Girls First Fund

GIRLS NOT BRIDES

INTERNATIONAL FUNDING TO END CHILD MARRIAGE

Reviewing a Decade of Investment

About Girls Not Brides

Girls Not Brides is a global partnership with a singular purpose: to end child marriage. We envision a world where girls decide if, when, and whom to marry, and where their rights and potential are fully realised. To achieve this urgent goal, we've built a movement of more than 1,400 grassroots, national, and international organisations across nearly 100 countries. We know we can achieve more together than we ever could alone, which is why we mobilise, connect, and influence our ecosystem to address the political, social, legal, and economic conditions that allow the practice to persist. Inspired by shared purpose, we will influence system change, harness collective power, and build a future free from child marriage.

About Girls First Fund

Girls First Fund (GFF) is a donor collaborative supported by leading philanthropic organisations and individuals, whose mandate is to increase quality resource allocation to and partnership with, community-based organisations (CBOs), so that they have the support, funding, connections, and influence they need to catalyse and sustain efforts to end child marriage and allow girls to create their own futures. GFF was seeded in 2017, in close partnership with Girls Not Brides, in response to the lack of end child marriage (ECM) funding reaching local and national organisations. The collaborative's founders shared the core belief that CBOs are a critical but underfunded player in the ecosystem of actors to end child marriage and that they are uniquely positioned to develop and deliver locally relevant, gender transformative solutions to end child marriage and achieve gender equality.

Acknowledgements

This report, and the research on which it is based, is a joint initiative of Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage and the Girls First Fund. The report has been authored by Siobhan Warrington of Girls Not Brides, and benefits from inputs and advice from Boikanyo Modungwa (Girls First Fund), Ludovica Anedda (Girls Not Brides), Silvia Guglielmi (ODI GAGE), Jamie Holton (independent expert), and Yvette Efevebera (She Thinks Group). It is based on research by Publish What You Fund (PWYF). PWYF extracted and analysed the funding data that is shared in this report.

Design by Amy Reinecke

Note on the time period:

At the time of writing (December 2025 - January 2026), complete international funding data for 2024 was not available. The calculations relating to overall funding to end child marriage and as a proportion of Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding are therefore based on data from 2015-2023. Other analysis in this report includes the funding data from 2024 that was available, providing us with a ten-year perspective on some key trends.

March 2026

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Introduction

Each year, more than 12 million girls are married before their 18th birthday.[1] Child marriage[a] remains one of the most urgent and persistent violations of girls' rights globally.

It deprives girls of their education, health, safety, and economic potential, perpetuating cycles of poverty and inequality across entire communities. Investing in ending child marriage is critical for the wellbeing of girls, their families, wider society, and future generations.

In the past 25 years, 68 million child marriages have been prevented worldwide, with the proportion of girls who are married falling from 1 in 4 to 1 in 5 within the last decade.[2] But progress has been uneven and rates remain high in many regions and countries.

Investing in ending child marriage is an essential move towards an equal world for everyone. There is, however, limited knowledge of the funding landscape to address child marriage.[3] Analysis of funding for ending child marriage is critical at a time when existing and new donors must urgently make needs-based decisions and develop strategies for impact.

2025 was marked by donors significantly cutting overall funding for international development, with these cuts disproportionately affecting gender equality work. These cuts to official development assistance (ODA) come at a time of difficult fiscal environments for low-income and lower-middle income countries. It is estimated that half of humanity live in countries that spend more in interest on debt than on health or education.[4] Millions of girls and women around the world are already experiencing the devastating impact of these cuts, reducing their access to critical health care, education, and poverty-reduction programmes.[5] Conflict, climate change, anti-rights movements, and shrinking civic spaces, combined with these cuts in ODA, contribute further to accelerating child marriage rates. No region is currently on track to meet the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 5.3 of eliminating child marriage, and these new funding cuts threaten to reverse the progress that has been made in the last decade.[6]

To contribute to evidence-based calls for more and better funding for gender equality and adolescent girls, Girls Not Brides and Girls First Fund collaborated on this joint research in partnership with Publish What You Fund (PWYF) to extract and analyse international funding data to better understand the funding landscape to end child marriage. The report also draws on the combined knowledge of Girls First Fund and Girls Not Brides regarding efforts to end child marriage and relevant literature by others.[b]

At this moment, in the context of drastic cuts to ODA[c] alongside the global rollback of girls' and women's rights, we must hold the line on the necessity of increased and improved funding for gender equality with a renewed focus on investing in ending child marriage as core to that effort. This report provides an evidence base to support renewed action, stronger coordination, and a funding architecture capable of delivering lasting change for girls and their communities.

a. We use the term 'child marriage' to refer to all forms of child, early and forced marriage and unions (CEFMU) – whether formal or informal – where at least one party is under age 18.
b. Including CARE's 2025 research into cuts to UK aid for women and girls worldwide, the AGIP-GAGE 'Investing in Adolescent Girls' research series, and AWID's 'Where is the Money?' work on funding for feminist organising.
c. Total Official Development Assistance (ODA) has begun to fall after reaching an all-time high in 2023. ODA from DAC member countries amounted to USD 214.5 billion in 2024, confirming a fall of 6.0%, in real terms from 2023. OECD, 'Official development assistance (ODA)', last accessed 25/02/2026

Introducing the research

In 2025, Girls First Fund and Girls Not Brides worked with Publish What You Fund (PWYF) to undertake joint research into the state of international funding to end child marriage. This research extracted and analysed publicly available international funding data for the period 2015-2024, providing an evidence base for a dialogue on and commitment to investing in ending child marriage.

PWYF drew on several sources of funding data that include both ODA and philanthropic funds: IATI, OECD–DAC CRS, and Candid.[d] Using these multiple sources captured more funders and project detail than relying on OECD-DAC CRS data alone. This detail is important given there is no specific marker relating to 'addressing child marriage' within the data sets.

An initial word search, using multiple terms and languages, was used to identify projects which mention child marriage (and related terms) within the project information (title, objectives, results, and outcomes) on each database. After removing any false positives,[e] the remaining 2088 unique projects were classified into two categories: **primary** and **secondary.** This approach mirrors the approach of the OECD's DAC gender equality policy marker, which tracks programmes that integrate gender equality as either a "principal" or "significant" objective.[7]

Primary and Secondary End Child Marriage (ECM) Funding — *What Do We Mean?*

Primary ECM funding **describes funding for projects which have been designed to address child marriage as the** ***core priority objective.*** This is a clear measure of funding to ECM because the full project funding value is explicitly assigned to the objective of addressing child marriage. This is funding that we can define as specifically dedicated to ending child marriage.

Secondary ECM funding **describes funding for projects addressing child marriage as** ***one of several objectives*** **or as a result indicator**. While it is not possible to determine the amount of funding which is uniquely directed towards ECM within these projects, analysis of this funding highlights the intersectoral nature of addressing child marriage and how ECM is integral to broader social impact objectives. Analysis of secondary funding demonstrates trends in relation to the integration of ending child marriage into wider sectoral programming and funding.

d The International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI); the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee - Creditor Reporting System (OECD – DAC CRS); and Candid, a database of grants data taken from tax filings by philanthropic funds and foundations, mostly in the United States.
e When the term 'child marriage' is included in the project information, but relates to the project context, rather than the intervention itself.

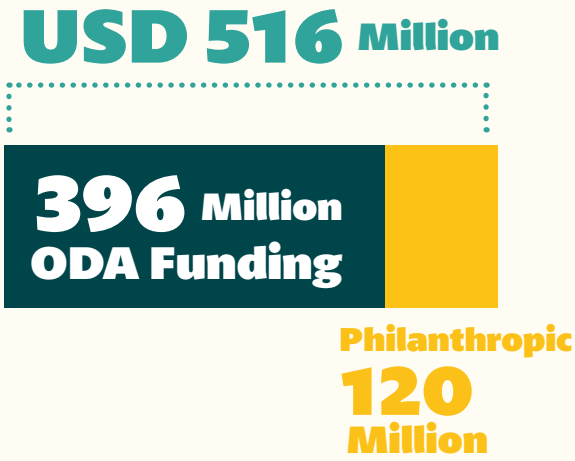
Findings

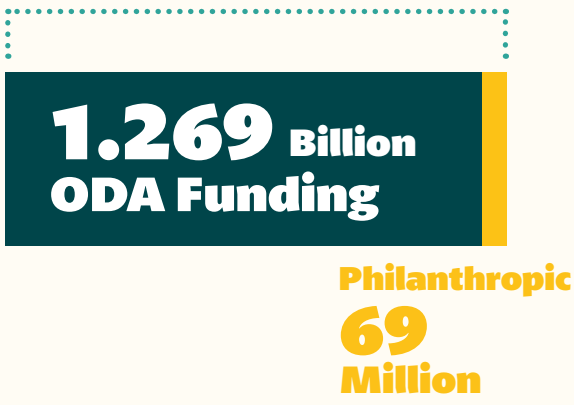
How much funding to end child marriage?

In this section we present the overall amounts of international funding (including philanthropic and ODA) allocated to addressing child marriage and show these as trends over time (2015-2023).[f] We also present these amounts in relation to overall ODA.

Total primary ECM funding

The total funding disbursed to projects which address child marriage as a **primary objective** from 2015 to 2023 is **US$ 516 million**. This funding comprises **US$ 120 million** (23 per cent) in **philanthropic funding** and **US$ 396 million** in **ODA funding** (77 per cent). The annual average for primary ECM funding based on the last three years of complete available data (2021, 2022, 2023) is **US$ 61.2 million**.



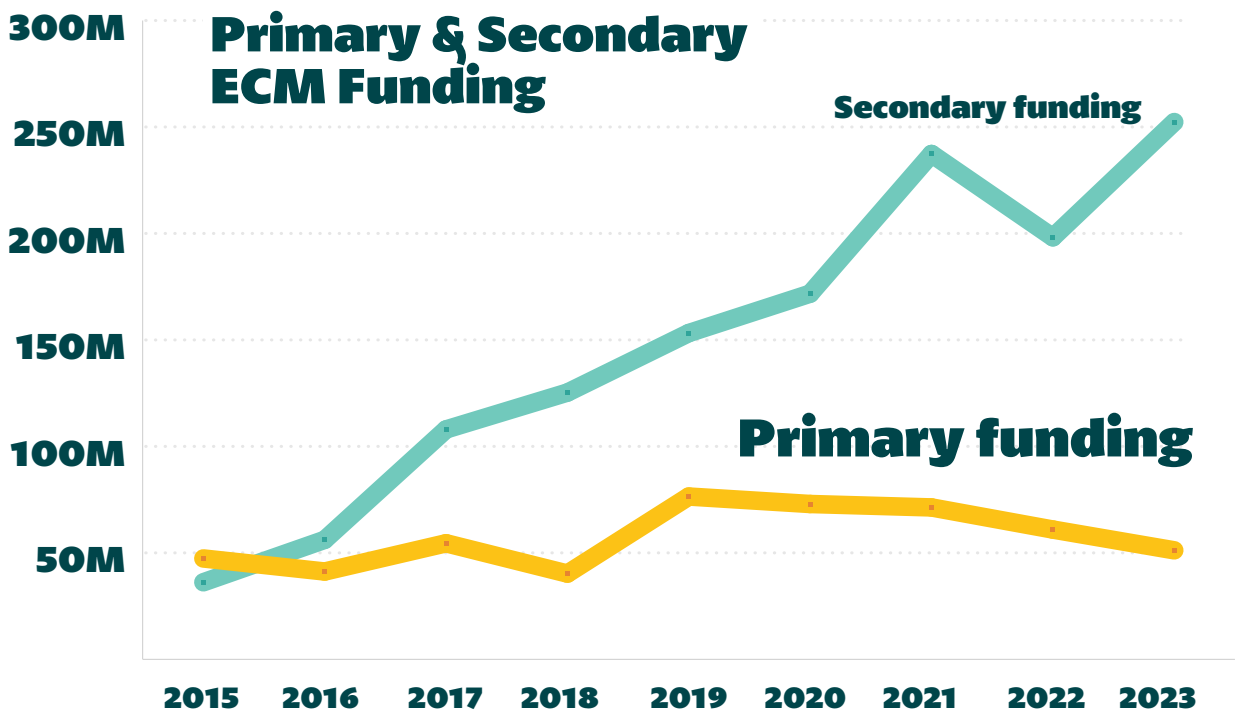


Total secondary ECM funding

The total funding disbursed to projects which address child marriage as a **secondary objective** from 2015 to 2023 is **US$ 1.338 billion**. This comprises **US$ 69 million** (5 per cent) in philanthropic funding and **US$ 1.269 billion** in ODA funding (95 per cent). The annual average of secondary ECM funding based on the last three years of complete available data (2021, 2022, 2023) is **US $229.3 million.**

f. OECD-DAC CRS data has a two-year time lag, meaning the latest available complete data at the time of writing was from 2023. Available data from 2024 is drawn on to support analysis of trends but not to claim total amounts.

Figure 1: Primary and secondary ECM funding 2015-2023. Noting that secondary ECM funding represents total funding for projects with a broader remit than ECM.[g]



The graph above shows that annual amounts of primary ECM funding peaked in 2019, and then steadily decreased. 2023 levels of primary ECM funding are at a similar level as they were in 2015. In the same period, secondary ECM funding saw a relatively steady increase likely attributable to two factors:

1. There was an overall increase in gender equality-allocated ODA funding in the same period, which is more likely to include ECM-related objectives than non-gender equality-focused projects.
2. Interventions to address child marriage are increasingly being integrated across sectors, as evidence and understanding grows of the impact of child marriage on wider outcomes for girls (such as health, education, economic security, and safety).

To get a sense of the relative scale of this funding, total ODA disbursed in this same period (2015-2023) was **US$ 1.571 trillion**. Just 0.025 per cent of this funding was primary ECM funding and 0.081 per cent was secondary ECM funding. These proportions are so miniscule it is difficult to visualise them.

g. Aggregate secondary objective funding amounts should not be directly compared with aggregate primary objective funding since we do not know how much of the total was actually spent on ECM objectives.

Key takeaways

Funding to end child marriage is grossly inadequate and represents a tiny fraction of overall ODA

Funding to end child marriage is inadequate for the scale of this harmful practice and its negative impact on key development outcomes for girls, their families, and wider societies. Primary funding to end child marriage represents 0.025 per cent of overall ODA.

In the years 2021-2023, only US$ 61 million of international funding (ODA and philanthropic) per year was fully focused on addressing this pressing issue around the world. Recent estimates suggest that in the next five years there will be over 70 million girls at risk of child marriage, which means current levels of international ECM funding are equivalent to less than US$1, per girl at risk, per year.[8]

Funding to end child marriage is unpredictable

The data shows that amounts of primary ECM funding have varied significantly year by year. This level of unpredictability is not aligned with the long-term investments required for the systemic change needed to end a practice perpetuated by multiple drivers, including both poverty and harmful social norms.

There has been an upward trend in funding for projects which integrate objectives or results to address child marriage as part of an intervention with other objectives

This is in line with increases in gender equality funding during the same period (2015-2023) and reflects a growing understanding that ECM is crucial in advancing other outcomes for girls and their communities, including education, poverty, and health.

An increase in secondary funding does not compensate for a decrease in primary funding

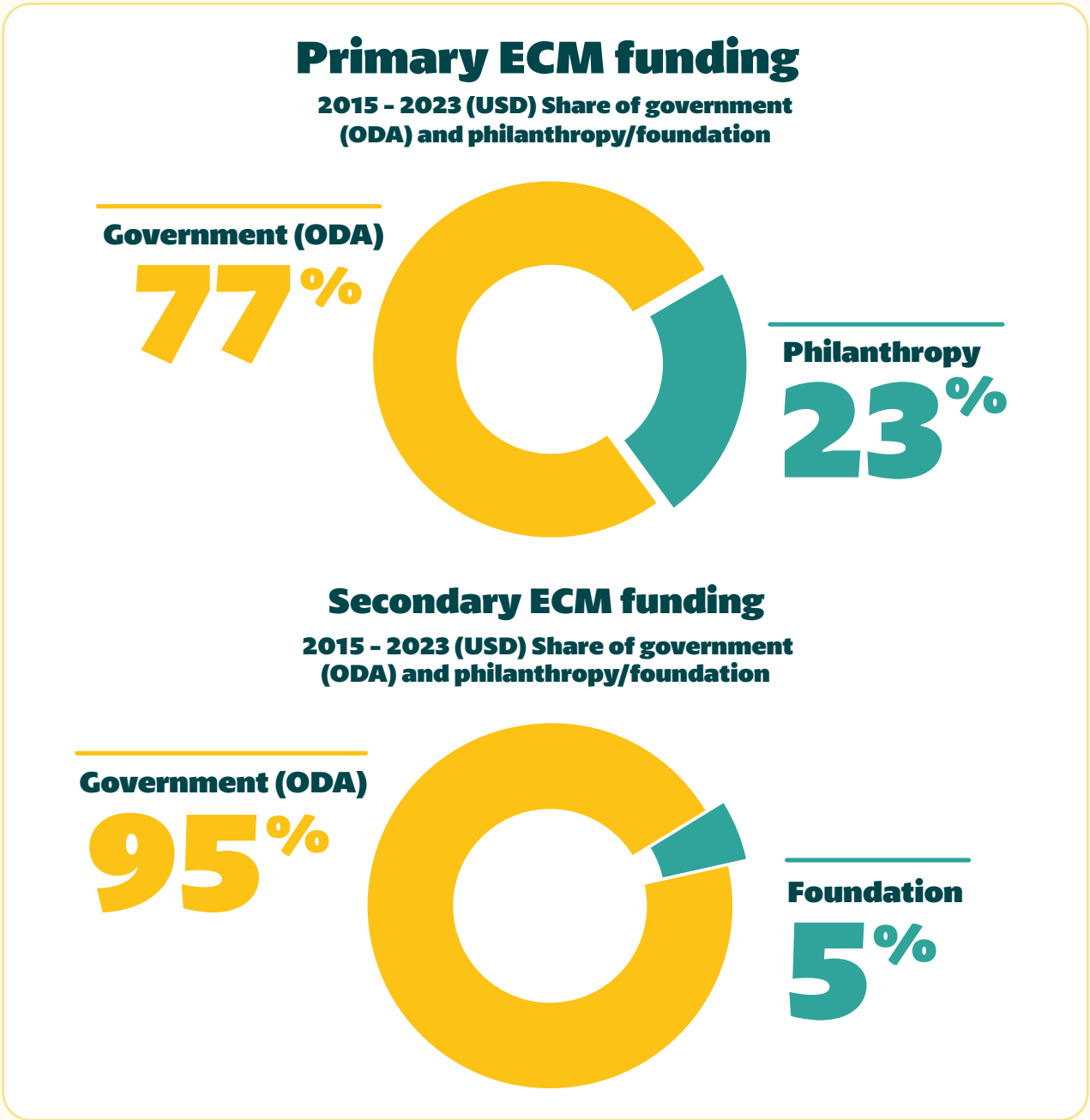
Accelerating progress to end child marriage requires a coordinated and strategic response, bringing together actors across different sectors to ensure impact. Primary ECM funding is the main means we have to understand prioritisation of the issue and to explicitly track funding and its impact. A decrease in primary funding may be indicative of a de-prioritisation of ECM work, and of a gradual side-lining of the issue across development priorities. It is therefore essential to remain vigilant, and to closely monitor funding and policy trends to proactively safeguard the visibility and urgency of ECM work.

Who are the funders?

The global community committed to ending child marriage through SDG 5.3, recognising that progress would depend on sustained, long-term financial investments. Knowledge of which organisations (governmental and philanthropic) have invested in ending child marriage enables us to better understand how the movement can strategise in response to the devastating cuts to ODA and vital programming we are currently witnessing.

Most of the funding to end child marriage has been ODA, with the amount of philanthropic funding more significant for projects with a primary objective to end child marriage.[h]

Figure 2: Share of ODA and philanthropic funding that make up primary and secondary ECM funding (2015-2023)



h. Note: Foundations tend to be more primary grant focused and do less complex programming with multiple objectives. Also, Candid data had less description about objectives so there was less secondary objective funding from that data

The table below shows the top eight funders for projects which address child marriage as a primary objective and the top eight funders for projects which address child marriage as a secondary objective or results indicator.[i] Funders are presented in order of the total amounts disbursed and are colour-coded to highlight the funders who disburse funds across both categories of project. Most funders are governmental, but there are also key philanthropic foundations in the top eight primary funders, demonstrating their significance to the movement.[j]

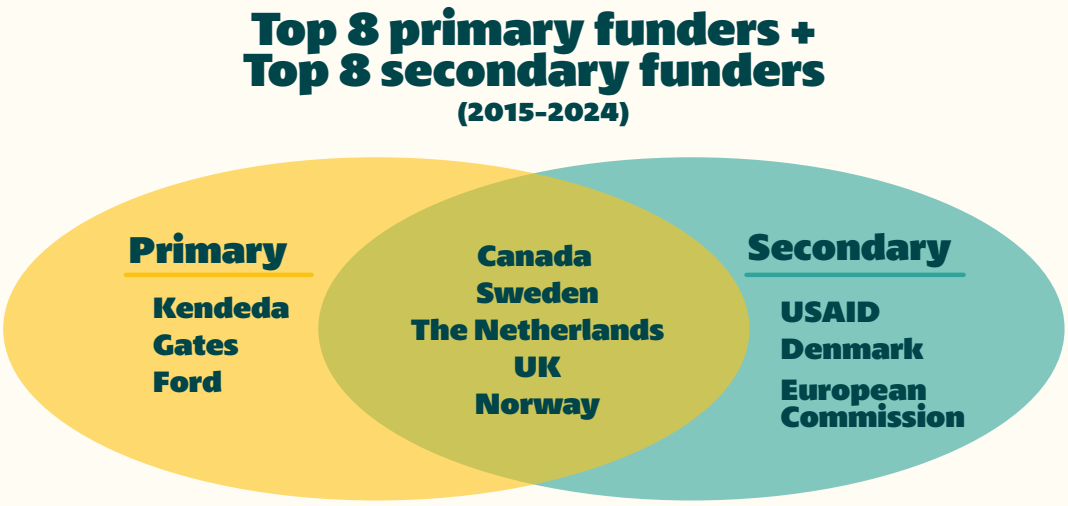
Top eight primary funders (2015-2024)	**Top eight secondary funders (2015-2024)**
The Netherlands (Ministry Foreign Affairs)	**Canada** (Global Affairs Canada)
Canada (Global Affairs Canada)	**Sweden** (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency - Sida)
Norway (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation - Norad)	**United States** (Agency for International Development - USAID)
UK (Foreign, Commonwealth Development Office - FCDO)	**European Commission** (Directorate-General for International Partnerships - INTPA)
The Kendeda Fund (data to 2023 only)	**Denmark** (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
Sweden (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency - Sida)	**UK** (Foreign, Commonwealth Development Office - FCDO)
Gates Foundation	**The Netherlands** (Ministry Foreign Affairs)
Ford Foundation (data to 2023 only)	**Norway** (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation – Norad)

Table 1: Top eight primary and secondary ECM funders colour coded to show overlap

i. 'Top' in relation to those disbursing highest amounts of funding.
j. Note: The Kendeda Fund is no longer operational.

The venn diagram below shows the top eight ECM funders in relation to whether or not they have disbursed primary ECM funding only, secondary ECM funding only, or both types of funding.

Figure 3: The top eight ECM donors



Key takeaways

The significant role of philanthropy

Philanthropic foundations have been a significant source of funding for interventions to address child marriage, particularly through primary ECM funding. Many philanthropic funders, who support gender equality efforts, have also been able to provide flexible funding mechanisms and funding for core costs. This is in contrast to the more structured and more challenging financing processes dictated by public ODA funding streams. It's important to note, however, that there are also changes among previously significant philanthropic foundations. For instance, the Kendeda Fund is no longer operational, and a number of others have deprioritised the funding streams that resourced ECM work.

The top ECM donors are cutting ODA

While some of these key donors have continued to prioritise funding to ECM beyond 2024, Donor Tracker's analysis of government funding announcements predicts that a number are cutting ODA substantially over the next two years.[9] We have already seen this prediction play out, with the **closure** of USAID, and reductions in spending by FCDO. In addition, some of these governments have either explicitly announced or signalled a shift away from focusing on gender equality as a foreign policy and development priority, further threatening funding to end child marriage. This will result in a substantive net drop in funding for efforts to ECM. The Global Programme to End Child Marriage reports that in 2025 they had to target 4 million fewer girls with empowerment initiatives as compared to the 16 million they were able to reach in 2024.[10]

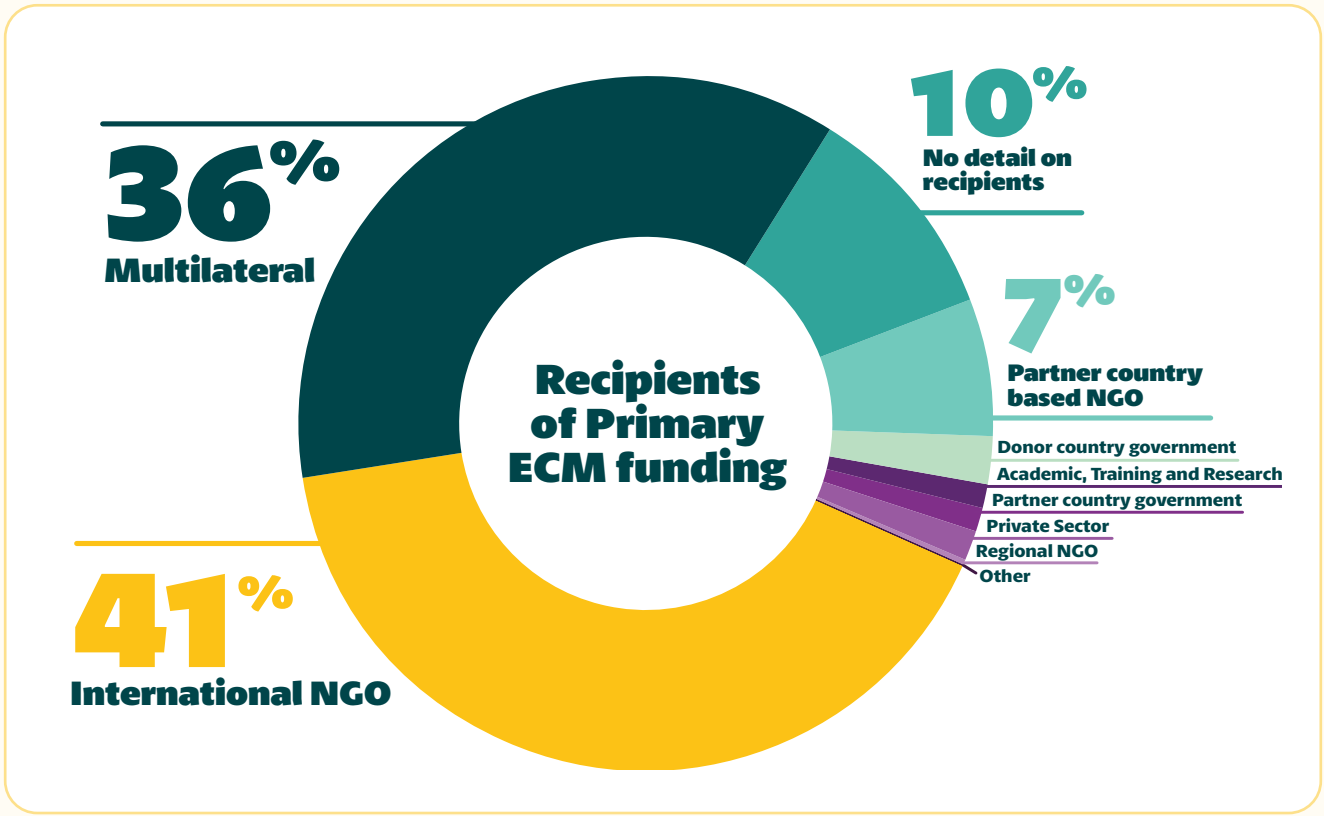
Who is receiving the funding?

Funding is disbursed by governments and foundations to recipient organisations that implement the intended activities. In some cases, funds are passed down through several organisations to recipients – this can be referred to as an "aid delivery chain".[11] These chains form a network of aid delivery which can be complex, with multiple donors contributing to programmes and large organisations playing multiple roles as both funders and implementers. Data that is published in IATI includes more detail on aid delivery than other funding data sets, however limitations with the data remain given the complexities noted.

The chart below shows how primary ECM funding is distributed among different types of recipient organisations. The largest recipients are international NGOs (receiving 41 per cent of ECM funding), followed by multilaterals (36 per cent - mainly UNICEF and UNFPA through the Global Programme to End Child Marriage), and then 'partner country-based NGOs'[k] who receive 7 per cent. It should be noted that a significant amount of the funds channelled to international NGOs and multilaterals may also be passed on to local organisations further down the aid delivery chain, despite this not being reflected in the data.

For a significant proportion (10%) of ECM funding data published in IATI there was no available data about the recipient organisations.

Figure 4: Distribution of primary ECM funding according to different types of recipient organisations.



k. This is the standard IATI term to refer to NGOs based in partner countries (countries in receipt of international development funding). We recognise that these might take different forms in different contexts (including national NGOs, community-based organisations, and women's rights organisations).

Key takeaway

Only a small proportion of primary ECM funding reaches local and national organisations

The available data shows that most primary ECM funding is disbursed to international NGOs and multilaterals and not to local or national organisations. This is despite these organisations being frontline implementers, often embedded within or emerging from communities where child marriage is prevalent. While we can assume that some of this funding flows to local and national civil society organisations, the data we have suggests that this still represents a small proportion of the overall funding.

This finding reflects existing knowledge that the local actors who are challenging every day harmful norms, systems and structures, supporting girls, and building national movements to end child marriage are not receiving international funding proportionate to their actual and potential impact. The most recent report by The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) shows that feminist and women's rights organisations based in Global Majority countries are all facing significant funding gaps.[12] Existing research reveals a number of contributing factors, including:

- A trust gap. This refers to grantmakers being less likely to trust - and therefore fund - frontline organisations, given the perceived risks of funding local organisations, particularly in Global Majority countries.[13]
- Complex funding application and reporting systems create a significant barrier for smaller organisations, which may not have the capacity or resources to fulfil them.
- The failure by donors to take steps to deliberately diversify their grantee base.

The scope of this research did not include a specific focus on the role of intermediary funders, however, their critical role in resourcing ECM is worth noting. Some community-based, local and national organisations receive funding through intermediary funds, such as Girls First Fund, as well as women's and feminist funds, who fund across a range of thematic areas including ECM.

Where does the funding go?

Primary ECM funding has been concentrated in a small number of countries. As part of this research, we were interested in comparing ECM funding allocations to child marriage rates across countries.

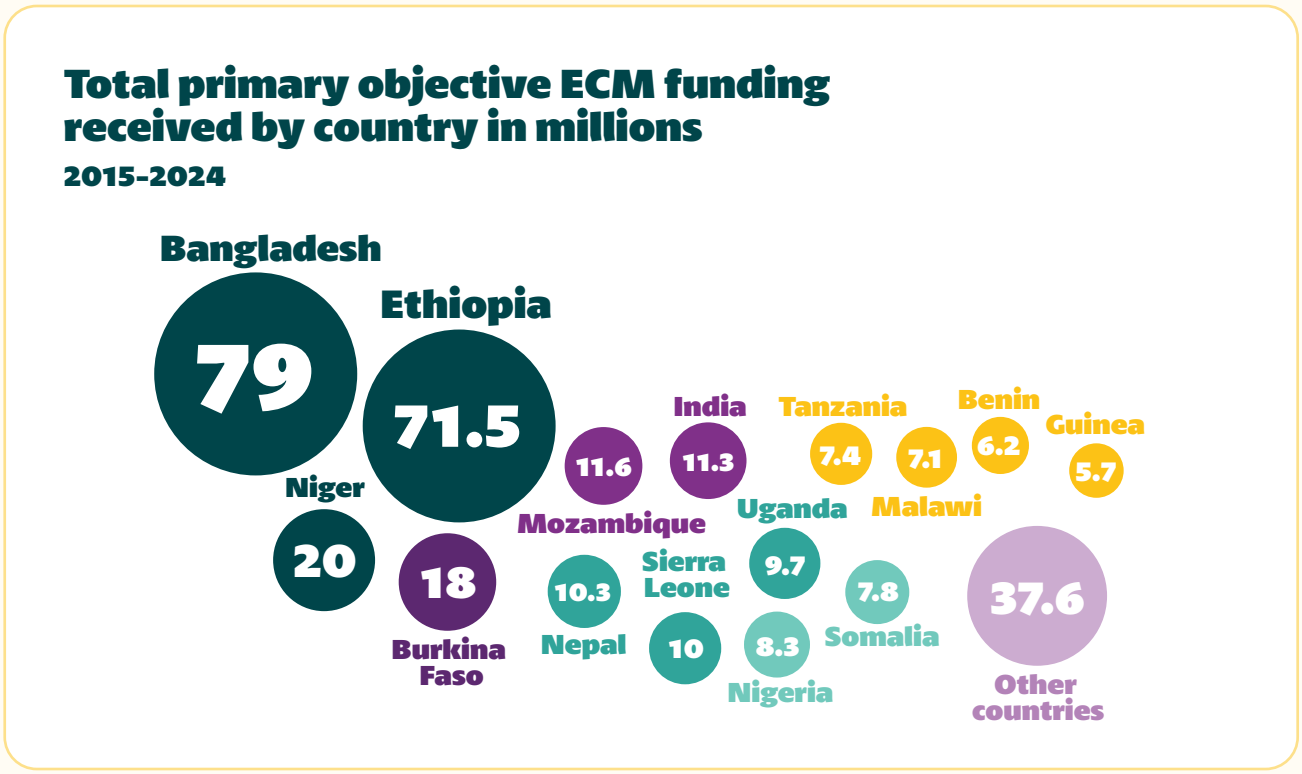
Country data on rates of child marriage is broken down into two categories:

1. **Child marriage *burden*** – the total number of women (aged 20-49) who were first married or in a union before they turned 18.
2. **Child marriage *prevalence*** – the proportion of women (aged 20-24) who were first married or in a union before they turned 18 (expressed as a percentage).[l]

Girls Not Brides' interactive Child Marriage Atlas provides data for almost every country for child marriage burden and prevalence.

The table below shows the 15 top countries in receipt of primary ECM funding 2015-2024, using available data.[m]

Figure 5: Total primary objective ECM funding received by country, 2015-2024



l. Data is based on surveys that look specifically at women aged 20-24 years old, with sets of figures for burden and prevalence of under 18 and under 15-year-old marriages and unions. Timeliness of the surveys varies, and data for some countries is over ten years old.

m. Significant amounts of primary ECM funding – approximately US$ 193 million (a third of the total) – did not specify the recipient country. Some of this funding may be for global activities without a specific target country, while in other cases the data may be missing.

53 per cent of country-specific primary ECM funding is allocated to three countries - Bangladesh, Ethiopia, and Niger - all of which have high under-18 marriage burdens and prevalence. They also have some of the highest burdens and prevalence of under-15 marriages.

Beyond these three countries, funding allocation is inconsistent in terms of its alignment to burden and prevalence. Many countries with the largest absolute burdens - including India, Nigeria, Indonesia, and Pakistan - received little or no funding with ECM as the primary objective. Several low-income and lower-middle-income countries with high burdens - such as the DRC, Côte d'Ivoire, Angola, and Yemen - received almost no funding to address it.

We acknowledge that when comparing country allocations using the burden or prevalence rates to indicate need, it is important to recognise that funding allocations are influenced by many factors beyond need.

Key takeaway

A large amount of funding has been concentrated in three high prevalence and/or high burden countries

53 per cent of country-specified primary funding (2015-2024) has been allocated to Bangladesh, Ethiopia, and Niger, suggesting some alignment of funding with overall need. Yet the data also shows that some countries with both high prevalence and burden have received little or no funding, demonstrating that the allocation of primary funding to end child marriage is not wholly needs-driven. The necessity of an enabling environment for ECM interventions, in relation to political will, for example, is also a critical factor in determining how funding is prioritised, among other factors.

Which sectors address child marriage?

Sector and purpose codes are used to classify projects by their primary area of focus, such as health or education, within the funding databases. These codes, managed by the OECD, provide a useful indication of donor priorities, but don't always capture the full scope of a project – particularly those that are multisectoral. Projects can also be assigned multiple sector codes, which means the same funds can be counted multiple times under different sector codes (which is reflected in the amounts presented below). The code list does not include a specific code for ECM.

For projects where ECM is the primary objective, the largest share of funding (2015-2024) falls under the sector *Ending violence against women and girls (EVAWG)*, which accounts for nearly US$ 333 million.[n] This highlights how ECM is often framed primarily as an issue of protection from violence. *Education* (US$ 134 million) and *Reproductive health care* (US$ 130 million) follow, reflecting the strong role that schooling and health services play in delaying marriage. *Legal and judicial development* (US$ 116 million) and *Social protection* (US$ 94 million) also received notable amounts, suggesting that structural and systemic interventions are seen as important entry points. The sector code *Women's rights organisations and movements, and government institutions* received US$ 41 million of primary ECM funding.[o]

When ECM is treated as a secondary objective, the largest share of funding also falls under *EVAWG* (US$ 1.07 billion), followed by *Human rights* (US$ 843 million), and then *Population policy and administrative management* (US$ 403 million). This suggests that, when ECM is not the primary objective, it is most often embedded in broad governance and rights-based programmes. ECM is thus frequently mainstreamed into wider development agendas, rather than driving them. The sector code *Women's rights organisations and movements, and government institutions* received US$ 106 million of secondary ECM funding.

Key Takeaway

The majority of ECM funding, both primary and secondary, has been allocated under the EVAWG sector code.

This is indicative of how the issue is currently framed at a programmatic and/or political level. It is important to highlight that current sector codes cannot grasp the full picture of a programme, particularly for an inter-sectoral issue like ECM.

Through the sectoral analysis, it is also evident that there are no significant amounts of funding being allocated under the *Emergency Response* sector, despite the evidence that child marriage is exacerbated in times of conflict and crises, including those that are climate-induced.

n. The EVAWG sector description includes CEFMU among the harms that programmes under the sector code are designed to prevent and eliminate.
o. These figures do not represent the funds directly received by women's rights organisations and movements and government institutions, but rather indicate the volume of funding reported as having a focus on supporting their work.

Conclusion and recommendations

Despite global commitments to gender equality and the elimination of harmful practices, international funding to end child marriage remains profoundly inadequate relative to the scale of the problem.

Even before the major cuts in 2025, only 0.025% of overall ODA was allocated to projects with a primary focus on ending child marriage. Current and expected reductions to ODA, combined with a shift by some key funders away from a focus on gender equality, mean that funding for ECM is likely to be hit even harder.

Through this research we have identified a replicable method of tracking ECM funding, despite the lack of a specific sector code. Analysis of available international funding data indicates that the majority of this funding flows predominantly to international NGOs and multilaterals. Organisations who are closest to the girls and communities most affected by child marriage, including youth-led, feminist, and women's rights organisations, are best placed to drive sustainable change, yet they receive only a fraction of available funding. While a large proportion of primary ECM funding has been allocated to three countries with high rates of child marriage, there are many low and lower-middle income countries with high rates which have received little or no funding.

This research underscores the urgent need for existing governmental and philanthropic funders to protect their current commitments to ending child marriage. It also sends a strong signal to new donors that increased support for adolescent girls and their communities is critical at this moment. The findings are intended to strengthen collective advocacy and ensure that investment in ending child marriage is recognised as both essential and non-negotiable. Girls' rights cannot be fully realised without ending child marriage, and addressing it must remain a central priority within the broader adolescent girls' agenda.

Recommendations

In response to the findings of this research, we have identified four recommendations. Some of these are directed towards funding agencies and those with the power to influence funding to end child marriage, while others apply to the ecosystem working to advance adolescent girls' rights.

1. Protect existing and unlock new end child marriage funding

Investing in adolescent girls, and child marriage specifically, delivers significant returns across poverty reduction, education, adolescent health, and broader development outcomes.[14] Ending child marriage is central to achieving these gains and requires both primary and secondary funding that is adequate and predictable. All donors – governmental and philanthropic – must do all they can to protect existing and unlock new ECM funding.

New funding can be unlocked by:

- Using ECM as an entry point to demonstrate impact across a range of sectors including poverty reduction, SRHR, girls' education, and crisis response. This can help to leverage investment in a constrained funding climate, through recognising the multiplier effects of ECM interventions.
- Exploring innovative financing approaches and expanding engagement with philanthropic actors in countries and regions where there are high rates of child marriage.
- Advocating for increased financing to address child marriage at a national level.

2. Shift power and resources to local and national organisations

The allocation of core, flexible, and multi-year funding to those working directly with girls and communities most at risk is critical for progress in ending child marriage.

To increase impact and sustainability, donors and multilaterals should:

- Increase the volume, flexibility, and predictability of funding to local and national actors, including core and multi-year financing.
- Simplify funding mechanisms so grassroots organisations can access resources more easily. Where this is not feasible, strengthen the role of trustworthy intermediary funders.
- Report transparently on the proportion of funding they channel to national, local, and community-based organisations.

3. Share evidence and knowledge on impact and funding

All actors need to work together to share evidence and knowledge that can increase impact and funding for adolescent girls at risk of child marriage, including:

- ➜ Evidence of what works to end child marriage, and in which contexts, to ensure that investments deliver the most possible impact.
- ➜ Knowledge of new and diverse forms of financing, and how to access those to unlock additional funding to accelerate progress to end child marriage.

In addition, transparent data is critical for accountability and alignment. Funders (governmental and philanthropic) and implementers should publish timely, detailed project and results data using open standards such as IATI.

4. Advocate together to keep adolescent girls' rights and ending child marriage on political, policymaking, and funding agendas

Given the scale and complexity of child marriage, coordinated action across sectors and levels is essential. There is a need for shared messaging and aligned goals — especially in key international and regional spaces — to ensure we can influence funders and policymakers to invest in adolescent girls.

Next Steps

Future tracking to understand ongoing trends in funding to ECM

Girls Not Brides and Girls First Fund aim to use this research as a baseline and methodology to continue tracking international funding to end child marriage up to 2030.

Ongoing research into funding and financing to end child marriage

As lead convenor of the End Child Marriage Collective, Girls Not Brides will work with Collective members to advance research on financing that supports global, regional, and national efforts to end child marriage. Future research priorities include:

- Using existing IATI data to deepen understanding of secondary funding for ending child marriage, including which objectives, activities, and results related to ECM are integrated into wider programming.
- Examining the role of philanthropy in countries and regions where child marriage happens most, particularly in Africa and South Asia.
- Identifying the links between international funding, domestic financing, tax systems, and debt relief, and how these shape resources available for ECM.
- Building a fuller picture of the aid delivery chain for primary ECM funding by complementing international funding data with relevant qualitative insights.

Endnotes:

1. UNICEF, 2023, 'Global polycrisis creating uphill battle to end child marriage'.
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Girls First Fund

GIRLS NOT BRIDES