

# Taking action to address child marriage: the role of different sectors



## Agriculture, energy, and the environment

Women's and girls' lives are integrally connected to a range of environmental issues, including climate change and access to energy, water, and food resources. Every day, billions of women and girls spend hours collecting firewood for household heating or cooking, sometimes travelling as far as ten kilometres to do so, and they then spend additional hours collecting water. In sub-Saharan Africa alone, women spend an estimated 40 billion hours per year collecting water for cooking, cleaning, and consumption—the equivalent of a year's worth of labour by the entire workforce in France. As changing climates accelerate deforestation and alter water supply patterns, women and girls must walk even further each day, putting their health and welfare at risk, and in some cases, increasing their vulnerability to physical or sexual violence.

In times of agricultural shocks, conflicts, and other crises that may be exacerbated by climate change, child marriage can be a response or coping mechanism for families looking to secure a safer or more food secure household for daughters. Examples of this phenomenon include “famine brides” during the droughts in Kenya in 2010 and in the Sahel in 2012, flooding in Pakistan in 2010, or the many environmental challenges facing poor families in Bangladesh today. Where floods, droughts, and resulting crop destruction devastate food security and economic production, families may see marrying their daughters as a method to relieve some of these burdens. In places such as Bangladesh, climate change has increased both the incidence and severity of natural disasters and their consequences, increasing the number of families who are using child marriage to mitigate the effects of inevitable

### Key child marriage stakeholders

- Agricultural extension officers
- Producer groups
- Disaster response workers
- Peace keepers
- Social entrepreneurs
- Legal officers
- Policy-makers
- Teachers
- Healthcare workers
- Community, traditional, and religious leaders
- Families, including parents and in-laws

flooding, cyclones, and river erosion by marrying off daughters before disaster occurs. (For further information, please see the *Conflict and humanitarian crisis* brief).

No matter the context, when girls marry, they are often expected to take primary responsibility for the cultivation, collection, and use of energy-related resources. Changes in access to these needed resources, either through the negative effects of climate change or the positive effects of energy-saving technologies, can greatly affect girls' and women's available time and thus ability to participate in education, income-generating, or other activities that can benefit them, their families, and their communities.



### Integrating child marriage prevention and response into agriculture, energy, and environment programmes

Knowing that natural disasters can exacerbate pressures for child marriage, response efforts should specifically include provisions to protect and provide opportunities for vulnerable girls. This includes safe sanitation, hygiene, and health services, as well as accessible education and income generation opportunities.

Technologies that help increase women's and girls' access to energy, such as solar lighting, energy-efficient cook stoves, locally available water tanks and filters, and other time and energy-saving measures can help shift gender roles and positively impact women's and girls' lives by increasing available time to be spent on schooling, leisure, and productive activities. Accompanied by efforts to transform gender norms that restrict girls' societal roles, these technologies have the potential of being especially beneficial for married girls, by providing them with more time to continue their studies, socialise, or engage in other activities, as well as by increasing their safety when these technologies are provided in well-lit and secure environments.

Not only do women and girls benefit from using these energy-saving technologies, but due to the fact that they are often the primary users, women and girls stand to greatly benefit from engagement in energy technology value chains. For example, several programmes have found that women make successful solar lantern and cook stove sales agents, as they are able to form trusting relationships with customers, clearly convey the benefits of the product, and can become economically empowered through these roles. These economic opportunities can both help adolescent girls avoid child marriage and help mitigate the effects of child marriage among married adolescents by providing them with income earning opportunities and important roles in the community.

Across the developing world, it is often women who plant, tend, grow, harvest, and bring food to market. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa women comprise at least half of the agricultural labour force, but due to longer working hours, women contribute an estimated 30 to 80 per cent of hours spent on agricultural activities. Women hold tremendous knowledge about food and agriculture. If their access to education, land, and other assets is constrained as a result of child marriage, they will suffer along with their families and communities. (See *Food security and nutrition* brief for more.)

### Strategies for integrating child marriage

- Agricultural skills training, for both household consumption and income generation
- Life skills and empowerment training
- Involve women and girls in designing emergency response efforts
- Promote women's and girls' access to and use of energy and time-saving technologies
- Engage women and girls as clean energy advocates and entrepreneurs
- Provision of agricultural assets (such as livestock)
- Train and deploy female agricultural extension agents
- Property rights reform



### Programme example

Landesa (an NGO) and the government of West Bengal, India, have entered into a public-private partnership to pilot the ***Empowering Adolescent Girls through Land*** project, which aims to reduce the risks facing adolescent girls, such as poverty, malnutrition, lack of education, and child marriage. Child marriage was identified as a barrier to land access during the programme design, which led to the inclusion of a programme objective to reduce child marriage through educational curriculum in the programme implementation. The programme included sensitisation sessions with boys, girls, and community members. Programme monitoring and evaluation measured the prevalence of child marriage and awareness of the legal age of marriage. The pilot evaluation found that girls in the programme married 1.5 years later than those who were not in the programme.



### Monitoring and evaluation: illustrative examples

An initial and powerful way to integrate child marriage prevention and response into programming is by measuring changes related to child marriage, learning how these changes impact other programme areas, and then adjusting programming accordingly. The following are sample indicators that can be used in agriculture, energy, and environment programmes to understand child marriage-related impacts. For a more complete list of indicators, please refer to the [USAID Child, Early, and Forced Marriage Resource Guide](#) or [Girls Not Brides' Measuring Progress: recommended indicators](#)

### Monitoring and evaluation: illustrative indicators

Indicator	Data source and notes
Extent to which adolescent girls (married and unmarried)/women have ownership, access to, and decision-making power over productive resources (such as land, livestock, agricultural equipment, consumer durables, and credit). <i>Disaggregate by age and marital status</i>	A survey of individuals in the target population. Methods pulled from IFPRI's Women Empowerment in Agricultural Index (WEAI) available on their <a href="#">website</a> .
Percentage of households using solid cooking fuels, by sex and age of household head	National household surveys following internationally standardised questionnaires (such as Demographic and Health Surveys, Income and Expenditure Surveys, Living Standard Measurement Surveys, Multi-Indicator Cluster Surveys, and some censuses)  Methods pulled from Sustainable Energy 4 All (SE4ALL) Global Tracking Framework.
Average weekly time spent in water collection (including waiting time at public supply points), by sex and age of household member	A survey of individuals in the target population.  Methods pulled from Sustainable Energy 4 All (SE4ALL) Global Tracking Framework.
Proportion of energy entrepreneurs, by sex and age	A survey of individuals with energy enterprise.  Methods pulled from Sustainable Energy 4 All (SE4ALL) Global Tracking Framework.
Number of women and female-headed households receiving training and assistance related to disasters	A survey of individuals in the target population.
Extent to which adolescent girls (married and unmarried)/women have ownership, access to, and decision-making power over productive resources (such as land, livestock, agricultural equipment, consumer durables, and credit). <i>Disaggregate by age and marital status</i>	A survey of individuals in the target population. Methods pulled from IFPRI's Women Empowerment in Agricultural Index (WEAI) available on their <a href="#">website</a> .



### Suggested further reading

The briefs in this series are based on the Child, Early, and Forced Marriage Resource Guide (2015), written for USAID by Allie Glinski, Magnolia Sexton and Lis Meyers on behalf of ICRW and Banyan Global. References, programme examples, and further information can be found in that guide, located here:

<https://www.usaid.gov/documents/1865/child-early-and-forced-marriage-resource-guide>.

For additional information, see:

Agostino, A. (2010). **Gender equality, climate change, and education for sustainability**. Beyond Access: Gender, Education and Development. Available at: <http://www.e4conference.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/Equals24.pdf>

FAO. (2014). **Youth and agriculture: key challenges and concrete solutions**. Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), & the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3947e.pdf>

Halder, P. (2014). **Empowering adolescent girls through land – a public-private partnership**. Paper prepared for presentation at the “2014 World Bank Conference On Land And Poverty” The World Bank - Washington DC, March 24–27, 2014. Landesa India. Available at: <http://www.landesa.org/wp-content/uploads/Empowering-Adolescent-Girls-through-Land-A-Public-Private-Partnership-Halder-March-2014.pdf>

Human Rights Watch. (2015). **Marry before your house is swept away: child marriage in Bangladesh**. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/06/09/marry-your-house-swept-away/child-marriage-bangladesh>

Malhotra, A., Warner, A., McGonagle, A., & Lee-Rife, S. (2011). **Solutions to end child marriage: what the evidence shows**. Washington, DC: ICRW. Available at: <http://www.icrw.org/files/publications/Solutions-to-End-Child-Marriage.pdf>

Plan. (2011). **Weathering the storm: adolescent girls and climate change**. Plan International. Available at: <http://www.plan-uk.org/resources/documents/35316/>