sup>60</sup> India provided in-kind support and cash transfers to low-income households, which contributed to reducing their vulnerability to the practice of child, early and forced marriage.<sup>61</sup> Mali reported that the Government had reinforced the social protection for survivors of child, early and forced marriage through income-generating activities, psychosocial and legal services and cash transfers to poor families.<sup>62</sup> A “cash for protection” project was reported to have provided support to Syrian refugee and asylum-seeking girls in host communities and in the Azraq refugee camp in Jordan, including girls who had been married young or were at risk of child, early and forced marriage. Through the project, the girls were provided with access to financial benefits and to comprehensive protection services in the context of the pandemic.<sup>63</sup> In Togo, where one in four women were married before the age of 18 years and 95 per cent of all women worked in the informal sector, the Government had transferred money to workers in the informal economy through cell phones, using the electoral registry.<sup>64</sup>

29. However, most of these programmes have had short durations – 4.5 months on average – and limited coverage. In sub-Saharan Africa, financial assets have reached only 10 per cent of the population. Challenges have included the lack of access to the Internet or to digital devices for many women and the need to hold a bank account in order to receive benefits.<sup>65</sup> Owing to their age, some married girls may have faced greater obstacles in gaining access to banking services and being included in registries to receive financial benefits, such as those made on the basis of lists of voters.

30. In order to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on survivors of child, early and forced marriage, and to ensure economic security and alternatives to marriage, entrepreneurship skills and the right of young women to waged and salaried work must be strengthened,<sup>66</sup> yet gender-responsive economic and labour measures in response to the pandemic have been very limited at the global level.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Ugo Gentilini and others, “Social protection and jobs responses to COVID-19: a real-time review of country measures”, paper prepared for the World Bank, “Living paper” version 16, 2 February 2022, p. 5.

<sup>58</sup> UN-Women and UNDP, *Government Responses to COVID-19*, p. 20.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>61</sup> UNICEF, *COVID-19*, p. 20.

<sup>62</sup> Submission by Mali.

<sup>63</sup> Submission by Plan International.

<sup>64</sup> UN-Women and UNDP, *Government Responses to COVID-19*, p. 75.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., pp. 68 and 74.

<sup>66</sup> UNICEF, *Towards Ending Child Marriage*, p. 24.

<sup>67</sup> UN-Women and UNDP, *Government Responses to COVID-19*, p. 58.

## B. Promoting access to education and to learning opportunities

31. Education is an important tool for empowering women and girls to claim their rights, in particular in contexts of increased social exclusion and poverty. The aim is to ensure universal and free enrolment, to prevent dropout, and to eliminate gender disparities and promote access for the most marginalized girls, especially those living in remote and rural communities. The restrictions associated with the pandemic, including school closures, have required States to develop innovative measures to meet these obligations.

32. Some of the submissions included mentions of how education systems were exploring new learning methods, including distance learning. For instance, many States indicated that they had invested in remote learning, extended the academic year or prioritized certain areas of the curriculum, along with the development of tailored learning materials, self-paced platforms, financial support, improved access to infrastructure and the provision of subsidized devices.<sup>68</sup>

33. UNESCO determined that, since 2020, at least 220 projects had been implemented in 112 countries and actions had been undertaken in 20 countries supporting 5 million girls during school closures. These included assessments and gap analyses of available digital education resources; the development of accessible training and learning platforms; the digitization of gender-responsive curricula and educational resources; and coordinated campaigns to encourage the continuity of learning, in particular in countries with high gender disparities in education.<sup>69</sup>

34. Some countries made the provision of specific support a priority to reduce the risk of child, early and forced marriage and early and adolescent pregnancies.<sup>70</sup> Mexico mentioned programmes implemented and initiatives taken at the primary and secondary levels of education to encourage pregnant girls and adolescents and mothers under 15 years of age to stay in school.<sup>71</sup> Poland reported on the provision of benefits targeting specific households, namely, mothers of at least four children from the Roma community, by providing subsidies to enable them to return to school.<sup>72</sup> Portugal reported, for instance, that it had prioritized digital contact with school communities and with social support entities.<sup>73</sup>

## C. Strengthening legal protection and support services

35. Efforts to protect survivors of gender-based violence, including child, early and forced marriage, must be gender-sensitive and age-sensitive. Such efforts require holistic interventions that include physical, psychological and social protection, in particular in the context of the pandemic.<sup>74</sup> As the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights emphasized in her report on accountability and child marriage, it is important to adopt victim-centred approaches in legal proceedings and protection interventions. This includes facilitating victims' participation in the design,

<sup>68</sup> See, for example, submissions by Guatemala and Mali.

<sup>69</sup> UNESCO, *When Schools Shut*, p. 57.

<sup>70</sup> Plan International Asia-Pacific Regional Hub, *Let's Go Digital! Using Digital Technology to End Child, Early and Forced Marriage and Reduce Adolescent Pregnancy* (Bangkok, 2021).

<sup>71</sup> Submission by Mexico.

<sup>72</sup> Submission by Poland.

<sup>73</sup> Submission by Portugal.

<sup>74</sup> OHCHR, "Protection of victims of sexual violence: lessons learned", available at <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Women/WRGS/ReportLessonsLearned.pdf>.

implementation and evaluation of gender-responsive and age-sensitive reparations and informing survivors about their rights.<sup>75</sup>

36. Some submissions provided examples of including women and girls in the design and implementation of relevant initiatives. For instance, El Salvador reported on its Ciudad Mujer programme, which has continued to facilitate access for women and girls to specialized reporting, protection, counselling, support and empowerment services.<sup>76</sup> Guatemala stated that its Child and Adolescent Protection Boards had been strengthened to provide specialized services for children and adolescents who were victims of violence, including child, early and forced marriage.<sup>77</sup> The Islamic Republic of Iran indicated that its National Authority for the Convention on the Rights of the Child had set up child rights clinics throughout the country to provide counselling and psychological support for children and their families and to raise awareness about child, early and forced marriage.<sup>78</sup> Nepal highlighted that, as a response to cases of gender-based violence, the Government, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, had mobilized psychosocial counsellors and set up 24-hour toll free helplines for women.<sup>79</sup>

37. Disruptions of services as reported above have also, in some instances, led to significant innovative and adaptive solutions in service delivery. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) estimated that over 100 countries had increased the availability of channels for victims of gender-based violence to seek support of all kinds.<sup>80</sup>

38. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated ongoing digital transformations and the use of technology in general. With social distancing and restrictions of movement, protection and support services have moved reporting, screening, court hearings and psychosocial support services online and explored new ways of facilitating victims' access to justice and to sexual and reproductive health information and services. Egypt reported that the addition of digital services had enabled the filing of complaints of human rights violations, the provision of psychosocial guidance, referrals and an online information campaign.<sup>81</sup> Luxembourg stated that it had updated relevant websites with information on addressing domestic violence during a pandemic and lockdown and had made those websites more interactive, gender-sensitive, age-sensitive, culturally sensitive and accessible.<sup>82</sup> According to reports, in Viet Nam and Timor-Leste applications had been built to help young people gain access to support services, ask questions about sexual and reproductive health, and learn about protection issues, such as trafficking in persons and child, early and forced marriage. It was reported that social media in Indonesia supported communication on sexual and reproductive health.<sup>83</sup>

39. Law enforcement strategies have also focused on access to remedies for victims, including through new reporting channels for filing complaints, new ways of conducting investigations, and the inclusion of comprehensive care and follow-up as part of services and legal support provided to victims of gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Mexico, justice centres for women continued their

<sup>75</sup> A/HRC/50/44, para. 46.

<sup>76</sup> Submission by El Salvador.

<sup>77</sup> Submission by Guatemala.

<sup>78</sup> Submission by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

<sup>79</sup> Submission by Nepal.

<sup>80</sup> UN-Women and UNDP, *Government Responses to COVID-19*, p. 41.

<sup>81</sup> Submission by Egypt.

<sup>82</sup> Submission by Luxembourg.

<sup>83</sup> Plan International Asia-Pacific Regional Hub, *Let's Go Digital!*, p. 12.

operations, holding extraordinary sessions.<sup>84</sup> Several countries reported providing virtual legal advice with referrals for psychosocial support to girls already married or in informal unions.<sup>85</sup> Switzerland noted that, given that its support services could provide legal counsel to victims, during the pandemic professionals in contact with victims had received online advice through the national department in charge of combating child and forced marriage.<sup>86</sup>

40. Online tools, however, rely on equipment, a reliable and affordable Internet connection, electric power and relevant digital and literacy skills. These requirements often rendered them inaccessible to women and girls from marginalized groups and regions, especially those who experienced compounding factors of discrimination, such as those with disabilities, those living in remote or rural areas and those with low income.<sup>87</sup>

41. In the light of the pandemic, Governments have also adapted service delivery for the protection of women and girls through in-person outreach. In Jordan, mobile police units have visited homes, while Fiji reported that police transportation had been organized for women victims to gain access to services during curfew hours. A number of countries identified shelters for victims as essential services and expanded options by repurposing hotels and extending rental subsidies for victims.<sup>88</sup>

#### **D. Enhancing the participation of girls and boys and community mobilization**

42. States have the duty to challenge and change patriarchal ideologies and structures that constrain women and girls from fully exercising their human rights and freedoms.<sup>89</sup> The empowerment of women and girls contributes to maximizing their potential to act as agents of such change and to contribute to the transformation of discriminatory cultural attitudes that drive and perpetuate the practice of child, early and forced marriage. Boys and men must also be made aware of their own role in preventing child, early and forced marriage and in supporting girls and women at risk. During the period covered by the report, States and other stakeholders have, to varying degrees, worked on improving the participation of girls and boys in efforts to foster behavioural change, despite pandemic related constraints.

43. One example of such participation is the project “Young Leaders against Child, Early and Forced Marriage and Unions”, which is said to promote the role of youth activists from Mali, Senegal and Guinea in challenging child, early and forced marriage and unions by strengthening their advocacy skills, building peer networks, and engaging community and religious leaders, school authorities and regional decision makers.<sup>90</sup> In Bangladesh, UNICEF stated that it had supported 480 child journalists, half of whom were girls, in generating video content on child marriage, girls’ empowerment and gender inequality and disseminating it on the children’s online news platform for the campaign “#Raisethebeat4ECM”, which had reached

<sup>84</sup> In accordance with agreement SIPINNA/EXT/01/2020 approving essential measures for the care and protection of children and adolescents during the health-care emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

<sup>85</sup> Submissions by Egypt and El Salvador, as well as by Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust, among other stakeholders.

<sup>86</sup> Submission by Switzerland.

<sup>87</sup> UN-Women and UNDP, *Government Responses to COVID-19*, p. 41.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>89</sup> Joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2019) on harmful practices.

<sup>90</sup> Submission by Plan International.

over 164 million people.<sup>91</sup> In Gujarat and West Bengal, India, UNICEF and UNFPA reported that they had partnered with youth networks to mobilize boys who had dropped out of school and engage them in discussions on gender and positive masculinities, including defining their role in child marriage prevention.<sup>92</sup>

44. Other community influencers, such as traditional leaders, have also been involved in such efforts. For instance, in Cameroon, Plan International reported that it supported girls and young women to advocate with parents and traditional leaders the family reintegration of girls who had left forced marriages. Moreover, a participatory action plan was developed with girls at risk and those already married to address their concerns about issues such as intimate partner violence, non-consensual sex, pregnancy, the right to education and the process to annul the marriage, which enabled them to make decisions about marrying age.<sup>93</sup> World Vision International indicated that its “Just Married” mobilization campaign on ending child marriage had involved nearly 100,000 children and young people and key influencers and secured over 80,000 petition actions.<sup>94</sup>

45. Awareness-raising efforts have helped parents, children and other relevant actors understand the harmful impact of child, early and forced marriage and reflect on the underlying social norms. For example, the Netherlands reported that it had developed informational material in eight languages about marriage, divorce and “marital captivity”, had supported civil society organizations in a campaign on harmful practices, and had organized a campaign in July 2021 through social media and advertisements at the Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam to prevent harmful practices, in view of the increased risk of child, early and forced marriage during travel organized for the summer holiday period to countries where such marriages were tolerated and practised.<sup>95</sup>

46. Engagement at the local level included the development of comprehensive protection mechanisms for women and children. Egypt reported that the child protection committees at the village level identified girls at risk of child marriage and reported cases. They also supported community dialogues and safe spaces for women and girls to meet and build a social network.<sup>96</sup> Plan International said that it had supported peer networks and the engagement of decision makers at multiple levels in Cameroon, Guinea, Mali and Senegal.<sup>97</sup> A United Nations study indicated that in 2020 in Kerala, India, the subnational government had involved local women’s groups in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic through formal participation and oversight mechanisms, in order to address the needs of women and girls.<sup>98</sup>

47. The strengthening of parenting skills provides significant leverage in addressing decisions on child, early and forced marriage, in view of parents’ role in the practice, in particular in the context of the stress caused by the pandemic. Egypt reported that, during the pandemic, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood had launched an awareness-raising social media campaign on positive parenting.<sup>99</sup> Several States also indicated that they had established family counselling services to

<sup>91</sup> UNICEF, “UNFPA-UNICEF global programme to end child marriage”, available at [www.unicef.org/protection/unfpa-unicef-global-programme-end-child-marriage](http://www.unicef.org/protection/unfpa-unicef-global-programme-end-child-marriage).

<sup>92</sup> Submission by UNICEF and the UNFPA office in India.

<sup>93</sup> Submission by Plan International.

<sup>94</sup> Submission by World Vision International.

<sup>95</sup> Submission by the Netherlands.

<sup>96</sup> Submission by Egypt.

<sup>97</sup> Submission by Plan International.

<sup>98</sup> UN-Women and UNDP, *Government responses to COVID-19*, p. 72.

<sup>99</sup> Submission by Egypt.

provide advice and mental health services and help children in need during the COVID-19 crisis.<sup>100</sup>

## E. Comprehensive legislation and policies

48. Various countries reported having adapted their legislation to prohibit child marriage in line with international standards and having taken measures to increase the legal age of marriage.<sup>101</sup> States' efforts have also focused on specific aspects of marriage, in particular its dissolution. Along with legal review, there have also been interventions to support implementation of the relevant laws. For instance, the Netherlands reported that it was currently amending its national law to end "marital captivity" by allowing a judge to force a spouse to collaborate in the divorce process, including in cases of religious marriage.<sup>102</sup> The Syrian Arab Republic reported that in 2021 the Government had adopted Child Rights Law No. 21 on basic principles for child protection and care, followed by an executive national plan to reduce early marriage by 2030.<sup>103</sup>

49. Comprehensive interventions aimed at ensuring the coherence and consistency of the measures adopted are a key feature of effective strategies aimed at eliminating child, early and forced marriage. A United Nations study reports that at least 15 countries have combined social protection responses to the pandemic with measures addressing violence against women and girls by, for example, associating cash transfers with support services and targeting victims for subsidies and labour market interventions.<sup>104</sup> The Santiago Commitment, a policy guidance instrument adopted in 2020 by States members of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to mitigate the impact of economic crises on women's lives, included the promotion of policies and programmes to tackle forced marriage and cohabitation imposed on girls and adolescents.<sup>105</sup>

50. Increased coordination across government sectors helps to ensure that protection systems prevent child, early and forced marriage and address the needs of women and girls who married in childhood. Croatia reported on the development of a standard operating procedure to respond to gender-based violence and victims of child, early and forced marriage.<sup>106</sup> Türkiye reported that it had amended its fourth national action plan for combating violence against women and that a strategy to combat violence against women in disasters, emergencies and epidemics had entered into force in June 2021 to ensure the continuity of service delivery.<sup>107</sup>

## IV. Remaining challenges in research and data collection

51. Robust, representative and accessible gender data enables the monitoring of progress and makes it possible to hold decision makers accountable for ending child, early and forced marriage. The pandemic has further underlined the urgent need for

<sup>100</sup> Submissions by Croatia, El Salvador, Thailand and Türkiye.

<sup>101</sup> Submissions by Algeria, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Mexico, the Russian Federation and Thailand, as well as by the national human rights institution of India.

<sup>102</sup> Submission by the Netherlands.

<sup>103</sup> Submission by the Syrian Arab Republic.

<sup>104</sup> See UN-Women and UNDP, *Government Responses to COVID-19*, p. 44.

<sup>105</sup> The Santiago Commitment was adopted at the fourteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean on 31 January 2020.

<sup>106</sup> Submission by Croatia.

<sup>107</sup> Submission by Türkiye.

accurate and timely data for decision-making, programme development and implementation.

52. During the reporting period, research initiatives and data collection at the global, regional, country and subnational levels have provided critical information on the phenomenon and its evolutions. In June 2021, UNICEF launched the Child Marriage Monitoring Mechanism to strengthen monitoring and accountability in relation to child, early and forced marriage.<sup>108</sup> At the regional level, in 2021, the African Union and the Government of the Niger convened the Third African Girls' Summit, at which Governments, the United Nations, civil society, children and young people discussed data on and evidence of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on harmful practices. According to submissions, some progress has been made at the country level in the collection of data disaggregated by sex, gender, age, geographical location, socioeconomic status, disability, level of education and other factors on girls and women who married in childhood.<sup>109</sup>

53. A review of existing studies has found that significant evidence-based knowledge has been generated on the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the prevalence of child, early and forced marriage and on girls' well-being.<sup>110</sup> A survey of almost 15,000 adolescents published by World Vision International in 2021 provided insights into the situation of girls 12 years to 18 years of age in Ethiopia, Ghana, India and Zimbabwe in relation to child, early and forced marriage in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, finding a correlation between the practice and hunger, access to education and parental support.<sup>111</sup>

54. The pandemic, however, limited the opportunities for in-person data collection. As a result, the use of remote data collection increased, along with non-traditional research methods. Plan International, for example, used digital data collection methods in a participatory research project on key challenges faced by girls and young women living in remote communities in the Philippines.<sup>112</sup>

55. Although the publication of research on child, early and forced marriage has increased and expanded across regions in the past two decades, gaps still remain. A number of countries with a high prevalence of child marriage, in particular in sub-Saharan Africa, have been largely left out of research efforts. Furthermore, research has primarily focused on prevalence, trends and determinants rather than on responses and evaluation. A shift is needed away from a focus on diagnosis and towards greater attention to the analysis of interventions and the building of evidence to support assessments of their effectiveness.<sup>113</sup>

56. In relation to the pandemic, gaps in research result from the need to build analysis with common and consistent methods of measurement and evaluation of interventions. The COVID-19 pandemic further reduced stakeholders' ability to measure effectively the impact of prevention programming, to track investments and to evaluate gender transformative changes. In line with this concern, the joint UNICEF and UNFPA Global Programme to End Child Marriage conducted an

<sup>108</sup> Satvika Chalasani and others, "Tracking progress and sharing learning: data and evidence dissemination as a critical contribution to ending child marriage", *Journal of Adolescent Health*, vol. 69, No. 6 (2021).

<sup>109</sup> Submissions by Albania, Mexico and Syrian Arab Republic as well as by Girls Not Brides Bangladesh.

<sup>110</sup> UNICEF, *COVID-19*.

<sup>111</sup> Submission by World Vision International.

<sup>112</sup> Submission by Plan International.

<sup>113</sup> Manahil Siddiqi and Margaret E. Greene, "Mapping the field of child marriage: evidence, gaps, and future directions from a large-scale systematic scoping review, 2000–2019", *Journal of Adolescent Health*, vol. 70, No. 3 (2022).

evaluation of its action, including outcome evaluations of interventions aimed at empowerment and social and behavioural change, and process evaluations of the services delivered to girls at risk.<sup>114</sup> Also of importance is the Child Marriage Research to Action Network established by Girls Not Brides, UNICEF and UNFPA, which is an open platform that brings together researchers, practitioners and policymakers to coordinate the research agenda on the topic, discuss available evidence and identify research gaps.<sup>115</sup>

## V. Conclusions and recommendations

**57. The COVID-19 crisis has compromised progress towards gender equality and diverted attention away from child, early and forced marriage. Consolidating robust and resilient systems for the protection of girls from child, early and forced marriage and addressing the situation of women and girls married before 18 years of age is critical, as doing so lays the foundation for accelerating the elimination of the practice and preventing setbacks when crises arise.**

**58. In the present report, the Secretary-General highlights the disruption caused by the pandemic to the efforts made to increase the resilience of women, girls and families to child, early and forced marriage. He nevertheless records some initiatives that have been taken to address social and gender norms and support community mobilization against such harmful practices. The information received in the preparation of the present report also highlights some of the adjustments that States and other stakeholders have made to their programmes to overcome the challenges caused by the pandemic.**

**59. On the basis of the analysis contained in the present report, and recalling the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's previous reports on the issue, in particular the need to ensure that COVID-19 recovery measures promote inclusive, gender transformative and sustainable economies and societies, the Secretary-General recommends that Member States, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, take the following actions:**

**(a) Address the root causes and drivers of child, early and forced marriage, through robust and comprehensive interventions addressing the social norms and gender inequalities and stereotypes that underline the practice;**

**(b) Ensure that budgets to address child, early and forced marriage are integrated into the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic response, as well as into future and other emergency responses and recovery plans;**

**(c) Expand programmes that protect women and girls at risk of child, early and forced marriage, and those already married under these practices, against economic insecurity and poverty, through gender-responsive labour policies, accessible public services and targeted social protection programmes, including by addressing and making efforts to change gendered roles in domestic work and care responsibilities;**

**(d) Ensure that measures aimed at addressing the economic shock prompted by the pandemic are sustainable, are relevant to the needs of women and girls, and have adequate coverage, including for those in the informal economy;**

<sup>114</sup> UNICEF, *Joint Assessment of Adaptations to the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage in Light of COVID-19* (New York, 2021).

<sup>115</sup> Chalasani and others, "Tracking progress and sharing learning".



(e) Promote women and girls' economic empowerment, support their access to education, remove barriers to their economic participation and address social inequalities and poverty;

(f) Develop innovative strategies, including through digital approaches and technology, to increase access to services and schooling for girls at risk and for women and girls married before 18 years of age, while ensuring digital access for all women and girls;

(g) Ensure access to services and schooling for women who were married in childhood and for girls who are married, are pregnant or are mothers;

(h) Develop strategies aimed at retaining girls in education, including in the context of school closures during pandemics, by promoting accessible learning tools, building teachers' capacities to operate in this context, supporting return to school upon reopening, and strengthening outreach to vulnerable groups, in particular girls at risk of child, early and forced marriage and girls who are married;

(i) Ensure the provision of relevant and appropriate health services and information, including sexual and reproductive health, addressing the specific needs of adolescent girls and young women;

(j) Strengthen gender-sensitive and age-sensitive holistic legal protection and support services with a survivor-centred approach for girls and women who are survivors of child, early and forced marriage and other forms of gender-based violence, including through hotlines, shelters and integrated services providing access to comprehensive support;

(k) Support girls' empowerment by increasing their understanding of gender norms, raising awareness of the risks associated with child, early and forced marriage – including the danger of adolescent pregnancy and childbirth – and raising awareness among communities of the harmful impact of the practice;

(l) Engage children and young people in interventions aimed at eliminating child, early and forced marriage, in particular awareness-raising, community mobilization and behavioural changes;

(m) Develop interventions aimed at supporting parents in developing child-rights-centred parenting skills, including to address stress factors and support relationships between parents and girls, as well as between parents and boys, that are based on trust and communication, are free from harm and discrimination, and are respectful of children's rights, the best interest of the child and the evolving capacities of children;

(n) Ensure that interventions are comprehensive and address in a coherent and integrated manner the factors leading to and perpetuating child, early and forced marriage, including in the context of crises;

(o) Promote collaboration and coordination among relevant stakeholders, including women's rights organizations, women human rights defenders and service providers, to ensure that COVID-19 response measures are adequately funded, gender-responsive and participatory and that they promote inclusive, gender transformative and sustainable economies and societies and address inequalities, exclusion and poverty;

(p) Expand evidence-based interventions concerning child, early and forced marriage through regular data collection, including the analysis of trends and understanding of root causes, and enhance the focus on evaluative and evidence-based research to assess the effectiveness of measures, with context-specific perspectives.