THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY

Plan

PREVENTING CHILD MARRIAGE IN THE COMMONWEALTH

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION

Front Cover photograph: Girls learning at Plan-supported school - Omur Black

This report is published by the Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS) and Plan International UK. It is authored by Leila Asrari (Public Affairs Officer, RCS), and co-authored by Helen Jones, Heather Saunders and Kerry Smith. The authors are grateful for the advice and feedback received from Jane Harley, Fatimah Kelleher, Charlie King, Meaghan Pelton and Anita Reilly.

Suggested citation: Asrari, L. (2015) Preventing Child Marriage in the Commonwealth: the Role of Education
London: Plan International UK and Royal Commonwealth Society.

The Royal Commonwealth Society is a civil society organisation committed to improving the lives and prospects of Commonwealth citizens across the world. Through youth empowerment, education and advocacy, the Royal Commonwealth Society promotes the value and the values of the Commonwealth. We champion human rights, democracy and sustainable development across the 53 member states, which are intrinsically linked through their common history and shared values.

Plan International is a global children's charity. We work with children in the world's poorest countries to help them build a better future. Since 1937 we've been taking action and standing up for every child's right to fulfil their potential by:

- giving children a healthy start in life, including access to safe drinking water
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With support children, families and entire communities have the power to move themselves from a life of poverty to a future with opportunity. Plan International does what's needed, where it's needed most.

Introduction: Michael Lake CBE and Tanya Barron

Preventing Child Marriage in the Commonwealth: the Role of Education is the latest in a series of reports written by the Royal Commonwealth Society and Plan UK as part of our collaboration to end child, early and forced marriage in the Commonwealth. This report draws on the substantial body of evidence linking improved education to a reduced prevalence of child marriage and seeks to answer the question: what can Commonwealth education stakeholders do to ensure that girls are able to access a safe, high quality education?

This report aims to share examples of best practice from both government and civil society in keeping girls in school; from a bicycle programme in Bihar State, India, to Rwanda's award-winning nine-year basic education fast-track scheme. Fundamentally, it aims to show Education Ministries that ending child marriage is their responsibility, as well as that of a range of other government departments.

With populous Commonwealth members such as Bangladesh, India, Nigeria and Pakistan exhibiting some of the higher child marriage prevalence rates, the number of child marriages in the Commonwealth will always be significant vis-a-vis global numbers. Equally, if the Commonwealth effectively addresses child marriage, the global battle is almost won. We hope that this report adds to the range of informative materials available on child marriage, and provides a useful tool for the Commonwealth in its work towards ending this practice.

Michael Lake CBE
Director, Royal Commonwealth Society

Tanya Barron
UK CEO, Plan International

The Royal Commonwealth Society and Plan UK have been working together towards ending child, early and forced marriage in the Commonwealth since 2010. Our previous publications include *Because I Am A Girl: Growing Up in the Commonwealth,* and *Empowering Girls: What the Commonwealth can do to End Early and Forced Marriage*. Since our campaign began, Commonwealth Heads of Government have committed at both 2011 and 2013 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings to ending child marriage. We are dedicated to ensuring that the Commonwealth takes effective steps to make this commitment a reality.

Girls studying at Balika Shivir in Lunkaransar, Bikaner district, Rajasthan - Bernice Wong / Plan

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*Asterisk indicates that the name has been changed

The Importance of Education as a Strategy to Prevent Child Marriage

Ending child marriage is a crucial step towards achieving girls' rights across the Commonwealth: child marriage is a violation of human rights, undermines women and girls' equality and empowerment, perpetuates and reinforces negative social norms and curtails girls' opportunities. Preventing child marriage is not only essential to ensuring the rights of the individual girls concerned, but is also fundamental to breaking the cycle of inter-generational poverty and to achieving the post-2015 sustainable development goals (SDGs). The practice causes girls to leave education too early, thus limiting opportunities for them to develop their knowledge, skills and qualifications. Given that girls represent half the future workforce, this has a significant impact on potential family incomes and tackling poverty. It also impacts on national efficiency and productivity and represents an economic cost in respect of lost GDP growth and the broader benefits of education such as improved health and citizenship.

In the Commonwealth, fewer girls are going to school than boys[1] as a result of numerous factors, not least poverty and discriminatory social norms. It is expected that the post-2015 development agenda will include a target on universal secondary completion by 2030[2]. The Commonwealth will have a significant amount of work to do to achieve these new goals having not achieved Millennium Development Goal 2 (achieve universal primary education). 18 of 53[3] Commonwealth countries show gender disparity at the primary level, and the case is worse at secondary level, where 26 of 53 Commonwealth countries have gender disparity. Whilst a few member states have gender disparity in favour of girls, in the vast majority of cases gender disparity is in favour of boys. The higher the level of education attained, the greater the gender disparity, both globally and in the Commonwealth. Commonwealth Education Ministers recognised this in submitting their recommendations for the Post-2015 development framework, where they stated that the three core concerns of access, quality and equity should be central to all education goals[4]. These priority policy areas are in accordance with the central aim this report discusses, that of providing girls with access to quality, inclusive, gender sensitive education, in order to reduce the prevalence of child marriage.

All girls have a right to a quality education – one which does not reinforce gender stereotypes, but which is relevant to their needs and aspirations and promotes gender equality and human rights. Learning in a safe and supportive environment enables girls to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence to claim their rights. It gives them the chance to reach their full potential and to assert their autonomy, helping them to make free and informed decisions about their life, including whether, when and who to marry, along with decisions affecting their sexual and reproductive health.

Girls raise their hands to support girls' education - Omur Black

1 Robertson, A. and Jones-Parry, R. (eds.) (2014) *Commonwealth Education Partnerships 2014/15*. Oxford: Nexus

2 United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). (2013) *Education For All Global Monitoring Report 2013 Teaching and Learning: Achieving Quality for All.* Paris: UNESCO. P.13

3 See Appendix 2 for a table detailing Commonwealth gender parity achievements

4 Jonathan Penson. (2015) *The Post-2015 Development Framework For Education: The Commonwealth Perspective.* [Online] Available at: http://www.cecomm.org.uk/policy-documents/143-the-post-2015-development-framework-for-education-the-commonwealth-perspective Accessed: 25 May 2015

Overview of International Political Commitments

Both within the Commonwealth and internationally, pressure is mounting on governments to act to end child marriage. At the 2011 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Perth, Australia, Heads of Government committed to measures to tackle child marriage[5], and at the 2013 CHOGM in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Heads 'mandated the Commonwealth Secretariat, within the scope of its strategic plan, to continue with this area of work, including the sharing of best practices, challenges, achievements, and to address implementation gaps to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriage.'[6]. Most recently, in May 2015, 15 Commonwealth National Human Rights Institutions signed the Kigali Declaration, incorporating a range of commitments to tackle child marriage. Globally, autumn 2013 saw the first ever resolutions on child, early and forced marriage adopted at the UN Human Rights Council[7], and the UN General Assembly putting this issue firmly on the multilateral agenda. A follow-up resolution at the UN General Assembly in 2014 called for the elimination of child, early and forced marriage to be considered in the post-2015 development agenda. May 2014 saw the launch of the African Union Commission campaign to end child marriage in Africa. In July of the same year, the UK Government's Department for International Development co-hosted the Girl Summit with UNICEF, where national governments, NGOs, human rights activists, teachers and people of all ages united to commit to ending child marriage in a generation. Ending child marriage is also set to become one of the targets in the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals, securing it as a priority issue for the coming 15 years. Whilst political will is mounting and resolutions are forthcoming, more action is required by governments to ensure an integrated, holistic approach to end child marriage.

Capitalising on Momentum in the Commonwealth

In spite of clear political will both to improve education and to end child marriage in the Commonwealth, there is a long way to go to achieve this. Commonwealth Education Ministers and Heads of Government can show global leadership to galvanise further action. Commonwealth Education Stakeholders can do much more to keep girls in school and to provide the quality of education that enables girls to develop the relevant skills and knowledge they need to actively and independently participate in social and economic life. Meanwhile, education which enables boys to develop the relevant skills and knowledge to take part in transforming social norms and ensuring girls and women are treated with dignity, respect and equality, is also a necessity. The Commonwealth must draw upon its potential for shared learning and experiences, utilising its common institutions, platforms, networks and 'south-south' approach of sharing to increase effectiveness. If the Commonwealth can address child marriage effectively, the global incidence could be almost halved.

This report demonstrates the key role that education plays in preventing child marriage, and the responsibility of actors in the education sector to end child marriage. Publication of this report has been timed to coincide with the 2015 Commonwealth Conference of Education Ministers (CCEM) with the intention of highlighting the issue as a continuing problem in the Commonwealth that requires priority action. This report draws upon a range of research – from NGOs, CSOs, academics and UN and Commonwealth agencies. It features case studies from around the Commonwealth to demonstrate good practice in tackling the barriers that prevent girls getting a quality education and helping to prevent child marriage. The report concludes by presenting key policy recommendations to Commonwealth Heads of Government, Education Ministers, and the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Girl speaks at the tenth National Children's Summit in Rwanda's parliament - Plan staff

5 Commonwealth Secretariat. (2011) *Commonwealth Leaders Release CHOGM 2011 Communiqué.* [Online] Available at: http://thecommonwealth.org/media/news/commonwealth-leaders-release-chogm-2011-communiqué Accessed: 25 May 2015

6 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. Colombo, Sri Lanka (2013) CHOGM 2013 Communiqué. [Online] Available at: http://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/news-items/documents/CHOGM%202013%20Communique_2.pdf Accessed: 25 May 2015

7 Human Rights Council resolution. Strengthening Efforts To Prevent And Eliminate Child, Early And Forced Marriage: Challenges, Achievements, Best Practices And Implementation Gaps, A/HRC/24/L.34/Rev.1 (25 September 2013). Available at: http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/HRC-resolution-on-child-early-and-forced-marriage-ENG.pdf

Child Marriage: the Problem in Context[8]

Despite the fact that child marriage is recognised internationally as a human rights violation requiring concerted action, the numbers affected remain very high.

In the Commonwealth

- Around 375 million women alive today were married or entered into union before their 18th birthday - this is over 16 per cent of the Commonwealth's population, and amounts to 52 per cent of women aged over 18 years old in the Commonwealth.
- At current prevalence:
  - 43 per cent of women in the Commonwealth are married before they reach 18 years old.
  - This amounts to over 44 million 20-24 year-olds who were married as children.
  - Approximately 8.8 million women in the Commonwealth are married as children annually, that's 24,000 girls every day, or 17 girls every minute.

How does this compare to Global prevalence?

- In the world, 720 million women alive today were married or entered into union before their 18th birthday - this is equivalent to 10% of the world's population.
- 15 million girls a year marry before the age of 18. That is approximately: 41,000 girls per day 28 girls every minute 1 girl every 2 seconds.

Box: UNICEF Statistics[9]

Girls Not Brides, calculates that 'If there is no reduction in child marriage 280 million girls alive today risk becoming child brides by the time they turn 18… The total number of women married in childhood would increase from more than 700 million today, to 950 million by 2030 and a staggering 1.2 billion by 2050. If progress continues at the current rate the proportion of women married as children will decline to 22% by 2030 and 18% by 2050. However this will be mitigated by population growth so the number of women married as children will remain the same – approximately 700 million by 2050 (although 490 million girls will have avoided marriage)[10].

Commonwealth members such as Bangladesh, India, Nigeria and Pakistan, which have large populations and some of the higher child marriage prevalence rates, mean that Commonwealth numbers will always be disproportionately large in relation to the actual number of member states. This is a key reason why Commonwealth member countries need to be prioritised in the campaign to end child marriage at the global level. If the Commonwealth addresses child marriage effectively, the global battle is almost won.

Child Marriage is a Fundamental Violation of Human Rights

Child marriage is defined as a formal marriage or informal union before age 18[11]. It affects both girls and boys, but girls are disproportionately affected by the practice. Child marriage severely impacts the lives of the girls it affects, bringing a premature end to girls' childhood and adolescence by imposing adult roles and responsibilities before she is physically, psychologically and emotionally prepared[12]. Child brides are also often forced to give up their education, and are unable to build the skills, knowledge and qualifications they need to have the opportunity to shape their own futures. Child marriage restricts girls' freedom and decision-making power; causes social isolation following girls' separation from their friends and family; leads to unwanted or coerced sexual intercourse, increased vulnerability to HIV/Aids and other sexually transmitted infections, and physical, emotional or sexual violence[13]. Child marriage can also have a severe impact on the health and well-being of a child bride, who may become pregnant before her body is ready, and subsequently experience complications during pregnancy resulting in disability or even death.

Ghazala, about 17, has to take care of her children while she rolls beedis - Davinder Kumar (Plan staff)*

8 See Annex 1 for a detailed discussion of child marriage in human rights law.

9 Statistics in this box are taken from UNICEF global databases, 2014, based on MICS, DHS and other national surveys. Estimates are weighted averages for countries with available data.

10 Girls Not Brides. (2014) Understanding the Scale of Child Marriage: A User Guide by Girls Not Brides. [Online] Available at: http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/GNB-factsheet-on-child-marriage-numbers-Oct-2014.pdf. Accessed: 4 June 2015.

11 United Nations Children's Fund. (2014a) *Child protection from violence, exploitation and abuse.* [Online] Available at: http://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_58008.html Accessed: 25 May 2015.

12 UNFPA. (2012) P.11

13 UNFPA. (2012) P.11

Child Marriage is Against the Law

Child marriage is against national law in many Commonwealth countries. However, this is often undermined by state or customary laws which allow girls younger than 18 to marry with the consent of parents or other authorities (see Appendix 1 for Commonwealth marriage laws by country)[14]. Given widespread social norms, whereby child marriage is viewed as a form of protection for girls, authorities must do more to legislate against child marriage and to enforce existing legislation. Some progress towards strengthening national legislation has been seen recently: in Malawi, the President this year signed the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Bill into law, which increases the minimum legal age of marriage to 18. Currently, only nine Commonwealth countries have clear legislation that sets the minimum age of marriage at 18 years old, and which is not undermined by caveats. There have also been setbacks, such as the recent, unsuccessful attempt by the Government of Bangladesh to reduce the legal minimum age of marriage to 16. The law must be recognised as a powerful preventative mechanism for child marriage and as a tool which allows victims recourse to justice. However, child marriage does not become an issue through its illegality, but through its damaging consequences.

Child Marriage is both a Consequence and a Cause of Discriminatory Social Norms

Child marriage stems from discriminatory social norms, which ascribe different social standing to women and men, girls and boys, so perpetuating damaging gender stereotypes and deep power imbalances. It is critical to address these social norms, which are the root cause of the multiple forms of violence that women and girls experience[15]. Child marriage is directly related to social norms which define a woman's social standing in terms of marriage and childbearing[16]. In fact, marriage is often seen as a form of protection for girls upon reaching adolescence, ensuring that they do not shame their families through extramarital relationships, and also in the belief that their futures will be secured. The latter belief is disproved by evidence that girls who marry young are more likely to remain poor even after marriage[17].

As well as being caused by discriminatory social norms relating to gender, child marriage reinforces them, as child brides frequently have a subservient role in their relationship with an often much older husband. This consolidates their limited social status and lack of independence[18]. In such unequal relationships, characterised by unequal gender roles, where manhood is related to dominance and womanhood to the fulfilment of rigid codes of conduct, violence against women and girls is higher[19]. In fact, where girls are generally considered to hold a lower status than men, both society and girls themselves are more likely to justify violence against them. Globally, almost half of adolescent girls believe a husband or partner is justified in beating his wife under certain circumstances[20]. The underpinning negative social norms that both lead to and are reinforced by child marriage must be addressed in order to reduce the multiple forms of violence against women and girls that are a global scourge.

Young people take part in Saksham training at Badarpur centre - Plan

14 UNFPA. (2012) P.12

15 Davis, A., Postles, C. and Rosa, G. (2013) *A girl's right to say no to marriage: Working to end child marriage and keep girls in school.* Woking: Plan International.

16 International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). (2006) *Ending Child Marriage: A Global Guide for Policy Action*. [Online] Available at: http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/endchildmarriage.pdf. Accessed: 26 May 2015. P.9

17 International Center for Research on Women. (2005) *Too Young to Wed: Education and Action Toward Ending Child Marriage.* [Online] Available at: http://www.icrw.org/files/publications/Too-Young-to-Wed-Education-and-Action-Toward-Ending-Child-Marriage.pdf. Accessed: 26 May 15.

18 IPPF. (2006) P.9

19 United Nations Children's Fund. (2014b) *Hidden in Plain Sight: A Statistical Analysis of Violence Against Children.* New York: UNICEF. P.147

20 United Nations Children's Fund. (2014b). P.147

Case Study: Family Pressure to Drop Out of Education – Nasreen* [21], aged 15, from Pakistan

Nasreen was attending a government school 1.5 kilometres away from her home when she dropped out due to a combination of bad grades and lack of support from her teachers. She was engaged to be married throughout her time at government school, but once she dropped out she was told she would have to get married straight away, despite the opportunity to attend a Non-Formal Education (NFE) centre closer to home. 'I wanted to continue my education, but my in-laws didn't want me to and insisted that I get married quickly. I was able to persuade my parents to let me continue my education instead of getting married, but my in-laws were not happy, so they ended the engagement.'

For Nasreen, the opportunity to study at Plan's NFE centre meant the world to her. 'I want to become something, and help support my brothers and sisters. The NFE centre is providing quality education, the teachers are good and I enjoy studying there.' Thankfully, Nasreen's parents were supportive of their daughter's desire to go to school. 'They want to see their daughter educated and earn a livelihood to support her family,' she says.

Unfortunately, Nasreen's parents have been unable to support their younger daughter's desire for education in the same way, because of family ties. 'My younger sister is engaged to our cousin, so if she refuses the marriage, the relationship between the families will be broken.' It breaks Nasreen's heart to see her younger sister forced to get married, when all she wants is the opportunity to go to school. 'I'm sad my younger sister is going to marry because she is not at the right age to get married'. Nasreen, who is keen to become a teacher, says 'Every girl should come to school and see the importance of learning and how it is beneficial for us. Through education, we can gain awareness and learn basic skills for life. Education also shows us how to treat and respect our families and communities'. But in a society where 'boys are preferred over girls, and treated as more important', it is the girls that are left to suffer and it is the girls who are unable to continue with their education.

Child marriage Inhibits Development

If Commonwealth countries fail to prevent child marriage they risk missing development targets. Further to being fundamentally damaging to the individual, child marriage also has wide-ranging, negative consequences for development.

Impact on Education

Marriage and pregnancy have been identified as some of the key factors forcing girls to leave school. A quality education is critical in helping children develop the skills, knowledge, confidence and abilities to make their own decisions, enjoy healthy and positive relationships, and make informed choices about their health and well-being, and their lives. However, girls forced to marry often drop out at the very point when education can guide them through the vulnerable period of adolescence[22]. Evidence shows that mothers with little education are less likely to keep their own children in school, because they themselves are less likely to be aware of benefits of school or to value education if they have not completed it themselves. They are also less likely to be able to support their children, due to their own low level of education, and their limited knowledge of the education system. Thus the children of child brides are unlikely to receive a full education and are in turn more likely to be child brides, perpetuating the cycle of rights violations and poverty[23]. Child marriage occurs most frequently in the poorest households: 54 per cent of girls in the poorest 20 per cent of households are child brides, compared to only 16 per cent of girls in the richest 20 per cent of households[24]. Education provides a platform from which to generate income, which would support future generations to lift themselves out of poverty[25]. However, the almost automatic dropout from formal education, as a result of child marriage, means that child brides are more likely to remain poor. Dropping out of school means girls have less power and control in decision-making; remaining in education, however, can give confidence, increased status, and greater knowledge and skills to make important household decisions.

Nadege at her school in the Eastern Province of Rwanda - Alice Rwema Iribagiza (Plan Staff)*

[21] Asterisk indicates that the name has been changed

[22] Plan International. (2012) *Because I am a Girl Africa Report: Progress and Obstacles to Girls' Education in Africa*. Woking: Plan International.

[23] UNFPA. (2012) P.35

[24] UNFPA. (2012) P.35

[25] Malhotra, A. et al. (2011) *Solutions to End Child Marriage: What the Evidence Shows*. Washington, D.C.: International Centre for Research on Women. P.4.

Impact on Health

Missing out on education means that child brides typically have less power and decision-making ability in their households, for example over family planning, and therefore less ability to make decisions about when to have children and how many to have, which can lead to higher maternal and infant mortality rates[26]. Research suggests that if all women completed primary education, the under-five mortality rate would fall by 15 per cent in low and lower middle income countries, saving almost a million lives annually[27]. If all women completed secondary education, the under-five mortality rate would fall by 49 per cent, saving 3 million lives annually[28].

95 per cent of the 16 million annual adolescent births occur in low and middle-income countries, and 90 per cent of such births occur within marriage[29]. A child born to a mother in her teens is two times more likely to die before they reach the age of one than a child born to a woman in her 20s[30]. Furthermore, pregnancy-related medical complications are the second highest cause of death amongst girls aged 15-19[31] (surpassed recently by suicide[32]). In addition, for every maternal death between 15 and 30, girls and women survive with chronic disabilities[33]. Finally, child brides are at greater risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) because many child brides marry much older men who themselves have a greater chance of having an STD. Decreased ability to negotiate safe sex in unequal relationships, and a lack of access to sexual health services or information, leaves girls at greater risk of contracting an STD[34].

Economic Impact

The range of development factors that child marriage impacts is substantial and it therefore has a direct impact on a country's economy. Exactly how large that impact is globally is currently being calculated in a research project undertaken by the World Bank and the ICRW[35], the results of which are expected in 2017. Whilst the cost is not yet calculated, it is possible to prove that educated women have a direct impact on economic growth. As a recent World Bank report states, 'female education is essential for economic growth and poverty reduction. In addition to helping generate additional income and breaking the vicious cycle of poverty, investments in female education have other economic and social benefits. Educated women tend to have fewer children, which reduces dependency ratios and raises per capita spending, eventually lifting households out of poverty. Increased maternal education also transmits intergenerational benefits by boosting the survival rate, educational level, and nutritional status of children[36].'

Case Study: Ruth's* Story from age 12-18, Papua New Guinea

In 2007 when Ruth was 12 her father passed away. The following year her mother also passed away leaving her younger brother, Thomas, and herself orphans. Since her father did not pay the bride price for her mother, Ruth became the centre of a four-year family dispute between her mother's family and her father's family. Her mother's family arranged a customary marriage with an older man so that they could receive the bride price as a debt owed to them since they did not receive the bride price for Ruth's mother. The continuous disputes between her relatives caused Ruth so much distress that she would often have blackouts and fainting episodes. She escaped to live with her paternal uncle, but his wife wanted her to marry a man from a different province so she escaped again to her mother's sister who lived in Port Moresby at the Nine Mile settlement. This aunt would often force her to work and would take all Ruth's earnings. She found work as a live-in nanny. After six months of working as a live-in nanny for a family in a different suburb in Port Moresby, her aunt decided to remove Ruth from employment as she needed her to do domestic work for her. While living with her aunt she experienced verbal and emotional abuse from her aunt and the aunt's younger son. On several occasions her cousin had attempted to rape her. On the evening of 5 June 2013 she escaped from her aunt's house. She now lives with a family that she had worked for previously[37].

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[26] Requejo, J. Et al. (2012) Countdown to 2015, *Maternal, Newborn and Child Survival*. Geneva: World Health Organisation. P. 25.

[27] UNESCO. (2013) P. 20.

[28] UNESCO. (2013) P. 20.

[29] World Health Organization. (2011) *Early Marriages, Adolescent and Young Pregnancies.* Report by the Secretariat to the WHO Executive Board, 130th session, Provisional agenda item 6.4 (EB 130/12).

[30] Jain, S. and Kurz, K. (2007) *New Insights on Preventing Child Marriage: A Global Analysis of Factors and Programmes.* Washington, D.C.: International Center for Research on Women. P. 8.

[31] World Health Organisation (2014) *Adolescent Pregnancy* [Online] Available at: http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs364/en/. Accessed: 26 May 2015.

[32] Petroni, S. (2014) 'Suicide, Not Maternal Mortality, Now Leading Killer of Adolescent Girls', *Gender Lens.* [Online] Available at: http://blog.icrw.org/suicide-not-maternal-mortality-now-leading-killer-of-adolescent-girls/. Accessed: 26 May 2015.

[33] Levine, R. et al. (2008) *Girls Count: A Global Investment and Action Agenda.* Washington, D.C.: Center for Global Development. P.45.

[34] UNFPA. (2012) P.13

[35] International Center for Research on Women. (2015) *Understanding the Economic Impacts of Child Marriage.* [Online] Available at: http://www.icrw.org/where-we-work/understanding-economic-impacts-child-marriage. Accessed: 26 May 2015.

[36] Tembon, M. and Fort, L. (eds.) (2008) *Girls' Education in the 21st Century: Gender Equality, Empowerment, and Economic Growth.* Washington, D.C.: World Bank. Also available at: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1099079877269/547664-1099080014368/DID_Girls_edu.pdf. Accessed: 26 May 2015.

[37] Equality Now. (2014) 'Interview with 'Ruth', Port Moresby, 18 October 2013', *Protecting the Girl Child: Using the Law to end Child Early and Forced Marriage, and related Human Rights Violations.* [Online] Available at: http://www.equalitynow.org/sites/default/files/Protecting_the_Girl_Child.pdf. Accessed: 26 May 2015. P. 34

Why should the Education Sector Care about Child Marriage, and what can it Do about it?

Education Prevents Child Marriage

'Education for girls has a catalytic effect on every dimension of development: lower child and maternal mortality rates; increased educational attainment by daughters and sons; higher productivity; and improved environmental management. Together, these can mean faster economic growth and, equally important, wider distribution of the fruits of growth... More education for girls will also enable more and more women to attain leadership positions at all levels of society: from health clinics in the villages to parliaments in the capitals. This, in turn, will change the way societies will deal with problems and raise the quality of global decision-making.' Former World Bank President, James Wolfensohn, addressing the Fourth UN Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995.

Students during a lesson at Munege Primary School - Jenny Matthew / Plan

A good quality gender sensitive and rights-based education is a powerful tool to end child marriage. Quality education is much broader than immediate academic learning outcomes, and includes a broad, rights-based approach to learning, including global citizenship and life skills such as comprehensive sexuality education. It is concerned with ensuring all children are learning in a child-friendly, safe and inclusive environment that promotes gender equality and encourages all children to fulfil their capabilities. Quality education is grounded in respect for human rights and gender equity, is accessible to all children without discrimination, encourages all children to fulfil their capabilities, and includes mechanisms to prevent and respond to violence. A quality education is accountable to children through the participation of children, families and communities in school governance and decision-making.

Quality education empowers girls to have a voice. Educated girls have an increased understanding of their rights[38] and the skills that girls acquire through education have been shown to help them make decisions and have a greater sense of self-esteem[39]. In particular, secondary education and citizenship education build the analytical skills required for meaningful civic participation and give girls critical thinking and analytical skills needed to change their society. Secondary education in safe spaces teaches girls to understand and access their rights and gives girls the skills and voice to participate in governance at local, national and international levels[40]. This empowers girls to challenge harmful gender norms and injustices. Secondary education also equips girls with the knowledge and means to make their own decisions and helps girls (and boys) to become positive change agents in the community. This ensures girls can make decisions that affect their lives, including marrying later, having fewer children and choosing a suitable partner. A key way of ensuring girls are empowered through education is ensuring there are spaces for increased participation by girls and boys and the community in school decision-making, and by creating accountability between school management and children. Plan's research has found this can lead to significant improvements in the school environment[41].

Through imparting knowledge, building skills and providing access to qualifications, education can be a gateway to economic opportunity. Education can also have an intergenerational impact, helping to end the cycle of poverty. Mothers with little or no schooling are less likely to educate their children, perpetuating poverty across generations[42]. As the Education For All Global Monitoring Report states, 'as well as boosting their own chances of escaping poverty, getting jobs, staying healthy and participating fully in society, educating girls and young women has a marked impact on the health of their children and accelerates their countries' transition to stable population growth, with lower birth and death rates. Moreover, educating girls and women contributes to broader social goals that are increasingly being recognised as vital elements of the post-2015 framework: building foundations for democracy and empowering women to make life choices that improve their welfare'[43].

For these reasons, education is widely held to be one of the most significant factors for delaying the age at which girls marry[44]. Moreover, whilst all education can assist in increasing the age at which girls marry, there is a direct correlation between years of schooling and age of marriage. Evidence from sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia shows that if all girls had primary education, child marriage would fall by 14 per cent. With secondary education, the prevalence would fall by 64 per cent, reducing the likelihood of child marriage six-fold[45]. Improving girls' access to school, and the quality of the education they receive, is vital to ending child marriage across the Commonwealth. However, in addition to focusing on girls, educational institutions must also work with all sections of government, boys and men, families and communities, to build consensus and momentum on ending child marriage.

Girls on their way to girls group meeting in Konzere camp in Chikwawa District - Rejoice Phiri (Plan staff)

38 UNESCO. (2013) P.29

39 Lloyd, C.B. and B. Mensch. 1999. *Implications of formal schooling for girls' transitions to adulthood in developing countries*. In National Research Council, *Critical Perspectives on Schooling and Fertility in the Developing World* (pp.80-104). C.H. Bledsoe, J.B. Casterline, J.A. Johnson-Kuhn, and J.G. Haaga (Eds.) Committee on Population, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. National Academy Press: Washington, D.C. In Jain, S. and Kurz, K. (2007). P.10

40 Rihani, M. A. (2006) *Keeping the promise: Five benefits of girls' secondary education.* Washington, D.C.: Academy for Educational Development. P.67

41 Plan UK. (2011) *Citizenship In Practice: Young People Driving Change.* London: Plan UK. Also Available at: http://www.plan-uk.org/resources/documents/32001/. Accessed: 26 May 2015.

42 UNESCO. (2013) P.17

43 UNESCO. (2013) P.17

44 Mathur, Greene and Malhotra. (2003) *United Nations Commission on Population and Development, 2002*. In Jain, S. and Kurz,K. 2007) P.10

45 UNESCO. (2013) P.29

Case Study: Kadiatou*, 17, from Sierra Leone, Fell Pregnant aged 14

'When I was growing up there was me, my mum, dad, sister and brother living in the village. But then my dad abandoned us all and went to marry another woman. It was very difficult - my mum couldn't even afford to feed us. She took us to live with my grandmother in Moyamba Junction. Shortly afterwards my grandmother died.

No-one helped us. So an aunt came and took me away and put me in school. I was six and it was my first time in school. Her husband was paying for me to go to school, but then he died. So my aunt said since he has now died, you should get married. I was 14. I said I didn't want to get married. But this guy who had a bike taxi came to my aunt and said he wanted to marry me. My aunt said I should get married because we had no money. She encouraged our relationship, but then I got pregnant and he left. He didn't pay any bride price. When I agreed to have a relationship with him, he was supporting my whole family. But as soon as I got pregnant, he left. When he went, my aunt started to mistreat me. When my mum heard what had happened, she told me to come home.

Once I was with my mum, I started collecting wood to sell and earn money. That's where I was when the Girl Power Project came to my community. I was so discouraged seeing other girls going to school. I was so depressed but they have peer counsellors who helped and advised me. I gave birth and then I joined the group. Now I help by talking to other girls. We've managed to persuade one girl to come back to school.

When my child started walking I decided I would go back to school. I started selling the wood to pay for school. I started in January 2014. And I feel so happy. But I do feel worried about how I'll pay for next term's fees. I was 15 when my baby was born – I'd already been out of school for two years. She is 1 year and 3 months – a baby girl. My mum looks after her when I go to school. I want to be an accountant when I leave school.'

Based on the evidence from Plan's global report, *A Girl's Right to Say No to Marriage*[46], and the Girls Not Brides Theory of Change, this report outlines what a comprehensive Commonwealth Education Sector policy on child marriage should encompass.

School children at Mudzu Primary School, Lilongwe - Natalie Herzhoff (Plan staff)

[46] Davis, A., Postles, C. and Rosa, G. (2013)

Providing Girls with Access to Quality Education

Over 250 million of the world's 650 million primary school age children are failing to learn the basic skills they need – the majority of them are girls[47]. Over half of these 250 million children are in education for over four years, but sub-standard teaching, lack of facilities and over-subscribed classes mean that they are unable to learn. Education is a preventative for child marriage not only because it keeps girls in a formal system formal system, but also because it gives them a purpose and goals: literacy in itself is strongly correlated with reducing child marriage prevalence. Only four per cent of literate girls in sub-Saharan Africa, and 8 per cent of literate girls in South and West Asia are married as children. In comparison, over 20 per cent of illiterate girls in sub-Saharan Africa, and almost 25 per cent of girls in South and West Asia are married as children[48]. One reason for this may be that literate girls have stayed in education for longer and thus have married later, but there is also strong evidence to suggest that quality education can empower girls to make decisions about whether, when and whom they will marry[49].

In order to provide girls with access to quality education, a number of barriers must be addressed.

- Access: do facilities exist which girls can attend, and if so, can girls get to school? What is the cost of schooling and what are community attitudes to education?
- Quality: whilst in school, can they learn? Are they provided with the skills they need to make decisions about their own futures and be actively involved in decision-making in their community? Is what they're learning challenging negative social norms?
- Safety: can girls get to school safely, and while at school, remain safe and free from violence?
- Inclusivity: are materials relevant to girls, and are girls represented?

Journey to School

Ministries for Education must ensure that girls are able to access schools. In rural areas, girls have less access to both primary and secondary schools than girls in urban areas. They are also likely to marry on average 1.5 years earlier than their urban counterparts[50] and to achieve lower levels of literacy[51]. Girls in rural areas are less able to access education not only because of increased poverty and issues such as the burden of domestic work, but also because schools are further away and there are concerns about their safety en-route[52]. Furthermore, rural families' lower levels of education impacts the value they place on education, the expectations and aspirations they have for their girls and their ability to support their girls' education. Addressing safety concerns around girls' journeys to and from school is crucial to addressing dropout rates. In Bihar State, India, the local government provided bicycles for girls to cover the longer distances to secondary school, and as a result, attendance increased dramatically.

Adolescent schoolgirls in school uniforms on their way from school in Delhi - Paolo Black for the Young Health Programme

47 UNESCO. (2013) P.33

48 UNESCO. (2013) P.29

49 United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). (2014c) *State of the World's Children 2015: Reimagine the Future: Innovation for Every Child.* New York: UNICEF. P.150

50 Westoff, (2003) *Trends in Marriage and Early Childbearing in Developing Countries.* Maryland: ORC Macro. P.24

51 UNESCO. (2013) P.35

52 Levine, R. et al. (2008) P.31

Case Study: Bihar, India: Chief Minister's Bicycle Programme

'Nothing gives me a greater sense of fulfilment of a work well done than seeing a procession of school-bound, bicycle-riding girls. It is a statement for social forward movement, of social equality and of social empowerment.' Chief Minister Swaroop, 2010

At the turn of the century, the gender gap in educational attainment in Bihar State was below the national average, with female literacy rates at 53 per cent, more than 20 points below male literacy rates. The drop-off in girls' enrolment was particularly pronounced when they reached the 9th grade, and one key barrier to secondary school enrolment was the average distance to a secondary school. In Bihar, over 50 per cent of villages are at least three kilometres away from the nearest secondary school, whereas over 95 per cent of villages have a primary school. The greater distance is associated with increased costs for girls to attend school via public transport, and reduced safety on longer journeys outside of their village.

The Chief Minister's Bicycle Programme aimed to tackle the problem of lack of access to secondary schools by providing all girls who enrolled in Grade 9 with Rs. 2,000 (~$40) to buy a bicycle. The cost amounted to less than $1/month spent per recipient, making the programme highly cost-effective.The programme yielded positive results, increasing the probability of a girl aged 14 or 15 being enrolled in or having completed 9th grade by 30 per cent. In four years of the programme, the number of girls registered in the 9th grade in Bihar's state schools more than tripled, from 175,000 to 600,000. Furthermore, the programme also bridged the pre-existing gender gap in age-appropriate secondary school enrolment between boys and girls by 40 per cent. An additional positive outcome was that the number of girls taking the SSC exam in Grade 10 increased by 9.5 per cent, suggesting that girls' increased school attendance continued past Grade 9. However, the number of girls who passed the SSC exam did not increase, suggesting that learning did not improve.

The programme was effective because bicycles directly contributed to reducing the daily cost of school attendance for girls; the programme was relatively low-cost; and spending was highly targeted. Furthermore, coordinated provision of cycles to all eligible girls may have led to greater safety, with girls cycling to school together, and a change in social norms with respect to the social acceptability of girls being able to leave the village to attend school[53].

This example shows that there are cost-effective ways of improving access to education. Ensuring girls' journeys to school are safe can lead to higher attendance, higher literacy levels and, ultimately, a reduction in child marriage prevalence. However, it is important to recognise that one solution cannot work for every student or in every Commonwealth context; bicycles would be an ineffective policy for girls with disabilities, for example.

Bienvenue at school - Alice Rwema Iribagiza (Plan Staff)*

[53] Muralidharan, K. and Prakash, N. (2013) Cycling to School: Increasing Secondary School Enrollment for Girls in India. [Online] Available at: http://www.theigc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Muralidharan-Prakash-2013-Working-Paper1.pdf. Accessed: 26 May 2015.

Violence at School

Ministries for Education must comprehensively address safety in and around learning environments, ensuring that these are safe spaces for girls. The WHO estimates that, globally, 150 million girls under the age of 18 have been raped or suffered some form of sexual violence[54]. While children's vulnerabilities and experiences vary across and within countries, school related gender-based violence (SRGBV) is a global phenomenon. No school is immune to the attitudes and beliefs within the broader community that promote harmful gender norms and condone acts of gender-based violence[55].

The research that Plan International carried out in their report *A Girls' Right to Learn Without Fear* showed that girls are most likely to be abused on their journey to or from school, in or near toilets, in empty classrooms or near the perimeter of school grounds[56]. Research in Sierra Leone has found that nearly a third of cases of forced or coerced sex at school, in exchange for money, goods or grades, were perpetrated by male teachers[57]. Other school employees and male students have also been shown to be perpetrators of sexual violence. To combat this, it is important that codes of conduct for teachers and school staff are in place, that they refer explicitly to violence and abuse and ensure that penalties are clearly stipulated and consistent with legal frameworks for child rights and protection[58].

Under these codes of conduct it is also important that teachers take responsibility more broadly for the welfare of girls in school, including working towards stopping violence in school perpetrated by other students or staff, and ensuring that reporting mechanisms are in place and connected to broader justice systems in order to punish all perpetrators of sexual violence. To create safe learning environments, schools must ensure that education is gender-sensitive and promotes gender equitable social norms and positive masculinities, alongside ensuring gender-sensitive facilities for girls and boys, such as private, secure and sanitary toilets. The Commonwealth Secretariat has done some work on gender responsive schooling, which should be revisited[59].

Girls attend Kishori Prerna Manch (KPM) meeting in Lunkaransar, Rajasthan - Bernice Wong / Plan

54 World Health Organization. (2002) *World Report on Violence and Health.* Geneva: WHO. Available at: http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/en/full_en.pdf. Accessed: 26 May 2015

55 Greene, M., Robles, O., Stout, K. and Suvilaakso, T. (2013) *A girl's right to learn without fear: Working to end gender-based violence at school.* Woking: Plan International.

56 Greene, M., Robles, O., Stout, K. and Suvilaakso, T. (2013)

57 Concern Worldwide (2010) School-related Gender-Based Violence in Sierra Leone. [Online] Available at: https://www.concern.net/sites/default/files/resource/2011/05/school_related_gender-based_violence.pdf. Accessed: 26 May 2015. P.44

58 UNESCO. (2013) P.45

59 See Page, E. and Jha, J. (2009) *Exploring the Bias: Gender and Stereotyping in Secondary Schools*. Available at: https://books.thecommonwealth.org/exploring-bias-paperback.

Case Study: Keeping Girls in School – the Stop Violence Against Girls in School Programme, Ghana

Violence against girls in schools in Ghana and elsewhere leads to low enrolment rates, poor performance, high dropout rates and psychological trauma[60]. ActionAid's Stop Violence Against Girls in School programme aimed to empower girls to enjoy their right to education in a violence-free environment, and address the knowledge gap about what works to reduce violence against girls in schools.

Globally, 60 million girls are sexually assaulted either in school or en-route to school, and beatings and whippings are still used as disciplinary measures in many regions[61]. ActionAid's initial research in Ghana showed that 81 per cent of girls interviewed had experienced violence, but that few girls reported it through fear of repercussions, a sense of shame, or to protect family honour. Moreover, follow-up through official channels was minimal in the case of reported violent incidents.

The programme succeeded in strengthening and formalising the links between education and justice in Ghana – recognising that police play a crucial role in ensuring justice for violence against girls. As a result of supporting closer collaboration between the Ghana Police Service's Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit and the Girls Education Unit of the Ghana Education Service, an agreement to work together to tackle violence against girls was reached between the two departments. This agreement was formalised through a national Memorandum of Understanding, which identifies, promotes and institutionalises a confidential reporting system to track and respond to cases of violence, and includes guidelines to facilitate the reduction of violence in schools, document reporting procedures and how to manage cases. This success was supported by raising awareness of the MOU within communities, and explaining reporting and referral mechanisms.

ActionAid's programme led to an overall decrease in violence against girls in project areas in Ghana, with reports of beatings decreasing by 20 per cent. Awareness was also raised amongst parents, teachers, children and other community members, of girls' rights to protection from violence, reporting channels and support organisations. The strong government buy-in to the programme demonstrates that the model is viable and supports existing structures to work more effectively to keep girls in school and reduce their risk of violence.

Changing Attitudes to Girls Education

'The greatest drivers of child marriage are poverty and tradition, which often manifest as social pressure to conform.' Desmond Tutu and Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda[62]

Schools can be a starting point for ensuring that families and communities are aware of the negative consequences of child marriage and for working with parents to change discriminatory social norms and keep girls in school. Working with families and communities to build gender equality and end child marriage forms part of a strategy based on the recognition that girls are rarely the decision-makers in their families, and that it is their closest relatives who make these decisions on their behalf. This approach is vital to ensuring that a generation of young girls does not find itself in conflict with decision-makers on matters of tradition.

Education is a central tool in tackling negative social norms propagated by families and communities across the Commonwealth where girls are at risk of child marriage. To change social norms, curriculum content and pedagogies must promote gender equality and human rights and ensure that negative gender stereotypes are absent from learning environments and teaching materials. In this way, education can play a strong part in behavioural change, creating greater awareness of the harmful impact of child marriage and reduced acceptance of child marriage by those who influence girls' lives[63].

Active citizenship and involving girls and boys in school governance can also ensure girls have a voice and are able to influence their parents, teachers and wider community to respect their rights. Parent-Teacher Associations or School Management Committees (SMCs) can provide safe spaces in which parents, children and community members can discuss educational issues such as ensuring schools are safe spaces for girls. These committees can also ensure that children are being enrolled and consistently attending school. A School Management Committee that is aware of the negative consequences – and the illegality and rights violation – of child marriage, can help to identify at-risk students and support them to continue their education using either informal or formal reporting mechanisms. Other community actions include awareness-raising about laws on child marriage and ensuring that effective child protection reporting and referral systems exist in schools and communities and are connected to broader justice systems to support girls affected by child marriage. In spite of often strong legislation, the high prevalence of child marriage across the Commonwealth signifies that implementation of these laws is low, and that many communities do not know the laws exist.

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60 ActionAid International. (2004) *Stop Violence Against Girls in School: Research Briefing.* Johannesburg: ActionAid International.

61 Greene, M., Robles, O., Stout, K. and Suvilaakso, T. (2013).

62 Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation. (2015) 'Africa will Benefit from Bringing an End to Child Marriage', *News.* [Online] Available at: http://www.tutu.org.za/africa-will-benefit-from-bringing-an-end-to-child-marriage. Accessed: 26 May 2015.

63 Girls Not Brides. (2014) *A Theory of Change on Child Marriage.* London: Girls Not Brides. P.8

Case Study: Strengthening Child Protection Mechanisms: Stop Child Marriage Programme, Bangladesh

Plan Bangladesh's Stop Child Marriage Programme supports girls to realise their rights to protection and education, aiming to reduce child marriage incidents among girls in Bangladesh through community action and strengthening informal and formal child protection mechanisms.

Bangladesh is the Commonwealth country with the highest percentage of child brides, at 65 per cent, making child marriage a common practice, particularly in rural areas. Over 10 per cent of married young women give birth to their first child before the age of 15. Legal provisions are strong, with the 2014 Child Marriage Restraint Act strengthening earlier legislation prohibiting marriage of girls under the age of 18 and increasing the punishment for offenders. State laws also provide for birth registration. However, large gaps still exist in how the effective implementation and enforcement of this legislation can be guaranteed.

The programme engages communities to become more active in reducing child marriage: raising awareness, educating parents and SMCs about gender-based violence, and supporting community members to develop action plans to address these issues[64]. It also aims to strengthen child protection mechanisms: training girls on prevention and monitoring of child marriage; improving reporting systems and structures; and strengthening informal reporting mechanisms. Furthermore, the programme aims to strengthen child marriage legislation and its enforcement, through forming district level NGO alliances; coordinating national level advocacy; and capacity building, monitoring and evaluating these groups.

This community-led approach aims to work across all the social structures that cause child marriage in order to collectively achieve change. So far, spaces have been created within communities for dialogue to open up on child marriage; District Officials in 18 Union Parishads have pledged to take positive action to prevent and respond to child marriages; the average age of marriage is increasing, although it is still below 18; and there are increasing reports of child marriages being stopped. Capacity building of adolescents has helped them to become more vocal and negotiate with their families, with the families of at-risk girls and with local government officials to hold these families to account for child marriage. Communities actively use informal reporting mechanisms, liaising with families and local government to stop child marriages. Local and national level coalitions have done more effective advocacy, with positive results such as the Child Marriage Restraint Act (2014) and the nation-wide child helpline initiative led and managed by government.

Whilst this approach has been successful on a number of levels, there are areas that need more work, including working with religious leaders – a key constituent in supporting or blocking change, and improving the use of formal reporting mechanisms. Programmes such as this also need to be scaled up, with government support, in order to increase the rate of change.

Changing social norms can take a long time, and there is still lack of consensus about how exactly social norms change. More research is needed in order to better understand this process, and it must also be recognised that societies are very different and face different challenges which are causal factors of child marriage. Furthermore, programmes such as the Stop Child Marriage Programme in Bangladesh must be scaled up and supported by Commonwealth governments. Ministries for Education have a direct role to play in educating communities under a mandate for lifelong learning. This applies equally to continued opportunities for the vast number of adults to complete their education, as well as to education that will change harmful practices such as child marriage, making communities aware of the health and economic issues that such practices cause.

Child Protection and School Governance

Children and young people, particularly young girls, are a vulnerable group which can find it hard to access the services meant to protect them. They can be subject to various forms of abuse and rights violations including child marriage. Girls and boys are often unaware of their rights, which can stop them seeking and receiving support to prevent abuse or deal with its consequences. Education systems must support and engage with the improvement of child protection systems. It is key for all schools to have comprehensive child protection mechanisms and reporting systems in place to ensure teachers can report concerns about girls at risk of child marriage to local government and judicial systems. Multi-dimensional approaches are required to build the capacity and knowledge of girls, boys, parents, community members and duty bearers on child rights, so that they begin to play an active role in accountability mechanisms to demand, strengthen and monitor child protection services. For example, Plan's DFID funded PPA programme in Malawi has engaged youth groups and the first lady to change legislation on the age of marriage in order to protect children at risk.

Strengthening school governance requires building relationships between teachers, students, parents, community leaders and local authorities at different levels. It is crucial that the decision-making structures that are created or strengthened are supported to connect with other school and local government structures. Where these links are institutionalised, new and exciting patterns of change, spreading beyond the school walls, can emerge – particularly where supported by national level policy change.

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[64] Plan Bangladesh's Stop Child Marriage Programme, read more at: https://plan-international.org/where-we-work/geneva/news/q-a-internatioanl-committment-important-to-bolster-and-position-the-work-of-ending-child-marriage/. Read about Plan's global campaign for girls' rights, Because I Am A Girl, here: http://plan-international.org/girls/

Girls studying at Balika Shivir in Lunkaransar, Bikaner district, Rajasthan - Bernice Wong / Plan

Qualified Teachers

In order to ensure a quality education, Commonwealth governments must invest in high levels of training for teachers, manageable class sizes, and classrooms with the necessary equipment to facilitate learning. In almost half the countries in the world there is an acute shortage of qualified teachers, which pushes up class sizes[65]. As a result of the struggle to recruit more teachers, quality is being sacrificed, with some countries recruiting untrained teachers. Addressing the problem of teacher-shortage will not be achieved overnight, but the urgency of this issue means that governments need to prioritise recruiting teachers and training them thoroughly. Teachers must be able to identify special needs and support all learners; they must not only have knowledge of their subjects, but be able to transfer this knowledge through teaching that engages learners; they must also be able to teach a diverse range of students with different needs and from different backgrounds. These skills will enable teachers to maximise learning opportunities for all students, no matter how disadvantaged their background[66]. To achieve these goals, teachers must be prepared through comprehensive, initial teacher education and be supported throughout their careers with on-going training and guidance[67]. Furthermore, the EFA Global Monitoring Report calls for teaching practices to be updated, moving away from traditional methods such as lecturing and rote-learning, and towards learner-centred pedagogies which emphasise critical thinking. There is evidence that these new methodologies are more effective for teaching all children, and particularly girls and children from marginalised groups[68].

As well as training more well-paid and well-supported teachers, national governments must tackle the uneven distribution of qualified teachers, and shortages in female teachers, through effective teacher deployment policies. Female teachers are crucial in order to attract girls to school. Studies show that women teachers can be role models for girls and can also make schools safer for them[69]. Female teachers often avoid rural or disadvantaged areas for the same reasons that cause girls to be out of school: safety concerns, lack of electricity, good housing and healthcare[70]. However, a key reason for the shortage in female teachers in some areas of the Commonwealth is gender disparity in schools: there are fewer female qualified candidates. Retaining more girls in education can help to change this trend over time. Other actions, that can be taken to recruit female teachers in more rural or disadvantaged areas, include providing safe housing and other benefits[71].

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65 Sean Coughlan, BBC. (2014) 'Acute global teacher shortage, warns UN', *BBC News*. [Online] Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-29505581. Accessed: 1 December 2014.

66 UNESCO. (2013) P.33

67 UNESCO. (2013) P.39

68 UNESCO. (2013) P.43

69 UNESCO. (2013) P.43

70 UNESCO. (2013) P.43

71 For a detailed study into teacher deployment policies in the Commonwealth, see Kelleher, F. (2008) *Primary School Teacher Deployment: A Comparative Study.* Available at: https://books.thecommonwealth.org/primary-school-teacher-deployment-paperback. Accessed: 26 May 2015.

Case Study: Rwanda Government Nine Year Basic Education Fast-Track Scheme

Rwanda's award-winning[72] Nine-Year Basic Education programme brings the six years of primary and the first three years of secondary education together under one system of free compulsory schooling. The programme supports the specialisation of teachers, reduces core subjects, and introduces double shifting[73]. These measures aim to improve the quality of education teachers can provide; increase the number of hours students can spend on a more limited number of key subjects; and address budget shortages by improving student-to-teacher ratios without requiring insupportable numbers of teachers to be trained. The measures aim to reduce the pupil teacher ratio of 56: 1 to 45: 1 in primary 1- 3 and to 37:1 in primary 4-6.

The additional Girls' Education Strategic Plan trains teachers on gender issues, capacity-builds female teachers and managers and encourages boys to take courses traditionally regarded as feminine. The policy tries to create a safer environment for female students by having more female representation in school administration and leadership positions. The plan also includes an affirmative action policy, which encourages girls to study science and technology and aims to move the gender ratio close to 50:50 for the enrolment of girls and boys into institutions where girls are under-represented. To achieve this, a 'lower cut-off point for [girls'] entry into higher education' has been implemented. This policy has been applied to National Exams where girls can pass at lower points than their male counterparts. The Girls' Education Policy also seeks to encourage pregnant girls to return to school after giving birth by providing them with remedial courses and enrolling them at 'catch-up centres'[74].

The programme has been highly successful, with girls' net enrolment rate now standing at 98 per cent, higher than for boys. The overall completion rate at primary level is 73 per cent (2012), which is a dramatic increase from 53 per cent in 2008, with girls' completion rates at 78 per cent in 2012. The secondary school net enrolment rate also now stands at 28 per cent (30 per cent for girls), up from 26 per cent (27 per cent for girls) in 2011[75]. Girls now make up 52 per cent of students in secondary education. Challenges remain, including increasing secondary school enrolment rates for both boys and girls, ending 'voluntary' fees, which are in practice compulsory, and the 2009 switch in language of instruction from French to English. Nevertheless, with limited resources, quality of teaching, teacher ratio, equipment and infrastructure, and gender equity are all targeted through the Nine Year Basic Education programme.

Creating Gender Sensitive Education Systems in the Commonwealth

Plan's research has found that assessment systems, curricula materials, teaching and learning processes including whether lessons are conducted in mother tongue and teachers' expectations of students can all form a considerable barrier to girls' learning – a barrier that must be overcome in order to achieve gender equality in learning outcomes[76]. In some Commonwealth countries, curricula hinder gender-equitable learning, reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes by placing girls in subservient roles. This was found to be the case in the Punjab region of Pakistan, where English textbooks were found to barely represent girls and women, and where they were represented this was in a discriminatory fashion[77].

Education has the power to challenge discriminatory social norms in societies where girls are not ascribed the same value as boys. To ensure education for girls is empowering it must be relevant – girls must develop the relevant skills and knowledge to actively participate in society, to become economically independent and to make decisions about their future and whether, when and who to marry, which are vital to help end child marriage.

It is necessary for curricula to be gender sensitive and classroom teaching and learning practices gender-responsive. For example, girls and minority groups must be included in learning materials in order to provide them with a range of role models and inspire them to learn. The presence of a curriculum that explicitly addresses gender inequality is, in itself, insufficient to ensure that gender issues are properly addressed in schools. Teachers need to have the pedagogical tools and the training to actively engage with the curriculum and make it relevant to their students and their own context[78].

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[72] This programme won the Commonwealth Education Good Practice Awards 2012.

[73] Republic of Rwanda. Ministry of Education. (2008) *Nine Years Basic Education Implementation: Fast Track Strategies.* [Online] Available at: http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Rwanda/Rwanda_9_years_basic_education.pdf. Accessed: 26 May 2015.

[74] Plan International – Rwanda. (2014) *Year 3 Evaluation of the 'Empowering Adolescent Girls through Education' Programme.* [Online] Available at: http://www.plan-uk.org/assets/Documents/pdf/project-open-info-dfid/Rwanda_Y3FR_report_final.pdf. Accessed: 26 May 2015.

[75] United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). (2015) 'Education', *UNICEF Rwanda.* [Online] Available at: http://www.unicef.org/rwanda/education.html. Accessed: 26 May 2015.

[76] Postles, C. et al. (2013) Girls' Learning: Investigating the Classroom Practices that Promote Girls' Learning. [Online] Available at: http://www.plan-uk.org/resources/documents/260260. Accessed: 26 May 2015.

[77] Shah, S. F. (2012) 'Gender inclusion: a neglected aspect of the English textbooks in Pakistan'. *International Journal of Social Science and Education,* Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 118–27.

[78] This is an area in which the Commonwealth has done some work already. See Atthill, C. and Jha, J. (2009) *The Gender-Responsive School: An Action Guide. [Online] Accessible at: https://books.thecommonwealth.org/gender-responsive-school*-paperback.

Transformative Education includes Human Rights, Global Citizenship

In order to be transformative, education must also provide a gateway to academic qualification, so that students are able to take the opportunities that they seek, and to deal ably with what their futures hold. This relies on curricula that allow young people to acquire transferable skills, such as literacy, numeracy, reasoning, critical thinking and analysis. Innovative and inclusive curriculum and assessment strategies can reduce disparities in school achievement and offer all children and young people the opportunity to acquire vital transferable skills[79]. Life skills, human rights and global citizenship education are a key part of a quality education which includes and goes beyond literacy and numeracy skills. This must include providing all girls and boys, especially those at risk from child marriage, with a safe space in which to discuss their futures, with financial literacy and with information about their options and the development of support networks[80].

Comprehensive Sexuality Education

It is vital in the context of child marriage, and indeed in the context of adolescence, that young people learn about their sexual and reproductive health and rights through comprehensive sexuality education (CSE). Recent analysis by the UK's Department for International Development found that 'sex education is a key terrain for engaging with gender norms'[81]. Alongside its role in protecting girls, CSE is a key area for interventions in order to ensure young people understand their rights and to tackle the serious consequences of child marriage - sexual and reproductive health problems, including complications during pregnancy and infant mortality. Child brides also experience higher levels of sexual violence in marriage[82]. Whilst being educated about sexual and reproductive health and rights will not combat all of these issues, girls will be able to enter relationships better informed about their rights in relation to their sexual and reproductive health. Evidence shows that in some areas of the Commonwealth educated women are 30 per cent more likely to negotiate safe sex, refuse sex, or request a partner to wear a condom than those who are illiterate[83]. Schools have a responsibility to ensure that girls have access to appropriate and confidential advice and services. Some Commonwealth members have already signed up to take action through the 'Young People Today, Time to Act Now' agreement[84]. In April 2015, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution calling upon governments to provide comprehensive evidence-based education on human sexuality in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child. This subject is a necessity for all girls and boys, but particularly in areas where girls are at risk of child marriage; it will equip them with knowledge and skills in areas relevant to their lives, including sexual and reproductive health, nutrition, and their rights under the law[85].

Education Builds Active Citizens

Schools must also ensure children and young people are able to participate in effective, participatory and inclusive school governance and decision-making processes and have the skills to do so. In particular, quality secondary education should promote development of critical thinking skills which allow girls to analyse and understand political arguments which are the building blocks to civic participation, democracy, and the empowerment to change their societies and the social norms which affect their lives. Giving girls and boys a voice in decisions that affect their lives can help to improve the quality of education.School management committees with strong links to local government structures can create the means for young people to lobby and hold leaders to account on legislation around child marriage. There are a range of accountability mechanisms that can be used in schools, such as score-carding to gather data and information on the school environment and listening to young people's views. By taking part in decision-making in their school and local community, young people gain the skills and confidence they need to have a say in the decisions that affect their lives. It is critical to involve women, mothers, father, girls and boys and wider communities in school governance; this is a key intervention which helps to ensure education is relevant.

A trainee mechanic at St. Joseph technical vocational training centre - Jenny Matthews / Plan

79 UNESCO. (2013) P.47

80 UNESCO. (2013) P.51

81 Unterhalter E. et al. (2014) *Interventions to enhance girls' education and gender equality.* Education Rigorous Literature Review. Department for International Development, United Kingdom.

82 International Center for Research on Women. (2006) Child Marriage and Domestic Violence Factsheet. [Online] Available at: https://www.icrw.org/files/images/Child-Marriage-Fact-Sheet-Domestic-Violence.pdf. Accessed: 26 May 2015.

83 UNESCO. (2013) P.24

84 UNESCO. (2015) 'Young People Today. Time to Act Now.' *HIV and AIDS.* [Online] Available at: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/hiv-and-aids/our-priorities-in-hiv/sexuality-education/east-and-southern-africa-commitment/. Accessed: 26 May 2015.

85 UNESCO. (2013) P.51

Case Study: Increasing Knowledge of SRHR in Malawi[86]

Since 1994, Malawi has embarked on an ambitious programme of free primary education, leading to dramatic increases in enrolment, but resulting in declining standards of education. Increased budgetary allocation has not led to higher quality education, and there is high dropout even at the primary level. Very few children continue to secondary education, with only 17 per cent of boys and 11 per cent of girls completing secondary school. As a result, literacy rates are very low in Malawi, at 59 per cent for women and 69 per cent for men. In a 2012 survey participants were asked about their reasons for leaving education. One third of respondents cited family responsibilities as their reason for dropping out; half of female respondents cited school-related factors (long distances to school, poor facilities, teacher shortages or violence in schools); other factors cited included rites of passage, child marriage, pregnancy, low educational aspirations, and household chores.

Plan Malawi's Building Skills for Life project aims to improve understanding of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and access to services. Plan Malawi worked with adolescents, delivering educational training about SRHR, discussing relationship behaviours, and discussing actions young people can take to combat violence against girls and reduce risky sexual behaviours; worked with parents and adolescents together, raising awareness about SRH issues and the importance of understanding SRHR for young people; and supported young people to assess health centres, to assess whether SRH providers were delivering quality services, were easily accessible, and were responsive to the needs of adolescents.

By the end of year three of the programme, adolescents' knowledge of SRHR had increased across all areas. The programme also succeeded in increasing girls' attendance in SRHR lessons, which had begun at only 12 per cent but increased to 94 per cent after three years. Sessions which worked with parents and adolescents together resulted in an increase in adults acknowledging the need for children to learn about SRHR in school; a high percentage of parents agreeing that their daughters should be taught sex education, but that they should not have access to family planning services; and increased parental ability to discuss puberty and growing up with their children. However, adolescents who assessed health services for their accessibility to youth found that services were inaccessible, at an average distance of 7-10km; had poor provision for family planning services, products and youth-friendly materials; lacked infrastructure, equipment and supplies; and that Health officers had poor attitudes towards young people, despite 40 per cent of service providers being trained in providing youth-friendly health services.

Whilst the programme has made significant progress in some areas, it is small scale, with only 8,100 beneficiaries. SRHR programmes must form part of the school curriculum in order to significantly increase the number of adolescents who have access to SRHR education. SRH services also need to be more closely linked to schools, in order to increase access and reduce stigma.

Gihozo, 15, chatting with her grandmother and child protection team, she was rescued from her marriage and resettled back to school - Lillian Omariba (Plan staff)*

[86] Msukwa, C.A.P.S. and Msukwa, A. (2013) Girls Access to and Completion of Lower Secondary Education in Malawi. [Online] Available at: http://www.plan-uk.org/assets/Documents/iati/MWI1125_PPA2_Malawi_MTE_final_report.pdf. Accessed: 26 May 2015.

Case Study: Importance of Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) in Schools, United Kingdom[87]

Shropshire Local Education Authority's 'Respect Yourself: Eat Better, Move More', Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) programme supports schools to deliver age appropriate, up to date lessons to help pupils keep themselves healthy, happy and safe. The programme provides a comprehensive scheme of work, containing lesson plans, resources, assessment and teacher's guidance for year 6 -11. It works with parents and school staff so that they feel confident about how to address health issues in a positive and coordinated way.

The work has operational and strategic links with Safeguarding, Domestic Abuse, TaMHS (targeted mental health in schools) and the Parenting Strategy. Teachers, governors and heads receive high quality support which they value and young people have increased their knowledge, skills and confidence.

Young people have informed the approach and style of the programme. By January 2014, 18 out of 22 secondary schools, and 65 (49 per cent) of primary schools, were engaged in preparing for, or implementing, the programme.

The Shropshire programme places the emphasis upon relationships, supporting pupils' understanding and skills in developing positive and healthy relationships. It involves teaching about sex, sexuality and sexual health using an age appropriate spiral curriculum, and views the work as a lifelong learning process of physical, moral and emotional development. It is about understanding the importance of, stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care.

Importance of sexual health information in schools in the UK

For both men and women, school is now the most commonly reported main source of information about sexual matters, having risen from 28 per cent in 1990 to 40 per cent in 2012. Both men and women who learned about sexual matters mainly from school experienced first sexual intercourse at a later age than those who got most of their information from 'other' sources. They were also less likely to report unsafe sex, or to have been diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection (STI).

Study results suggest the need for a broader framing of sex education in schools that addresses the needs of both young men and women, with a move away from the traditional female-focused 'periods, pills and pregnancy' approach.

Kishori Prerna Manch (KPM) girl's group meeting - Plan staff

87 Healthy Shropshire. (2015) Sexual Health. [Online] Available at: http://www.healthyshropshire.co.uk/topics/sexual-health/. And http://www.healthyshropshire.co.uk/topics/sexual-health/relationships-and-sex-education/. Accessed: 26 May 2015. See also, Medical Research Council. (2015) New Research into how Young People Learn about Sex and Relationships. [Online] Available at: http://www.mrc.ac.uk/news-events/news/new-research-into-how-young-people-learn-about-sex-and-relationships/. Accessed: 26 May 2015.

Working Together

Child marriage is a complex issue that impacts a range of social and economic indicators: there is no single solution to end the practice. Evidence suggests that in order to effectively end child marriage, a range of strategies must be employed holistically in order to comprehensively address the root causes, the immediate impacts, and the problematic outcomes of child marriage. Governments are increasingly aware that cross-sectoral strategies are needed to effectively combat child marriage and some governments, such as Bangladesh, India and Zambia, are in the process of designing and implementing National Action Plans to comprehensively address child marriage. Some donor countries have also supported this process of country-owned action plans. For the majority of Commonwealth countries, Ministries for Women's and Children's Affairs hold the burden of responsibility for ending child marriage. Whilst they can play a strong coordinating role, many more Ministries need to understand their vital responsibility as part of a cross-sectoral effort to ensure the elimination of child marriage. This report has highlighted that child marriage interacts in a complex way with education, healthcare, family planning, employment, and law and its enforcement. Ending child marriage requires a range of different sectors to have the right policies in place, a co-ordinated approach, and sufficient resources.

A joined-up approach to child protection systems is critical for ending child marriage. This requires the legal age of marriage to be 18 and the strengthening of legal frameworks, as well as working alongside schools to identify girls at risk of child marriage, and taking action. Furthermore, recognising that poverty and economic insecurity are causes of child marriage in most Commonwealth countries, there is a need for services that provide girls with opportunities for economic empowerment, integrating them into the labour force, or supporting them in starting their own businesses. These actions will reduce their financial dependence on those around them and provide alternative models of women's social roles. This intervention requires the support of Departments for Business, Skills and Innovation or others with a similar mandate, alongside that of the education sector, which can ensure that girls are learning the necessary skills to become more economically independent.

Girls learning sewing skills at Balika Shivir where vocational training courses are also provided - Bernice Wong / Plan

Case Study: Developing a Co-ordinated National Action Plan in Zambia

The Ministry of Chiefs and Traditional Affairs takes a central role in ending child marriage in Zambia, working with the UNFPA to invest in programmes that will enforce national legislation against child marriage; support information sharing with communities; create safe spaces for girls affected and at risk of child marriage; and build up girls' education and health assets[88].

Zambian law forbids marriage below the age of 21, but over 42 per cent of girls are married as children. Customary law in Zambia allows marriage at 16 years old, as this is considered to be the age of adulthood. This conflicts with statutory law, which sets 18 years old as the legal age of majority. A rewriting of laws is necessary in order to avoid conflicting legal definitions. Girls living in poverty and in rural areas face a higher risk of child marriage, and girls who do not have access to education are particularly vulnerable[89]. Despite increased awareness of the huge health, social and education implications of child marriage, little progress has been made toward ending the practice. In fact, the problem threatens to increase with the expanding youth population.

As custodians of cultural and traditional practices, traditional leaders can be a central part of challenging dominant social norms and working towards a culture that does not include harmful practices such as child marriage[90]. Traditional leaders work within their communities to promote dialogue around cultural norms that inhibit women and girls from realising their potential, and come up with sustainable solutions[91]. They also stress that that the 'headmen' in their districts should not hesitate to report all cases of child marriage to local authorities in order to eradicate the practice.

The campaign has catalysed further coordinated efforts to end child marriage, leading to a symposium which brought together key stakeholders – including various Ministries, traditional leaders, civil society organisations, youth, media and UN agencies – to explore ways to collaborate to end child marriage in Zambia. This has in turn led to steps to develop a National Action Plan on child marriage, which will be centrally coordinated by the Government of Zambia[92]. The Government is now taking steps towards putting child marriage at the forefront of the regional and international agenda, including co-sponsoring a resolution on the issue at the 69th session of the UN General Assembly in September 2014.

Cohesive Commonwealth Action

Further to cross-departmental action, the Commonwealth can work more cohesively as an intergovernmental organisation to tackle child marriage. Recognising that financing depends on a global development agenda, and considering the vast impact that child marriage has on development, the Commonwealth must present a united front in calling for child marriage to be included as a target in the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, Ministers should make ending child marriage a key priority for the Commonwealth at the next meeting of the Commonwealth Ministerial Working-Group on Post-2015. The Commonwealth has committed to ending child marriage in the communiqués from both the 2011 and 2013 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings, and National Human Rights Institutions from 15 Commonwealth Member States recently (May 2015) signed the Kigali Declaration, outlining specific plans and commitments towards ending child marriage.

Girl learning at Plan supported primary school in Udaipur, India - Dina Torrans

Child marriage should also be addressed as part of the Commonwealth's Gender Plan of Action, which expires in 2015. As of yet, the Commonwealth has not committed to a renewed plan of action on gender equality. Commonwealth governments must unite to ensure that a new Plan of Action includes a commitment to ending child marriage, and is put in place without delay. As a first-step, Education Ministers should include a commitment to ending child marriage, and recognition of the central role of quality, gender sensitive education in doing so, in their outcome statement at the 19th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers. This should be a key area for review when assessing progress. The Secretariat could also further its work by supporting Commonwealth Governments to develop National Action Plans to end child marriage.

88 UNFPA Zambia. (2013) Campaign to End Child Marriage Launched in Chipata. [Online] Available at: http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/zambia/2013/04/16/6590/campaign_to_end_child_marriage_launched_in_chipata/. Accessed: 26 May 2015.

89 UNFPA Zambia. (2013)

90 Lillian Banda. (2013) 'AFRICA: Traditional Chiefs in Zambia work to stop child marriage'. *Women News Network.* [Online] Available at: http://womennewsnetwork.net/2013/07/17/traditional-chiefs-zambia/. Accessed: 26 May 2015.

91 Lillian Banda. (2013)

92 Girls Not Brides. (2013) *Child Marriage Around the World: Zambia*. [Online] Available at: http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/zambia/. Accessed 26 May 2015.

Finance

Resourcing for Implementing the Necessary Education Policies to End Child Marriage

In order to implement the policies necessary to end child marriage, as outlined in this report, Commonwealth governments and donors must ensure that enough resources are dedicated to education, and that spending is targeted to the most marginalised and those at greatest risk of child marriage.

Plan International's report 'Financing the Right to Education' outlines that governments should spend at least 20 per cent of national budget on education, that 50 per cent of this should be spent on basic education, and that governments should undertake gender reviews of education sector plans[93]. The EFA report recommends that after 2015 a common financing target should be set for countries to allocate at least six per cent of GDP to education[94]. In the Commonwealth, only 14 of 53 countries had hit this target by 2011. Even wealthy countries such as the UK and Canada are spending less than the recommended six per cent of GDP. Of the 29 Commonwealth countries under-spending on education, 16 countries are spending a lower proportion of GDP than they were ten years ago, showing a regression in government policy. This group includes Pakistan, which has some of the lowest overall figures for school attendance in the Commonwealth. For twelve Commonwealth countries, there is no current data about the proportion of GDP they are spending on education. This group includes Nigeria, the largest economy in Africa, but with one of the worst gender parity rates in the Commonwealth for girls' education, and the Bahamas, which is hosting the Commonwealth Council for Education Ministers in 2015. However, there is evidence that some Commonwealth countries that are under-spending have worked hard over the past 20 years to increase government financing of education. This group includes Cameroon, Malawi, Rwanda and Uganda.

As well as spending enough, governments can also spend in a more targeted way to keep girls in school and reduce child marriage prevalence[95]. Many incentive-based programmes such as scholarships, subsidies and conditional and unconditional cash transfers[96], show that targeted investment in girls' education can produce effective and long-lasting results, and that support for the most marginalised girls helps to increase overall attendance rates.

Girls during their tailoring internships at St. Joseph technical vocational training centre

93 Plan International. (2014) Financing the Right to Education. [Online] Available at: http://plan-international.org/files/global/briefing-paper-financing-the-right-to-education.pdf. Accessed: 26 May 2015.

94 UNESCO. (2013) P.111

95 Levine, R. et al. (2008) P.29-31

96 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). (2012) P.52

Case Study: Apni Beti Apna Dhan, Harayana, India

Apni Beti Apna Dhan (ABAD)[97] is a conditional cash transfer (CCT) programme developed by the Government of Haryana, which operated from 1994-1998. The programme aimed to address the lower social value ascribed to girls, evident in lower birth rates and educational attainment, as well as child marriage. Under the scheme, mothers were given 500 rupees within 15 days of giving birth to a baby girl. Within three months of the birth, the government purchased a savings bond at 2500 rupees in the name of the daughter. This was redeemable at a maturity of 25,000 rupees, only after the girl turned 18 years old, and only on the condition that she remained unmarried.

The International Centre for Research on Women evaluated whether the programme succeeded at delaying marriage; whether girls enrolled in the programme were more likely to continue in education beyond middle school; and whether attitudes and behaviours among beneficiaries and their parents indicated that girls had gained more social value, and were supported in alternative choices to marriage.

Beneficiaries of the ABAD programme remained in school for longer than non-beneficiaries. Amongst the older cohort, 76 per cent of beneficiaries, and 63 per cent of non-beneficiaries remained in education past middle school. In the younger cohort, 91 per cent of beneficiaries and 87 per cent of non-beneficiaries were still in education at the time of the first research (at which time they were 14-15 years old). Moreover, amongst the older cohort, a higher proportion of beneficiaries than non-beneficiaries also achieved higher educational attainment: 53 per cent and 49 per cent respectively.

Parental investment in girls continues to be lower than their investment in boys: constrained by the continued perception that girls are another person's wealth – that of the marital family. Amongst beneficiaries, more girls and their mothers aspired to higher education than amongst non-beneficiaries – at 58 per cent and 56 per cent respectively. Furthermore, a higher percentage of beneficiaries were given more than three hours of study time at home. Evaluation of the impact of the programme on child marriage is still being carried out, but initial results suggest that prevalence has reduced by eleven per cent[98].

In conclusion, firstly, beneficiaries attained higher levels of schooling, were more likely to continue their education and less likely to drop out. Secondly, the anticipation of the cash benefit clearly influenced families' decisions to invest in their daughters' education. Thirdly, ascribed gender roles continue to limit the impact of increased education on girls' empowerment, suggesting that other interventions are needed to help girls fulfil their potential. Thus fourthly, financial incentive programmes must be tied to values or aspirations in order to trigger change[99].

There is ongoing debate about the benefits of conditional versus unconditional cash transfers. Some programmes show that cash transfers, conditional on girls remaining both in school and unmarried, are the most effective way of achieving two clearly defined aims. Other programmes show that unconditional cash transfers can be more effective, because in providing support for a broader range of opportunities, they can enable out-of-school girls to delay marriage[100].

Increased funding also needs to go towards data collection and disaggregation. This is necessary in order to ensure that systems work efficiently and can deliver on increased access for girls to quality education. Better data allows governments to allocate funding more effectively; this is the case for both national spending and for education funding from donor countries. Better data collection and disaggregation will also play a central role in ensuring that funding under the Sustainable Development Goals will be allocated effectively. Governments must therefore ensure that they are collecting data on child marriage and gender based violence, as well as education data including (but not limited to) school enrolment, school dropout rates, achievement levels, and reasons for early school dropout. This data must be disaggregated by gender, age, location, wealth and disability.

Riya ready for school with her new uniform and books - Plan*

97 Nanda, P., Datta, N. and Das, P. (2014) Impact of Conditional Cash Transfers on Girls Education. Washington, D.C.: International Center for Research on Women.

98 P. Nanda. Presentation given at the Girls Not Brides International Members Meeting. Casablanca, May 2015.

99 This case study all taken from Nanda, P., Datta, N. and Das, P. (2014)

100 Baird, S., McIntosh, C. and Ozler, B. (2011) 'Cash or Condition? Evidence from a Cash Transfer Experiment'. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* Oxford: Oxford University Press. Vol. 126. No. 4: 1709–53

Conclusion

Child marriage continues to be a barrier to girls claiming their rights in the Commonwealth, and prevalence is higher here than the global average. High-level policy shifts have not led to change on the ground and greater action is required to end child marriage. Education has proved to have a strong correlation with lower rates of child marriage, and Ministries of Education are well placed to support interventions to end child marriage. One key aspect of a holistic, and integrated approach to ending child marriage is to ensure all girls and boys access and complete an inclusive, quality education.

In order to end child marriage, the Commonwealth must think strategically about how it can take an integrated and holistic approach to combat this complex and multi-faceted problem. As this report outlines, Education Stakeholders must work in a more holistic way to ensure all children access and complete a quality education which helps to prevent child marriage, including by working more effectively with other service providers, and creating stronger connections with families and communities. The following recommendations serve as a framework for how the Commonwealth Education Sector can contribute to efforts to end child marriage.

Recommendations

For Commonwealth Governments

- An integrated, whole government approach is required to end child marriage.
- Commonwealth Governments should support the implementation of National Action Plans to prevent child marriage, with clear targets and timeframes for progress.
- Commonwealth Governments should work towards the accepted spending target of six per cent of GDP and at least 20 per cent of national budgets on education. At least 50 per cent of this should be spent on basic education, with significant investment in improving all aspects of the quality of education.
- Commonwealth Governments must support regional and international resolutions that call for an end to child marriage, including through the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals negotiations.
- Commonwealth Governments should support a renewed and robust Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action following the expiration of the current Plan of Action in 2015. This should include a clear target on ending child marriage.
- The Commonwealth Ministerial Working Group on post-2015, which is to meet later this year to develop a set of priorities for Commonwealth action, should include a framework for education, and prioritise ending child marriage.
- Commonwealth countries must increase data collection on child marriage and gender based violence, disaggregate all data by gender, age, location, wealth, and disability, and make this data publically available.

For Ministries of Education

Ministers for Education must recognise the crucial role that education can play in changing discriminatory social norms, promoting gender equality and preventing child marriage.

- The 19th CCEM statement should include a commitment to ending child marriage and recognition of the central role of quality, gender-sensitive education in so doing.
- Ministries of Education must work more closely with Ministries of Health, to ensure that girls can access youth-friendly health services.
- Ministries of Education must work with the Ministries of Finance to ensure that education is financed properly, and that spending is targeted to ensure that education is available for all. They should research how best to provide assistance to the most marginalised girls who are likely to be affected by child marriage in the form of conditional cash transfers, grants or scholarships.
- Ministers should play a leading role in supporting, developing and implementing clear and transparent National Action Plans to end child marriage, through participation in (and establishment of) cross-departmental working groups.
- All girls and boys must complete at least twelve years quality, gender-sensitive education.
- Ministries of Education must ensure that schools are safe spaces for girls, and address the high levels of violence against girls in and around schools. This includes ensuring that codes of conduct and reporting mechanisms are in place, understood, and that reporting leads to consequences for perpetrators.
- Ministries of Education must work with communities to raise awareness about the importance of girls' education, and form strong, supportive school management committees comprising members of the community and girls and boys who are engaged in effective, participatory and inclusive school management and are able to hold decision-makers to account.
- School curricula must be accessible and relevant for all students. This means ensuring rights-based curricula that promote gender equality, and that all learning materials are free from gender stereotypes.
- Comprehensive sexuality education must be part of the school curriculum. Education must play a central role to increase learners' knowledge and understanding of their sexual and reproductive health and rights, and how they can access services.
- Teachers must receive comprehensive and gender-sensitive initial teacher education, and be supported throughout their careers with on-going training and guidance, in order to ensure they have the skills to ensure all learners can reach their full potential, within a safe learning environment.
- Policies must be put in place to incentivise teaching in rural or remote areas, and to encourage more female teachers both in classrooms and also in managerial positions.

For the Commonwealth Secretariat

- Child marriage disproportionally affects the Commonwealth due to high prevalence in some of the Commonwealth's most populous countries. Therefore if the Commonwealth affectively addresses child marriage, the global battle is almost won. The Secretariat should coordinate its work to end child marriage (as mandated by Heads of Government in the 2013 CHOGM communiqué, currently under the Human Rights Unit) across departments, including the Health and Education Department, the Gender Department and the Youth Affairs Division. As a starting point, the Secretariat should hold a roundtable discussion with Heads of all relevant departments (Gender, Youth, Political, Health, Education, Human Rights), and key civil society partner organisations.
- The Commonwealth Secretariat should ensure that progress on child marriage is on the agenda for both the 2015 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, and the 2016 Women's Affairs Ministerial Meeting.
- The Secretariat must take on a co-ordinating role, offering support to Commonwealth countries, and also providing a bridge between government, NGOs and private sector. This should include providing technical assistance to National Human Rights Institutions in implementing the commitments outlined in the Kigali Declaration[101].

Girl speaking at Gender Equality event in Gatsibo District - Alice Rwema Iribagiza (Plan staff)

[101] Kigali Declaration. (2015) *Moving from aspiration to action to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriage in the Commonwealth.* [Online] Availableat:http://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/pressrelease/documents/Early%20and%20Forced%20Marriage% 20%20Kigali%20Declaration.pdf. Accessed: 26 May 2015.

Appendix 1: Child Marriage and the Law

International Human Rights Law

Child marriage results in numerous rights violations, affecting children's and women's rights to health, education, equality, non-discrimination and to live free from violence and exploitation. It is also a rights violation in and of itself: Article 16(2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that 'Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.' Several major UN treaties have also addressed child marriage. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), in Article 16, states that women should have the same right as men to 'freely choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent', and that the 'betrothal and marriage of a child shall have no legal effect'[102]. Furthermore, under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), governments have committed to ensure the overall protection of children and young people aged under 18, including the right to education and health care; the right to protection from all forms of sexual, physical, and mental abuse' and the right not to be separated from their family against their will. In signing this document, countries have committed to take 'all effective and appropriate measures with a view to abolish traditional practices prejudicial to the health of the children[103],' Child marriage, and its corresponding range of rights implications, substantially infringes these protections[104].

In the Commonwealth the CRC has been ratified by every country, and the CEDAW has been ratified by every Commonwealth country bar Tonga. Ratification obligates countries to make provisions within their national legal frameworks to protect the rights that are included under these international treaties, and to hold themselves accountable for violations. However, some Commonwealth countries have included reservations in their ratifications. Reservations to article 16 of the CEDAW have been made by the Governments of the Maldives and Singapore, and the Sultanate of Brunei Darussalam, stating that Article 16 will be upheld only where it does not oppose the provisions of Sharia Law. Furthermore, in some Commonwealth countries (such as Nigeria) domestication of CEDAW post-ratification remains delayed.

Legal Minimum Age of Marriage in Commonwealth Countries

In most Commonwealth countries, the legal minimum age of marriage for women is 18. A notable exception is Brunei Darussalam, where the legal minimum age of marriage for girls is 14. However, this age is often lower with parental consent, and significant disparities and caveats exist across regional and cultural groups. Many Commonwealth countries need to do more to implement national legal frameworks that clarify the minimum legal age of marriage, and combat dual legal systems and other loopholes that legalise marriage of girls below age 18.

Commonwealth Country	Legal Minimum Age of Marriage[105]	Exceptions
Antigua and Barbuda	18	Under 18 with parental consent.
Australia	18	16 with court approval
Bahamas	18	Under 18 with consent / court permission
Bangladesh	18 (F) 21 (M)	Exception for religion
Barbados	16	
Belize	18	16 with parental consent
Botswana	21	18 with parental consent. Exception for customary or religious marriages
Brunei Darussalam	14	Under-18's may need parental consent to register the marriage
Cameroon	15 (F) 18 (M)	Waiver can be granted by President of Republic
Canada	18 / 19	Dependent on province
Cyprus	No information	
Dominica	18	16 with consent
Fiji	21	16 (F) 18 (M) with parental consent
Ghana	18	Younger under customary law

[102] *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,* New York, 18 December 1979. Article 16. [Online] Available at: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm. Accessed: 26 November 2014.

[103] *Convention on the Rights of the Child,* 2 September 1990. Article 24.3. [Online] Available at: www.unicef.org/crc/. Accessed: 26 November 2014.

[104] Girls Not Brides. (2014) *About Child Marriage.* [Online] Available at: http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/about-child-marriage/. Accessed: 24 November 2014.

[105] Equality Now. (2013) UN CEDAW and CRC Recommendations on Minimum Age of Marriage Laws Around the World. [Online] Available at: http://www.equalitynow.org/sites/default/files/UN_Committee_Recommendations_on_Minimum_Age_of_Marriage_Laws.pdf. Accessed: 26 May 2015.

Grenada	21	16 with parental consent
Guyana	18	16 with parental or judicial consent
India	18 (F) 21 (M)	Exceptions under Mohammedan Law
Jamaica	18	16 with parental consent
Kenya	18	
Kiribati	No information	
Lesotho	18	
Malawi	18	
Malaysia	18	16 for girls with court order. Inconsistency between civil and Sharia law
Maldives	18	16 with consent of marriage registrar
Malta	18	16 with parental consent
Mauritius	18	16 with parental consent
Mozambique	18	16 with parental consent
Namibia	18	Exception for customary marriages
Nauru	No information	
New Zealand	18	
Nigeria	18	Does not apply to all states – some allow marriage from puberty; also conflicting constitutional provision
Pakistan	16 (F) 18 (M)	
Papua New Guinea	16 (F) 18 (M)	Court can grant permission: 14 (F) 16 (M)
Rwanda	21	Exception can be granted by Minister of Justice if over 18
Saint Kitts and Nevis	No information	
Saint Lucia	18	16 with parental consent
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	No information	
Samoa	16 (F) 18 (M)	
Seychelles	15-17(F) 18(M)	Lower with judicial consent
Sierra Leone	18	
Singapore	18	Special marriage licence possible for under 18's
Solomon Islands	15	Not applicable to customary marriages
South Africa	18	
Sri Lanka	18	No minimum age under Muslim personal laws
Swaziland	21	16 (F) 18 (M) with parental consent; under-16 for girls with consent of Deputy Prime Minister
Tonga	No information	
Trinidad and Tobago	18	12 (F) 14 (M) with parental consent
Tuvalu	16	
Uganda	18	
United Kingdom	18	16 with parental consent
United Republic of Tanzania	15 (F) 18 (M)	
Vanuatu	16 (F) 18 (M)	
Zambia	21	Exceptions under customary law

Appendix 2: Gender Parity in Education

Commonwealth Gender Parity Index (GPI) Positions[106]

Commonwealth Country	GPI Primary		GPI Secondary	
	1991	2011	1991	2011
Antigua and Barbuda	…	0.93	0.92	0.98
Australia	1	0.99	1	0.95
Bahamas	0.97	1.02	0.99	1.05
Bangladesh	…	1.06	0.99	1.17
Barbados	1.04	0.98	1.12	1.12
Belize	0.91	0.97	1.07	…
Botswana	1	0.96	1.07	…
Brunei Darussalam	0.95	1.01	1.09	1.02
Cameroon	0.82	0.87	0.84	0.84
Canada	1	1	1.02	0.98
Cyprus	1	1	1.03	1.01
Dominica	1.02	0.99	1.33	1.07
Fiji 0.99	1	1.11	1.08	
Ghana	0.93	0.95	0.81	0.9
Grenada	0.97	0.97	…	1.03
Guyana	1.01	1.04	1.01	1.1
India	0.84	1	0.7	0.92
Jamaica	1	0.95	1.01	1.03
Kenya	0.97	0.98	0.96	0.9
Kiribati	1.01	1.04	1.23	…
Lesotho	1.08	0.97	1.36	1.4
Malawi	0.96	1.04	0.7	0.91
Malaysia	0.98	…	1.08	1.07
Maldives	1.01	0.98	1.08	…
Malta	1	1.01	0.85	0.89
Mauritius	…	0.99	0.98	…
Mozambique	0.74	0.91	0.63	0.89
Namibia	1.01	0.99	1.12	…
Nauru	1.33	…	1.17	…
New Zealand	1	1	1.05	1.05
Nigeria	0.81	0.91	0.91	0.88
Pakistan	0.67	0.82	…	0.73
Papua New Guinea	0.86	…	…	…
Rwanda	0.98	1.03	1.01	1.05
Saint Kitts and Nevis	1.02	1.02	1.04	1.04
Saint Lucia	0.95	0.98	1.26	0.97
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	0.95	0.93	1.34	1.02
Samoa	0.98	1.04	1.11	1.15
Seychelles	1	1	1.04	1.12
Sierra Leone	0.89	0.93	0.68	…
Singapore	…	…	…	…
Solomon Islands	0.94	0.99	0.76	0.88
South Africa	0.95	0.96	1.13	1.05
Sri Lanka	0.99	0.99	…	1.04
Swaziland	0.96	0.9	1	0.97
Tonga	0.95	…	1.14	…
Trinidad and Tobago	0.99	0.97	1.09	…
Tuvalu	1.02	…	1.1	…
Uganda	0.9	1.02	0.76	0.82
United Kingdom	1	0.99	1.01	1.01
United Republic of Tanzania	1	1.03	…	0.87
Vanuatu	0.98	0.95	0.88	1.02
Zambia	0.92	0.99	…	… [107]

[106] 1 = equal ratio of boys and girls in education.
Less than 1 equals fewer girls than boys in education. More than 1 equals more girls than boys in education.

[107] Figures taken from United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). (2014) 'Gender Parity Index', *Millennium Development Goals Indicators:*

1. Primary Level Enrolment. Available at: http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/SeriesDetail.aspx?srid=611
2. Secondary Level Enrolment. Available at: http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/SeriesDetail.aspx?srid=613

Appendix 3: Education Spending

Commonwealth Education Spending as a Percentage of Gross National Product (GNP)*

Commonwealth Country	Education Financing (% GNP)		Increase / Decrease
	1991	2011	
Antigua and Barbuda	3.4	2.6	D
Australia	5	5.3	I
Bahamas	2.9	…	NA
Bangladesh	2.3	2.1	D
Barbados	5.3	7.7	I
Belize	5.7	7.1	I
Botswana	…	8.2	NA
Brunei Darussalam	4.9	2	D
Cameroon	2.1	3.3	I
Canada	5.9	5.6	D
Cyprus	5.3	7.5	I
Dominica	5.5	3.6	D
Fiji	5.3	4.3	D
Ghana	4.2	8.5	I
Grenada	…	…	NA
Guyana	9.3	3.6	D
India	4.4	3.3	D
Jamaica	5.2	6.7	I
Kenya	5.4	6.7	I
Kiribati	6.7	…	NA
Lesotho	10.9	10.2	D
Malawi	5.1	5.5	I
Malaysia	6.1	5.3	D
Maldives	…	3.6	NA
Malta	…	5.9	NA
Mauritius	4	3.6	D
Mozambique	3.8	…	NA
Namibia	7.9	8.4	I
Nauru	…	…	NA
New Zealand	7.1	7.6	I
Nigeria	…	…	NA
Pakistan	2.6	2.3	D
Papua New Guinea	…	…	NA
Rwanda	4.6	4.8	I
Saint Kitts and Nevis	4.9	…	NA
Saint Lucia	7.7	4.6	D
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	7.2	5.3	D
Samoa	4.5	6.3	I
Seychelles	5.5	…	NA
Sierra Leone	5.1	3.7	D
Singapore	3.3	3.4	I
Solomon Islands	2.3	8.9	I
South Africa	6.2	6.1	D
Sri Lanka	…	2	NA
Swaziland	4.9	8.8	I
Tonga	5.2	…	NA
Trinidad and Tobago	3.9	…	NA
Tuvalu	…	…	NA
Uganda	2.5	3.4	I
United Kingdom	4.5	5.5	I
United Republic of Tanzania	…	6.3	NA
Vanuatu	6.3	5.4	D
Zambia	2	1.5	D

[108] UNESCO. (2013) Statistical Table 9.

Girls at Plan-supported school - Omur Black

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