



# ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE

## *A Program to Accelerate Global Action*

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF 2018 ANNUAL REPORT PREPARED FOR ZONTA INTERNATIONAL

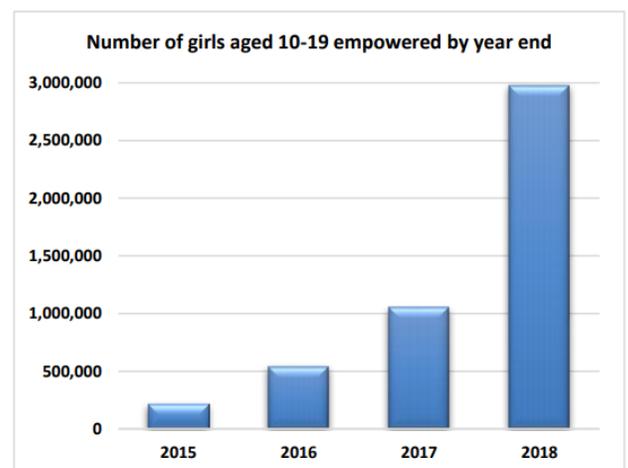
Child marriage is a devastating human rights violation that robs young girls of their childhood and often marks the end of their education. Instead of playing with friends or studying with other students, child brides often have significant domestic responsibilities and are powerless to make their own decisions. They are also significantly more likely to be the victims of domestic violence, to contract HIV/AIDS, and to die young due to complications during pregnancy and childbirth.

The forces that drive child marriage are complex, often including poverty, deeply rooted gender inequality, customary or religious laws that condone the practice, and a lack of legal protections. To combat these factors and work toward a day when girls everywhere can fully enjoy their childhood free from the risk of marriage, UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) came together in 2016 to establish the Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage.

The Global Programme works in 12 countries – Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Yemen, and Zambia – where it brings together governments, civil society, families, and young people in a collective effort to prevent girls from marrying too young and support those already married as girls. Since it was launched in 2016, the Global Programme has reached almost five million adolescent girls.

### **With the generous support of Zonta International and other supporters, the Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage achieved the following results in 2018:**

- Nearly 3 million adolescent girls were empowered through life skills education and training, far exceeding the year's goal of 1.4 million.
- 77 percent of girls enrolled in these programs transitioned from primary to lower secondary school, compared to just 59.8 percent who made the same transition in 2017.
- The Global Programme was able to scale up its direct support for education programs, providing assistance to over 6,000 schools to help them improve the quality of girls' education.
- Educating community members, headmasters, and parents about the lasting benefits of girls' education is



also critical for the enrollment and retention of girls in school. Last year, 1.73 million individuals regularly participated in community dialogues organized by the Global Programme to address these topics.

- Media campaigns promoting gender equitable norms including ending child marriage reached an estimated 10.8 million people.
- Over 41 percent of individuals who participated in household surveys demonstrated positive attitudes and behavior toward investing in and supporting adolescent girls, compared to just 25 percent who expressed those views in 2017.
- Eleven governments have developed national action plans to end child marriage, nine countries have costed plans, and six countries have allocated budgets for the implementation of the plans. In addition, several countries have repealed preexisting policies that discriminated against married and pregnant girls, especially in respect to their continued access to education.

## Communication and Engagement Highlights

In our first year of partnership in support of the Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage, we have been able to combine our voices to raise awareness about the issue of child marriage, the role of Zontians in ending the practice. Noted here are several highlights of public recognition of Zonta's role, engagement of members, and advocacy:

- Zonta is the first private sector partner to join the funding coalition for this program. Zonta's name and logo is included on all public documents referencing donor support, including the [brochure](#) summarizing the program.
- President Susanne von Bassewitz was invited to speak during a high-level side [event](#) at the UN General Assembly. The event was organized by the missions of Canada and Zambia, UNICEF, UNFPA and UN Women.
- On October 20, 2018, Rachel Steinberg (Senior Director, UUSA) presented the child marriage program on a Zonta Talks webinar.
- UNICEF USA has developed a toolkit that provides background on the program and its impact, talking points, advocacy messaging, and social media guidance for use by Zonta members. We hope this toolkit will be rolled out to members by September 2019.
- In March 2019, UNICEF supported a side event co-organized by Zonta International during the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). UNICEF USA facilitated the participation of representatives from UNICEF and UNFPA. UNICEF USA also hosted Zonta's annual workshop for members during the CSW, in which Nankali Maksud of UNICEF delivered a presentation on the program.
- UNICEF USA celebrated Zonta International's centennial during the 2019 Annual Summit. In addition to a card that attendees signed to send their thanks and well wishes to Zonta, President Susanne von Bassewitz was featured in a workshop about child marriage (alongside a Massachusetts state legislator) and in a main stage panel on strategic partnerships.
- In July 2019, President Susanne von Bassewitz participated in the global Steering Committee meeting for the program in Zambia. During the trip, President von Bassewitz participated in a program site visit, a Steering Committee with other donors, and met with Government officials. Photos for the visit can be found [here](#).
- Zonta was highlighted as part of UNICEF USA's Day of the Girl Child social media posts.
- Zonta is featured prominently on UNICEF USA's [website](#), in UNICEF USA's [Annual Report](#), and in UNICEF USA's annual year in review video. Zonta's support is also highlighted in UNICEF's [Annual Report](#).

# Moving Forward

Child marriages are declining. The overall proportion of women who were married as children decreased by 15 percent in the last decade, from 1 in 4 to approximately 1 in 5. As the Global Programme builds on this momentum and accelerates efforts to finally end the injustice of child marriage around the world, it continues to achieve, and at times significantly exceed, the program targets.

Yet despite this success, challenges remain. The reality is that the current rate of decline is not sufficient to meet the SDG target of ending child marriage by 2030, but would instead take 50 years to achieve. Additionally, the reduction in child marriage has been uneven. While South Asia has led the way on reducing child marriage, the global burden is shifting to sub-Saharan Africa, where rates of progress need to be scaled up dramatically to offset population growth. Finally, political and security instability in several Global Programme countries, including Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Nepal, Niger, and Yemen, continue to impede progress.

Sustained investment is critical for enabling the Global Programme to keep scaling up its programs to protect and empower girls. Looking forward, the Global Programme will continue to pursue lasting change at a significant scale by building the ownership and commitment of local and national governments toward ending child marriage. Greater efforts will also be made to involve boys and men in more systematic ways, which is essential for strengthening community and family support for gender equity and promoting the empowerment of adolescent girls.

**On behalf of girls all around the world, thank you for your support!**

**The United Nations Children's Fund** (UNICEF) works in more than 190 countries and territories to put children first. UNICEF has helped save more children's lives than any other humanitarian organization, by providing health care and immunizations, safe water and sanitation, nutrition, education, emergency relief, and more. UNICEF USA supports UNICEF's work through fundraising, advocacy, and education in the United States. Together, we are working toward the day when no children die from preventable causes and every child has a safe and healthy childhood. For more information, visit [www.unicefusa.org](http://www.unicefusa.org).