



# LESSONS LEARNED FROM *GIRLS NOT BRIDES'* NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP WORKSHOP

7-9 NOVEMBER 2016, AMSTERDAM



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# INTRODUCTION

## Introduction

In November 2016, *Girls Not Brides'* National Partnerships met in Amsterdam to share successes and challenges. This resource provides a summary of lessons learnt from the workshop and is intended for attendees and those interested in collaborative work to end child marriage.

## *Girls Not Brides* and National Partnerships

National Partnerships have become increasingly important for *Girls Not Brides* to reach its objectives. A National Partnership is formed of *Girls Not Brides* members who believe in the power of collective action to end child marriage in their country. By becoming a National Partnership, members have chosen to align their work to the *Girls Not Brides* global strategy and have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the *Girls Not Brides* secretariat. *Girls Not Brides* also works with national coalitions that either, wish to become National Partnerships in the future or, have chosen to fulfil similar work with a different identity.

While National Partnerships and other national coalitions differ in their relationship with the *Girls Not Brides* global secretariat, their formation process and current activities are very similar. With this in mind, we are using the term National Partnerships throughout this document to refer both to National Partnerships as well as national coalitions.

## A partnership of partnerships: why this workshop?

In November 2016, *Girls Not Brides* organised a three-day workshop in Amsterdam with representatives from National Partnerships. The purpose of this workshop was to facilitate learning and exchange, to build the capacity of National Partnerships, and to reinforce relationships with the *Girls Not Brides* secretariat.

This resource summarises the presentations and outcomes of the discussions held in Amsterdam. It is intended as a review for those who attended the workshop as well as a resource for those who were not able to attend but are either active in a *Girls Not Brides* National Partnership or interested in starting collaborative work on child marriage. We hope it will inspire you to continue and expand your collaborative child marriage work!

*Girls Not Brides* is grateful to the 35 participants from 15 countries who shared their learnings and challenges as contributions to this lessons learned resource.

## List of Abbreviations:

- AU** African Union
- CSO** Civil Society Organisation
- GVB** Gender Based Violence
- MYP** Meaningful Youth Participation
- MoU** Memorandum of Understanding
- M&E** Monitoring and Evaluation
- NGO** Non-Government Organisation
- NP** National Partnership
- SAARC** South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
- SADC** Southern African Development Community
- USAID** United States Agency for International Development

# WHO ATTENDED?

## PARTICIPANTS AT THE NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP WORKSHOP, 7-9 NOVEMBER 2016, AMSTERDAM



### National Partnerships

**Bangladesh:** *Girls Not Brides Bangladesh: The Bangladesh Alliance to End Child Marriage* was launched in September 2013, and became an official *Girls Not Brides* National Partnership in July 2014. *Girls Not Brides Bangladesh* has over 20 members, ranging from small grassroots organisations to country offices of larger INGOs.

**Ghana:** *Girls Not Brides Ghana* became an official *Girls Not Brides* National Partnership in October 2014, and was launched in December 2014. *Girls Not Brides Ghana* has over 20 members covering all ten regions of the country.

**Mozambique:** *Girls Not Brides Mozambique* was set up in 2013 as the "Coligação para Eliminação dos Casamentos Prematuros", and became an official *Girls Not Brides* National Partnership in July 2014. *Girls Not Brides Mozambique* is made up of 43 civil society organisations: 36 local organisations and seven international organisations.

**Nepal:** *Girls Not Brides Nepal (Balika Dulahi Hoinan* in Nepali) was created in February 2012, and became an official *Girls Not Brides* National Partnership in February 2015. *Girls Not Brides Nepal* is made up of 15 national and international organisations.

**The Netherlands:** *Girls Not Brides the Netherlands* was officially launched in November 2016. Started in 2014 as "The Alliances of the Child Marriage Fund", *Girls Not Brides Netherlands* was initiated by three child marriage alliances: the "Her Choice" alliance, the "Yes, I do" alliance, and the "More than Brides" alliance.

**Uganda:** The Uganda Alliance to End Child Marriage started in January 2013 and became an official *Girls Not Brides* National Partnership in July 2016. *Girls Not Brides Uganda* has over 50 members across Uganda working at community, district, regional and national level.

**United Kingdom (UK):** *Girls Not Brides UK* became an official *Girls Not Brides* National Partnership in July 2014. Its members are working to end child marriage in the UK and globally. The members share learning and evidence, and work jointly to influence the UK Government to ensure it continues to work to end child marriage.

**United States of America (USA):** *Girls Not Brides USA* became the first official *Girls Not Brides* National Partnership in 2012. Before then, the group was known as the U.S. Child Marriage Coalition and was instrumental in pushing forward key policies on child marriage in the United States. *Girls Not Brides USA* is composed of over 50 civil society organisations working at the international and national level.

### Existing or emerging national groups

**Burkina Faso:** A National Coalition to End Child Marriage was launched in 2013 to work with the government to develop a National Action Plan to End Child Marriage. The group is working on formalising its mandate and structure.

**Cameroon:** A national level partnership is forming in Cameroon, and has already been collaborating with different ministries. It has also been an important actor in the launch of the AU campaign in 2016.

**Malawi:** A national level partnership has been launched in Malawi in 2014. It is in the final process of signing a Memorandum of Understanding to affiliate with *Girls Not Brides* and become a *Girls Not Brides* National Partnership in 2017.

**Tanzania:** Tanzania Ending Child Marriage Network (TECMN) is a coalition of 35 CSOs working together to end child marriage in Tanzania. It was launched on the commemoration of the International Day of the Girl Child on 11 October 2012.

**Pakistan:** A group of *Girls Not Brides* members are currently in the process of forming a national level CSO partnership to end child marriage. This partnership will work closely with existing provincial coalitions.

**Zambia:** The CSO Network for Ending Child Marriage in Zambia is a coalition of CSOs and other stakeholders that work on various projects to address child marriages in Zambia. The network was launched in 2014 and has diverse membership of stakeholders.

**Zimbabwe:** A coalition of CSOs has been working together in Zimbabwe since 2015. The group is loosely organised and currently working to formalise its structure and affiliation to *Girls Not Brides* to become a National Partnership.

# 1 WHAT DID WE LEARN ABOUT: POLICY AND ADVOCACY?

The causes of child marriage are complex and the consequences far-reaching. Governments' therefore have a leadership role to play in addressing the practice at a national level. Advocating for action and holding their governments to account for commitments to end child marriage is a crucial role of the National Partnerships. In Amsterdam, Partnerships were keen to share their advocacy successes and challenges.

## Advocacy goals: what are National Partnerships advocating for?

A common advocacy goal is often what brought members of National Partnerships together in the first place. Advocacy goals are always context specific as they are tailored towards the particular policy and legal process in a country. However, when reviewing the advocacy goals of all National Partnerships, we can see there are common themes and priorities across countries.

## Advocacy goals for National Partnerships in high prevalence countries

- To raise the legal age of marriage to 18, with no exceptions.
- To close the loopholes for marriage under the age of 18 in all relevant laws and policies including removing all exceptions to marriage below 18 with parental or judicial consent.
- To harmonise excising laws and policies, including constitution and Family Law, to ensure that the legal age of marriage is 18 across the board.
- To ensure the development and implementation of national strategies to end child marriage.
- To adopt a multi-sectoral and inclusive multi-stakeholder approach to child marriage, with an effective coordination mechanism.
- To ensure sufficient budget allocation from government towards issues concerning adolescent girls, including funding national action strategies to end child marriage.

- To effectively implement the existing policies and law related to adolescent girls.
- To adopt international and regional policy and legal frameworks, such as the SADC Model Law.
- To ensure that governments are held accountable to their international and national commitments to end child marriage.

## For National Partnerships in donor countries

- To ensure that donor governments keep the issue of child marriage on their international development agenda.
- To ensure that donor governments fully fund their commitments towards adolescent girls and ending child marriage.
- To ensure that their national government takes action against child marriage in the country, including raising the legal age of marriage to 18 with no exceptions, if needed.

## How can National Partnerships work together to achieve their advocacy goals?

Until now, most National Partnerships have focussed their advocacy efforts at the national level. During the workshop, participants identified the need to increase regional and international cooperation between National Partnerships. They identified the following potential areas for collaboration:

- **Regional advocacy:** National Partnerships from countries in the same region can work together to collectively influence relevant regional institutions which are common advocacy targets (e.g. SAARC, SADC, AU.) They can also act as a regional watchdog.
- **Joint advocacy:** a National Partnership from a high-prevalence country and one from a donor country with foreign investments in that high-prevalence country can align strategies, objectives and messages.

- **Learning:** peer-to-peer learning and regional exchanges could allow National Partnerships to learn on an ongoing basis. Moreover, with incipient groups in Francophone countries, it will be important to support a transfer of knowledge, including on creating and managing a National Partnership.
- **Fundraising:** National Partnerships from the same region could apply together for regional call for proposals.



## CASE STUDY OF JOINT ADVOCACY: Bangladesh: joint advocacy against legal change

### ***Dilruba Nasrin, BRAC, secretariat of Girls Not Brides Bangladesh:***

“At the 2014 London Girls Summit, the Bangladesh Prime Minister pledged to end child marriage by 2021 as a practice and completely by 2041. The Government is now updating the Child Marriage Restraint Act to increase penalties for those who marry their daughters young. The Act also contains a provision allowing girls to marry before 18 in special circumstances. *Girls Not Brides Bangladesh* is leading the advocacy against this provision.

In 2014, we organised a human chain in Dhaka and together brought child brides to tell their stories to policy makers. With support from the *Girls Not Brides* secretariat, we mobilised The Elders to write a letter to the Bangladeshi government. Although the government has not publically responded to it,

we believe it made an impact. Furthermore, *Girls Not Brides Bangladesh* held a press conference and worked with local media to ensure their continued coverage.

When we first started this advocacy campaign, many organisations tried to do things on their own. We saw that this was not having the impact we needed, so we organised a conference to ensure collective action. Not only did *Girls Not Brides* members attend, other coalitions - such as women's rights groups - did as well!”

Unfortunately, the Child Marriage Restraint Act was adopted by the Bangladeshi parliament in February 2017. The new Act includes a special provision allowing child marriage in “special cases”. *Girls Not Brides Bangladesh* continues to find new allies to jointly advocate against this law and ensure that no child is married under the age of 18.



## CASE STUDY: USA: advocating for an integrated approach

**Helena Minchew, International Women's Health Coalition, Girls Not Brides USA co-chair:**

"As *Girls Not Brides USA* we wanted to get child marriage on the foreign policy agenda of the US government. USAID had a vision for action on child marriage, but the State Department saw it as a GBV issue. We worked hard to convince them that we actually needed a whole-of-government approach to ending child marriage. The whole process took us three years. After coming up with a plan to change the way the US government talks about the issue, we brought together many stakeholders working on the issue and developed a policy memo ahead of the London Girls Summit in 2014. After the Girls Summit, the government realised they needed a strategy with a 'whole girl approach'. This was a turning point in the process.

After this, we decided to bring together over 50 organisations that were pushing for the same thing. This led to the development of a joint strategy memo. The co-chairs of the National Partnership were leading on this, but all members contributed according to their specific expertise. In the end, 50 organisations co-signed the memo. The government used parts of the text in what became the US Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls, which was released in 2016.

We learned from this process that collective action on advocacy has a lot more impact than each organisation doing it individually. You need to show a critical mass is working on a specific issue and show that your vision is the right vision. We firmly believe working together is the best way to influence decision-makers."



**In Washington DC, if you're not working in coalition,  
you won't be heard. You need to have a critical mass.**



## 2 WHAT DID WE LEARN ABOUT: DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING NATIONAL STRATEGIES TO END CHILD MARRIAGE?

There has been increasing recognition that due to the scale, complexity and urgency of acting to address child marriage, it is crucial to develop comprehensive, country-wide initiatives. A growing number of countries with high rates of child marriage have started to develop national strategies and / or action plans to address the practice. Many National Partnerships are involved in the development and implementation of national strategies in their country.

In 2015, *Girls Not Brides* undertook its first research and analysis on “Lessons Learned from National Strategies to End Child Marriage”. The recommendations that emerged as a result of this research led to the development of “A Checklist for National Strategies to End Child Marriage”. In 2016 *Girls Not Brides* undertook a second analysis to understand how best to implement national strategies and action plans. The main findings were presented and discussed during the National Partnership workshop.

### Lessons from the multi-sectoral implementation of national strategies

- **LESSON 1** Sustained government leadership and political will are essential to ensure national initiatives progress.
- **LESSON 2** Governments need to strengthen their capacity to coordinate work across sectors; this includes the need to communicate clearly about what is happening and to allocate budget to address child marriage.
- **LESSON 3** Civil society has a vital role to play in the design and implementation of national initiatives and holding governments accountable to their commitments.
- **LESSON 4** Dedicated national initiatives help with agenda-setting and coherence, but care should be taken to ensure child marriage is not then seen as a “standalone” issue rather than the multi-sectoral issue it is. It may be equally or more effective to advocate for and support integration of sectoral interventions that will contribute to preventing or responding to child marriage e.g. education and out-of-school girls; adolescent-friendly health services, etc.

## Implementation challenges and the role of National Partnerships

During the discussions surrounding the development and implementation of national strategies, participants highlighted some of the most common implementation challenges, and the role of National Partnerships in mitigating them.

Challenge	Role of National Partnerships
Stakeholders lack of capacity/ understanding of the issue and the national strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To simplify, disseminate and where necessary, translate the national strategy / plan.</li> <li>• To provide information, evidence, and learning to build the capacity of stakeholders.</li> </ul>
Insufficient or unknown levels of funding allocated by governments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To build the financial case for addressing child marriage and ensure all members advocate using the same message, statistics and financial information.</li> <li>• To know exactly who the National Partnership advocacy targets are and how to reach them.</li> <li>• To ensure support from UN agencies and other donors to the national strategy / plan.</li> <li>• To hold governments accountable to their commitments to end child marriage.</li> </ul>
Weak co-ordination between ministries or leading ministry lacks capacity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide technical expertise and sharing research and best practices.</li> <li>• To lead by example and ensure civil society is coordinated and speaking with one voice.</li> <li>• To highlight national strategies on other issues and how they coordinate work.</li> <li>• To advocate for the establishment of a coordination mechanism.</li> </ul>
Lack of commitment from various actors (including within civil society)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To build a common understanding of the consequences of inaction on child marriage in order to advocate for commitment.</li> <li>• To ensure all stakeholders understand what role they can play and are consulted as early as possible.</li> <li>• To build fair partnerships with well-defined roles and responsibilities.</li> <li>• To work with the media to keep the issue on the agenda.</li> <li>• To engage communities and ensure their participation in the implementation of responses.</li> <li>• To contribute to the implementation of plans, with individual organisations, implementing programmes that fall under the strategy.</li> </ul>
Lack of targets and M&E framework.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide technical assistance to build a M&amp;E framework, including using <i>Girls Not Brides</i> recommended indicators.</li> <li>• To encourage UN agencies to provide technical support.</li> <li>• To share best practices from other countries or sectors.</li> </ul>



## CASE STUDY: Mozambique: joint action towards a national strategy to end child marriage

### ***Persilia Muianga, World Vision, co-coordinator Girls Not Brides Mozambique (CECAP):***

Since 2014, CECAP has worked with the Government, partners, and UN agencies on research, policy and programmes. It has played a key role in the development of the National Strategy to Prevent and Eliminate Child Marriage (2016-2019).

“When we first started this process, and came together as a coalition, we defined our objectives and what we wanted to achieve. We decided to develop an advocacy plan. As part of this process, we recognised the different types of expertise within the coalition. We divided the members into four groups: research, communications, advocacy and community mobilisation. Each group had an individual leader who fed back during monthly meetings coordinated by

ROSC (co-coordinator). ROSC played an important role in coordinating the coalition, providing leadership, and advocacy skills. What we learned during this process is that you need to work together using the expertise of different members. Everyone has different skills they can bring to the table. For example, don't expect a grassroots NGO to conduct high-level advocacy in government, if this is not their skill.

It's also really important to ensure buy-in and commitment from all members. Their signing of the MoU as a *Girls Not Brides* Partnership was a signal of commitment as the directors of the organisations signed. Lastly, we found that data and evidence were a critical part of the process and of building CECAP, they gave the coalition credibility and the ability to influence government.”

### 3 WHAT DID WE LEARN ABOUT: CO-ORDINATION AND MANAGEMENT OF NATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS?

National Partnerships are formed, structured and governed in different ways. During the workshop some of the theory on working in partnerships was presented. For example, the Partnering Cycle below summarises the different stages in the life of a partnership. It is, a schematic simplification; no one partnership conforms precisely to this sequence. Yet, it was a useful tool for National Partnerships to reflect on the work they have done to establish themselves, and what lies ahead of them. For the full presentation, including some theory about the Partnering Cycle and the partnering process, please visit our Resource Centre: [www.girlsnotbrides.org/resource-centre](http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/resource-centre)



**A partnership is not a goal in itself – it is a means to an end**

Woutine van Beek, facilitator



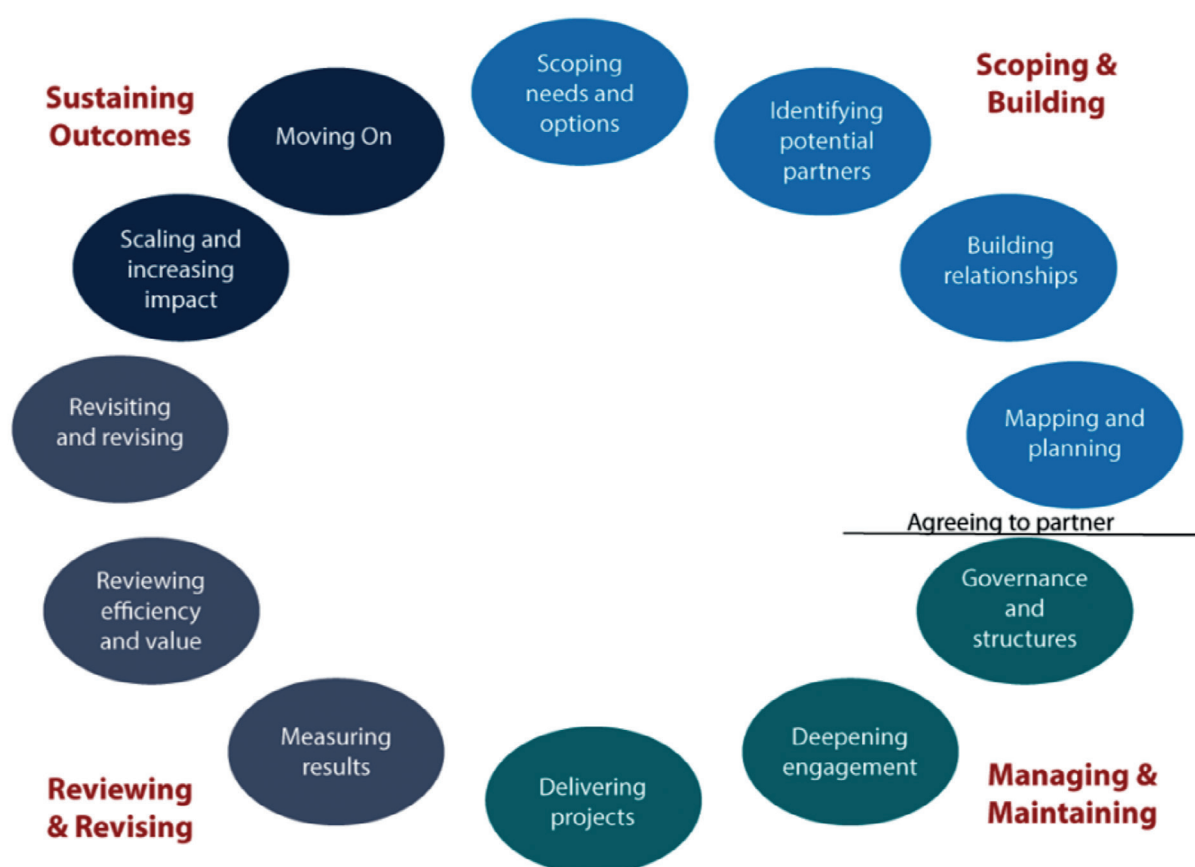
**Partnerships can't be pushed by one individual; it takes time to build commitment**

Participant

The National Partnerships participating in the workshop had already been working together for some time, and most of had finalised the scoping and building phase. Therefore, the discussions centred on managing and maintaining a National Partnership. This section shares examples of National Partnerships' good practices in governance and structures, coalition management, deepening engagement, and evaluation.



## The Partnering Cycle - a schematic framework



Adapted from - The Partnering Cycle - copyright The Partnering Initiative

Source: The Partnership Brokers Association.

### Lessons learned: Partnership agreements

- It is important to have a clear Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) depicting the main processes, roles and responsibilities. This should be endorsed by all members.
- There are different ways in which a MoU can be developed. Most National Partnerships found it useful to select a few members (2-4) to the lead in drafting it. However, it is important that all members have sufficient opportunity to provide input and feedback.
- All members should endorse the MoU and new members should be made aware of its contents.
- It is important to review the MoU after a set period of time. *Girls Not Brides* expects all National Partnerships to review and renew their MoUs every two years.

## Lessons learned: Coordination

Many National Partnerships have divided the coordination tasks by either having a co-chairing or co-coordinating structure. For example, the USA National Partnership has found that having co-chairs (or co-coordinators) who dedicate a set amount of time (20%) to the running of the National Partnership works well.

It is important that a National Partnership clearly identifies who is coordinating and what the roles and responsibilities of the (co-)coordinator are. A National Partnership can only be run effectively if there is strong commitment from the coordinating organisations (steering committee, secretariat) as well as the executive leadership of the member organisations.

## Lessons learned: Evaluating the work of a National Partnership

Holding an annual health check gives members the opportunity to reflect on the National Partnership and provide their feedback. Evaluations can help to identify emerging problems and improve satisfaction among members. This can be done by doing annual surveys, with a questionnaire on issues including: strategic direction of the National Partnership, governance and decision-making, coalition management, communications, or National Partnership activities.

## Ten tips for National Partnerships to ensure member engagement

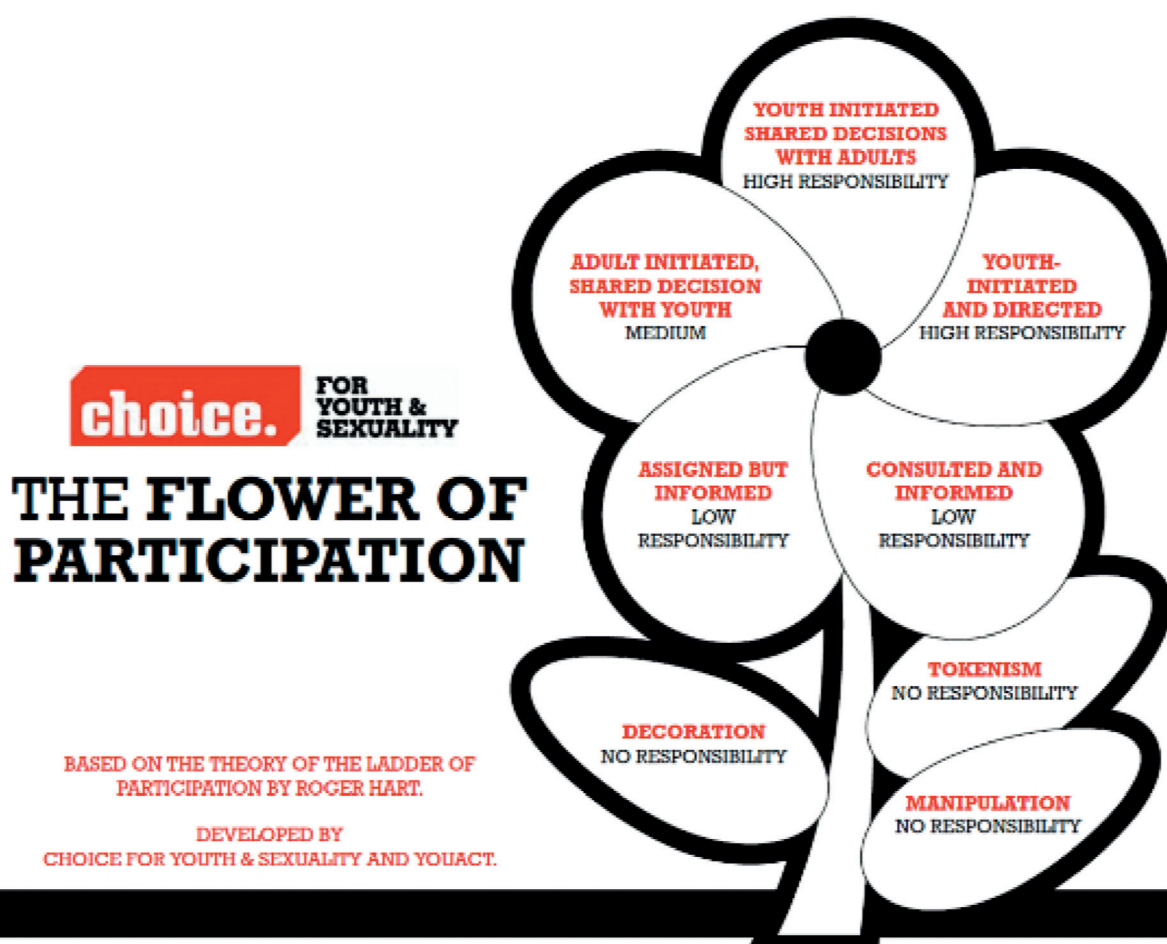
- 1. Define clear expectations from the outset:** member registration and induction is the time to be clear about expectations, interrogate motivation and values. Do not be scared to be explicit about these issues and keep in mind that not all organisations have the same capacity to engage and contribute.
- 2. Manage growth with caution:** managing membership growth at a pace that helps to build cohesion and trust among members, rather than undermining these. When groups decide to actively recruit new members this should be well thought out and based upon an analysis membership gaps.
- 3. Timetable regular meetings:** a timetable for regular meetings and circulation of agenda, minutes and actions will help foster a culture of communication. It will also enable members who did not participate in the meeting to be updated about the latest developments and engage in actions going forward.
- 4. Be inclusive:** ensure that members from different parts of the country can join meetings, activities and events by, for instance, rotating the meeting point. Make use of social media like WhatsApp groups and Facebook groups to share regular updates and opportunities.
- 5. Set up regional/district coordinators:** these coordinators should be based in different parts of the country and responsible for communication and coordination with members in their areas. This system has proven to increase members' engagement, improve communications and visibility.
- 6. Ensure transparency between members:** sharing the MoU between members, including agreements on decision-making and governance will help members understand how the group works and increase accountability and transparency.
- 7. Have a democratic system:** a clearly articulated nomination and voting process for steering or executive committee membership that is transparent and open to all members will help increase engagement in decision making within the National Partnership.
- 8. Share representation, share the spotlight:** delegate attendance to meetings and trainings to members and have them brief the group afterwards. Make sure to increase the visibility and profile of the partnership as a whole, not that of individual organisations.
- 9. Sub-committees work:** in a smaller configuration, there is more pressure on members to participate rather than sitting back and expecting others to engage. Working with Sub-committees on particular streams such as advocacy or research can mitigate this. Be careful not to create power struggles!
- 10. Establish co-chairs as points of contact:** they can be used to provide a rapid response when the wider steering group does not have time to respond effectively. As with certain sub-committees, the danger is that these configurations take on more authority to the detriment of the steering group as a whole.

## 4 WHAT DID WE LEARN ABOUT: MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION (MYP)?

At *Girls Not Brides*, we believe that we will not end child marriage without the sustained and active engagement of youth. We aim to ensure that diverse groups of young people, and their organisations, are playing an active, meaningful role in the National Partnerships. To review this, our youth-led member CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality led a presentation and discussion at the workshop. This is summarised below.

### What do we mean by Meaningful Youth Participation (MYP)?

- Participation of young people in all stages and levels of policies, programmes and decision-making processes that influence their lives.
- Young people participate on equal terms through access to accurate information and training.
- One young person does not represent all young people, so MYP should include young people from diverse backgrounds.
- There is no one-size-fits-all approach to MYP.
- MYP must fit the organisation, the programme objectives and the needs of young people.
- Each context and each youth group requires different strategies.
- Whether participation is meaningful depends on young people's perspectives.



## Why Meaningful Youth Participation?

- It is young people's right to participate in the decisions that affect them.
- By participating in MYP, youth will be empowered.
- Youth participation leads to better targeted and more effective services and projects.
- Youth participation will build the overall capacity of an organisation.
- Youth participation is an effective strategy for ending child marriage.
- In many countries where child marriage is prevalent, youth are demographically dominant. Failure to engage youth in efforts to end child marriage is a missed opportunity to achieve results at scale.
- A variety of organisations report that engagement of youth in advocacy has increased the creativity, credibility and legitimacy of their work.

## Youth Participation in National Partnerships

Many National Partnerships engage young people in their activities and programmes. However, ensuring that young people participate in the design, planning and monitoring of activities as well as in the governance and decision-making of the group was identified as an area for improvement. Together with the secretariat, National Partnerships will work to build an enabling environment for meaningful youth participation in all aspects of their work.

## How do National Partnerships engage youth?

- Members sometimes bring young people to meeting of the National Partnership or could select a youth representative. However, they are often not part of National Partnership's governance structure.
- Girls are often included in member's programmes and National Partnership activities, but not in governance. E.g. Girls' conferences, International Day of the Girl or round table discussions.

## Essential elements to promote youth participation

- Analyse the current level of meaningful youth participation in the organisation or partnership.
- Build the capacity of adult partner organisations on MYP.
- Select young people to be involved.
- Plan for ongoing support and capacity building.
- Provide mentorship and training.
- Ensure an enabling environment, make sure members understand MYP.
- Consider the opportunities you can offer, do they lead to MYP?
- Prevent a check-the-box approach!
- Identify and involve existing groups of young people.





## 5 WHAT DID WE LEARN ABOUT: COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA ENGAGEMENT?

Communication and media engagement is an important part of the work of National Partnerships. They often collaborate with the media to reach a wider audience (the general public, decision makers, donors, etc.) and increase awareness of child marriage and the work of the National Partnerships. Media engagement can also be used to generate support.

At the National Partnership workshop attendees looked at some of the best practices for media engagement from National Partnerships and established guidance for future efforts. This section summarises what they found. For more information and examples, please see the full presentation delivered at the workshop, which can be found in the Girls Not Brides Resource Centre: [www.girlsnotbrides.org/resource-centre](http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/resource-centre)

### Communications strategy and media plan

A communications strategy is a plan of action to achieve a long-term or overall communications aim. This plan must link closely with the National Partnership's strategy and objectives. A media engagement plan is one component of that strategy (other elements can be a brand development, digital content, publishing, etc.)

#### What a good media plan would include:

- **What are your objectives?** What are you looking to achieve through your work with the media? It's important to establish what you hope to achieve by engaging with media.
- **Who is your target audience?** Write a list of who you hope to reach, this will help steer your media engagement plan.
- **How will you reach them?** Different people engage with the media in different ways. Once you have worked out who your audiences are you can make an estimated guess at which media outlets they read, watch or listen to. This will give you an idea of who to target.

- **What are your key messages?** It's important to have clear principles and messages that you want to get across when you speak to the media.
- **How are you going to deliver them?** Discussing potential activities that are designed to reach your audiences in the most effective way via the media is helpful.
- **When?** Timing is very important to media engagement activities. Have a think about hooks and when you can target particular media outlets.
- **How much?** Consider resources carefully. A lot of media activities can be done very cheaply but it's important to allocate time and budget accordingly.
- **Why are we doing this?** Evaluate regularly. Set your indicators so you can analyse your strengths and weaknesses. Establish what worked well and what needs to be improved upon.



## Ten signs your story might be newsworthy

- **Timing:** does it coincide with an announcement, an International Day, a larger story or perhaps an anniversary?
- **Superlatives:** is it the first, the largest, the oldest, or the most unique?
- **Human interest:** is there an interesting personality at the centre of the story?
- **Relatable:** people like to read and hear stories they can relate to. This helps the story be more accessible and real.
- **Shock factor:** shocking news such as that involving change resulting in widespread impact, tragedy or unexpected victory is often popular. But be careful to avoid sensationalism.
- **Proximity:** audiences relate more to stories that are close to them geographically: local papers like local stories, national papers like national stories.
- **Novelty:** journalists are competitive about breaking news – revealing stories as they happen. They want to be the ones that brought it to you first.
- **Exclusivity:** if a newspaper or broadcaster is the first and only news outlet to be covering that story then they will rate it highly.
- **The elite:** any story that involves an important or 'famous' person generally has great value. For example important local child marriage champions often receive coverage.
- **Currency:** stories that are already in the public eye but are deemed valuable and so run and run, even if nothing new really happens.

## Developing your messaging framework

Key messages are the foundation of all your communication. They should be short, to the point, simple, 'big picture' statements about child marriage.

Key messages should be: **clear, concise, consistent.**

Think about what the 2–3 key things about child marriage you want to say are. Make sure you put them in priority order.

Key messages should be 10 words or less. For example:

*"Each year, 15 million girls are married before the age of 18. That is 28 girls every minute 1 Every 2 seconds." or "Child marriage is fuelled by gender inequality, poverty, traditions, and insecurity."*

When developing key messages about your National Partnership, ask yourself:

- How do we want to portray the National Partnership?
- How do we want to position the National Partnership?
- If this message were repeated, what would I want to hear?
- What would most enhance the National Partnership's work right now?

## Tips for drafting a Press Release

A press release is a good way of telling the media about a story they may want to cover. Remember to:

- Check the story is newsworthy before you write the press release. The tips mentioned earlier can help with this.
- Be concise.
- Write a killer headline if you can, but at the very least, say what your story is about – if it is about the launch of the first end child marriage project in x region say exactly that. An exciting and informative headline helps attract busy journalists to the story.
- Your first line is crucial: it should summarise the story and immediately grab the journalist's attention otherwise they will not continue reading.
- The 5 W's should be included in the first paragraph of your press release: who, what, when, where, why?
- Use quotes to provide insight from experts, not information.
- Include your contact information at the bottom of the release so the journalist can get in touch if they have additional questions or need more information.
- If a spokesperson is available for the story, include who is available for interview at the bottom of the release and say what their title is.

- Don't include background information about your organisation in the opening paragraph. This, along with any other additional information, can be included in a "notes to editors" section at the end.

### Example of strong media engagement in Nepal

During the *Nepal Girls Summit* in 2016, *Girls Not Brides Nepal* organised a press conference to amplify the voices of adolescent girls affected by child marriage and ensure that media narratives were reflective of what was driving child marriage in Nepal. Eight married adolescent girls – some with small children – from across Nepal participated in the press conference. The event was attended by 17 media outlets, including national newspapers, TV channels and radio stations. It also brought the girls together on the same platform with influential government stakeholders, including the Director General of the Ministry of Health and Population.

### Internal and external communication: best practices from National Partnerships

National Partnerships have different ways of coordinating their internal communications with and between members as well as ways to deal with external opportunities. In most cases (co-) coordinators or (co-)chairs are responsible for this area of work. At the National Partnership workshop Partnerships were keen to share their achievements and challenges with internal and external communications:

***Girls Not Brides Uganda*** has a quarterly meeting with the steering committee of the National Partnerships. The steering committee includes regional representatives who are responsible for collecting information from members in their region, as well as communicating decisions made by the steering committee back to these members. *Girls Not Brides Uganda* also uses WhatsApp and Facebook to communicate with and between members. This strong internal communications system allows members to stay up to date.

***Girls Not Brides USA*** has three co-chairs who have a weekly call to decide what needs to be communicated to members. Their external communication material, such as briefs and brochures are not always branded as *Girls Not Brides USA*. Sometimes it makes most sense for a member with expertise in a particular area to take on an opportunity and to communicate on behalf of the group.

***Girls Not Brides Mozambique***: developed an infographic that outlines what has been done to address child marriage in Mozambique from 1999 until now. This is a good resource for new members and external communication opportunities.

### Additional tips for National Partnerships on communication

- Have a repository of key messages on the National Partnership, and on child marriage in your country. Revise them at least annually to keep them timely.
- Include the repository of messages in the induction package for new members so they can understand the messages of the National Partnership.
- Include a standing agenda item on communication in your planning or general assembly meetings. This will help ensure important projects have strong communications elements integrated from the outset.
- Agreeing on policy positions can help to make external communications easier as it saves the group having to negotiate each time an opportunity or need comes up.
- Discuss and agree on the process for communication, not just content. For example, agree on when members can(not) talk on behalf of the National Partnership.
- The co-ordinator(s) should delegate representation and communication opportunities to members with expertise in particular areas.

## 6 WHAT DID WE LEARN ABOUT: USING EVIDENCE AND LEARNING IN NATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS' WORK?

During the workshop we discussed the importance of evidence and how it can be useful to National Partnerships. Participants were given templates and guidelines on how to find and present information. The group discussions focused on how National Partnerships could facilitate learning about solutions among their members.

### Key terms

**Evidence:** the body of data that helps you prove a particular point. This can be qualitative or quantitative data.

**Learning:** translating what we already know to inform our work: using evidence to promote better policies and programmes.

**Data:** information collected and analysed to yield findings which serve as a basis for conclusions.

### Why is sharing evidence and learning important?

- Sharing evidence and learning **makes the most of collective expertise**.
- It helps develop **stronger advocacy** and messaging.
- It can inform **better programme design and implementation**.
- If National Partnerships are well informed they become **credible** and the go-to resource for information on the issue.
- Strong evidence **encourages funding** because it makes the case for the importance of addressing the issue, and why what National Partnerships are proposing is value for money.
- Shared evidence and learning creates a **culture of openness** so that National Partnerships and members can celebrate success and learn from failures or build from what others are doing.



### What is the role of *Girls Not Brides* in sharing learning?

- Convene in person meetings for learning and reflection including at National Partnership workshops.
- Use *Girls Not Brides* newsletters and mail outs to highlight latest global evidence and resources.
- Use *Girls Not Brides* website to synthesise the links between child marriage and related issues (thematic briefs, infographics); share country specific reports; resources for programming and advocacy; case studies highlighting member learnings; and blogs from members.
- Facilitate webinars on specific topics to present new data / research.
- Identify specific learning areas for the secretariat to bridge knowledge gaps or increase focus on underexplored areas. E.g. understanding how child marriage happens in humanitarian contexts.

### What is the role of National Partnerships in sharing learning?

- Synthesise what is known about child marriage in their country and make it available to all members.
- Compile basic and accessible materials about child marriage that can be translated into local languages.
- Facilitate learning about what works between members of the National Partnership.
- Share good practices of evaluated programmes and case studies of progress.
- Share learning to inform and shape the national policy agenda and the global narrative about child marriage.
- Build capacity of smaller organisations to improve strategies to end child marriage and document their work and lessons learned.
- Regularly synthesise new information including reports, policies, etc. Highlight their relevance to members.
- Encourage members and other actors (UN agencies, development agencies, etc.) to share information on their work and learnings, including on social norms change.
- Help to facilitate the formulation of lessons learned as a Partnership.
- Share country specific updates with the secretariat and receive useful information about child marriage developments globally including via newsletters or social media platforms.
- Strengthening the monitoring, evaluation and learning processes of the National Partnership.

## 7 WHAT DID WE LEARN ABOUT: THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF COLLECTIVE FUNDRAISING?

Collective fundraising is a new area of work for many members and National Partnerships. We took advantage of the existing knowledge and experience in the room to collate a first list of approaches, with their pros and cons.

### Applying for large international funds financing networks, alliances, etc.

**Pros:** generally offering long term funding (e.g. 3 years), and potentially large amounts.

**Cons:** difficult eligibility criteria, long proposal process with a short timeframe to prepare all paperwork.

**Advice:** consider applying if you have financial and accountability systems in place; members are willing to contribute to writing the proposal; there is a strong vision and objectives already exist from which the group can draw the components of the proposal.

### Engaging with the private sector

**Pros:** they have funds; can give in-kind support (e.g. premises for events); can support with public relations; relationships could be formed informally rather than through applications.

**Cons:** long process to gain trust and funding; need to be careful that values of company and network align; generally not keen to fund advocacy work, which is a harder sell to customers/shareholders; usually provide small amounts of money.

**Advice:** look for those companies that have a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme.

### Introducing a membership fee

**Pros:** leads to increased commitment from members.

**Cons:** can make some members believe they have more influence as they contribute larger sums; the sums collected will be too small to cover the functioning of the secretariat or big joint activities.

**Warning!** The decision to introduce fees needs to be agreed by the members and it is not a requirement to set up a National Partnership.

### Applying for government funding

**Pros:** tap into government allocations for child marriage strategy as implementing partners.

**Cons:** it takes many years' work to get the government to allocate funding.

### Joint social fundraising activities (e.g. dinners with payments, marathons)

**Pros:** collection of small contributions can help engage new allies.

**Cons:** needs to be well targeted to be an effective use of time.

### Member's annual planning of activities and contributions

**Pros:** members come together to plan contributions; focus on specific activities that are coming up to ensure engagement (e.g. International Day of the Girl)

**Cons:** unlikely to cover National Partnership's secretariat time and joint reactive activities.

### Build in funds for collective work in individual members' fundraising (e.g. specific budget lines for National Partnership activities)

**Pros:** many members said this was very effective and that donors were willing to fund budget lines for network strengthening/training for civil society/ time of secretariat (e.g. in USA each of the co-chairs fundraises for their time as co-chairs.)

In countries where only registered organisations can apply for funding and where they have to register international funds with the government (e.g. Bangladesh) it can be easier to fundraise for the network within ongoing individual organisations' fundraising. This type of fundraising can be built on the existing relationship of a donor with one member organisation.

**Cons:** donors need to agree to this type of arrangement; individual NGOs are accountable for the funds so the network has to be very open and transparent for this to work; difficult to do if a network activity plan is not completed; it might make the branding of spending around the individual organisation and not the network (e.g. is this the work of the individual member on International Day of the Girl or is it the work of the National Partnership?)

#### Considerations for National Partnership funding

- What are the funding needs of the National Partnership? Is there a strategy or an annual plan around which a funding proposal can be built?
- What are the fundraising skills of the National Partnership?

- Should the National Partnership develop a fundraising strategy? Should there be a fundraising committee?
- How will the funds be managed and who will be accountable?
- Should the National Partnership fundraise as a group, or should individual organisations have a budget line on working in partnership, networking?

#### Did you know?

National Partnerships can undertake advocacy activities that do not require funds, such as meeting with key policy makers at platforms where they already interact, carry out "silent diplomacy" and lobbying and ensuring all members convey the same message in their individual activities.

## CONCLUSION

The National Partnerships workshop was an opportunity for *Girls Not Brides* National Partnerships to share learning on their work, build relations with others and increase their capacity in advocacy, using evidence and learning, coalition management and communications. This resource has summarised some of the key lessons learned during the workshop.

*Girls Not Brides* will continue to strengthen its work with National Partnerships. One of the key elements of this will be to continue facilitating learning and exchange between National Partnerships and sharing lessons learned from collective work from civil society to address child marriage.



# LESSONS LEARNED FROM GIRLS NOT BRIDES' NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP WORKSHOP

7-9 NOVEMBER 2016, AMSTERDAM

*Girls Not Brides* is a global partnership of civil society organisations from around the world committed to ending child marriage and enabling girls to fulfil their potential.

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