

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:
TOWARDS MEANINGFUL AND MEASURABLE INDICATORS FOR
THE GIRLS NOT BRIDES (GNB) PARTNERSHIP**

**Aspen Planning and Evaluation Program
The Aspen Institute
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Girls Not Brides (GNB) retained the Aspen Institute's Aspen Planning and Evaluation Program (APEP) to help inform the secretariat's understanding of indicators that organisations are using to measure progress toward ending child marriage, suggest useful indicators, and identify instances where better indicators are needed. This report, along with its companion materials, represents the first step in the process of developing a shared framework of indicators that will help the secretariat, national partnerships, and member organisations focus their work effectively and facilitate learning about both successes and challenges. More specifically, this framework will enhance the GNB partnership's capacity to: build consensus among its 359 members; define what members should measure; demonstrate members' impact; advocate for governments to take concrete actions; map and drive investment; define precise asks for data collection; and facilitate engagement with development frameworks like the forthcoming UN post-2015 goals.

The GNB secretariat gathered lists of indicators used by member organisations, United Nations and government agencies, as well as related reports and other documents suggesting assessment approaches and potential benchmarks. APEP used these materials to develop a **Preliminary List of Recommended Indicators** that map onto or complement GNB's theory of change (ToC). APEP also delivered a **Report** that discusses gaps in available indicators, key challenges in measuring progress toward ending child marriage, and recommendations for next steps. To help ensure that the list of indicators is of practical use to GNB member organisations, APEP developed a **User's Guide** containing examples, helpful tips about selecting and using indicators, and useful data sources.

Highlights

Key Challenges and Technical Considerations

Developing a shared framework of indicators for GNB's diverse partnership is a complex task. The report discusses a number of key challenges in identifying appropriate indicators:

- **Balancing breadth vs. utility:** For a partnership as diverse as GNB, a key challenge is defining a practical scope for indicators while also reflecting members' varied activities and impacts.
- **Discerning consensus:** Some indicators are commonly used (e.g., adolescent birth rate, the percentage of women ages 20-24 married before age 18). But the diversity of organisations and contexts in this field makes it difficult to build consensus around other key indicators.
- **Assessing the utility of indicators across contexts:** Indicators can be useful in some countries and even some sub-national regions or locales, but inapplicable or impractical in others due to differences in cultural factors and data availability.
- **Weighing new versus established indicators:** Well-known indicators typically come with the advantages of ample field testing and publicly available data. But newer or less well-known indicators can provide a finer-grained focus on specific issues relevant to child marriage and married girls.
- **Incorporating multiple levels of indicators:** GNB members' work spans multiple levels, from individual-level change to international policy change. The larger the geographic area and target population, however, the more difficult it is to isolate the unique contribution of a single organisation. APEP encourages members to pick a target population or target audience – and

corresponding indicator – that makes it as easy as possible to identify their special contribution to change.

- **Capturing normative change:** Researchers and practitioners working to end child marriage have been hindered by a weak conceptual framework for defining and measuring different types of norms, such as descriptive and prescriptive social norms. The report and the list of indicators offer some background.
- **Distinguishing between indicators for program evaluation vs. program planning:** Indicators can serve *evaluation* purposes (helping track progress toward expected or desired outcomes), as well as *planning and advocacy* purposes (helping organisations prioritize, develop messages, or shift programmatic content).

Preliminary List of Recommended Indicators

APEP used GNB's ToC documents to guide our analysis of the hundreds of indicators gathered by the secretariat and by APEP. We mapped indicators onto specific components of the ToC and ranked them by the extent to which they were:

- **Meaningful:** a valid, precise, and non-directional indicator of a given component in the ToC;
- **Measurable:** a feasible indicator to measure using available tools, methods, and data; and
- **Field tested:** a reliable indicator that has been tested and/or recommended by organisations within and outside the GNB partnership.

The resulting list of recommended indicators focuses primarily on the nineteen Outcomes and thirteen Results laid out in the ToC. These represent the most directly measurable components of the ToC that can be used to **evaluate** members' progress and impact. The list also includes a brief section on measures useful for **planning and advocacy** purposes, as well as indicators for tracking progress on the ultimate goal of ending child marriage, captured by the **prevalence of child marriage**.

Recommended Next Steps

We offer some recommendations about next steps that GNB might take as it continues this valuable process of developing a framework of indicators to focus its efforts and record its progress. These steps overlap and interact with one another, so GNB can take complementary actions to address multiple recommendations at once.

- **Address gaps in the list of indicators:** We recommend that GNB solicit its members' suggestions for ToC components that lack strong indicators. The list of indicators also draws attention to these gaps, explicitly encouraging members to share suggestions for potential indicators and data sources.
- **Clarify ToC language to make it easier to identify appropriate indicators:** We suggest that GNB organize one or more facilitated discussions to identify more precise focal points within some of the more broadly worded Outcomes and Results in the ToC. That will make it easier for the partnership to identify a select set of relevant indicators.
- **Facilitate a workshop discussion among GNB members to build consensus:** Building on the above recommendation, GNB may wish to conduct a facilitated workshop to generate agreement among

members around indicators that closely match their work, expanding consensus beyond the well-established indicators used across the broader development domain.

- **Work towards aligning the ToC and indicators framework:** The GNB ToC documents represent a significant milestone in the partnership's work. However, we discovered certain gaps in the ToC that GNB may wish to address. The ToC is a useful conceptual framework against which to map relevant indicators. We encourage GNB to "synch up" the ToC and relevant indicators, perhaps making modest adjustments to address gaps or tighten ambiguities in the ToC.
- **Consider how to incorporate indicators for capacity building, progress in policy advocacy, and social norms:** APEP recommends including these indicators to allow members to track and demonstrate their progress in areas that have been overlooked, under-valued, or (in the case of social norms) lacked sufficient conceptual clarity.
- **Develop a time horizon for some outcomes and results:** We suggest providing a realistic timeframe for certain Outcomes and Results, such as changes in norms, policies, and behaviours that may take years to achieve. Adding a timeframe to the ToC can help GNB members more accurately judge which indicators will yield useful information at a given point in the longer process toward desired changes.