

A CHECK-LIST FOR NATIONAL STRATEGIES TO END CHILD MARRIAGE



**USER
GUIDE**

February 2016



GIRLS NOT BRIDES CHECK-LIST FOR NATIONAL STRATEGIES TO END CHILD MARRIAGE: A USER GUIDE FOR GIRLS NOT BRIDES MEMBERS AND NATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

February 2016

The check-list is a tool for *Girls Not Brides* members and National Partnerships, as well as UN and government stakeholders, who are either in the early stages of developing a policy or strategy to address child marriage in their countries or reflecting on an existing national strategy and how to maximise its impact. It provides a framework for analysing the process of developing national strategies, provides suggestions for what content might be included in these strategies, and highlights questions to consider for how they could be implemented.

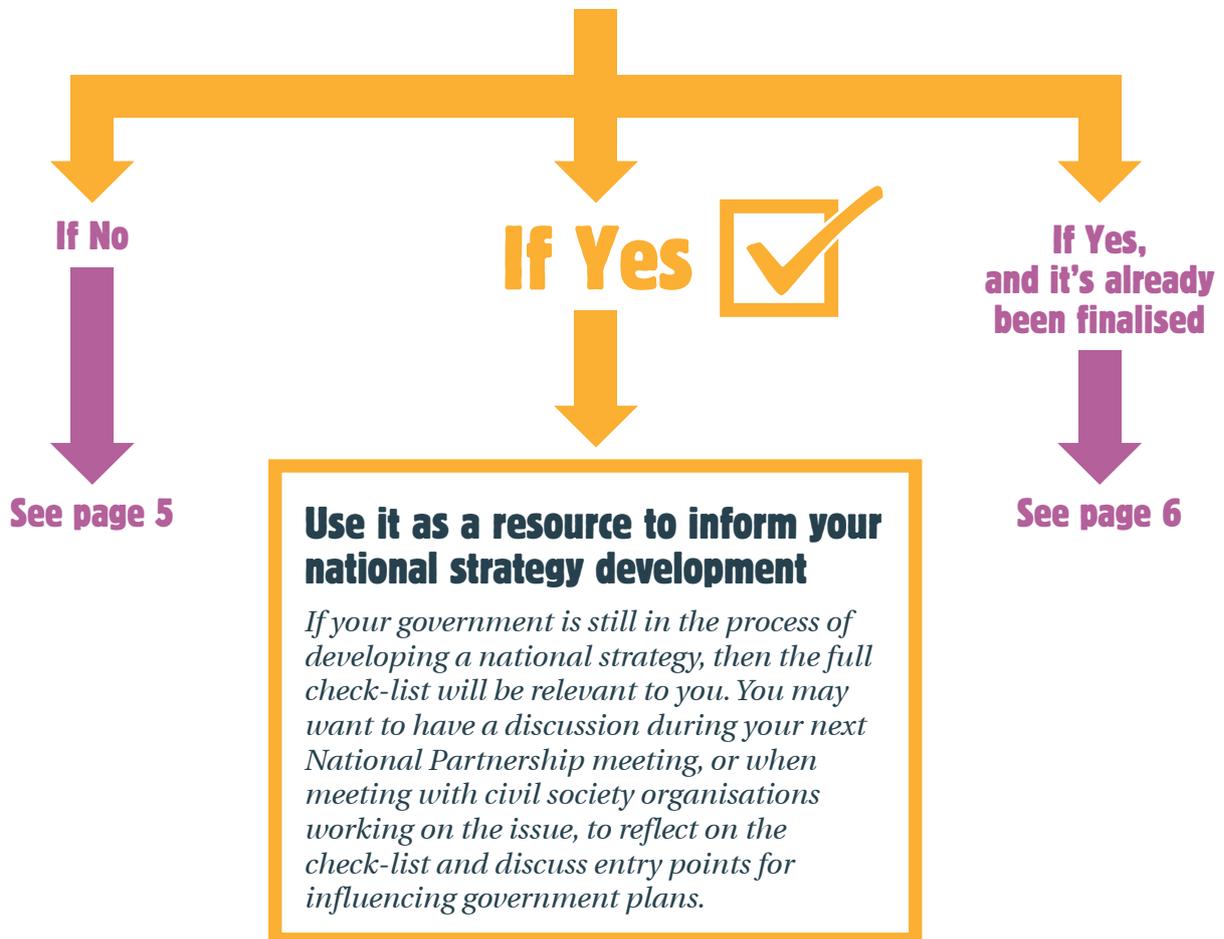
The check-list might also be of interest to *Girls Not Brides* members and National Partnerships¹ in countries where there is no dedicated national strategy as it gives a sense of what a comprehensive strategic framework should involve.

This user guide includes tips for *Girls Not Brides* members and National Partnerships on how to use the check-list in your work. We encourage you to discuss the check-list as a group to facilitate a common reflection process, and to help refine common advocacy goals. Here we offer some guiding questions to help you make the most of the check-list.

¹ *Girls Not Brides* National Partnerships are autonomous partnerships that are associated with *Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage*, and share the values and mission of *Girls Not Brides*. They are formed of *Girls Not Brides* members who have decided to work together to address child marriage in their country, and are committed to a common strategy.

QUESTION 1.

IS YOUR GOVERNMENT CURRENTLY DEVELOPING A NATIONAL STRATEGY?



PART 1 of the checklist looks at the strategy development process.

It aims to assess what level of political commitment there is for the strategy, whether there are clear roles and responsibilities outlined for the development process and implementation, whether the consultation process involved the necessary stakeholders in a meaningful way, and whether it was based on research and evidence in the country.

Reflect on the process of developing the national strategy in your country:

- Is there a strong political commitment to developing and implementing a strategy? If not, can you refine your advocacy plans to encourage greater government commitment? Cross-Ministerial commitment to action will be crucial when implementing the strategy.

- Are there clear roles and responsibilities outlined and is the means of accountability defined? If not, is this something you wish to call for?

- Have all the stakeholder groups been involved in the development of the strategy? The check-list highlights examples of potentially relevant stakeholders, but carrying out a stakeholder mapping exercise in your country will tell you who is relevant to include in your context. If not, are there ways you can encourage the government to involve them?

- Is there enough information in the public domain about the national strategy itself? If not, can you encourage greater information sharing and translation into local languages by UNICEF or other stakeholders?

- Is the strategy based on adequate research and evidence? If not, do you want to call for more research and data collection?

PART 2 of the check-list looks at the content of what should be included in such national strategies.

It aims to support reflection on the vision and ambition of the strategy, how realistic it is about what can be achieved within the short term and what needs to be done in the long term, how comprehensive it is, and how well linked it is to other policy initiatives and regional and international commitments. While contexts differ across countries, there are some important minimum elements that national strategies should include.

Assuming you have seen a draft of the national strategy, **reflect on the content included and consider if there are places where it can be strengthened.**

- Have existing related policy initiatives in your country been mapped out?
- Does the draft include a long-term vision and address the root causes of child marriage, including gender inequality?
- Are there entry points in existing policy initiatives for strengthening work on child marriage?

Based on your responses to these questions, consider incorporating them into your advocacy strategy and raising these issues to the responsible Ministry / at the next consultation.

PART 3 of the check-list looks at the implementation plan for the strategy.

It aims to assess whether roles and responsibilities have been clearly defined, and whether costing, resourcing, capacity development, ways of coordination and communication have been considered. It also asks about the monitoring and evaluation planned for the strategy to understand whether it will assess impact, as well as outcomes, and who will be involved in that process.

Reflect on the implementation plans for the strategy in your country.

- Are the plans clear? If not, include these elements in your advocacy strategy.
- Start discussions about what role your organisation or National Partnership will play in implementing the national strategy: for example, in helping to disseminate the strategy / in implementing programmes which can help to achieve the objectives of the strategy / in monitoring what the government is doing, etc.

If No 



Encourage your government to take more action to address child marriage

Even in countries where governments are not planning to develop national strategies, the check-list could still be useful for you as it provides ideas, for example, for the types of data that is important to collect to inform national-level responses to ending child marriage, as well as the types of programmatic approaches necessary for a holistic response.

Assess the existing government response against what needs to be done in your country

- What is the government already doing on child marriage, both directly and indirectly, across sectors?
- Are there gaps or areas to be strengthened? E.g. reaching girls at risk of child marriage or already-married girls as a target group? Improving effectiveness of programmes or scaling them up? The *Girls Not Brides Theory of Change on Child Marriage* shows the holistic nature of child marriage and the interrelated and multi-sectoral interventions needed for a comprehensive response.
- Is a targeted strategy to address child marriage needed? Take a look at our **Lessons learned from selected national initiatives to end child marriage** to see what the process for developing a targeted national strategy in other countries has involved.
- **OR** can it be addressed by strengthening related policies and programmes across different government sectors: health, education, agriculture, law and similar? See www.GirlsNotBrides.org for resources on **Taking Action to Address Child Marriage: the Role of Different Sectors**.

Consider what international or regional commitments your government has made that you can leverage

- Your government has committed to the **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) which include a target (5.3) to end child marriage by 2030. You can remind them of the need to act at the national level in order to deliver upon this global commitment.
- Your government is most likely signatory to other regional and international commitments (for example, **Human Rights Council resolutions on child marriage in 2013**, the UN General Assembly resolutions on child marriage in **2013** and **2014**, the **Convention on the Rights of the Child**, etc.) that your organisation can also use for leveraging government action on the issue.

For tips on advocacy and policy messages, and existing commitments, see *Girls Not Brides Post-2015 Advocacy Toolkit*, available at www.GirlsNotBrides.org

QUESTION 2.

HAS YOUR GOVERNMENT RECENTLY DEVELOPED A NATIONAL STRATEGY?

If Yes



Reflect on the experience of national strategy development in your country.

If your government has already developed a national strategy, you will be considering what the next steps for implementation of the strategy are. As part of the UNICEF - UNFPA Global Programme to End Child Marriage, they are tasked with supporting the development of implementation plans. The Global Programme specifically highlights the important role that civil society plays in efforts to address child marriage, especially in developing focused interventions at the level of girls, families and communities in focus districts.

Get in touch with the relevant Country Office to see what this means in practice for you.

Just as it is important for the development of a national strategy to be an inclusive, participatory process, its implementation will require partnership and coordination. National Partnerships, or groups of members working together at the national level, may wish to *dedicate a discussion during your upcoming meetings to reflect on the check-list and discuss implementation of the strategy as part of your policy analysis and advocacy planning work.*

As mentioned above, Part 3 of the check-list looks at the implementation plan for the strategy. Consider these questions to help inform your strategy as civil society organisations.

- What has already been done? What are the gaps and how can they be filled?
- Are there a set of common advocacy messages that your National Partnership or group of civil society organisations would like to focus on going forward?
- What should the role of civil society organisations be in the next steps:
 - ▶ Developing the programme of action / implementation?
 - ▶ Testing new programmes?
 - ▶ Sharing evidence of what works and doesn't?
 - ▶ Monitoring progress?
 - ▶ Holding government to account for their commitments in the strategy?

We encourage you to fill out the check-list with your comments, and share your assessment with your civil society, UN and government counterparts. Consider whether you wish to do this as a joint reflection process with UN and government, or independently as civil society.

HOW TO USE THE RESULTS OF THE CHECK-LIST

Once you have discussed and completed the checklist, think about what this means for your collective advocacy strategy and the role civil society can play in developing an implementation plan and monitoring its implementation going forward. Are there certain areas where you scored particularly poorly and want to focus more on? For example:



If you scored poorly on resourcing and capacity building of the strategy, perhaps you will focus more on encouraging the government to dedicate resources to the strategy and investing in training service providers and developing their capacity.



If you scored poorly on consultation with certain groups in developing the national strategy, perhaps you can ensure through your programmes that they are included in the implementation plans.



If you scored poorly on coordination mechanisms, perhaps think about what role civil society can play in helping to ensure coordination.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

The *Girls Not Brides* secretariat can help share learning about good practice from national strategies in different countries, and what more needs to be done, but we need to hear from you!

You could contribute to our collective learning in the following ways:



► Share a blog with us reflecting on the national strategy in your country and what more needs to be done.



► Tell us about a good practice in your country and we can share it as a case study: what worked well about the process of developing a national strategy in your country? Is that something that others could learn from?



► If you have completed the check-list, share it with us, and let us know if it has helped to inform your advocacy strategies moving forward.

