

INDIA

COUNTRY PROFILE

UNFPA–UNICEF
Global Programme to
End Child Marriage

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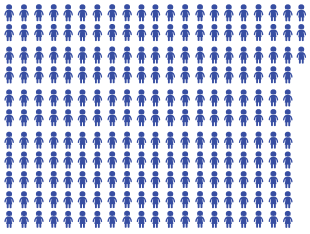
India is home to 223 million child brides. Of these, 102 million married before age 15.

Source: UNICEF global databases, 2020. Demographic data are from United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019). World Population Prospects 2019, Online Edition. Rev. 1.

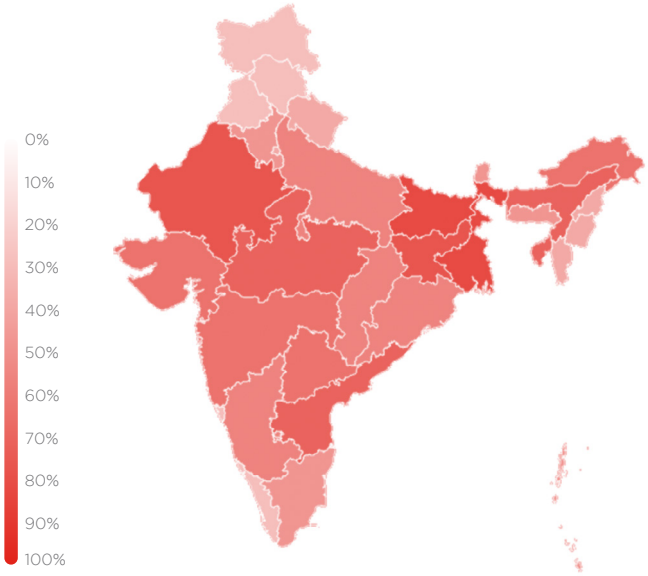
Notes: For details on the calculation of girls and women married in childhood, see: United Nations Children's Fund, Child Marriage: Latest trends and future prospects, UNICEF, New York, 2018. Estimates refer to population year 2016 for India, which align with burden numbers recently published in a country-specific analysis. Values above 2 million are rounded to the nearest million.



223 million
Married before age 18



102 million
Married before age 15



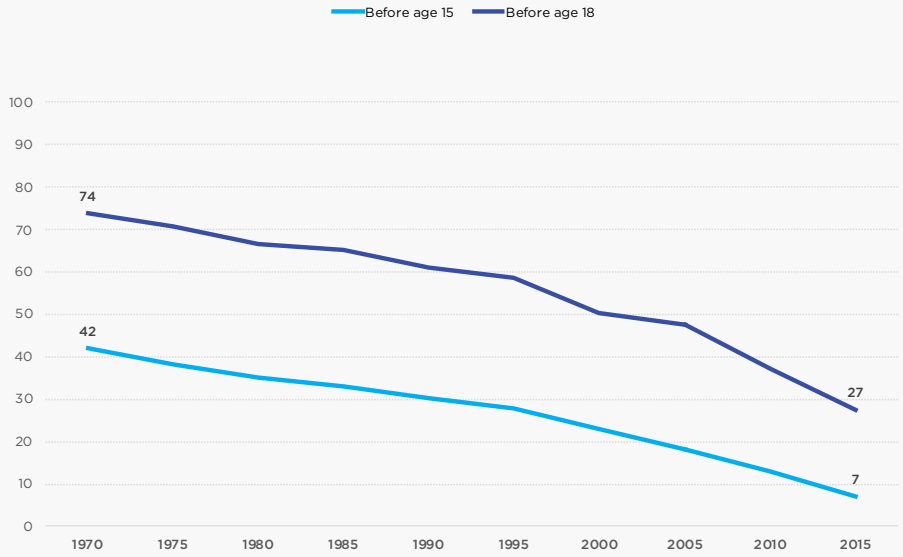
Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18

Note: This map is stylized and not to scale. It does not reflect a position by UNFPA or UNICEF on the legal status of any country or area or the delimita- tion of any frontiers. Source for child marriage prevalence data is the India National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 2015–2016.

Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 15 and before age 18

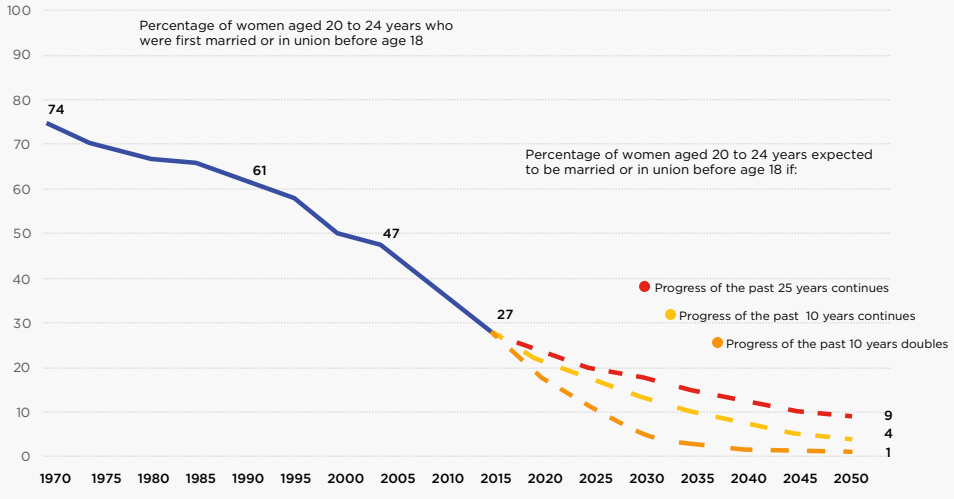
Source: UNICEF analysis based on NFHS, as published in: United Nations Children's Fund, Ending Child Marriage: A profile of progress in India, UNICEF, New York, 2019.

Notes: This trend analysis is based on the prevalence of child marriage across age cohorts, as measured in the NFHS 1992-1993, 1997-1998, 2005-2006 and 2015-2016. See publication noted above for additional details.



Projections of the prevalence of child marriage

Source: UNICEF analysis based on NFHS, as published in: United Nations Children's Fund, Ending Child Marriage: A profile of progress in India, UNICEF, New York, 2019.



Message from UNFPA and UNICEF India country representatives



Argentina Matavel Piccin
UNFPA India country representative



Dr. Yasmin Ali Haque
UNICEF India country representative

India has achieved a number of significant development milestones in the last decade. The prevalence of child marriage declined sharply from 47 per cent girls married before age 18 a decade ago, to 27 percent in 2015—2016 (NFHS4). In the same period the prevalence of adolescent pregnancy has halved and the gender gap in school enrolment rates is narrowing.

The development and well-being of girls and women will determine India's future in many ways. Girls can develop to their full potential when they are healthy, educated, able to exercise agency, gain the skills necessary for engaging in decent work as adults, and when they are supported by an enabling environment.

In India, the Global Programme to End Child Marriage Phase I has helped drive collective action towards a common goal of addressing the needs of girls who are most vulnerable to the risk of child marriage. Through the programme, UNFPA and UNICEF have rallied efforts, built synergies, and leveraged government programmes for scale, convergence and sustainability. A vast range of actors including the government, civil society organizations, research institutions, media and community members including young girls and boys, have been actively involved in bringing about this change.

While the programme has made considerable progress, there is still a lot of ground to be covered. Ending child marriage and other harmful practices against girls and women requires tackling the root causes. Poverty and gender inequality including discriminatory social norms, continue to drive the practice of child marriage, and determine poor health, education and development outcomes for young girls and boys. The situation is further exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis that threatens to reverse the gains made in the previous decades.

Our work today is challenging and ever more relevant and urgent in the face of this crisis. As we move into Phase II of the Global Programme, we remain committed to the pledge of the Sustainable Development Goals to promote gender equality and end all harmful practices in India.

Country movement to accelerate action to end child marriage: Key moments and achievements of Phase I

In Phase I, the Global Programme in India deepened partnerships with the government to accelerate action to end child marriage, and provide data and evidence with advocacy to promote policy change and legal reform at various levels.

Significant achievements in India since the inception of the Global Programme include:

The states of Bihar, Rajasthan and Odisha

developed and launched 10-year strategic action plans to

end child marriage

5,573,066

adolescent girls aged 10–19

participated

in at least one programme intervention aimed at empowering them with skills and information to delay child marriage.

Over

2.4 million boys

also benefitted from the life-skills interventions.

In 2018, UNICEF released new estimates indicating a global reduction of child marriage burden, mainly driven by a decline in child marriage prevalence in India between 2005–2006 and 2015–2016: **the proportion of girls getting married before age 18 have declined** from



349,619

adolescent girls aged 10–19

have been supported

by the programme to enroll and continue with their education to delay child marriage.

The programme enabled young people to access critical health services, including age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health information and services.

For instance, in Rajasthan an average of over

215,000

adolescents

were reached each year with sexual and reproductive health information and services, and adolescent-friendly health clinics recorded a 23 per cent



increase in visits by young girls and boys during **2018—2019.**

In 2019, UNFPA developed a framework on addressing harmful practices to address the intersections across different harmful practices against women and girls in the country.

1,640,245

individuals in the community

were engaged and regularly participated

in dialogues promoting gender-equitable norms, including delaying child marriage.

Over

50 million people

in programme areas were reached with community media campaigns to end child marriage.

In 2019, a

13,000 kilometers

long human chain was formed in the state of Bihar to protest

against dowry and child marriage.

Over **2018—2019**, technical assistance provided to the Bihar state government for integrating life-skills into the Madrassa (Islamic educational institutions) curriculum contributed to the scaling up of the intervention across more than

2,500 Madrassas

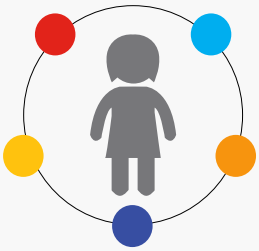
across the state.

Phase I Country Programme Strategies

In Phase I, UNFPA and UNICEF adopted the following strategic approaches to achieve the objectives of the programme:

- **High-quality technical assistance** to the national and state governments to develop guidelines, action plans and protocols; capacity-building; and strengthening of institutional mechanisms.
- **Schemes/programmes to promote the value of daughters:** Support was provided to states to promote schemes that offer equal opportunities for daughters, e.g., *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* ("Save Daughters and Educate Daughters") and *Biju Kanya Ratna*.
- **Programmes for adolescent health and well-being:** Support was provided towards development of resource materials and training of service providers on the National Adolescent Health Programme (*Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram*), which addresses menstrual health management and information to adolescent girls.
- **Programmes for women's empowerment:** Technical assistance was provided in strengthening the national government's programme on *Mahila Shakti Kendras* (a scheme which aims to empower rural women).
- **Action plans on ending child marriage:** As part of the Global Programme, support was provided to the state governments to facilitate development of state action plans on ending child marriage.
- **Demonstrating pilot interventions and supporting scale-up:** UNFPA and UNICEF have demonstrated scalable models for adolescent empowerment and ending child marriage, and supported scale-up through government resources, to reach millions of adolescent girls and boys. In Phase I, the two agencies deliberately shifted strategies from small scope, sector-based interventions to larger-scale district models that could be adapted at the state level. For example, in Madhya Pradesh, UNFPA's support for integrating life-skills education in hostels for girls attending secondary school, in multiple districts, was scaled up by the state government across all upper primary and secondary government schools, through joint collaboration with UNFPA and UNICEF. UNICEF, in collaboration with select state governments (Rajasthan, Bihar, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat) developed a career portal that enables adolescents to choose a career path matching with their aspirations, interests and inclination, and links them up with mechanisms (such as colleges, scholarships, skills development programmes, internship and apprenticeship opportunities) in the pursuit of career choices. This is expected to ameliorate the high dropout rates observed at various stages in the educational system and also improve retention in jobs. The portal was launched in Rajasthan in March 2019 in collaboration with the state government, and since then, over 80,000 class 11—12 students have accessed it. The portal was launched in Andhra Pradesh in August 2019, reaching out to 750,000 secondary students in the state, and in Bihar and Jharkhand later in the year. The portal, in collaboration with the technical partner IDreamscareer, is aspiring to launch in additional selected states (Assam, Gujarat, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Telangana), and, subsequently, to reach all states in India.
- **Evidence-building for policy advocacy:** In Phase I, the two agencies supported some foundational research and advocacy products on ending child marriage and empowering adolescent girls. These included: *Reducing Child Marriage in India—A Model to Scale Up Results* (UNICEF, 2016); *Ending Child Marriage in India—Drivers and Strategies* (UNICEF, 2019); *Addressing Harmful Practices in India—Programme Framework and Strategies* (UNFPA, 2019); *Child Marriage—History, Debates and Future Directions* (UNFPA, to be published in 2020). These studies and advocacy products have helped guide programme approaches for ending child marriage by indicating the potential implications of different strategies and highlighting good practices. Additionally, the two agencies analysed the data from the Census and the fourth National Family Health Survey to advocate with specific state governments for developing action plans on ending child marriage, and for other policies and schemes that are relevant for the health and well-being of adolescent girls and boys, such as cash transfer plus schemes or schemes related to menstrual health management.

Country programme strategies



EMPOWER ADOLESCENT GIRLS

- Mobilizing and training girls on life skills and sexual and reproductive health
- Leveraging large-scale programmes to improve access to sexual and reproductive health information and services
- Integrating life skills education in schools
- Developing girls' skills for employability and financial literacy

ENHANCE THE ACCESSIBILITY AND QUALITY OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND PROTECTION SERVICES

- Developing and supporting training of service-providers on adolescent-friendly health and protection guidelines
- Leveraging large-scale programmes to improve access to education

FOSTER AN ENABLING LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

- Providing data and evidence with advocacy to promote policy change and legal reform
- Supporting development of national plan of action to end child marriage

OFFER ECONOMIC SUPPORT AND INCENTIVES FOR GIRLS AND THEIR FAMILIES

- Leveraging large-scale programmes to improve access to social protection schemes
- Developing and rolling out guidance on national and state-level social protection schemes



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EMPOWERING ADOLESCENT GIRLS WITH SKILLS AND INFORMATION

In 2019:



2,496,395
adolescent girls aged 10-19
in programme areas actively participated in at least one targeted intervention

Since 2016:



5,573,066
adolescent girls aged 10-19
in programme areas have actively participated in at least one targeted intervention

Over 50,000 boys aged 10–19 in programme areas also actively participated in at least one targeted intervention

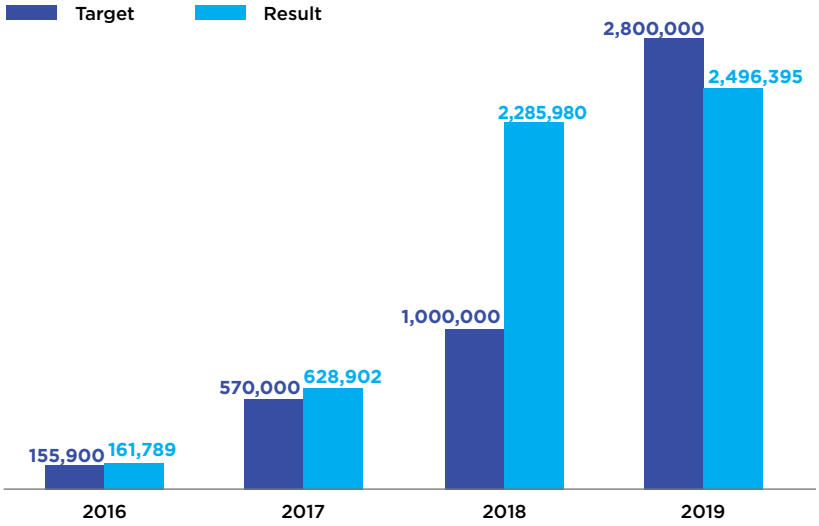
Results from 2016–2019 programme implementation

During Phase I of the programme, concerted efforts made by the Global Programme saw the effective roll-out of life-skills education programmes in communities as well as institutional settings. The focus was to accelerate and demonstrate workable models to inform and advocate with the states for scale-up. The success of the work can be seen in the majority of the states taking the life-skills education roll-out to scale – namely, Rajasthan, Odisha and Bihar. In total, 5,573,066 adolescent girls participated actively in at least one targeted intervention.

In 2019, UNICEF's life-skills framework, used in adolescent empowerment programmes, reached 1,192,179 adolescent girls within the Global Programme areas, and an additional 4.3 million girls and 2.4 million boys across 13 states. Life-skills interventions brought together multiple stakeholders and the government to: develop resource material for teachers and facilitators; integrate life-skills in textbooks in Maharashtra and Gujarat states; roll out life-skills modules in eight districts in Madhya Pradesh state reaching approximately 400,000 students; building capacity of 400 teachers in two districts of Gujarat state; and demonstrate an innovative folk art-based model in secondary schools among tea communities in Assam state. Corporate networks were leveraged to amplify policy advocacy for life-skills and employability skills in Delhi, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

UNFPA's advocacy and support for school-based comprehensive sexuality education reached 1,304,216 adolescent girls within the Global Programme areas and an additional 2.2 million young people (1.2 million girls) through 12,717 schools and training institutions in other non-Global Programme areas.

Number of adolescent girls (aged 10–19) in programme areas actively participating in at least one targeted intervention



> I learn from my girls' group what I don't get to learn in school; I found the sessions on health and menstrual health particularly interesting.

16-year-old Ragini, a member of an adolescent girls' club in Udaipur

> The training on life-skills has enabled teachers like me to understand young people's issues better; it has helped us communicate more clearly and bond strongly with students. We are able to better understand why a girl is not performing well or why she remains sad or unhappy. Accordingly, we try and take corrective steps including talking to parents to identify and resolve issues at home.

Life-skills teacher in the intervention with girls in secondary school hostels in Madhya Pradesh



Challenges

In settings where poverty and economic stress are the major drivers of child marriage, work with girls in community settings, based exclusively on life-skills-based interventions, is challenging. In the states of Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Jharkhand and Maharashtra, the practice of child marriage is most common among the lowest wealth quintiles. For instance, in Maharashtra in the district of Beed, there is significant seasonal migration each year by families of small-scale and marginal farmers, because of successive years of drought and agricultural stress. Adolescent girls are more vulnerable to child marriage just before and during this migration, as families see child marriage as a way to cope with poverty (young girls and boys are married and contracted as sugarcane workers; the labour contract is typically made with two pairs of working hands) and as protection against violence against girls.

In such contexts, where economic drivers are reinforced with social customs that facilitate the practice of child marriage, the programme needs to integrate strategies for improving the material conditions of girls and their families to address child marriage.

In recent years, increasing numbers of girls have begun taking a stand against child marriage, and have refused gauna (a social practice when brides leave their natal homes to go and reside with their husband's family. Traditionally, gauna is practised a few years after the marriage is contracted, especially in instances of child marriage). For instance, the state of Rajasthan has seen a high number of annulments in recent years.[1] This action by girls, has exposed them to backlash, including violence, social boycott and penalties imposed by local caste/social groups, against their families.

[1] See for example here

Lessons learned

Engagement with out-of-school girls is extremely challenging, given that many out-of-school girls are likely to be engaged in work for pay. The work conditions for such girls are likely to be exploitative. In such conditions, interventions must be multipronged to deepen the engagement with girls, their families as well as with their site and nature of occupation. In such situations, some trade-off between at-scale outreach and being able to reach the most marginalized and vulnerable girls is likely.

While amplifying the drivers of change such as education, empowerment of adolescent girls, community mobilization and incentivizing change, there is a need for a differentiated approach within state and inter-state collaboration based on the prevalence and norms. The prevalence of child marriage is high in border districts and there is a linkage between child marriage and trafficking in a few states. Also, there are many vulnerable populations such as nomadic communities in Rajasthan, Maha Dalit in Bihar, tribal communities in Rajasthan, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh and Jharkhand, and tea garden communities in Assam, which need concerted and nuanced approaches to prevent child marriage.

Organizing adolescent girls through the adolescent clubs is an effective medium of engagement, both for girl as well as frontline workers. In the words of a digital literacy champion, a *Sathi, "It has been very difficult to get these girls to the AWCs for IFA tablets but with the club activities, they come here on their own and my work gets done"*.

Shifts in Phase II

From pilot interventions to leveraging national- and state-level schemes to engage girls in community settings: Based on learnings from pilot interventions with girls in community settings, the programming in Phase II will focus on extending support to strengthen the outreach of national- and state-level schemes such as the Scheme for Adolescent Girls and the National Adolescent Health Programme in the states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha.

Integration of multisectoral engagements with a particular emphasis on skills-building for employability: In Phase II, particular emphasis will be placed on building linkages for vocational skills opportunities in institutional and community-based outreach programmes with girls, through state skills missions.

Inclusion of targeted interventions to young people living with disabilities: In Phase II, starting from 2020, UNFPA will initiate life-skills-based interventions in institutions serving the needs of young people with disabilities.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EMPOWERING GIRLS THROUGH EDUCATION SUPPORT

In 2019:



217,731

adolescent girls

in programme areas supported to enroll and/or remain in primary, lower secondary or non-formal education

Since 2016:



349,619

adolescent girls

in programme areas supported to access and remain in primary or lower secondary school or non-formal education

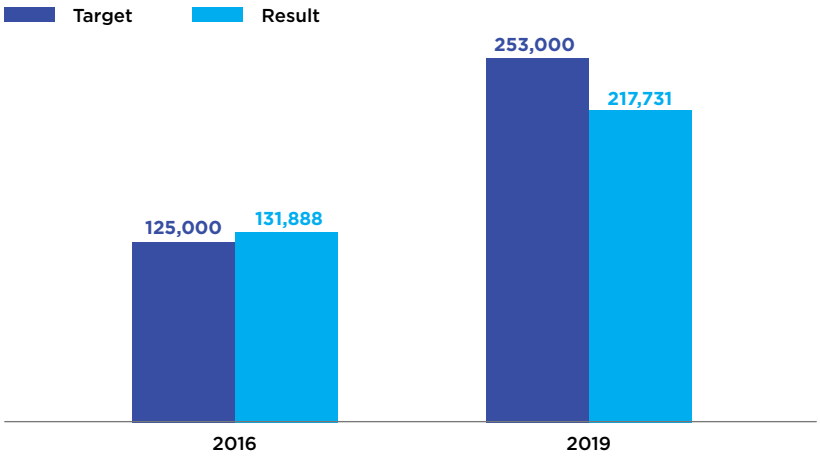
This includes 10,372 out-of-school girls from urban slums supported to enroll and remain in school and 5,305 girls who were successfully mainstreamed back to formal primary schools

Results from 2016–2019 programme implementation

With Global Programme support, 349,619 out-of-school adolescent girls have been supported to enroll in schools and special training (accelerated learning) programmes in states with a higher burden of out-of-school children during Phase I.

In Uttar Pradesh, capacity-building support from UNICEF for improved identification led to ten times more out-of-school children being identified in 2019 compared with 2018 and approximately 96 per cent of children being mainstreamed into formal education. Furthermore, the state has adopted a comprehensive programme called SHARDA for the effective identification and enrolment of out-of-school children. In Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal, support has been provided to digitize data on out-of-school children towards better monitoring and follow-up. Capacity for special training (accelerated learning) has been strengthened. In collaboration with the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT), state officials from nine states were oriented on NCERT's newly developed special training package. Following up on the orientation, UNICEF supported the state government of Rajasthan to revise its special training package to include a school readiness component and a teacher's handbook. In Bihar, 76 master trainers were trained, who are in turn training block resource coordinators to support special training programmes. UNICEF conducted a call for innovative solutions to reach out-of-school children, with the identified solutions showcased in a marketplace attended by national and state government officials, civil society organizations and private sector actors. In Gujarat, targeted support is being provided in the Kutch district for identification and enrolment of migrant children in 21 coastal, industrial and salt pan settlements through supplementary learning centres. A study on unrecognized madrassas (Islamic educational institutions) covering five states with large proportions of out-of-school Muslim children was completed. The key findings were shared with the Ministry of Minority Affairs on its request, as it looks to strengthen the quality of madrassa education.

Number of adolescent girls in programme areas supported to access and remain in primary or lower secondary school or non-formal education





Challenges

The issue of out-of-school children is largely missing from the national discourse on education, including in the context of the draft National Education Policy. There seems to be a perception that access has been taken care of and that the focus should now be on learning, with access to and quality of learning seen as separate issues. Given the focus on learning, a key lesson is that advocacy efforts need to speak this language and highlight the link between access and learning: a critical aspect of the learning crisis is that millions of children are not in school and not learning.

Lessons learned

The link with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all) and the RTE Act's call for 'every' child completing their education needs to be re-emphasized to promote education of the most marginalized. There is often considerable underreporting of the number of out-of-school children in states and a lack of acceptance that the numbers may be higher. However, experience has shown that continuous advocacy is required and eventually bears fruit. In the states with the highest numbers of out-of-school children, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, UNICEF's advocacy has led to the state governments placing greater focus on this issue, with higher numbers of out-of-school children being identified and mainstreamed into schools and special training programmes compared to past years. In Uttar Pradesh, the state government has established the SHARDA programme in response, and in Bihar, the government's own community workers are now playing a more active role in identifying, mainstreaming and tracking out-of-school children. Avenues for designing and carrying out flexible learning programmes within the government's current schemes and policy environment are limited. Some innovative/alternative programmes, as noted above, have been identified and are being implemented, but scope for further alternatives and their scale-up needs to be explored.

Shifts in Phase II

UNICEF will continue to call for innovative solutions to reach out-of-school children and ensure that identified solutions are showcased in a marketplace with the government, civil society organizations and the private sector on a regular basis.

UNICEF will continue expanding the career portal across implementation states. Currently, state governments in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Jharkhand and Rajasthan have launched career portals to enable adolescents to choose career paths matching their aspirations and interest, linking them up with mechanisms (colleges, scholarships, skill development, social protection schemes) in the pursuit of career choices.

SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE COMMUNICATION TO INFLUENCE SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS

In 2019:



1,347,245
individuals
in programme areas regularly participated in dialogues promoting gender-equitable norms including delaying child marriage



About
3.1 million
individuals
within programmes were reached with midi-media campaigns in communities (such as street theatres)

Since 2016:



1,640,245
individuals
in programme areas regularly participated in dialogues promoting gender-equitable norms including delaying child marriage

Results from 2016–2019 programme implementation

As part of implementation of the state action plan on ending child marriage in Rajasthan, UNFPA and UNICEF supported training of Panchayat (local government) leaders to build understanding on their roles and responsibilities in enhancing the value of women and girls, and in preventing child marriage. In 2019, through the Panchayat engagement, 5,276 outreach sessions were organized and 155,890 adolescent girls and 128,654 adolescent boys were reached.

UNFPA engaged with the Directorate of Women's Empowerment for a call-in radio initiative, Naubat Baja, to share information related to sexual and reproductive health, gender equity and girls' empowerment. In 2019, a total of 150,000 calls was received and call-backs were given to share messages on relevant issues. Local frontline workers, and Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan and National Service Scheme group members were trained to organize discussions with adolescent girls and families in the community, centered around the messages shared via Naubat Baja.

In Bihar, the programme supported the Women Development Corporation in implementation of the Women Empowerment Policy (2015)and now a multi-pronged state-wide campaign to root out child marriage and dowry. An assessment was undertaken to comprehend the reach and effect of the campaign. The results of the study were encouraging, wherein 89–99 per cent of the respondents had heard about the campaign. The study revealed that more respondents recalled messages related to child marriage than messages related to dowry practices. Similarly, the majority of respondents perceived that the campaign was effective in bringing child marriage issues to the forefront of public discourse in the state and in reducing child marriages, although considerably fewer found this to be true with regard to dowry practices. Regarding respondents' knowledge and attitudes to child marriage, 89–98 per cent of respondents were aware that the minimum legal age of marriage for girls is 18 years, although relatively fewer, 74–82 per cent, were aware that the minimum legal age of marriage for boys is 21 years. The majority also believed that girls and boys should not marry before they were 18 and 21, respectively. A considerable proportion of respondents was aware that child marriage and dowry practices attracted fines and even imprisonment. Although many respondents reported that dowry transactions were very common (in over 80 per cent of marriages in the state), a majority of them held attitudes that opposed dowry exchanges. Very few respondents had personally intervened to stop cases of child marriage or dowry transactions, and even fewer had witnessed or were aware of interventions by community leaders or the police against perpetrators of such offences (1–3 per cent or less).

”

When I initially attended the community dialogues on child marriage supported by the local non-governmental organization, I was very resistant. The messages against child marriage transmitted through the nataks [plays] and films kept playing in my mind. During this time, I interacted with many young activists and also became more keenly aware about how young girls experience child marriage by observing the practice in my own village and community. I gradually realized that child marriage wasn't the answer to my biggest fear – my granddaughter's safety and security. Marriage wasn't a guarantee for her security – education was. So, I reversed my decision to marry off my granddaughter in the face of opposition from my community.

I know by refusing to have my granddaughter married so young, I have broken a custom. But I believe that norms should be broken for the right cause. My happiness lies in her wellbeing.

Grandfather of 15-year-old Sneha Mannar, member of a girls' group supported by UNFPA, Maharashtra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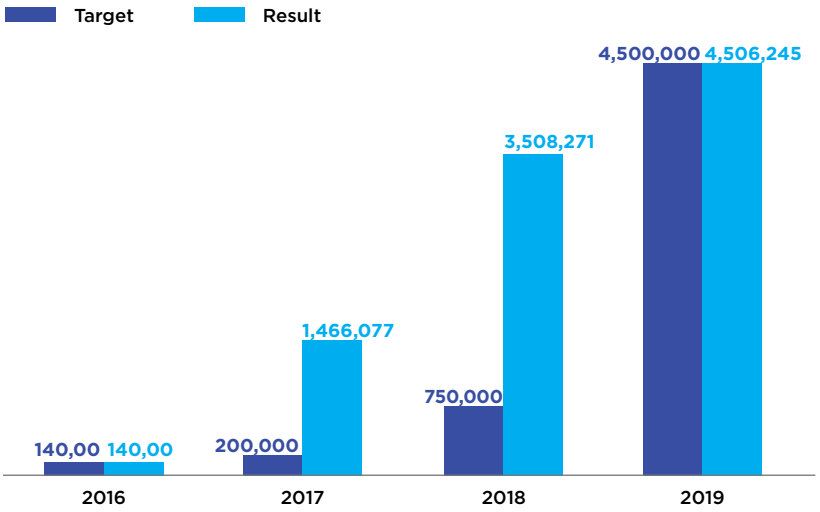
Number of individuals in programme areas who regularly participate in dialogues and/or are reached by media campaigns promoting gender-equitable norms including delaying child marriage



Challenges

There was some initial resistance to the life-skills components that were being introduced in the madrassa, including discussions on physical, mental and emotional changes during adolescence; menstrual health management; and reproductive health. These were gradually overcome through intensive community dialogues and campaigns.

Engaging with Panchayat leaders has been challenging, given their multiple competing administrative responsibilities. With continuous engagement with and outreach to the Department of Panchayat Raj, a space was created for advocacy related to adolescent girls, with members of Panchayati Raj institutions, and their support was ensured.

Measuring the impact of large-scale communication campaigns is challenging because of the effects of diffused message spread.

Lessons learned

To ensure sustainability of community-based programmes, institutional ownership is essential. Therefore, in Phase II, the Global Programme will focus on intensifying engagement with institutions, such as Panchayati Raj institutions, for continued community mobilization, and for ensuring gender-transformative change at a structural level.

Media advocacy complementing inter-personal communication-based interventions can help build a favourable environment to accomplish faster, as well as effective, results. However, running mass media campaigns, to the exclusion of other means of community engagement, may not be effective – this should be accompanied by engaging the community in dialogues and building opinion discourses against child marriage.

Shifts in Phase II

In Phase II, work with families and communities will be streamlined through Panchayat and other community-based institutions.

Priorities for 2020:

- UNFPA will support training of Panchayat representatives across four states to play a proactive role in preventing harmful practices.
- In Bihar, the Madrassa life-skills education initiative will be scaled up through the Madrassa Education Board using their own resources. In partnership with local agencies, UNFPA may provide technical support.
- Task forces constituted by Panchayat members, self-help group members, teachers and other key stakeholders, created at the district and block levels will be activated through civil society involvement for ensuring implementation of the state action plans on ending child marriage.

”

Many families in our village still do not welcome daughters. They prefer sons, since they think sons will support them in old age. But if we look around us, we see so many examples where it is daughters rather than sons who have come to their parents' aid in their old age.

Together we need to acknowledge that harmful practices like child marriage and gender-biased sex selection are still prevalent in our society – that is a first step in addressing the problem. We need to also be more aware about the changing times and keep step with it. I am certain that when all of us apply our collective will, we will be able to overcome these problems.

Panchayat representative involved in the national government's Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme, in a district supported by UNFPA in Madhya Pradesh



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STRENGTHENING PREVENTION AND PROTECTION SYSTEMS

In 2019:

4,712
service delivery points
in programme areas implement guidelines for adolescent girl-friendly health and protection services

In 2019, UNICEF supported the government and partners to strengthen capacities of 4,200 child protection service providers on case management, reporting, coordination with other services and counselling. UNFPA collaborated with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, through the e-learning course for counsellors from the National Adolescent Health Programme, to train counsellors from 198 facilities in Madhya Pradesh and 314 clinics in Rajasthan.



1,558,900
adolescent girls
in programme areas have utilized health or protection services

Results from 2016–2019 programme implementation

The programme focused its efforts on improving young people's access to sexual and reproductive health information and services, including counselling services. The Global Programme efforts were channelled towards capacity-building efforts, and innovations in improving the mechanisms for training, mentoring and monitoring of the adolescent health programme. As a result of these initiatives, for instance, the state of Rajasthan recorded an increase in visits by adolescent girls and boys to adolescent-friendly health centres of 14 per cent between 2018 and 2019.

UNFPA collaborated with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in 2017 to develop an e-learning course for counsellors within the National Adolescent Health Programme, to enable them to provide high-quality counselling services on adolescent health (including emotional and mental health support) and well-being. As a result of the training of counsellors, there was an increase in the uptake of counselling services by adolescents of 14 per cent between 2018 and 2019 in Rajasthan. The counsellors responded to a range of concerns shared by adolescent girls and boys, including issues related to self-image, sexuality and reproductive health, as well as counselling to address pressures from parents and family members to get married.

Continued technical support was provided by UNICEF to programme-targeted states on enhancing systemic capacity to design and implement high-quality large-scale and school-based learning assessments. 900 (35 per cent female) teacher educators, curriculum and assessment experts had their capacity enhanced in development of state assessment road maps, designing assessment programmes with appropriate quality standards, development of high-quality competency-based assessment instruments and item banks to promote twenty-first-century skills and grade-appropriate learning. Technical assistance was also provided to states in curriculum reviews, capacity development of teacher educators, mentoring, academic leadership and information and communication technology-led supportive supervision to improve foundational and grade-appropriate learning skills.

Challenges

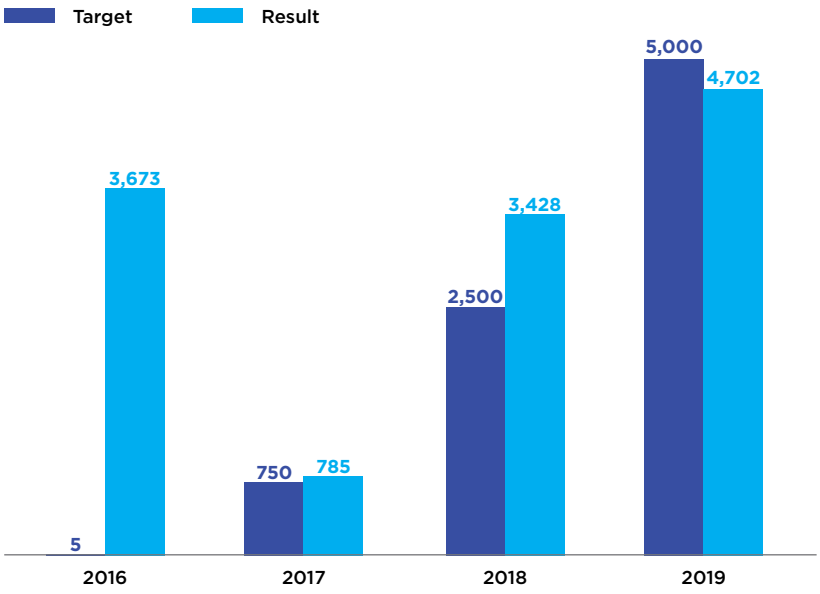
In Madhya Pradesh, the training of counsellors from the National Adolescent Health Programme suffered initial hitches as the counsellors were new to the e-earning platform and faced multiple technical challenges. As several new batches of counsellors were added to the e-learning platform, this came with its own challenges such as a rise in call flow. There were a few delays with the technical partner in terms of coordination and launching of the live modules on time.

10,313

non-formal, primary or secondary schools

implement interventions to improve the quality of education for adolescent girls

Number of service delivery points in programme areas implementing guidelines for adolescent girl-friendly health and protection services



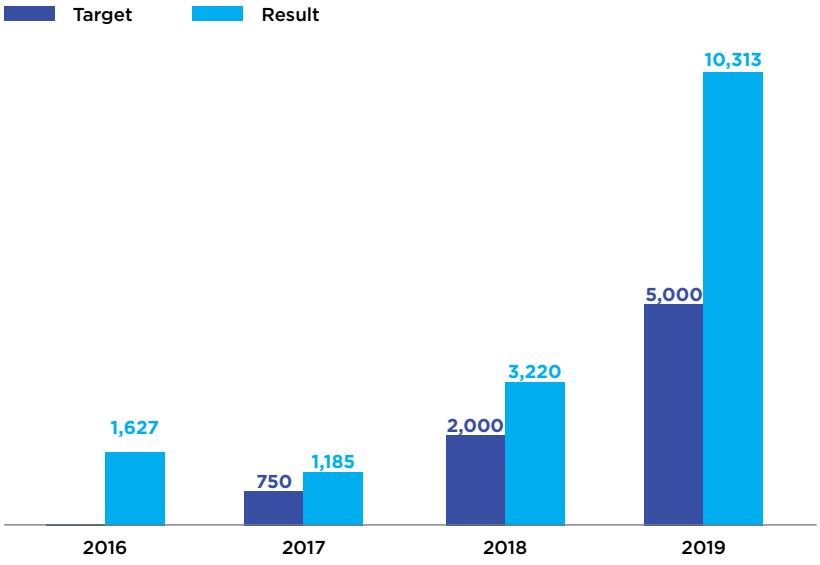
Since 2016:

12,588

service delivery points

in programme areas implement guidelines for adolescent girl-friendly health and protection services

Number of non-formal/primary/secondary schools implementing interventions to improve the quality of education for adolescent girls



16,345

non-formal, primary or secondary schools

implement interventions to improve the quality of education for adolescent girls

”

I wasn't able to delay my marriage... I got married at age 16. But the only way I could delay my first pregnancy till the first three years of marriage was because of the auxiliary nurse midwife [a village-level female health worker] in our village. And that made a world of difference for me. Today I am an accredited social health activist [ASHA]. Frontline workers and community health activists play such a key role in enabling women and girls to access services. I also counsel families to continue educating their daughters and not to marry their sons and daughters at a young age.

35-year-old ASHA, Maharashtra

In Rajasthan, high turnover of the counsellors and posts lying vacant have led to training loss; the inadvertent loss has been that adolescent girls may have no access to counselling advice against child marriage or any referral help in case of need. UNFPA has been working with the National Health Mission to fill these positions.

Retention of health service providers in underserved communities and hard to reach areas is particularly challenging; this has adverse implications for quality of and access to sexual and reproductive health services.

Lessons learned

Capacity-building of health service providers and counsellors on adolescent sexual and reproductive health must be complemented with regular mentoring support and review of implementation challenges.

E-Learning platforms provide a cost-effective way of imparting knowledge-based training, at scale.

The learning from counselling and helpline-based initiatives clearly demonstrates that mental health is a key priority issue and needs urgent attention.

Work with married adolescent girls indicated a high prevalence of gender-based violence within marriage. Phase II initiatives must integrate gender-based violence prevention and redressal strategies within the programming on ending child marriage, from a public health perspective.



Shifts in Phase II

Increased priority for integrating programming on sexual and reproductive health for young girls and boys in the joint programming between UNFPA and UNICEF: In Phase II, the two agencies will work towards building stronger interlinkages between the programme on ending child marriage and interventions to address the sexual and reproductive health needs of young girls and boys in Bihar and Rajasthan in ongoing empowerment programmes for girls.

Increased focus on population groups not adequately covered in Phase I: The programme will also increase its focus on engaging with married adolescent girls and boys and young people living with disability in Odisha, with sexual and reproductive health information and services through dedicated programme initiatives. The engagement with married girls and boys will go beyond focusing on delaying pregnancy and spacing to also address gender-based violence.

In Madhya Pradesh, UNFPA in coordination with the Department of Health, will focus on building capacities of supervisory staff posted at 100 health and wellness centres in eight aspirational districts.

Establishment of a helpline for adolescents to increase outreach to adolescents, address access barriers to reaching health facilities for young people, and to encourage adolescents to share their concerns related to sexual and reproductive health, while maintaining confidentiality. UNFPA is supporting the Department of Health in Madhya Pradesh in setting up a toll-free helpline (Umang Kishore helpline) as part of its support for the National Adolescent Health Programme. The helpline launched on 13 January 2020 is currently reaching out to 28 districts in Madhya Pradesh. In a period of less than two weeks, the helpline received a total of 3,450 calls (at least 1,035 calls from boys and 229 from girls). The issues addressed through the calls included: academic concerns, puberty-related concerns and myths, relationship stress, career counselling, physical and emotional changes, suicide intervention and addiction (substance abuse and pornography).



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STRENGTHENING LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

Three states in India have costed action plans on **ending child marriage**



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Results from 2016–2019 programme implementation

Advocacy initiatives have resulted in increased recognition for the adverse implications of stringent laws and policies on adolescent agency and autonomy. Civil society dialogues have enabled a rethink around policy responses that centre criminalization and zero-tolerance laws as mechanisms to fight the already diminishing trend of child marriage.

UNFPA and UNICEF have jointly supported the development of evidence-driven, gender-responsive, state action plans on ending child marriage in Rajasthan (2017), Bihar (2018) and Odisha (2019), in collaboration with the states' Department for Women and Child Development. In the state of Bihar, significant among the initiatives linked to the state-wide campaign to end child marriage, is the role UNICEF continues to play in catalysing and advocating for policy change. UNICEF provided support in undertaking an intensive review of the existing laws (Prevention of Child Marriage Act, 2006) and rules for the necessary amendment to ensure stringent provisions and effective monitoring mechanisms. UNFPA and UNICEF in Rajasthan, in partnership with the Directorate of Women's Empowerment, drafted the rules of the act, which is currently being reviewed by the legal department for approval; similarly in Odisha, the two agencies supported the Department of Women and Child Development in amending and notifying the Odisha Prohibition of Child Marriage Rules 2009.

Challenges

The launch of the Global Programme has been accompanied by an increase in investments to address child marriage by several actors, but not all efforts are informed by a robust theory of change as is the case under the Global Programme. A heavy emphasis on exclusively using implementation of laws against child marriage, in the absence of parallel efforts to adequately engage families, communities and adolescent girls and boys, has, in some instances, led to a push for criminalization and no-exception laws to address child marriage without due regard to adolescent health, sexuality, education and support services. Such approaches that predominantly focus on addressing child marriage through punitive legal frameworks without tackling the drivers and root causes of child marriage, run the risk of adversely affecting adolescents and young people, including those under-age girls and boys who contract marriage by choice.

Lessons learned

There is a need to closely study and understand the impact of action plans to end child marriage; unless these action plans are regularly reviewed, and the budget allocations are tracked annually, they will not be operationalized. UNFPA and UNICEF have invested efforts in ensuring reviews of the action plans. However, the exercise must be driven from within the system. The Global Programme must continue its support for operationalizing and monitoring the implementation of the action plans.

Furthermore, for the programming on child marriage to be truly gender-transformative, it needs to extend its focus beyond legal and policy measures prohibiting child marriage, to also engage with legal and policy efforts in other sectors such as health, including sexual and reproductive health, skills-building and employability, child protection and nutrition.

Alignment between the age of sexual consent and legal minimum age of marriage, has increased the risk for criminalizing adolescent sexuality. Efforts to end child marriage, must consider the implications for young people's agency and autonomy in developing relationships, engaging in sexual activity, and accessing sexual and reproductive health information and services.

Shifts in Phase II

A priority for Phase II include evidence-based policy advocacy on emerging areas related to child marriage such as the implications of no-exception laws on ending child marriage and other laws related to young people's sexual and reproductive health and autonomy and on menstrual health management.

Priority activities in 2020:

- UNFPA will continue its engagement with Partners for Law in Development on alliance-building and evidence generation on the interlinkages between child marriage and adolescent sexuality; based on this partnership, UNFPA and UNICEF will jointly advocate with select state governments (Odisha).
- UNFPA and UNICEF will build capacities of government officials and other stakeholders, for integrating gender-transformative strategies within the programming on child marriage.
- Joint policy advocacy on menstrual health management will be pursued through evidence-building and district-level programme interventions.



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STRENGTHENING DATA AND EVIDENCE

Results from 2016–2019 programme implementation

As part of Global Programme, the two agencies supported the development of national- (UNICEF for *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* at the national level), and state-level information management systems in select states (UNFPA for Women and Child Development in Rajasthan). This work is ongoing and will continue in the next phase. The support includes mapping and review of schemes and entitlements, mapping of data flow structures for different schemes, identification of key monitoring indicators, development of reporting mechanisms for physical and financial progress under different schemes, and development of web-based information management systems and dashboard.

During Phase I, UNFPA supported research on 'Child Marriage—History, Debates, and Future Directions' and desk-based review on changing parental attitudes and shifting value of daughters across the domains of education, work, marriage, property rights and rituals through an extensive survey of existing studies. The research will be published in 2020 and will be useful for guiding programme and research strategies. The two agencies also supported data analysis based on Census and NFHS to guide state-level policy and programmatic action related to adolescents and youth, including the development of state- and district-level action plans on ending child marriage, such as in Odisha and Rajasthan. In Rajasthan and Odisha, advocacy also led to notification of state rules under the law on child marriage, and the designation of Child Marriage Prohibition Officers across all districts in Rajasthan. Furthermore, evaluation and implementation research of programme initiatives was undertaken, and used to inform future strategies and programme support.

The UNICEF-led 'Drivers and Strategies' review study on ending child marriage suggested a few national modifications in the global theory of change to end child marriage to respond better to the India country context. Available evidence from India and elsewhere suggests a host of practices that may hold promise for denting the strength with which the drivers of child marriage persist. Twelve strategies have been identified that are hypothesized to delay marriage, either directly (such as completing secondary education) or, more often, indirectly (such as changing gender norms at individual, family and community levels,). The majority of strategies identified are based on evidence obtained from India.

UNFPA partnered with Partners for Law Development to use evidence on the impact of use of the law (the prohibition of child marriage act) on criminalizing adolescent sexuality. Submissions were made before the government, and before CSO groups to generate awareness and build consensus on using adolescent rights centric approaches to ending child marriage.

UNFPA's evaluation of the work with adolescent girls in community settings in Rajasthan and Odisha, and implementation research on the interventions related to integration of life-skills in national programmes, helped refine programme approaches for Phase II. The recommendations of the evaluation of the work with girls in community settings are guiding UNFPA's technical assistance for the roll-out of the Government of India's scheme for adolescent girls in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha.

Similarly, implementation research related to UNFPA's assistance for the National Adolescent Health Programme in Madhya Pradesh has helped modify the strategies and guidelines on strengthening the peer educator approach, and counselling services under the programme.





Challenges

It is difficult to find space within government systems for work on monitoring and tracking progress on programme initiatives. United Nations agencies have to engage in regular and intensive advocacy on this front. Furthermore, the challenges related to the government's programme implementation (delayed timelines, inconsistent and interrupted budget outlays, procedural gaps) also influence monitoring and evaluation processes and outcomes.

Given the scale of operations, the two agencies have consciously decided to support and strengthen government data systems. In using such an approach, a key challenge has been lack of programme-level monitoring data disaggregated beyond sex (e.g. caste, disability, age, region-urban/rural).

While there is acknowledgement for the need for qualitative research, there has been limited scope within the results framework of the Global Programme to capture qualitative data necessary for ensuring meaningful and nuanced reporting on progress, in changing material conditions, and social norms and behaviours – the goal of the Global Programme.

Given the resource requirements for undertaking evaluations and short-term duration interventions (spanning one to two years) that are not backed by predictable and consistent funding, this does not allow for a fully fledged evaluation plan.

In India, data collection for some key indicators related to adolescents' sexual and reproductive health knowledge, attitudes and practices is challenging because of local sensitivities. Furthermore, raising of the age of sexual consent to 18 years, and requirement for mandatory reporting related to sexual offences (as per the legal definition, any sexual activity below age 18 is considered a sexual offence) has also imposed restrictions on data collection related to this area.

Lessons learned

The evaluation data from small-scale pilot interventions do not provide an adequate basis for policy advocacy for scaling up initiatives. In this regard, the government has in the past emphasized the need for evaluation findings from large-scale initiatives. Thus, programme interventions and monitoring and evaluation initiatives should be at least planned at the district level to enable advocacy for scale-up.

Monitoring and evaluation frameworks should be planned and implemented right from the inception stage of programme initiatives.

Shifts in Phase II

Evidence-building on the impact of life-skills education on empowerment of adolescent girls: Evidence will be generated on how implementing life-skills education programmes may improve life chances and quality for specific groups of vulnerable young people and adolescents, particularly those with disabilities.

Evidence-building on menstrual health management in select states: UNFPA will engage with technical partners and civil society organizations to develop a deeper understanding of the issue of menstrual hygiene management, to inform the advocacy for strengthening menstrual health management initiatives.

One area of focus will be on research on the impact of laws related to child marriage on adolescent sexuality and agency.

COMMUNICATIONS TO END CHILD MARRIAGE

Stories and videos

- Kiran, a girl from Purulia, who fights child marriage
- How parents in India are keeping their girls in school, and away from early marriages

Social media posts

- After signing the #UNICEF supported #EndChildMarriage signature campaign at #Kumbh2019, Vijay Rupani, Chief Minister #Gujarat shares a strong message on the need to end early marriage and empower girls in our communities
- Santoshi is amazing! The 17-year-old from #WestBengal stood up against her family and community to stop her own marriage
- "Educated girls understand the world better and can take better care of themselves," says Anjali Rao from #UttarPradesh
- The rally to #EndChildMarriage begins at #Kumbh2019
- With support from @wash_alliance, we are attempting to break a @GWR for most signatures on a flag and raise awareness to stop the practice of early marriage of children
- Members of block and village level child protection committees shared their community initiatives to #EndChildMarriage
- A one-day workshop at Karauli district in Rajasthan was organised under edutainment channel Naubat Baja
- "Only one department cannot stop child marriage. It needs support from Education, Health, Panchayati Raj, Skill Devt and the community."
- Chief Minister of Rajasthan @ashokgehlot51 released the 'Girl Friendly Gram Panchayat Guidelines' developed by the Directorate of Women Empowerment in partnership with @UNFPA under the 'Beti Bachao Beti Padao' scheme
- Sagarika Raika from Odisha speaks out against child marriage! #ICPD25 #NairobiSummit



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IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

NAME OF IMPLEMENTING PARTNER	TYPE OF PARTNER	PARTNER FOCUS AREA	MAIN PARTNER
Action Aid Association	International NGO	Children's rights, youth rights, women's rights	Both
Partners for Law in Development	Local NGO	Women's right	UNFPA
Child Rights and You	Local NGO	Children's rights	UNICEF
MAMTA - Health Institute for Mother & Child	Local NGO	Children's rights, youth rights, women's rights	UNICEF
ComMutiny Youth Collective	Local NGO	Children's rights, youth rights, women's rights	Both
New Concept Information Systems	Local NGO	Children's rights, youth rights, women's rights	UNICEF
SWARG	Local NGO	Children's rights, women's rights	UNICEF
Vigyan Foundation	Local NGO	Children's rights, youth rights, women's rights	UNICEF
Urmul	Local NGO	Children's rights, youth rights,	UNICEF
Jatan Sansthan	Local NGO	Children's rights, youth rights, women's rights	UNFPA
Centre for Community Economics and Development Consultancy Society	Local NGO	Children's rights, youth rights, women's rights	UNFPA
Jeevan Ashram Sansthan	Local NGO	Children's rights, youth rights, women's rights	UNFPA
Pink City Cycle Rickshaw Chalak Sanstha	Local NGO	Children's rights, youth rights	UNICEF
Talash	Local NGO	Children's rights, women's rights	UNICEF
Bulbulchandi and Barind Development Society	Local NGO	Children's rights	UNICEF
Child in Need Institute (CINI)	Local NGO	Children's rights, women's rights	UNICEF
Aarambh	Local NGO	Children's rights, women's rights	UNICEF
Muskaan	Local NGO	Children's rights, youth rights, women's rights	UNICEF

Debate	Local NGO	Children's rights, youth rights, women's rights	UNICEF
Aawaj	Local NGO	Children's rights, youth rights, women's rights	UNICEF
Parhit Samaj Sewa Sanstha	Local NGO		UNICEF
Bindas Bol	Local NGO	Children's rights, youth rights,	UNICEF
Bharatiya Grameen Mahila Sangh	Local NGO	Children's rights, youth rights, women's rights	UNFPA
Dharti Gramotthan Samiti	Local NGO	Children's rights, youth rights, women's rights	UNFPA
People's Rural Education Movement	Local NGO	Children's rights, youth rights, women's rights	UNFPA
Life Project 4 Youth	Local NGO	Youth rights	UNICEF
Global Interfaith WASH Alliance (GAWA)	International Partnership		UNICEF
Centre for Women's Development Studies	Academic institution		UNFPA
International Institute for Population Studies	Academic institution		UNFPA
Tata Institute for Social Sciences	Academic institution		UNFPA
Praxis	Academic institution		UNICEF
Maulana Azad National Urdu University	Academic institution		UNFPA
Jamia Milia Islamia University	Academic institution		UNFPA
Ministry of Women and Child Development	Government body		Both
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare	Government body		UNFPA
Ministry of Youth and Sports Develpment	Government body		UNICEF
Minsitry of Skills and Entrepreneourship Development	Government body		UNICEF
Department of Women and Child Development	Government body		Both

Department of Education	Government body	UNICEF
Uttar Pradesh State Rural Livelihoods Mission (UPSRLM)	Government body	UNICEF
Mahila Samakhya	Government body	UNICEF
Department of Social Justice and Empowement	Government body	UNICEF
Rajasthan State Legal Services Authority	Government body	UNICEF
District Administration West Bengal	Government body	UNICEF
Rajya Shiksha Kendra (RSK), Department of School Education	Government body	UNICEF
Schedule Caste and Scheduled Tribe Department (SSD)	Government body	UNICEF
Department of School and Mass Education (DSME)	Government body	UNICEF
Women Development Corporation, Department of Social Welfare	Government body	UNICEF
State Social Welfare Department	Government body	UNICEF
Department of Labour	Government body	UNICEF
State Livelihood Promotion Society	Government body	UNICEF
Department of Social Welfare	Government body	UNICEF
Gender Resource Centre of Department, Women and Child development	Government body	UNICEF

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AREAS

GEOGRAPHIC AREA	Output 1.1: Life-skills and economic support	Output 1.2: Education support	Output 2.1: Social and behavioural change	Output 3.1: Quality health and protection services	Output 3.2: Quality education
Rajasthan	■	■	■		
Madhya Pradesh	■	■			
Maharashtra	■	■			
Odisha	■	■			
Bihar	■	■	■		
Gujarat	■	■	■	■	■
Uttar Pradesh	■	■			
West Bengal	■	■	■	■	■



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INDIA

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