

Ending child marriage: what does the latest evidence say? 30th January 2018, **Questions posed to expert panel**

Q: Statistics are helpful, but also risk generalizing causes and solutions. How do you address the diversity of the cases?

The best solutions will be tailored to the specific context and population. What works in one setting may not work in another, so it is important not to think of any approach as a one size fits all solution.

Q: What do we know about what works in child marriage prevention and response in humanitarian contexts? Is there much information about this?

Girls Not Brides have put together a [brief](#) on what we know about child marriage in humanitarian contexts. This is an area which is increasingly a focus of research, but there is still a huge amount that we don't know.

Q: Please send the references for the publications Meg and Rachel mentioned.

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) article which reviews girls clubs and their impact on child marriage is available [here](#). The ODI review of communication initiatives to change discriminatory gender norms is available [here](#). The Yount et al systematic review of on preventing gender based violence against adolescent girls is available [here](#). The Botea et al review of programmes that provide life skills, SRH, economic opportunities and education opportunities to girls aged 10-19 is available [here](#).

Q: Other than child marriage behavioural indicators, do the panellists have recommendations for indicators that measure change at the social level? What are recommended indicators that better capture girls' agency?

Girls Not Brides has developed an [indicators framework](#) which shows how to measure different outcomes and results that are outlined in our [Theory of Change](#). They are organised by each of the key strategies: Empower Girls, Mobilise Families and Communities, Provide Services, and Establish and Implement Laws and Policies. Some evaluations also measure changes in the perceptions of who can or should make decisions about marriage, and of married girls' mobility, ability to refuse sex, and make household decisions.

Q: Were there circumstances where conditional cash transfers did not work?

Cash transfers have had mixed results in delaying marriage, and sometimes also have an unintended impact. For example, the Apni Beti Apna Dhan programme in India provided cash transfers to girls on condition of them remaining unmarried until the age of 18, but led to participating girls being more likely to marry when they turned 18, as their families saw the cash transfer as way of paying dowry costs.¹ Recent evidence has also shown that cash transfers may be less effective for older girls, who are more at risk of marriage.²

¹ Nanda et al, [Making Change with Cash? Impact of a Conditional Cash Transfer Program On Age Of Marriage In India](#), ICRW, 2015

² Erulkar A, Medhin G, Weissman E. [The Impact and Cost of Child Marriage Prevention in Three African Settings](#), Addis Ababa; New York: Population Council, 2017

Q: How do we build public support more so from cultural leaders who are the key drivers to child marriage?

In a forthcoming report by Meg Greene, Cultural Defense of Child Marriage, the functions filled, roles played, and problems solved by child marriage are mapped out, and alternative ways to address those issues are considered, in order to ensure that the cultural requirements are acknowledged and worked with explicitly. This paper will be available on the [GreeneWorks](#) website soon.

Q: Longer is better, but is there agreement on how long? How intensive?

There is some material on this on page 69 in the ODI girls' clubs review (link above), although it is not specific to child marriage. No studies have measured impact thresholds - whether there are diminishing returns after a certain length of programme or participation. Once a week for at least 3 - 6 months is common in empowerment-focused programmes, but whether this is optimal hasn't been tested. A more intensive programme would be more costly but participants might also not attend any more regularly.

Q: My observation is that many countries have laws that do not allow marriage of children before the age of 18 but nevertheless the practice is happening due to one reason or another; what can be done to ensure that citizens live according to this piece of legislation?

Combining different approaches in an integrated "package" of interventions is more effective than single solutions. Laws and policies will be more effective when they are implemented at the same time as other strategies.

Q: Can we please get a copy of this discussion for us to review later and use in our various communities?

The recording and presentations are available online [here](#).

Q: Do the researchers take into consideration the role of youth, women, grassroots organizations, religious and traditional leaders in addressing child marriage? Which approach or approaches used doing the research?

Engaging with communities is one of the five key strategies in our theory of change. *Girls Not Brides* members often engage with religious leaders and youth and community members as part of efforts to address child marriage. Community actors may or may not become involved in the research implementation process, depending on the study.

Q: How do you address child marriage in communities where the practice is more rooted in religion than culture?

This will be a focus of our learning series in May. Visit the [event page](#) to find out more!