

IMPACT REPORT 2021



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FOREWORD FROM THE CEO

When *Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage* was founded a decade ago, child marriage was barely recognised or spoken about internationally, despite affecting hundreds of millions of girls and women around the world.

We set out to build a movement to raise the profile of the issue and ensure it is reflected in global policies and development agendas. Now we are an effective, dynamic and impact-driven organisation supporting a Partnership of over 1,600 member organisations working towards a common goal: a world without child marriage where girls and women enjoy equal status with boys and men, and can reach their full potential.

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to threaten this progress over 2021, but together we kept child marriage on the national and international agenda, holding decision-makers to account for their commitments to girls' rights. Reflecting on what we have learned over the last decade – and on the impact of the pandemic – we focused in on collective action, youth engagement, gender-transformative and intersectional approaches, and converting evidence into action.

In a challenging year, I found inspiration in our work with *Girls Not Brides* National and State Partnerships and coalitions, who spearhead the movement at the national level. Through them we connected with

regional youth, feminist and Indigenous movements, building momentum and bringing greater diversity to our collective action. We promoted youth and women's leadership, supporting them to participate in regional and global advocacy spaces, where they directly influenced the international agenda.

On our 10th anniversary, we re-energised the global Partnership with the Power to Girls campaign, calling for immediate action to end child marriage at a time when political will and financial support was being diverted to the pandemic response. By year-end we had reached over 100,000 stakeholders on social media and inspired 168 commitments to girls' rights through our website, including from national governments, donors and civil society from Mexico to Pakistan.

With member organisations, we encouraged the UN Human Rights Council to include bolder language on girls' rights in their fifth resolution on Child, Early and Forced Marriages, building a stronger environment for long-term, sustainable change.

We continued to act as a key source of information and collective learning on child

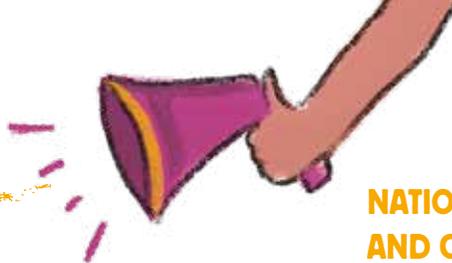
marriage. We worked with member organisations to strengthen the global evidence base, facilitate cross-regional and multi-stakeholder collaboration and shared learning, and promote evidence-based actions that prevent child marriage and support married girls. We contributed to greater coordination of global research and uptake of evidence by co-hosting the Child Marriage Research to Action Network, officially launched in 2021.

Lessons from a decade of collective experience will guide our work for the next four years, as outlined in our refreshed [Partnership Strategy](#) and new Secretariat Strategy. Our collective work is needed now more than ever, and if we accelerate our actions I believe we can reach our shared vision of a world without child marriage.

I look forward to continuing this journey with our friends and partners around the world in 2022!

Dr Faith Mwangi-Powell
CEO, *Girls Not Brides:*
The Global Partnership to
End Child Marriage

DEFINITIONS



CHILD MARRIAGE

We use the term “child marriage” to refer to all forms of child, early and forced marriage and unions where at least one party is under the age of 18. In this, we include all girls and adolescents affected by the practice – whether in formal or informal unions – and acknowledge the culturally-specific understandings of childhood and development, and the complex relationship between age, consent and force.

THE GIRLS NOT BRIDES GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP

At the end of 2021, the *Girls Not Brides* partnership comprised 1,602 member organisations from 102 countries committed to working together to end child marriage and support married girls. *Girls Not Brides* member organisations work across sectors – including health, education, human rights and humanitarian contexts – and range from small grassroots actors to large international organisations.

THE MOVEMENT TO END CHILD MARRIAGE

The informal global network of civil society and grassroots organisations, national and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), activists, academics, UN agencies, funders, governments, leaders and champions, all working towards a world without child marriage where girls can exercise their rights and reach their full potential.

THE GIRLS NOT BRIDES SECRETARIAT

The secretariat coordinates, rallies and supports the work of the Partnership and movement, with staff based in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. We play three broad roles in driving change: a central support and coordination body for the only global civil society partnership to end child marriage; a representative of – and advocate for – civil society work to end child marriage; and a source and convener of technical expertise and central actor in the global movement to end child marriage.

NATIONAL AND STATE PARTNERSHIPS AND COALITIONS

Many *Girls Not Brides* member organisations have come together to accelerate progress to end child marriage in their countries by forming [National and State Partnerships and coalitions](#).

National and State Partnerships are networks of *Girls Not Brides* member organisations that believe in the power of collective action to end child marriage and ensure girls can reach their full potential. They have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the *Girls Not Brides* secretariat to align their work with the [Partnership Strategy](#).

Coalitions are networks of civil society organisations committed to addressing child marriage and working together at the national level to spearhead change. They are close allies to *Girls Not Brides* but have not signed an MoU.

“Our unity is our greatest strength. With a spirit of teamwork, partnership and solidarity – even with limited funds – we are able to carry out activities and have an impact. We have been able to raise our voices and create more change across borders.”

Member of *Girls Not Brides*
Mozambique

ABBREVIATIONS

FGM/C	Female genital mutilation/cutting
GEF	Generation Equality Forum
GTA	Gender-transformative approaches
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
The CRANK	Child Marriage Research to Action Network
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
WACA	West and Central Africa

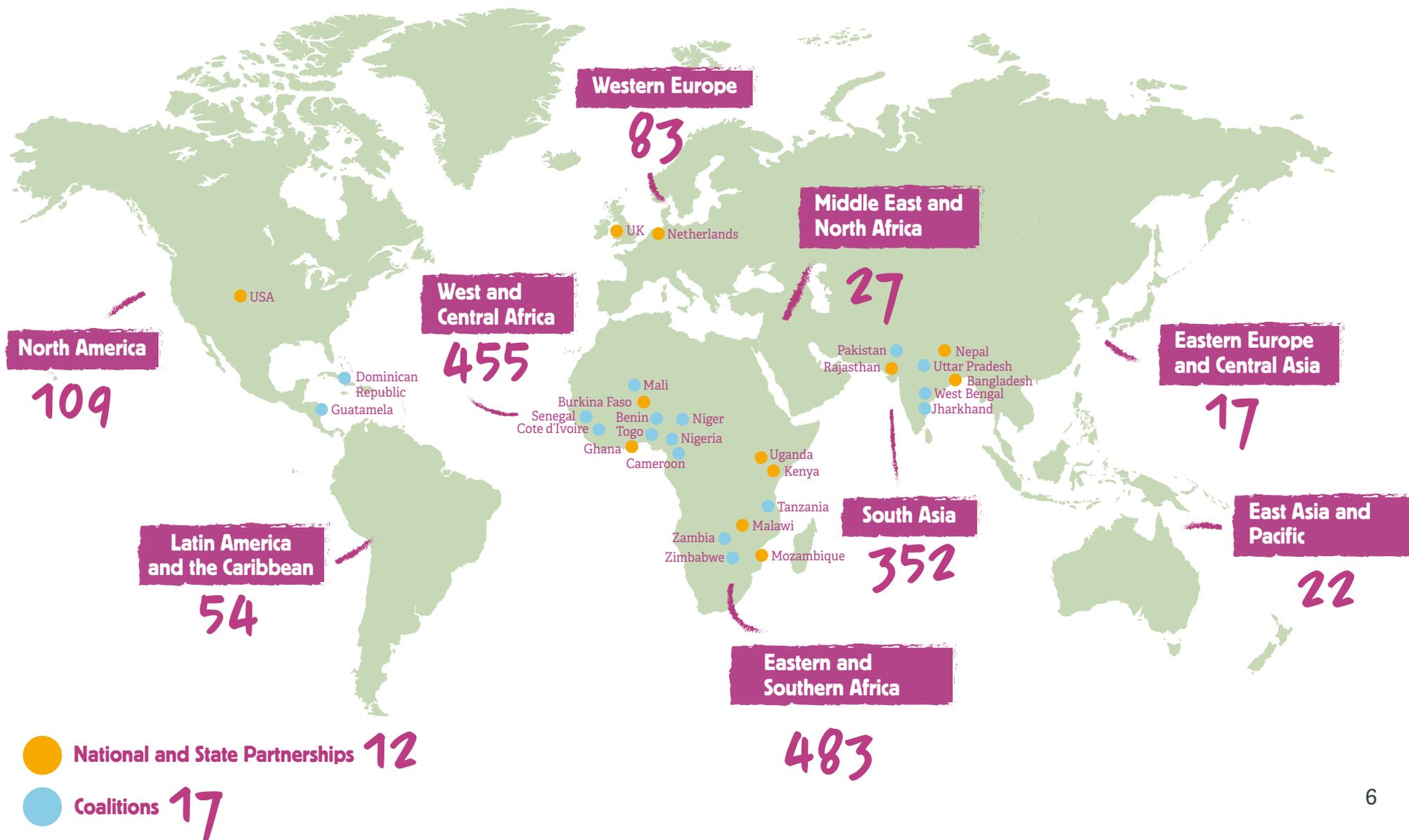


THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP TO END CHILD MARRIAGE

GIRLS NOT BRIDES MEMBERS BY REGION

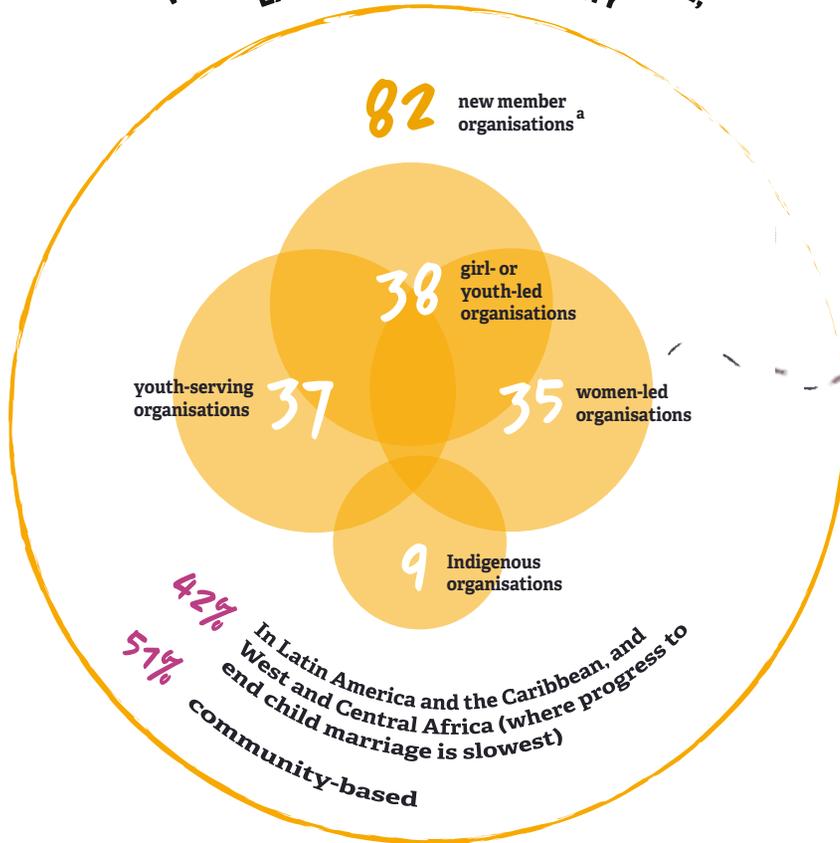
Total members 1,602

Total countries 102



2021 IMPACT AT A GLANCE

THE PARTNERSHIP HAS GROWN IN SIZE, EXPERIENCE AND DIVERSITY



1 new coalition

10 youth-led organisations in National and State Partnership governance structures

WE HAVE FACILITATED SHARED LEARNING AND EVIDENCE-BASED COLLECTIVE ACTION



64 shared learning/capacity enhancement sessions

1,124 participants

47% youth^b

72% women

16 learning products produced/published

21,188 downloads of learning products

4 global research meetings

WE HAVE AMPLIFIED GIRL AND MEMBER VOICES AND ACCELERATED ENGAGEMENT BY DECISION-MAKERS

25 positive stories of change published

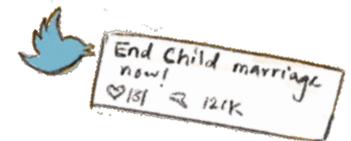
1 global Power to Girls campaign launched

79 governments supporting child marriage in global spaces

11 national Power to Girls campaigns offered financial and technical support

18 governments demonstrating committed action

168 campaign commitments made



^a Number/percentage of member organisations in each category is based on how they self-identify in their membership application. Some identify as more than one category.

^b Percentages based on a sub-set of participants who self-reported age and gender.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECRETARIAT OBJECTIVES

In 2021, the secretariat supported the movement to end child marriage by working to fulfil six objectives:

- 1 Catalysing effective civil society collective action at all levels
- 2 Ensuring the movement to end child marriage has the evidence, information and learning necessary to take effective action
- 3 Ensuring child marriage is seen as a political and social priority through direct advocacy, amplifying the voices of the Partnership and providing a platform for community-based organisations, women, girls and youth to be heard
- 4 Advocating for governments and other decision-makers to take action to address child marriage
- 5 Ensuring the movement to end child marriage has sufficient resources
- 6 Ensuring the secretariat is functional, effective and able to support the movement to end child marriage





OBJECTIVE 1: CATALYSING COLLECTIVE ACTION

KEY EVIDENCE



Over 2021, the Partnership has grown in size, experience and diversity. We have intentionally focused on expansion in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), and West and Central Africa (WACA) – regions where progress on child marriage has been slowest – and have increased youth and women’s participation. We worked with member organisations to share learnings, enhance capacity, connect diverse stakeholders and catalyse collective action at all levels to ensure governments deliver on commitments.

SUPPORTING COLLECTIVE ACTION AT THE SUB-NATIONAL AND NATIONAL LEVEL

Girls Not Brides National and State Partnerships and coalitions – as networks of organisations bringing together contextually relevant expertise, evidence and connections and speaking with one voice – are uniquely positioned to influence and advocate for local and national governments to take action. The *Girls Not Brides* secretariat provides tailored technical assistance to coalitions based on their priority work areas and needs as defined by them, and supports them to connect and learn from each other and broader learning in the movement.

When member organisations in the Dominican Republic started working collectively, we brought them together with focal points from Africa and Asia – where there are experienced National and State Partnerships and coalitions – to share examples of successful collective action and ways of working. They used the *Girls Not Brides Partnering for success toolkit* to explore how to conduct collective advocacy in their context, and agreed their mission and goals, which will guide their national-level work.

One of our priorities is to support the coalitions to be inclusive, diverse and democratically elected to strengthen their ongoing collective work. With our support, *Girls Not Brides Malawi*, *Girls Not Brides Rajasthan* and the Mesa a Favor de las Niñas y Adolescentes

^c Number of member organisations in each category is based on how they self-identify in their membership application. Some identify as more than one category.

^d Some youth activists may be counted more than once, if they participate in more than one group

(Mesa de la Niña) – a civil society coalition in Guatemala – elected new, more inclusive leaderships. They now have youth- and women-led organisations represented in their decision-making structures.

Building on the strength of their new leadership, *Girls Not Brides Malawi* played a key role in analysing the national budget and urging the Government of Malawi to prioritise funding for girls' education. Following a parliamentary event backed by us in 2020 and ongoing support to engage the media, *Girls Not Brides UK* was a driving force behind Members of Parliament (MPs) voting for a [ground-breaking bill](#) to make all forms of child marriage illegal in England and Wales.

In Uttar Pradesh, India, the state coalition – with our technical support – worked with girls to identify barriers to accessing two government schemes – on sexual and reproductive health and rights and cash transfers – that could help prevent child marriage. The coalition responded with easy-reference booklets and training with government officials on the schemes, which girls then replicated with 2,150 peers across the state.

Due to this collaboration, thousands of girls are already better able to access government schemes that will reduce their risk of child marriage, and government officials have called for further awareness-raising activities that could reach millions more.

Youth engagement is essential to transforming the gendered social norms that drive child marriage, and working with National and State Partnerships and coalitions is a powerful way to scale up our joint impact. This year, we worked with 116 youth workers from 72 member organisations across four State Partnerships and coalitions in India to use stories and social media to speak with adolescents about gender, sexuality and discrimination.

Youth leaders are now using the [curriculum and storytelling toolkit](#) – which they inputted to – in their organisations and communities. They now report greater confidence and understanding to talk about these issues, which are key drivers of child marriage.

Girls Not Brides National and State Partnerships and coalitions bring diverse stakeholders together and have responsibility for the safety of the communities engaged in their projects and activities, particularly the girls, adolescents and adults at risk they interact with. In 2021, we worked with coalitions in Uttar Pradesh (India) and Nigeria to build a shared understanding of international safeguarding standards. We facilitated training and the co-creation of their own policies so they can align their national and local frameworks to these core principles.

“We must convene spaces for organisations, activists and people [to come together to advocate to end child marriage], while prioritising the perspective of girls. Their voice is too often ignored.”

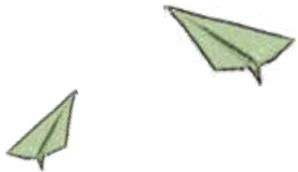
Joseline Velásquez, Mesa de la Niña, civil society coalition, Guatemala

“We have been able to make huge progress to change legislation in England and Wales through teamwork. Working as a genuine partnership with a flat management structure has enabled all involved to contribute meaningfully and successfully.”

Luna Maktari, Independent Yemen Group, *Girls Not Brides UK*

“I really enjoyed the peer learning method, I am glad that other girls from my village also got the chance to know about both the schemes in detail. This whole activity has given me a sense of encouragement to pursue further other opportunities which are available for girls.”

Girl leader from Uttar Pradesh, India



Participants later reported greater collaboration between coalition members, improved knowledge and understanding of safeguarding, and commitment to embedding safeguarding in their work. The Uttar Pradesh coalition is now in a stronger position to consult and feed back on the State government's draft rules for the Prevention of Child Marriage Act 2006.

“I didn't limit this training to only myself but used it with my team and together we have implemented in the field in an organised way. We have used this training with at least 150 youth.”

Youth worker from Rajasthan, India

SUPPORTING COLLECTIVE ACTION AT THE REGIONAL AND GLOBAL LEVEL

Our collective work to promote girls' representation in regional and global advocacy for also had an impact at the regional and global level this year. Working with Indigenous^e women's and youth organisations is a priority for our work in LAC, as girls from Indigenous communities experience intersecting discriminations – relating to their gender, age, ethnicity, education and location – that put them at greater risk of child marriage.

This year, we worked closely with Indigenous women's and youth organisations to deepen understanding of child marriage in their communities, and to promote Indigenous girls, adolescents and young women as experts in their own cultures and experiences.

To this end, we accompanied representatives from 11 organisations and collectives to organise a side event at the 14th Session of the United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, supporting them to prepare and deliver a joint statement to the session's Expert Members. Through this process, young Indigenous women – including the adolescent girl who presented the joint statement – spoke about child marriage from their own perspectives, sharing their recommendations on how to address child marriage with their communities.



^e We capitalise “Indigenous” to recognise the existence of global, regional and national Indigenous rights movements. However, we also acknowledge that there is significant diversity amongst Indigenous peoples, and that they usually prefer to self-identify with their specific community name. Our aim is not to mask this diversity, but to draw on the strength of this identity to advocate for a differential approach to ending child marriage that takes ethnicity into account.

IMPACT IN PRACTICE: WORKING WITH YOUTH TO TRANSFORM SOCIAL NORMS IN KENYA AND TANZANIA

Child marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) are both driven by gender norms linked to controlling girls' and women's sexuality, and maintaining social and religious norms

In some contexts – like the cross-border Kuria community in Kenya and Tanzania – the two practices coexist, and FGM/C is linked to girls' marriageability. Successfully addressing these issues means [empowering girls](#), [engaging families and communities](#), and building effective partnerships.

Building on the collaboration with *Girls Not Brides Uganda* in 2020, we supported [Girls Not Brides Kenya](#) and the [Tanzania coalition](#) (Tanzania End Child Marriage Network) – through member organisations in Migori County, Kenya ([Msichana Empowerment Kenya](#)), and Tarime District, Tanzania ([Children's Dignity Forum](#)) – to address child marriage and FGM/C with the Kuria community. We prioritised youth engagement, gender-transformative approaches (GTA) and multi-stakeholder action to address gender inequality and reshape the unequal power relations that perpetuate both practices in this context.

PROMOTING MULTI-STAKEHOLDER ACTION

We established two youth working groups to bring together key stakeholders and opinion leaders to drive collective action, with active leadership from young women. They established community-based structures – including child rights and protection committees – that link with relevant government ministries and respond to cases of child marriage and FGM/C.

Supported by budget advocacy trainings and advocacy meetings, this collaboration led key government officials – including the Tarime District Commissioner – to make public statements on child marriage, ward councillors to incorporate gender-responsive budgeting into their work and local governments to integrate youth-inspired activities into their workplans. Transforming social norms is a long-term project, but collective, multi-stakeholder action is critical for lasting impact.

“I have learnt so much from this training. It has shed so much light on the importance of gender-responsive budgeting. I will use my position as a ward councilor to influence construction of a dormitory at the school in my ward.”

Binagi Ward Councilor, Tarime District, Tanzania.

ENGAGING WITH YOUTH TO TRANSFORM SOCIAL NORMS

We trained 20 young people using the *Girls Not Brides Stand up, speak out!* youth activism toolkit – with an additional module on GTA – who replicated this with a further 83 youth activists. The Migori Youth Network was established with them and other young people to foster collective action to end child marriage across the region. We also supported a digital storytelling workshop with 30 youth activists, which explored diverse forms

of expression – including art, photography, drama, creative writing and story circles – for them to share and use their own experiences to advocate for an end to child marriage and FGM/C in their communities.

These activists have become a powerful, collective force for change, organising into groups to conduct door-to-door sensitisation forums and advocacy, and offering youth mentorships. They have led intergenerational and youth-focused dialogues in their communities and on local radio stations, challenging discriminatory gender norms and pushing for the long-term transformations that will ensure girls and women can enjoy the same rights as boys and men.

“When we began this role, we were experiencing so much backlash, from the elders particularly, but as we continued the backlash reduced. Through this I learnt that as a changemaker I need to be patient.”

Member of the Tarime Youth Working Group, Tanzania





OBJECTIVE 2 : SHARING EVIDENCE AND LEARNING

KEY EVIDENCE



16 learning products produced/published

21,188 downloads of learning products

64 shared learning/capacity enhancement sessions with National/State Partnerships and coalitions

→ 1,124 participants

4 global research meetings

→ 399 participants

One of our key roles as a secretariat is to facilitate knowledge exchange amongst member organisations and with practitioners, researchers, policymakers and donors to ensure they have access to – and influence over – the latest evidence and resources.

This year, we built global understanding of why and how child marriage happens, its impacts, how it links to other human rights issues and what works to end it. As a result, we are in a stronger position to collectively advocate for investment and support that will effectively prevent child marriage and support married girls.

WORKING WITH MEMBER ORGANISATIONS TO PUT EVIDENCE INTO ACTION

This year, we facilitated and supported opportunities for members to exchange learning with each other and key stakeholders. Highlights included a global convening (see impact in practice on p. 19) and a series of online learning sessions for National and State Partnerships and coalitions around the world to build cross-regional relationships and increase peer-to-peer learning.

In Kenya, we brought member organisations together to share evidence and learning on how to address the child marriage and FGM/C together in programming and advocacy. As a result, member organisations developed evidence-based collective messaging to advocate for both issues to be addressed in an integrated way. *Girls Not Brides Kenya* developed a joint advocacy strategy to hold the Kenyan Government to account for its commitments to end child marriage and FGM/C. These outcomes will support ongoing work with the Kuria community in Kenya and Tanzania (see impact in practice on p. 13)

In Burkina Faso, we convened [National Partnership](#) members (the Coalition Nationale contre le Mariage des Enfants au Burkina Faso, CONAMEB), traditional and religious leaders and a consultant from Niger to share learning on social norms change in child marriage programming. As a result, leaders committed to being more active in their engagement with other stakeholders. This was the first time CONAMEB and such leaders have agreed to work strategically together.

With the [coalition in Niger](#) (the Plateforme vers la Fin du Marriage des Enfants, the Niger Platform) we brought together diverse stakeholders – including humanitarian actors, government officials and representatives from the educational and child marriage sectors – for the first time to plan a collective approach to ensure girls’ access to education in humanitarian settings. They formed a working group which will meet regularly to share workplans, identify areas for collaboration and support collective advocacy.

By facilitating youth engagement in the African Girls’ Summit – including through the African Union’s pre-Summit youth training – working on collective advocacy with the Niger Platform and organising a parallel event on girls’ education, we ensured that girls and member organisations could make powerful demands for decision-makers to take cross-sectoral actions to guarantee girls’ rights. As a result, child marriage and education were included in the Summit’s outcome statements. This process not only shows the power of collective action, but also served to strengthen it: youth activists have connected with the wider youth movement in Africa, and member organisations formed an alliance for joint advocacy in West Africa, through which they can hold decision-makers to account.

In LAC – where child marriage is not widely recognised though prevalence is high at 22% – we worked with member organisations to host two webinars to deepen understanding of the links between child marriage and two issues that are a priority for civil society in

the region: adolescent pregnancy and masculinities. Through the webinars, member organisations – and particularly young women – shone a light on their work, shared learnings and recommendations, and galvanised collective advocacy for integrated responses to child marriage. Bringing community-based and youth-led organisations together with UN Agencies and INGOs also helped to link community work with the global evidence base, highlighting the importance of context and the need for an approach that accounts for the intersecting factors that put girls at risk.

“We live in an environment where traditional values and the interpretation of religious texts have a negative impact on the lives of young girls and women in general.”

Religious leader participating in the social norms workshop in Burkina Faso

“It motivates us who are older that there are young people [...] who are very committed to this social change and to a dignified life as human beings, and that we can all do something from where we are.”

Participant in the adolescent pregnancy webinar, Guatemala

STRENGTHENING THE GLOBAL EVIDENCE BASE

We produced and disseminated 16 learning resources in multiple languages. These case studies, briefs and longer reports summarise the latest data, evidence and learning on specific topics, reflect the expertise and experiences of member organisations and offer actionable recommendations for policy and programming.

Resources published this year include briefs and reports on child marriage and [girl’s education, child protection, adolescent pregnancy and motherhood, FGM/C, cash transfers and modern slavery](#); case studies on child marriage in [humanitarian settings, child marriage and FGM/C](#) and [using the media to address FGM/C](#); and a Research Spotlight on [gender-transformative and systems approaches to ending child marriage](#). An additional brief developed in 2021 on intersectionality, which explores the factors that increase girls’ individual risks of child marriage, will be published in 2022.

COORDINATING AND PROMOTING UPTAKE OF GLOBAL CHILD MARRIAGE RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE

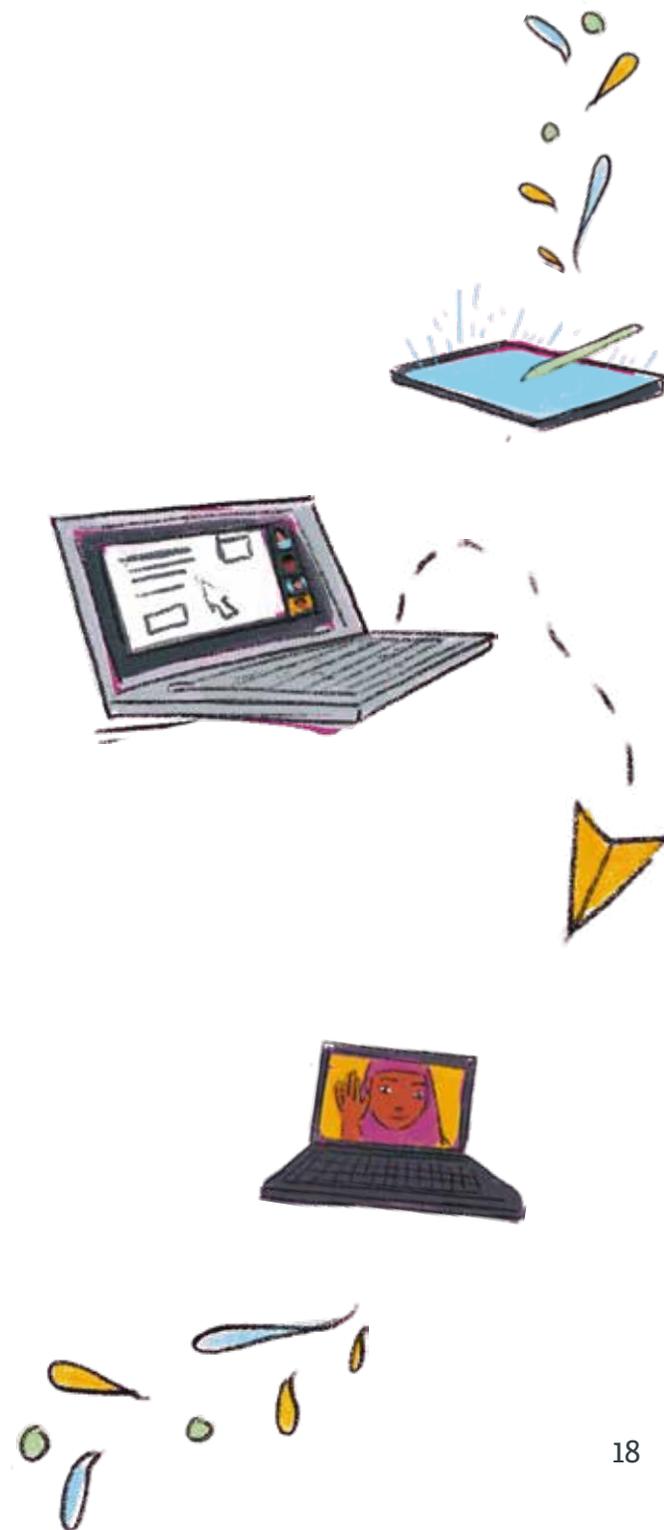
This year – in partnership with the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage – we launched a unique mechanism for coordinating the global research agenda and promoting uptake of learning and evidence: the [Child Marriage Research to Action Network](#) (the CRANK). By year-end, the CRANK comprised over 300 researchers, practitioners and advocates from diverse organisations – including women- and youth-led organisations, universities and UN Agencies – from around the world.

The CRANK disseminated and encouraged uptake of priority child marriage research through [quarterly meetings](#) to discuss the latest evidence on priority issues – including gender-transformative approaches and child marriage in humanitarian settings – and what it means for research, practice and policy.

The CRANK's [first](#) and [second](#) Research Spotlights summarised key takeaways, resources, tools and case studies with practical solutions for those working to end child marriage. The [research tracker](#) also contributed to greater coordination in child marriage research.

We also worked with UNICEF and nine other strategic partners to launch UNICEF's [Child Marriage Monitoring Mechanism](#) (CMMM) this year. This collaborative platform will generate analysis and engage national actors to use data in their work. As a member of the Strategic Advisory Group, we will engage and represent the global Partnership to ensure the CMMM integrates the perspectives of young people and civil society.

At the regional level, we hosted a workshop to reformulate the Africa Action Group to End Child Marriage to ensure it has the evidence, information and learning necessary to take effective action, and to provide a platform to highlight African research and researchers at the regional and global levels. We initiated a review of existing evidence on child marriage prevalence, drivers, consequences and interventions in Africa, identified research gaps and set priorities with member organisations, UN Agencies, research organisations and academia.



IMPACT IN PRACTICE: DRIVING EVIDENCE-BASED ACTION THROUGH SHARED LEARNING WITH MEMBERS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

As we marked our 10th anniversary during the pandemic – when travel and face-to-face meetings were still restricted – we moved our series of learning convenings with National and State Partnerships, coalitions and member organisations online.

Over four sessions, we discussed and shared practical examples – in four languages – of issues at the core of our work: youth engagement, sexuality and girls' agency, movement-building, and collective action.

The sessions were co-created with member organisations and the youth engagement sessions were designed with adolescent girls and young leaders. Young people moderated and participated in the discussions, providing examples of how they organise and foster networks of girls and young women to advocate for their rights in Guatemala, India, Kenya, Mexico and Tanzania. By focusing on shared learning and youth engagement, we built member organisations' and young people's confidence to influence the global evidence base, and strengthened their leadership in the movement to end child marriage.

In all sessions, participants highlighted and shared practical solutions to enhance youth capacity and cultivate safe spaces at the national and regional level where they can share their opinions and recommendations, and participate in decision-making. National and State Partnerships and coalitions have already begun making this a reality by including more young people in their governance structures (see examples on p. 10), and member organisations and partners continue to support their leadership journey at the local and national level.

We used our digital channels to share key learnings and resources with participants. We also brought youth activists together to share their thoughts on activism and campaigning to end child marriage in a [blog](#) for broad audiences around International Youth Day, broadcasting a positive vision of change to inspire action by diverse stakeholders.





End child marriage
now!
❤️ 181 🗨️ 121K

LIVE

POWER TO GIRLS!



OBJECTIVE 3 : AMPLIFYING VOICES

KEY EVIDENCE



25 positive stories of change shared

1 global Power to the Girls campaign launched

11 national Power to Girls campaigns offered financial and technical support

168 campaign commitments made through our website

over 100,000 reached through the #PowerToGirls campaign tag

1 set of guidelines for ethical communications produced

We have made significant progress towards a world without child marriage over the past decade, but 12 million girls still marry every year,^f and 10 million more are expected to marry by 2030 because of the broad impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.^g

Raising awareness of the issue, its urgency and what is being done to address it – by amplifying girls' and member organisations' voices – is at the core of our work to mobilise the global Partnership, build support and accelerate engagement by decision-makers at every level.

A GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR POWER TO GIRLS

The pandemic – and associated school closures, restrictions to movement, pressure on health services and increasing economic hardship – has put adolescent girls at increased risk of child marriage. At the same time, political will and resources have been diverted away from programming to prevent and respond to such practices.

In this context, we launched the global [Power to Girls](#) campaign calling for immediate action to end child marriage. Through it, we have engaged member organisations and partners around the world to create spaces for girls to speak out, harness their power and realise their potential. We have also called on decision-makers to make tangible commitments to end child marriage, making the issue a political and financial priority that they can be held to account on. The campaign will run until March 2022.

Together, we have created a global and vocal network calling for action, beginning with an online festival attended by over 400 individuals and leading to the launch of five national campaigns (see impact in practice on p. 24). By year-end, we had received 168 [commitments](#) through our website, including from the Governments of Mexico and Sweden, with thousands more collected by member organisations through their national campaigns.

^f UNICEF, 2021, [Child marriage database](#).

^g UNICEF, 2021, [COVID-19: A threat to progress against child marriage](#).

The campaign tag #PowerToGirls was seen over 100,000 times in 2021, videos received an average of 4,300 views on social media and email engagement was well above sector benchmarks. In this campaign, we have reached far beyond our own Partnership to raise awareness and inspire action to ensure girls have the power to decide over their lives and bodies.

“[We commit to] promoting an on-going information campaign on this issue, joining national and international initiatives to strengthen self-care and autonomy from early education, working hand in hand with girls and adolescents, listening to them.”

Power to Girls commitment from the National Institute for Women (INMujeres), Government of Mexico

AMPLIFYING GIRLS' AND MEMBER VOICES FOR A POSITIVE VISION OF CHANGE

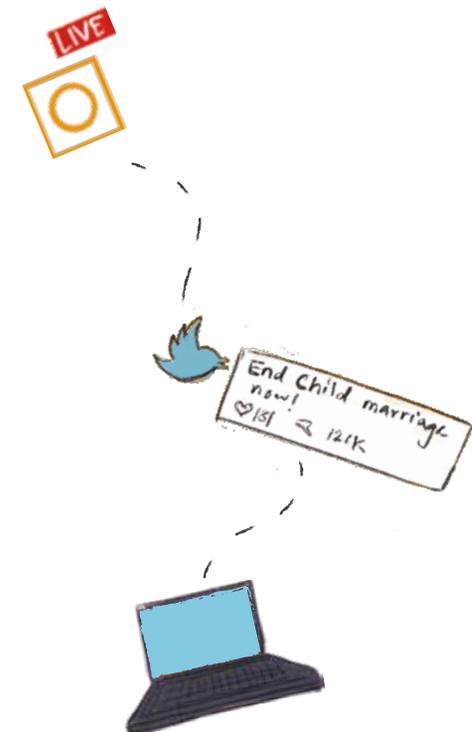
This year, we used our digital channels – including our newly refreshed website – to share the work being done to end child marriage, how it affects girls' lives and what challenges we still face as a movement. In sharing these stories, we have kept member organisations and partners engaged and motivated, and have ensured that decision-makers, governments and donors can see the impact of investing in civil society organisations working with girls to build a better future for us all.

Over 2021, we published 25 positive stories of change – that is, girl- and member-led insights, expertise and personal stories – on our website, which were visited almost 10,000 times. They focused on youth activism, intersectionality, humanitarian contexts and collective action to end child marriage. The most visited story was [Celebrating the Day of the African Child](#) which highlighted progress on child marriage in Africa. Other blogs included the story of an [Angolan organisation addressing child marriage through girl power](#), [promoting healthy masculinities in LAC](#), [channelling power from government to girls in India](#) and [supporting girls and women in Afghanistan](#) after the Taliban takeover.

We also shared information, stories, events and discussions on child marriage and the work being done to end it across our social media channels. Through this, we encouraged broad audiences and key stakeholders – including member organisations and donors – to join the conversation and to take action. Over 2021, our social media audience across established channels in English grew by 3.1% to a combined total of over 220,000, and engagement increased by 167.7%.

To better support our growing membership in LAC, we launched our official Spanish-language [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) accounts. Through them, we have raised the profile of child marriage and the work of *Girls Not Brides* member organisations in the region, engaging activists, civil society, the media, UN agencies and governments. A Facebook group set up for member organisations now provides a space to share events, tools and experiences, and to build consensus so we can advocate for change, together.

This year, we re-launched our supporter communications through a monthly email, which provides a curated snapshot of girl- and member-led stories, evidence and campaign actions for stakeholders including donors, policymakers, journalists and civil society. By engaging regularly with this group we have encouraged commitments to the Power to Girls campaign and the integration of child marriage into work beyond our Partnership, building a more holistic, multi-sectoral approach to girls' rights.



RESPONSIBLE REPORTING ON CHILD MARRIAGE

The media is very important for raising awareness and public pressure to end child marriage at the national, regional and global level. We work with member organisations to proactively pitch stories and respond to media requests that cover the issue in an ethical and solutions-focused way, where those affected can tell their stories safely and in their own words. This builds on our approach of promoting personal stories that illustrate the impact of, and solutions to, child marriage, and avoid sensationalist reporting of the issue.

This year, we worked closely with [The Washington Post](#) to source evidence of how COVID-19 is impacting on child marriage in West Africa. We brokered a working relationship between their bureau chief and member organisation [Agir Plus](#), and ensured safeguarding measures were in place for a press visit. As a result, The Washington Post published the story of Fatouma, a youth activist who almost married as a child, and who now advocates for girls' education. Reader donations mean Fatouma could go back to school and is working to regain her identity papers.

We worked with the coalition in Zimbabwe (the Zimbabwe National Group to End Child Marriage) to respond to news that a girl had died in childbirth following her marriage, resulting in coverage with first-person accounts by [BBC Africa Daily](#), [CNN](#) and on [our website](#). We continue to work closely with the coalition in Zimbabwe to promote their stories and the

Southern African Development Community [Model Law](#) on Eradicating Child Marriage and Protecting Children Already in Marriage.

Work with *Girls Not Brides UK* led to the landmark Bill to increase the legal age of marriage being covered by [The Guardian](#), [Thomson Reuters Foundation](#), PA Media and the [Evening Standard](#). We also worked with [Folha de Sao Paulo](#) in Brazil, building a reputation as a trusted source of information in the country with the fifth highest absolute number of child marriages in the world.

This coverage raises the national and international profile of child marriage, putting pressure on governments to fulfil their commitments – too often laid aside – to end child marriage and guarantee girls' rights. It also presented *Girls Not Brides* member organisations, girls and young women as experts on the issue and led readers to donate to organisations working with and for girls.

LEADING THE WAY ON ETHICAL COMMUNICATIONS AROUND CHILD MARRIAGE

Cutting across all our work to amplify voices is our commitment to communicating responsibly around child marriage. This year, we worked with 50 member organisation representatives and contributors – including young women who have experienced child marriage – to produce a set of [guidelines for ethical communications](#) on the issue.

These guidelines outline – for the first time – ethical principles and good practices specifically tailored to communicating around child marriage, and include 11 practical tools to deliver on them.

In the context of the pandemic and increasing awareness of the power imbalances that can cause harm in the storytelling process, these guidelines support us all to ensure that contributors, and particularly girls and adolescents, are safe and able to express their experiences and preferences, and find the process to be a source of power.

“Storytelling is an effective way to communicate with our community but [there are] many consequences of sharing [a] story and risks of stereotypes which need to be clear for [the] storyteller while communicating.”

Representative from a *Girls Not Brides* member organisation based in India

^h UNICEF, 2021, [Child marriage database](#).

IMPACT IN PRACTICE: COLLECTIVE ACTION FOR POWER TO GIRLS

As part of the Power to Girls campaign, we worked closely with member organisations around the world to adapt messaging to regional contexts and to highlight their work for girls' rights. We also offered funding and technical support for 11 member organisations and National Partnerships to develop their own campaigns and drive national-level action. Four of these campaigns launched in 2021.

In Pakistan, [Blue Veins](#) worked with the media and religious leaders, who had not previously been engaged in the issue of child marriage, to catalyse action in favour of girls' rights across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Through a workshop with journalists, they raised awareness of girls' rights and the role of the media in preventing child marriage and driving public support, and set up a media support group to promote collective action.

They also held multi-faith dialogues with religious leaders, resulting in leaders from across the region committing to promoting girls' and women's rights, and to working together to end child marriage for the first time. Their support is key to the future success of a working group and two Provincial Assembly committees developing child marriage legislation.

In India, [Pratigya](#) has combined community-level work in urban slums and tribal villages with state-level advocacy to rally political and religious leaders behind girls' rights. They have gathered over 7,000 signatures for their pledge to end child marriage, including those of ministers and government representatives. They have also used pamphlets and talks with decision-makers to raise awareness.

In LAC, member organisations have come together and found strength in collective action through the campaign. They have shared their experiences and prepared joint, contextually-relevant messages that drive decision-makers to formally commit to girls' rights. Over 20 Power to Girls commitments have already been made in the region, including by government institutions. Our new Spanish-language social media channels have been key to this engagement (see p. 22).

“The [Power to Girls investment] is contributing to tangible commitments and accountability from decision-makers to ensure that ending child marriage is a political and financial priority going forward.”

Blue Veins, Girls Not Brides member organisation in Pakistan

“Working closely with the government facilitates our work at the community level. We can't end child marriage without engaging young people, and most of the ideas for our campaign came from young people [...].”

Pratigya, Girls Not Brides member organisation in India



POWER TO GIRLS!

I WILL LISTEN

NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US!

END GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

I WILL REFLECT GIRLS' NEEDS IN MY BUDGET

OBJECTIVE 4: ADVOCATING TO DECISION MAKERS

KEY EVIDENCE



79

governments supported child marriage in global spaces

18

governments demonstrated committed action

11

decision-makers expressed commitments

7

advocacy and campaign resources made available online

520

youth activists participated in advocacy/campaign moments with decision-makers

As a Partnership, we are stronger when we unite around a clear, practical vision for change. The secretariat works with diverse stakeholders to influence decision-makers to help make this vision a reality.

Over 2021, we mobilised youth- and women-led organisations and advocated for their concerns – including bodily autonomy, sexual and reproductive rights, and child marriage – to be included on international and national agendas.

The Generation Equality Forum (GEF) – which marked the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing+25) with events in Mexico and Paris – was a key arena for us to promote youth engagement and drive youth-friendly political and financial commitments to girls' and women's rights at the national and global level.

Our collective advocacy with youth activists and civil society through platforms like the Adolescent Girls Investment Plan (AGIP) meant the GEF enjoyed significant youth participation and leadership – with prominence given to Indigenous and LGBTQ+ representatives – in its Action Coalitions, Youth Task Force and Core (decision-making) group. More on our engagement with the process in the impact in practice on p. 28.

Also on the global stage, we contributed to a strong normative environment on child marriage through the UN Human Rights Council's [fifth resolution on Child, Early and Forced Marriage](#). We worked with partners across governments, INGOs and civil society organisations to ensure the needs of girls at risk of child marriage, and those who are or have been married, are prioritised.

The resolution was adopted by consensus with 74 co-sponsors and broad cross-regional engagement. It maintains international pressure on UN Member States to fulfil their commitment to ending child marriage within a framework of human rights, and accounting for the COVID-19 pandemic.

Collective action by civil society was instrumental in getting governments to support the resolution and adopt the strongest possible language to protect girls' rights. Thanks to our joint advocacy, the resolution mentions girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights for the first time. It also contains strong language on girls' right to participate in decision-making, an issue previously resisted by some Member States. By strengthening global commitments and language on child marriage, we have built a stronger environment for long-term, sustainable change.

At the national level, *Girls Not Brides Uganda* built on the financial support and joint work begun in 2020 to develop a parliamentary motion tabled by a champion MP in 2021. Their collective advocacy led MPs to pass a motion urging the Ugandan Government to develop and enforce policies and strategies to protect girls against escalating cases of adolescent pregnancy and child marriage during the pandemic. This case illustrates the power of ongoing collective and multi-stakeholder action, which has resulted in child marriage becoming a political and social priority in Uganda.

“The Permanent Representation of the Netherlands in Geneva thanks all partners from *Girls Not Brides* for their support and cooperation on the resolution on child, early and forced marriage [...] Your crucial work on this important topic is so important when we are trying to eliminate child marriages worldwide. Let's end child marriage together!”

Government of the Netherlands

We also continued to support *Girls Not Brides* member organisations to advocate for government funding for work to end child marriage. In Cross River State, Nigeria – a region experiencing a humanitarian crisis – we offered financial support for *Girls' Power Initiative* to organise a 3-day training on budget advocacy with government officials, local media and the Network to Curb Sexual Abuse in Girls and Women. The training resulted in official commitments for a more gender-responsive State budget, to making that budget publicly available, and to including girls and women in House Committee discussions, so that those most affected by child marriage can table issues.



IMPACT IN PRACTICE: ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG WOMEN IN LAC TAKE TO THE GLOBAL STAGE

KEY EVIDENCE



2 National-level youth summits in Mexico co-led.

2 Regional-level youth summits in LAC supported

210 Youth activists participated

Almost **90%** of participants young women

13 Countries in LAC represented

The GEF is a multi-stakeholder space created to celebrate progress and drive commitments and investment in girls' and women's rights.

Working closely with partners like the AGIP, our engagement centred around the inclusion and leadership of diverse young people – particularly adolescent girls, young women and Indigenous-led organisations – in consultations and direct dialogues with decision-makers at the GEF. Their concerns – which reflect the intersecting factors that govern girls' risk of child marriage, including gender, age, ethnicity, sexuality and education – are now on the international agenda with greater legitimacy.

“As young activists from Indigenous communities, our voices need to be represented in the spaces where decisions are taken. We need to be able to contribute to strategies and processes like the GEF – nothing about us without us!”

Elvira Pablo, *Girls Not Brides* Policy and Member Engagement Officer for LAC

With other civil society organisations and networks – like the Mexican Youth Syndicate for Beijing+25 and GEF, the Youth Network for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights ([RedLAC](#)), and the Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas ([ECMIA](#)) – we convened and supported four youth summits for activists from [Mexico](#) and 12 other countries in LAC to compile their recommendations for decision-makers at the GEF. Our involvement meant these recommendations included specific actions to address child marriage alongside the right to bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health.

These recommendations were shared with key stakeholders – including representatives from the Mexican Government, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women – who [pledged](#) to take them to the GEF in Paris and include them in their own commitments. We also co-created youth-friendly [social media materials](#) to raise awareness of the GEF, which reached over 58,000 people.





OBJECTIVE 5 : SECURING FUNDING FOR THE MOVEMENT

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have an impact on the type and amount of funding available for the movement to end child marriage, and for gender equality more broadly.

The secretariat plays a central role in keeping the issue on the political agenda and catalysing donor commitment. We work closely with donors, partners and member organisations to inform donors and influence priorities for the funding community, helping to ensure they respond to the needs of the movement, and of girls.

As part of our 10-year anniversary, we organised our latest annual (online) event on child marriage with the Ford Foundation. The trilingual event attracted 273 attendees, including donors, member organisations and partners from across the world. We heard from civil society and young leaders from Guatemala, India, Pakistan and Senegal, and enjoyed reflections from [Mary Robinson](#) (The Elders), [Darren Walker](#) (Ford Foundation), and [Malala Yousafzai](#). The speakers also made commitments to the Power to Girls campaign, which was launched at the event (find out more about the campaign on p. 21).

With the pandemic still ongoing, this was an important opportunity to convene diverse members of the end child marriage

community to celebrate progress, assess ongoing challenges and plot a path forward, together. We continue to work with donors and partners to support their understanding of the complex work being done to end child marriage, and the amount and type of funding needed to achieve real impact in girls' lives.

Girls Not Brides member organisations are at the forefront of this work, but many have limited staff bases, budgets and resources. Around 50% operate with an annual budget of less than US\$50,000¹, and the pandemic has further strained their operational capacity. We are committed to promoting investment in member organisations, and support them to identify and access more – and sustainable – funding, wherever they are based.

To this end, we curated and shared over 500 funding opportunities with member organisations this year. We also partnered with GivenGain – a non-profit digital fundraising platform – to organise a webinar for member organisations to learn more about peer-to-peer and online fundraising.

“In the Pakistani context, organisations have joined hands, and after 10 years realise that child marriage is a harmful practice.”

Qamar Naseem Pak, Blue Veins, *Girls Not Brides* member organisation, Pakistan

“Thank you for sharing [the fundraising newsletter] for through this means, our partner organisation has been able to work with MUNDO Cooperante for three years now.”

Girls Not Brides member organisation, Nigeria



¹ Based on a data set of 1,074 member organisations who reported their annual budgets to *Girls Not Brides*.

The funding landscape is particularly challenging in LAC, where child marriage affects almost 1 in 4 girls but is not a recognised issue. With this in mind, we worked with member organisations to assess their fundraising knowledge and experience, then organised a workshop that responded to their needs.

The workshop included tools to identify areas for improvement and to foster creativity in fundraising. The process led to the creation of a manual with practical examples from member organisations in the region. After the workshop, member organisations reported greater capacity to fundraise in their context.

“We want to thank *Girls Not Brides* for the training spaces. We participated in the resource mobilisation training which was very motivating and valuable. After the training we have reviewed our processes and we are strengthening our fundraising strategy.”

Girls Not Brides member organisation,
Colombia





OBJECTIVE 6: EFFECTIVE SECRETARIAT

KEY EVIDENCE



36

internal capacity enhancement sessions held

1

Diversity, Inclusion, Voice and Equity Committee launched

1

Language Committee launched

“[Something that inspired me was] connecting with women working around the globe and realising they're also thinking deeply about these issues (partnership, equality, power, inclusion) in exciting ways – really invigorating!”

Member of secretariat staff participating in Reflection Time

As a support body for the Partnership and movement, we are committed to learning and evolving alongside *Girls Not Brides* member organisations, so we can better serve them in their work to end child marriage.

To this end, we have taken actions to ensure we have an inclusive and representative structure that does not perpetuate harmful or discriminatory power dynamics, either between individuals or across borders.

In 2021, we formalised a Diversity, Inclusion, Voice and Equity (DIVES) committee to draw on our staff's collective expertise and promote greater diversity and inclusion across the secretariat and Partnership. The DIVES committee draws on an intersectional approach to promote internal learning and action on racial justice, decolonising international development and social justice more broadly. The DIVES committee has set out an action plan to identify and address unequal power dynamics, reform policies and practices and ensure we are well-placed to serve the Partnership.

This year, we reviewed our recruitment process to ensure increased diversity across the organisation. We also organised a Power and Privilege introductory session with all staff members, focusing on recognising

existing power structures and working towards more equitable relationships and shared power.

In the context of growing youth, anti-racist and feminist movements around the world, we also formalised a Language Committee this year. Through it, we review and make recommendations for changes to our organisational language to ensure it accurately reflects our work, values and relationships, and contributes to a vibrant, diverse and inclusive movement to end child marriage.

Despite working remotely during the pandemic, we remain committed to learning together and gaining strength from the expertise of our colleagues, member organisations, partners and supporters. This year, we held eight Reflection Time sessions with external speakers presenting on topics including movement-building, cash transfers, storytelling during the pandemic and increasing resources through partnership. Staff reported increased motivation following the sessions and highlighted the value of learning with diverse partners.



REFLECTIONS AND LOOKING FORWARDS

As the only umbrella movement working solely to end child marriage across Africa, our regional approach focused on supporting African civil society organisations – especially Girls Not Brides member organisations – as advocates that can push national and regional institutions and governments to translate commitments into action.

We revived a continental virtual learning forum – the Africa Action Group to End Child Marriage – to link research and evidence to regional advocacy to end child marriage. We advanced an “ecosystem” approach to ending child marriage, encouraging engagement and collaborative action between diverse stakeholders.

Ending child marriage means addressing unequal relationships of power, particularly those based on gender norms that discriminate against girls and women. In 2022, we will work with member organisations to use gender-transformative approaches to implement and measure child marriage interventions, contributing to greater equality in the long term.

Nerida Nthamburi,
Head of Africa Engagement

Although child marriage prevalence has declined significantly in South Asia – particularly among younger girls – adolescents and young women are still put at risk by lack of educational and livelihood opportunities, and the stigmatisation of adolescent sexuality. We therefore focus on promoting girls’ and women’s rights and agency, dismantling the gender discrimination, violence and inequalities that perpetuate child marriage.

As governments in the region consider raising the age of marriage above 18 years, we have worked with civil society to bring youth advocates before decision-makers to share their experiences and solutions. Rather than a change in law, they called for investments that would allow them to delay marriage – quality education, health services and decent paid work.

We remain committed to youth engagement and will continue to promote gender-transformative approaches to collectively address issues around gender and sexuality at the community level. In this way, we will undo the root causes of child marriage.

Shipra Jha,
Head of Asia Engagement

In LAC, child marriage – which often manifests as informal unions – are largely normalised and perpetuated by unequal gender norms, stereotypes, structural inequalities, racism and discrimination. To get the issue on the public agenda, awareness raising at all levels – alongside collective and creative interventions – is essential.

We have worked to develop tools and spaces to understand child marriage and address its root causes in a more holistic way. We have supported youth-led organisations and movements to actively contribute to major policy developments in the region. We are committed to valuing and maximising their diverse knowledge and experiences – especially those from Indigenous and feminist groups – by creating and consolidating alliances to address child marriage as a common goal.

We will continue to diversify our membership by including youth- and girl-led organisations and collectives, and developing strategies to address the fallout from the pandemic.

Alma Burciaga-Gonzalez,
Head of Latin America and
the Caribbean Engagement

As the incoming Chair of the Board of Trustees for *Girls Not Brides* I have been struck by its approach to addressing an issue as complex and multi-layered as child marriage. The *Girls Not Brides* approach places those most affected – and those supporting them – at the centre. This approach is holistic and collaborative, and values partnership as the principal tool for supporting individuals, engaging communities, and building an advocacy coalition to push for the legal changes that will make a real difference. It is an approach that has helped to build and sustain an effective, dynamic global movement to end child marriage over the last decade.

As I write this, our global community faces myriad challenges and uncertainties, and priorities for attention and resources will shift in response. In this environment, it is essential to remain steady and to stand firm. Ending child marriage is critical to the health and wellbeing of millions of girls. Our work on the issue is helping to build strong and resilient communities. It is contributing to a more just and equal world.

As *Girls Not Brides* enters its second decade of action, we are determined to lean into the many challenges that lie ahead, working diligently and creatively to make a real difference to the lives of girls everywhere. We have sharpened our tools: we have a new Secretariat Strategy that explicitly supports member organisations learning and acting together. And we have a new Partnership Strategy that will guide that important work. Alongside the Partnership, we will leverage our collective power to keep child marriage on national, regional and international agendas.

Our commitment is to work with, learn from and support those closest to the issue. Our commitment is to amplify the voices and impact of those who are doing the vital work of ensuring that girls and women – in all their diversity – can exercise their rights alongside boys and men.

**Dr Anne T Gallagher AO,
Chair of the Board of Trustees**



FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Girls Not Brides had an income of £3.4m and spent £3.7m on charitable activities over 2021.

INCOME

Girls Not Brides received grants and other donations worth £3.4 million in 2021, with £1.6 million coming from statutory sources and £1.8 million from foundations and other donors. Of the total income, £0.8 million was restricted. In 2021 we also utilised £0.3m of funding received in 2020.

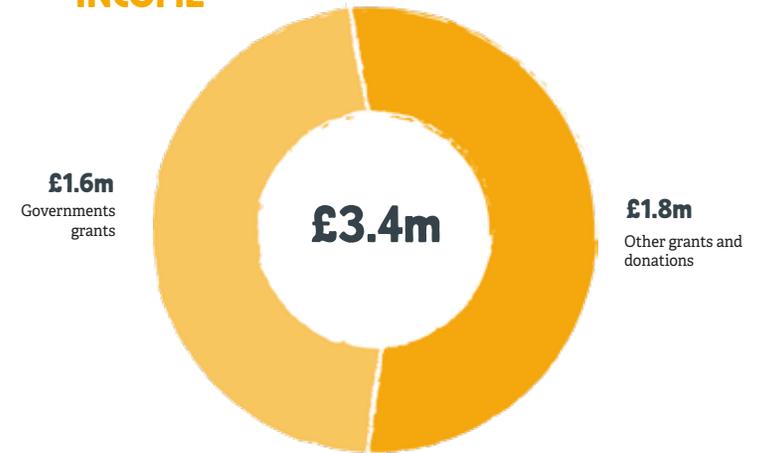
EXPENDITURE

Girls Not Brides spent £3.7 million in 2021, including £0.8 million that was from restricted sources. This was an increase on the 2020 expenditure but still lower than planned, due in part to the evolving impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Girls Not Brides' work. While we took efforts to anticipate the likely impact of the pandemic in our budgeting, the sudden changes to restrictions in parts of the world meant that, as in 2020, we had to review our planned activities and find new ways to deliver work, or to delay work, and this involved significant savings.

The lower pie chart shows expenditure per secretariat objective. In 2021, the secretariat supported the movement to end child marriage by working to fulfil these six objectives:

1. Catalysing effective civil society collective action at all levels
2. Ensuring the movement to end child marriage has the evidence, information and learning necessary to take effective action
3. Ensuring child marriage is seen as a political and social priority through direct advocacy, amplifying the voices of the Partnership and providing a platform for community-based organisations, women, girls and youth to be heard
4. Advocating for governments and other decision-makers to take action to address child marriage
5. Ensuring the movement to end child marriage has sufficient resources
6. Ensuring the secretariat is functional, effective and able to support the movement to end child marriage.

INCOME



EXPENDITURE



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work of *Girls Not Brides* would not be possible without the support of our donors. Their generosity drives our contribution to the global movement to end child marriage. They are:

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Akamai Foundation

The Kendeda Fund

Plan International, Inc

Friends and partners of *Girls Not Brides* who – even under challenging circumstances – have continued to collaborate with us on our mission to end child marriage and ensure all girls can reach their potential.

The 1,602 *Girls Not Brides* member organisations working at the community, national, regional and global levels to bring child marriage to global attention, build an understanding of what it will take to end child marriage, and call for laws, policies and programmes that will make a difference to the lives of millions of girls.

Illustration and layout by [Upasana Agarwal](#).

OUR COLLECTIVE WORK IS NEEDED NOW MORE THAN EVER TO REACH OUR SHARED VISION OF A WORLD WITHOUT CHILD MARRIAGE

IMPACT REPORT 2021

Girls Not Brides is a global partnership of more than 1,600 civil society organisations from over 100 countries united by a commitment to work in partnership to end child marriage and ensure girls can fulfil their potential.

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