This Partnership Strategy (from now on, referred to as Strategy) is a roadmap for our work over the next four years. It does not reflect all the work of individual Girls Not Brides member organisations, nor does it describe everything that needs to be done to end child marriage. For an outline of the strategies and approaches needed to address child marriage in a comprehensive way, please refer to our Theory of Change.

Individuals and communities the world over have been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and other global challenges. The goals in this Strategy are ambitious – indicating our collective vision – but also recognise the many challenges impacting the change we want to see over the next four years.

How this Partnership Strategy was developed

This Strategy identifies a set of six shared goals to focus our work and maximise our impact as a Partnership over the next four years, from 2022 to 2025. It builds on our ambitious Partnership Strategy 2017-2020.

It is the result of extensive consultation – through surveys, interviews and focus group discussions – with Girls Not Brides member organisations and external stakeholders. In total, over 300 individuals fed into this Strategy. Significant input was also provided by a Member Advisory Committee (MAC), which consists of 11 individuals representing Girls Not Brides member organisations.

The Girls Not Brides Member Advisory Committee

The MAC played a crucial role in developing this Strategy, ensuring it is informed by the knowledge, perspectives and interests of Girls Not Brides member organisations. The MAC advised the Girls Not Brides secretariat throughout, from designing the consultation process, to feeding back on early drafts and participating in decision-making. The individuals involved were:

- Rosa Lilian Abrancinkas, Mujer y Salud en Uruguay, Uruguay
- Ambreen Ajaib, Bedari, Pakistan
- Mary Cabrera, Fundación Sendas, Ecuador
- Rebeca Gyumni, Msichana Initiative, Tanzania
- Payzee Malika, Iranian and Kurdish Women’s Rights Organisation (IRKWO), United Kingdom
- Eyleen Terea Menchu Tuy, Rise Up - Levantemos, Guatemala
- Vimbai Ndone, Women and Law in Southern Africa, Zimbabwe
- Godfrey Ochieng Okumu, Tostan International, Kenya
- Gayatri Sharma, Women Power Connect (WPC), India
- Shabira Sultana, World Vision Bangladesh, Bangladesh
- Lassina Traore, Action pour la Solidarité, l’Urgence et le Développement international (Action SUD), Mali
- Gabriela Muñoz García, Jóvenes Latidas, Guatemala
Shifts in focus

Over the past decade, the global prevalence of child marriage has decreased and millions of girls have enjoyed greater freedoms, opportunities and powers to decide and direct their own lives. Progress has been uneven – with prevalence declining significantly in some counties and more slowly in others – but change has gained momentum as our Partnership has grown in size, experience, diversity and influence.

The progress we have made, lessons we have learned and the shifts in many political and social realities over the last five years have informed this refreshed and updated Strategy. Some of the shifts in focus include:

1. Increased focus on community-led change

While civil society action has always been the foundation of our work, to secure lasting transformations we have increased our focus on community-led change and on strengthening the position of girls, youth and communities in holding governments to account for their commitments. This includes expanding funding and support for community-led change.

2. Deeper understanding of gender, inclusion and intersectionality

To effectively address child marriage, we need to define, identify and reach the girls who have been most marginalised and placed at greatest risk of child marriage. We have deepened our understanding of what gender inequality means for girls and how it interacts with other aspects of their identities and lives – including their education, economic status, race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, ability, and migration and refugee status – to create different and overlapping discriminations.

Gender inequality is the root cause of child marriage, and the girls most at risk face multiple intersecting oppressions. To effectively address child marriage and ensure girls can reach their full potential, we need a diverse Partnership that is gender transformative and inclusive in its approach.

3. Increased focus on girls’ “voice” and agency

To effectively address child marriage, we need to advance adolescent girls’ rights and agency; our approach must delay marriage and ensure girls can choose and act on their choices. This Strategy focuses more on ensuring that girls and young people can claim their rights and that their experiences, needs, desires and solutions – as expressed by them – are central in the work we do.

4. Addressing child marriage in humanitarian settings

Child marriage exists in stable conditions, but humanitarian crises intensify its drivers, which include harmful gender norms, poverty and lack of access to basic services such as education and sexual and reproductive health care. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how fragile our world is. This Strategy was created in – and for – an uncertain pandemic/post-pandemic context and focuses more on addressing child marriage in humanitarian settings, ensuring that we are inclusive and reach those who are most at risk.

Notes on language

Child marriage: We use this term to refer to all forms of child, early and forced marriage and unions where at least one party is under the age of 18. We understand child marriage to include all girls affected by the practice – regardless of whether they are in a formal or informal union – and acknowledge the diverse aspects of the issue, including culturally-specific understandings of childhood and development, and the relationship between age, consent and force.

End child marriage: We use this term to refer to the overall vision we are all working towards – a world without child marriage where girls and women enjoy equal status with boys and men and can achieve their full potential in all aspects of their lives.

Address child marriage: We use this term to include the prevention of child marriage and the mitigation of the effects of child marriage (i.e. through the provision of support to girls who are – or have been – married).

High-prevalence countries: We use this term to refer to countries with a high percentage or absolute number of women aged 20 to 24 who were first married or in union before they turned 18.a

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a. A list of high-prevalence countries can be found on the Girls Not Brides website.
Overarching themes

Three overarching themes emerged from the consultation process and affect every aspect of this Strategy. All our work must reflect and integrate these themes if we are to end child marriage. They are:

1. **Gender-transformative approaches**: Gender inequality is the root cause of child marriage. It – and the social norms and practices it informs – means that girls and women are treated as second-class citizens, denied their human rights and valued less because of their sex. To be successful and sustainable, work to end child marriage must push for gender-transformative social change that ensures girls and women – in all their diversity – can exercise their rights and that achieves gender equality.

2. **Meaningful youth engagement**: Adolescents have evolving capacities, can be active agents in their own lives and can make informed decisions. We will only end child marriage with the sustained and active engagement of young people. This means ensuring that a diversity of young peoples’ experiences, needs, desires and solutions – as expressed by them – are included in all areas of programming and decision-making.

3. **Child marriage as a multi-sectoral issue**: To end child marriage, coordinated action is needed across sectors – including education, health, justice/rights, economic wellbeing and humanitarian response – to ensure the best possible outcome for girls and women. Actors in different sectors have a role to play to address child marriage in their work.
Our vision
A world without child marriage where girls and women enjoy equal status with boys and men and can achieve their full potential in all aspects of their lives.

Our mission
We know that we are more effective when we work together and believe that – as a Partnership – we will foster real change in girls’ lives.

Together, we will:
• Collaborate to prevent child marriage and support girls who are – or have been – married.
• Amplify the voices of girls at risk of child marriage and defend girls’ rights to health, education and the opportunity to fulfil their potential.
• Enhance and strengthen work to end child marriage at every level.
• Raise awareness of the harmful impact of child marriage by encouraging open, inclusive and informed discussion at the community, local, national and international level.
• Facilitate learning and coordination between organisations working to end child marriage.
• Mobilise all necessary policy, financial and other support to end child marriage.

Six shared goals to focus our work and maximise our impact as a Partnership

A. COMMUNITIES
Communities are drivers of change, with girls and women at the centre.

B. GOVERNMENTS
Governments lead effective action and foster civil society participation.

C. GLOBAL
Global community champions and supports initiatives to end child marriage.

D. FUNDING
More sustainable, long-term funding is available, especially for communities.

E. EVIDENCE & LEARNING
Work to address child marriage is based on evidence.

F. PARTNERSHIP
Collective engagement through a diverse global Partnership is at the forefront of work to end child marriage.
Communities are drivers of change and can transform unequal power relations and gender discrimination, putting girls and women at the centre. Community initiatives are supported and funded.
**OUTCOMES**

**A1** Community experiences, needs, desires and solutions – particularly those of girls – drive efforts to end child marriage.

The lived experience, knowledge, challenges and proposed solutions of those most affected by child marriage and discrimination should be valued, and they should be supported to participate in decision- and policy-making spaces at every level.

We will use our influence in national, regional and international spaces to connect decision-makers to these views and experiences to inform strategies, policies and programmes to end child marriage and address the root causes of gender inequality.

**A2** Change-makers and their allies in communities have the support they need.

Community-based and women- and girl-led civil society organisations have a unique role to play in holding governments to account. Informed by a deep understanding of a community’s history, position and role within a wider ecosystem of influences, they can push for gender equitable access to resources and opportunities, and promote girls’ leadership and participation in decision-making. Increasing the opportunities for girls at risk or affected by child marriage to share their views, make choices and act on them – that is, exercise their agency – must be at the centre of all our work.

We will support community change-makers who are transforming attitudes, mindsets and norms. We will work with boys and men, parents, teachers, and religious and traditional leaders. We will increase our commitment to working with girls who have been marginalised and put at risk by gender and other intersecting discriminations and oppressions, particularly in humanitarian contexts.

**A3** Community-based change-makers have the resources they need.

Often at the forefront of our movement, community-based civil society organisations, social leaders, champions and activists have a central role to play in ending child marriage. Too often, they cannot access the (financial) support they need to build and strengthen their transformative work, organising and networking.

We recognise that girls are leaders of change and will support their collective action in our work with women-, girl- and youth-led organisations. We also recognise community-based organisations as agents of change – that is, individuals and groups who can identify, prompt and lead change in their communities – and will work to ensure they are financially, technically and politically supported in this role.
Governments – as key actors who can drive transformative change – lead effective action in their countries and foster an environment suited to the active participation of civil society, including youth, women and other stakeholders. The steps they take to end child marriage are holistic, multi-sectoral, girl-centred, evidence-based and rights-based.
OUTCOMES

B1 Civil society organisations play a central role in ensuring government initiatives to end child marriage are effective.

It is the responsibility of governments to engage with civil society and ensure open civic space for its meaningful input into the development, implementation and monitoring of national responses to end child marriage. To be effective, civil society organisations – including youth-led organisations – at all levels must work together and engage in these processes. When governments fail to implement their commitments, civil society must be able to hold them to account. National-level and sub-national collaboration and coordination among civil society organisations is critical to ensure governments make and implement commitments.

By working together we will ensure that civil society is a key partner to government initiatives; share lessons-learned, evidence and data; and, as appropriate, support the implementation of national strategies and programmes that complement government efforts.

B2 Governments take comprehensive action to end child marriage.

Governments need to establish enabling environments, supportive legal and policy frameworks, implement programmes at scale and ensure that girls can access crucial services related to education, health, gender, child protection and justice. Dedicated national strategies to end child marriage provide an important framework for government action. They should be created and implemented with the active participation of all relevant ministries. To be effective, these strategies must also be developed and implemented in cooperation with key stakeholders, including civil society, communities, youth and girls affected by them.

In countries where the needs of girls are already an implementable national priority, integrating a focus on child marriage into existing sectoral strategies, plans and programmes may be more productive than creating a new, separate strategy to end child marriage. All government efforts to end child marriage should be accompanied by the necessary technical and financial resources to ensure implementation as well as mechanisms for monitoring progress and effectiveness.

We will advocate to ensure that governments take effective action and promote accountability.

B3 All relevant ministries and sectors take action to end child marriage.

Governments must integrate a focus on ending child marriage into the work plans and budgets of relevant ministries and departments – including in gender, education, health, child protection, social protection, water and sanitation, justice and transportation – and ensure cross-governmental coordination through participation in national mechanisms for implementing government policies and programmes to end child marriage. Sub-national and local governments also have a crucial role to play in adapting national policies and programmes to the local level to reach girls who are at risk or married.

We will work collectively to promote cross-sectoral initiatives to end child marriage.
GOAL C: GLOBAL

The global community champions and supports initiatives to end child marriage.
C1 The global community recognises ending child marriage as a priority issue.

Significant progress has been made at international and regional levels in securing government commitments to end child marriage. These include Target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals – which commits all governments to ending child marriage by 2030 – and regional commitments at the African Union, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and the States of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). Governments also have significant obligations to end child marriage under international human rights frameworks.

Ending child marriage requires continued, dedicated action. The media, policymakers, donors and global leaders need to sustain and increase their attention to child marriage as a priority issue to ensure continued – and growing – momentum. Influential champions from diverse backgrounds can help keep the issue on the agenda, while increased engagement on digital platforms can be utilised to reach new and existing audiences. The discourse around child marriage must reflect local realities and seek to transform gender norms and stereotypes.

We will work to ensure that ending child marriage remains a priority issue at the international and regional levels by recruiting champions, bringing attention to child marriage in the media and highlighting the issue in a variety of international and regional platforms.

C2 International and regional actors support the implementation of commitments to end child marriage.

Global and regional frameworks can be continually strengthened, but we also need to ensure that international and regional actors support governments in acting on their existing commitments. International and regional actors have an important role to play in holding governments to account for their commitments, and in supporting them to fully implement effective child marriage strategies, policies and programmes. Some regions may also need additional commitments to drive action to end child marriage, including in Latin America and the Caribbean, where the issue is not well recognised.

We will use international and regional mechanisms to hold all relevant actors to account for commitments made, and will support governments in implementing them.

C3 Related sectors take action to address child marriage.

Child marriage is a cross-cutting issue and a barrier to achieving a range of development goals. We will support activists and allies working to end child marriage to work with international partnerships and initiatives to strengthen cross-sectoral engagement and integrate a focus on ending child marriage into their work.

Global humanitarian actors also play an important role in emergency response, when crises mean governments cannot or will not fulfil their commitments to ensure child marriage is addressed through different sector interventions. We will engage with the humanitarian sector to ensure child marriage is addressed in their work.

C4 The links between national, regional and global spaces are strengthened.

Advances at the global level need to be used to drive government commitments at the regional and national level. We will profile local and community leaders and activists in global and regional conversations to ensure a solutions-focused response to child marriage.
PICTURED: Girls take part in a tailoring workshop organised by Solidarity of Refugee Women for the Social Welfare (SOFRES), Dzaleka Refugee Camp, Malawi.

Photo: Girls Not Brides/Thom Pierce

More sustainable, long-term funding is available from a diverse range of sources, particularly for community-based, youth-led and women-led organisations.

GOAL D: FUNDING

More sustainable, long-term funding is available from a diverse range of sources, particularly for community-based, youth-led and women-led organisations.
OUTCOMES

D1 Increased flexible, long-term funding – and emergency and rapid response funding – is directed to civil society, with a priority focus on countries with a high prevalence of child marriage and humanitarian contexts.

Driving sustainable change on complex, deeply rooted issues like child marriage requires flexible, multi-year funding. Existing donors to the sector must continue and – where possible – increase contributions. At the same time, new donors and those working on related issues – whose own goals cannot be reached if child marriage continues – must help to fill funding gaps to end this human rights violation.

D2 Funding is significantly prioritised for community-based, women-, youth- and girl-led organisations, networks and coalitions.

Civil society organisations – especially those working at the community level – play a critical role in addressing child marriage and directly supporting girls who have been affected by child marriage.

We will work to ensure that there is increased funding for civil society, and that traditionally under-resourced groups – including community-based organisations, women- and youth- and girl-led organisations – with high-quality programmes can access these funds. We will also work to ensure donors recognise the importance and impact of collective civil society efforts and fund movement-building.

D3 Governments – particularly those of high-prevalence countries – directly allocate increased and more visible funding to the issue of child marriage and to civil society.

A sustainable, large-scale response to child marriage requires significant domestic investment and commitment, especially from governments of high-prevalence countries. Governmental efforts to end child marriage must be fully funded in the budgets of all relevant ministries. Resources must also support work to end child marriage at district and local levels.

We will connect member organisations – particularly community-based organisations – to funding opportunities. As members of civil society, we will hold governments to account for ensuring that funding reaches the local level and addresses the needs of the individuals and groups that have been most marginalised.
PICTURED: Melody, a young leader in Rise Up's municipal network, facilitates a "Let Girls Lead" programme workshop, Chimaltenango, Guatemala. Photo: Girls Not Brides/James Rodríguez/Arete

GOAL E: EVIDENCE AND LEARNING

Work to address child marriage is based on evidence.
OUTCOMES

E1 New data and evidence are generated and inform decision-making.

While evidence on child marriage has increased in scope and momentum over the last decade, there are still significant research and data gaps in our understanding. These include the reasons behind large-scale shifts in prevalence, which interventions are most (and least) effective, under-explored contexts such as humanitarian crises, how to deliver at scale, how to reach the most marginalised girls, how to work best with different sectors – including education, health, child protection and humanitarian response – and the combination of approaches that works to prevent child marriage and support married girls.

Evidence comes in many forms, including project evaluations, lessons learned, qualitative and quantitative research, case studies, human-centred stories and ongoing discussions among practitioners. We can also learn from programmes and policies in other sectors.

We will promote further qualitative and quantitative research – including at the sub-national level – to fill these gaps. We will also work to ensure that those responsible for developing and funding policies and programmes are aware of new evidence and lessons learned, and are using it to inform their decisions.

E2 New data and evidence are disseminated and accessible to civil society.

New data and evidence are rarely made available and accessible to those who need it – that is, those designing and implementing child marriage prevention, mitigation and response initiatives.

We will work to coordinate between child marriage researchers and practitioners, and to make existing research more accessible to non-research audiences in terms of broad dissemination in different languages and through different formats and platforms.

E3 The collective expertise of civil society drives the global discourse.

With their understanding of the realities of child marriage in different contexts, civil society organisations are uniquely placed to shape global, regional, and national discussions and decisions on child marriage. This will help ensure that work to end child marriage remains focused on effective solutions, and addresses gender inequality and other underlying factors that drive child marriage.

We will act as “knowledge aggregator”, ensuring that evidence and data are shared widely between member organisations and other key stakeholders, including governments and actors from other sectors. We will encourage all child marriage stakeholders to share learning and reflections to develop a common understanding of what works best to end child marriage at the international, national and community levels.

We will also monitor the trajectory of child marriage research, highlighting critical gaps in knowledge, encouraging partners to fill these gaps, and supporting civil society to document their work. We will co-create materials to shape the global discourse and influence decision-making.
The collective work of Girls Not Brides member organisations is at the forefront of work to end child marriage around the world. Our Partnership is committed to ensuring that we have a diverse and inclusive membership that represents those most effected, in which member organisations are treated equitably and with dignity and mutual respect.
OUTCOMES

F1 Girls Not Brides member organisations have greater impact by working together.

A core strength of our Partnership is the diversity of experience and expertise of our member organisations. They all have important contributions to make, regardless of their size, scale, capacities, geographical location or thematic focus. They have a unique and critical role in collaborating with each other, sharing insights from communities with governments and stakeholders, and driving and shaping change to end child marriage in their communities, countries and regions.

By collaborating and mobilising together, member organisations can achieve more because they can reach more people, access more resources and offer more perspectives and solutions. National Partnerships and coalitions provide a key organising mechanism to strengthen the national collaboration of member organisations and enable them to drive change at the national level. Together, we will ensure that all member organisations are – and feel – empowered, engaged, supported and encouraged by a sense of global solidarity.

F2 Girls Not Brides member organisations have the necessary skills and capacities to collaborate and achieve their goals.

Member organisations can strengthen their work and increase their reach to effectively address child marriage. The Partnership has grown over the past decade, creating potential for peer-to-peer learning and exchanges, and ensuring individual member organisations benefit from the learning and expertise of the global Partnership.

We will support each other in the areas we have collectively identified for growth, including successful advocacy and holding governments to account, delivering effective programmes, fundraising, measuring impact and using evidence, working collaboratively, communicating powerful messaging and integrating child marriage into the work of other sectors.

F3 The global Partnership is diverse, inclusive and represents those most affected by child marriage.

Girls Not Brides is diverse in terms of where member organisations work and the approaches they use to address child marriage. However, the Partnership can be further strengthened by bringing in new and under-represented groups, increasing our diversity and ensuring we are inclusive and representative. Together, we will ensure the best standards of safeguarding are maintained by all member organisations. All parts of Girls Not Brides – its National Partnerships and coalitions, member organisations and secretariat – have a role to play in sustaining and strengthening the Partnership.

As a global Partnership, we recognise that ending child marriage means taking a rights-based, intersectional approach that puts girls – in all their diversity – at the centre. We will work to ensure that the experience, knowledge and expertise of the girls most at risk of child marriage – and those who are or have been married – inform and influence policies and practices that have a positive impact at the local level.

F4 Stakeholders – within and outside the Partnership – recognise their contribution to ending child marriage.

Girls Not Brides believes that – when all relevant stakeholders align with each other, and each stakeholder individually intensifies and accelerates their work – progress towards an end to child marriage can happen at a scale that is currently unimaginable. We believe collaboration should go beyond civil society partnerships, and that increased multi-stakeholder collaboration is critical to ending child marriage.

To accelerate progress and achieve transformational change, we will bring together the collective expertise of all relevant sectors and stakeholders.
3. HOW THE GIRLS NOT BRIDES SECRETARIAT WILL CONTRIBUTE TO THE PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY

A movement-builder, influencer and knowledge hub, the Girls Not Brides secretariat is pivotal in supporting the global Partnership and the wider movement to end child marriage.

The secretariat is a central support and coordination body for the largest global civil society partnership working to end child marriage. We represent and advocate for civil society on work to end child marriage.

We are an expert resource and central actor in the global movement. At the heart of all our work lies a desire and determination to transform girls’ lives through supporting and representing our diverse member organisations, and mobilising the vast potential of their collective expertise and power.

The 2022-2025 Girls Not Brides Secretariat Strategy sets out how we will contribute to the work of all Girls Not Brides member organisations and accelerate change in girls’ lives over the next four years.

**Movement-builder**

Girls Not Brides member organisations, National and State Partnerships and coalitions are the powerhouses that work with girls in communities, influence decision-makers and keep child marriage on the national, regional and global agenda.

The secretariat will support and mobilise the broader Partnership through activities including global advocacy campaigns, sharing member organisations’ stories on our platforms, providing technical support, sharing knowledge and evidence, and facilitating peer-to-peer learning.

We will ensure that our members have the up-to-date information and evidence they need to end child marriage in their contexts. We will intentionally diversify our membership in targeted areas – including in high-prevalence contexts – and grow the representation of youth-, women- and Indigenous-led organisations. We will also work with a range of Girls Not Brides National and State Partnerships and coalitions to support their leadership of national movements and collective action to accelerate national change.

**Influencer**

We will mobilise and influence governments, donors, the international community and global and regional high-level institutions and processes to secure increased political and financial commitments. We will coordinate with key donors and other funding mechanisms, such as VOW for Girls and the Girls First Fund, for more joined-up programming and to encourage increased funding for adolescent girls, and ending child marriage.

We will identify and influence sectors where action on child marriage can make a difference in girls’ lives, and support member organisations in their cross-sectoral work, especially in the education and sexual and reproductive health and rights sectors.

We will co-create or support campaigns, media and awareness-raising initiatives that mobilise supporters and contribute to a change in beliefs, attitudes and social norms. We inspire and catalyse concrete action by decision-makers and leaders.

**Knowledge hub**

We will continue to be the “go to” and trusted source for anybody who wants to know about child marriage. We will strengthen our role as a global knowledge and learning hub, working with member organisations to document, collate, and share information and evidence on what works to end child marriage, and supporting effective action and results within the global Partnership and broader movement. We will convene diverse stakeholders, identify evidence gaps and catalyse collective work to strengthen the evidence base on what works to end child marriage, centring the needs and expertise of Girls Not Brides member organisations in these spaces.
WE ARE MORE EFFECTIVE WHEN WE WORK TOGETHER AND – AS A PARTNERSHIP – WE WILL FOSTER REAL CHANGE IN GIRLS’ LIVES.

PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY 2022-2025

Girls Not Brides is a global partnership made up of more than 1,500 civil society organisations from over 100 countries committed to ending child marriage and ensuring girls can reach their full potential.