

UNFPA-UNICEF
Global Programme to
End Child Marriage

Protecting girls
from child marriage
during COVID-19
and always
Stories of change



**end
child
marriage**
A voice. A chance. A future.



”

One day we will definitely end child marriage

The quote is by Sandhya Saroj, an 18-year-old child rights activist from India, from the high-level side event hosted by the Governments of Canada and Zambia in partnership with the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage in September 2020, on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly.

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#EndChildMarriage

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Maina Dey in India was 16 when she escaped the marriage her parents had arranged for her in 2019, thanks to the help she received through a child marriage support telephone hotline.



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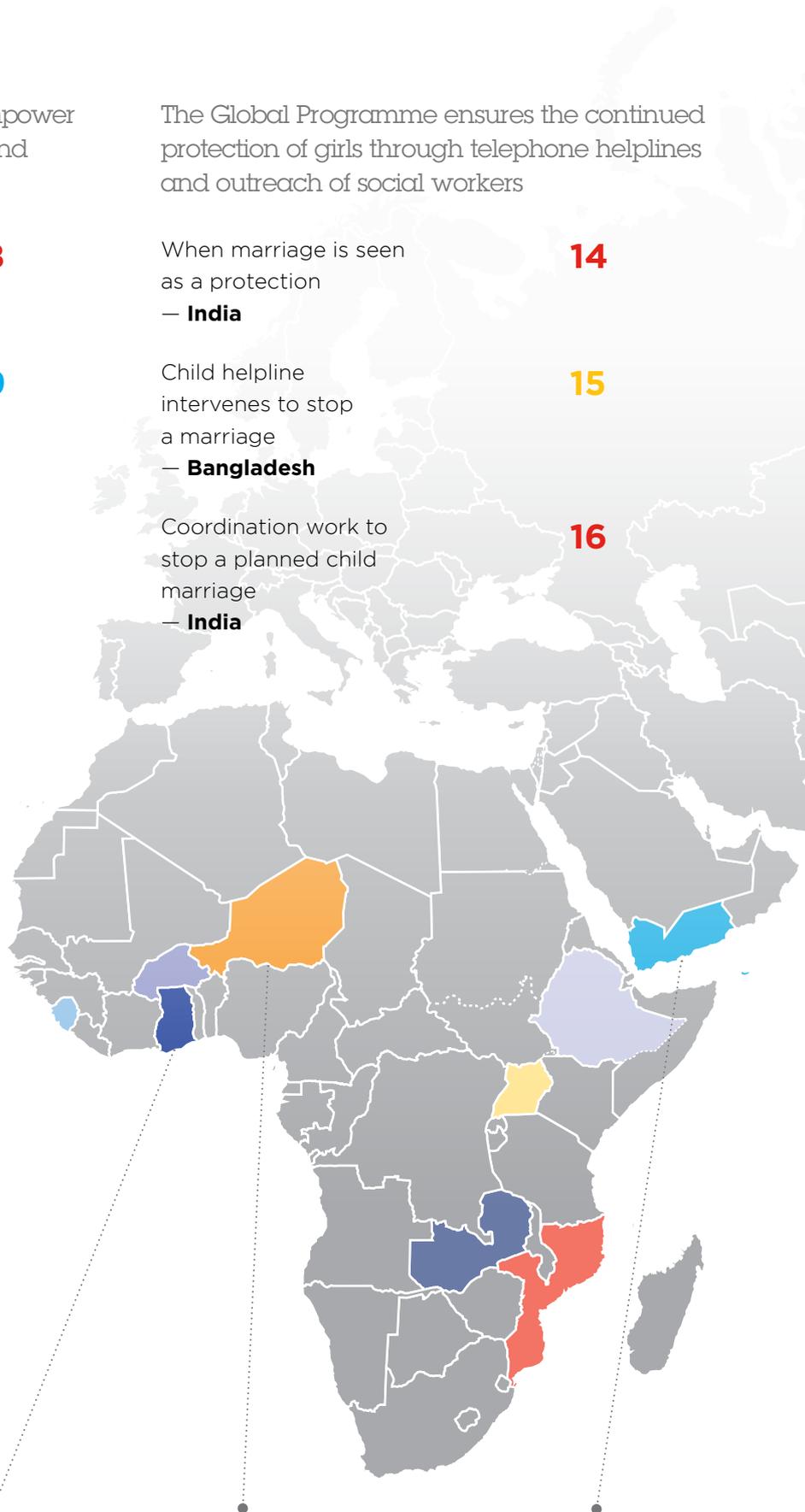
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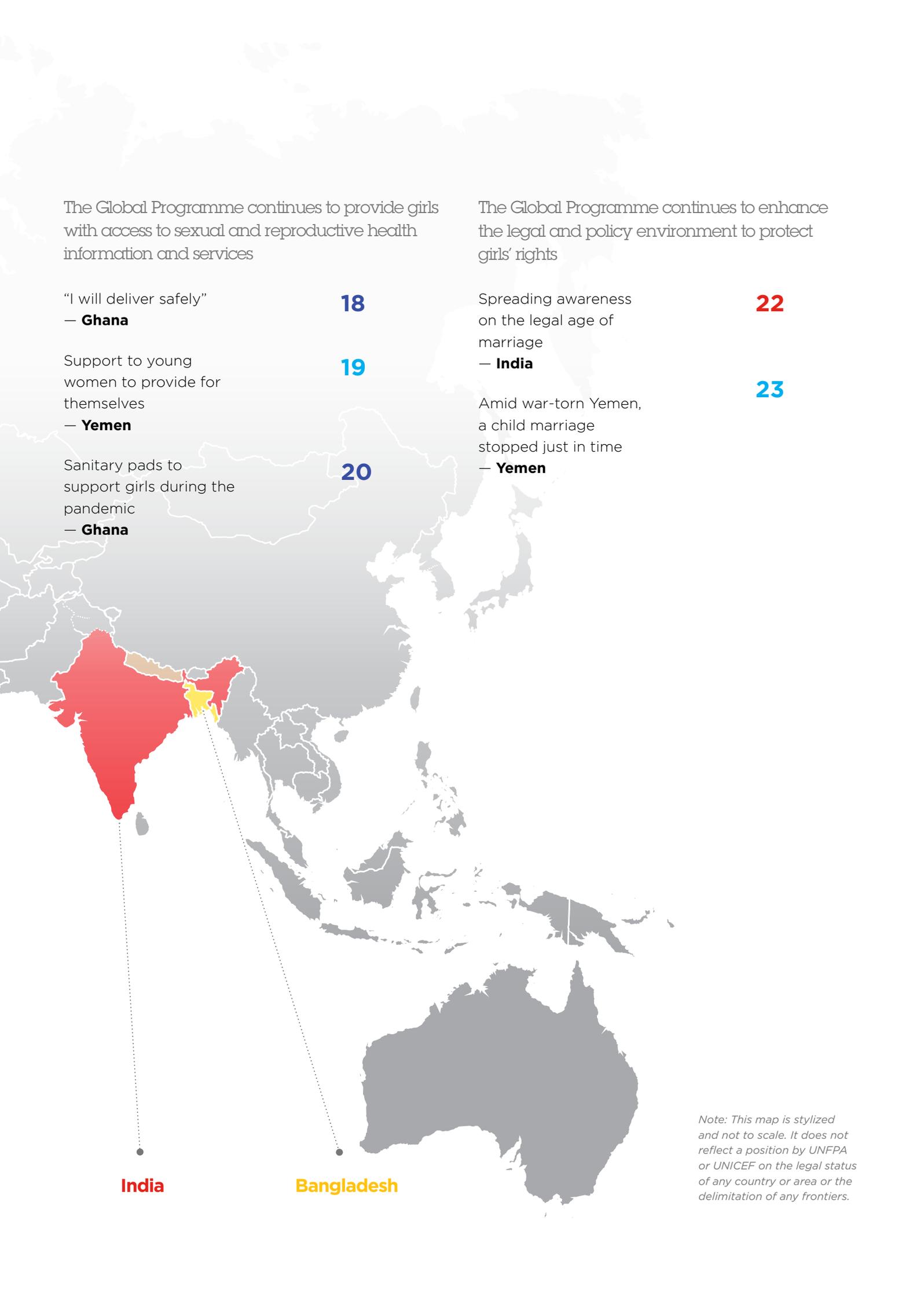
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Note: This map is stylized and not to scale. It does not reflect a position by UNFPA or UNICEF on the legal status of any country or area or the delimitation of any frontiers.

INTRODUCTION

We work to end the practice of child marriage. We promote the right to delay marriage. We care for those already married. We do whatever it takes to give girls and boys a voice, educate them, offer them opportunities, and keep them safe and healthy. And we never give up.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) – United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Global Programme to End Child Marriage is implemented in 12 countries with a high prevalence and/or high burden of child marriage: Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Mozambique, Nepal, the Niger, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Yemen and Zambia.

The Global Programme focuses on five strategies for increased impact:

- 1.** Create and expand opportunities for the empowerment of adolescent girls
- 2.** Promote a supportive and gender equal family and community environment
- 3.** Strengthen governance to prevent child marriage
- 4.** Enhance sustainability and impact of child marriage programmes
- 5.** Build partnerships.

Through these strategies we aim to make sure that adolescent girls at risk of and affected by child marriage are effectively making their own informed decisions and choices regarding marriage, education, and sexual and reproductive health; that relevant sectoral systems and institutions effectively respond to the needs of adolescent girls and their families; and that there is enhanced legal and political response to prevent child marriage and to support pregnant, married, divorced or widowed adolescent girls.

For all girls, a voice, a chance and a future.

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, which began as a health crisis, quickly became a child rights crisis. The pandemic, and measures put in place to limit its spread, have had adverse socioeconomic impacts on communities around the world, and risks progress on the Sustainable Development Goals – which the global community has committed to achieving by 2030 – including to end child, early and forced marriage under target 5.3. Recent data show that an additional 10 million girls risk becoming child brides in the next decade as a result of the pandemic. Hence, it is more important than ever that we reimagine approaches to protect girls and accelerate action to end child marriage, supporting interventions that address the context of the current crisis and build the resilience of girls and their families to respond to future potential crises – in line with the Sustainable Development Goals during this Decade of Action.

This publication highlights stories of some of the girls who have been reached by various interventions supported by the Global Programme to End Child Marriage during COVID-19 in 2020. The stories show how the Global Programme has continued to:

- Empower girls to know their rights, be educated and speak up in their communities
- Ensure the protection of girls through telephone helplines and outreach of social workers
- Provide girls with access to sexual and reproductive health information and services
- Enhance the legal and policy environment to protect girls’ rights

To learn more about the Global Programme, visit [our website](#), follow us on Twitter and Instagram ([@GPChildMarriage](#)) or contact GPChildMarriage@unicef.org.

THE GLOBAL PROGRAMME HAS CONTINUED TO EMPOWER GIRLS TO KNOW THEIR RIGHTS, BE EDUCATED AND SPEAK UP IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

“

Every time I found myself feeling a failure or feeling down, I would think about the activities of the Adolescent Club and what they taught me: ... always lift my head up. I am happy that I am now raising my voice and taking the initiative to stop child marriage in my community.

Bina Akter, 18, is part of the Harjya Bari Adolescent Club in Islampur, Jamalpur, Mymensingh, Bangladesh

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Empowered, and agent for change in her village

Subharti* from Borapada village of Dhenkanal district of Odisha, India, was 16 years old in 2016 and studying in the intermediate class.

One day, she found out that her parents were going to solemnize her marriage against her will due to pressure from relatives and the poor economic condition of the family.

However, Subharti stated her aspirations to her parents: that she wanted to become a lawyer and did not want to give in to their pressure to marry. After a series of arguments and attempts to explain to her parents the harmful effects of getting married at such an early age, Subharti was able to convince them to not make her marry at age 16.

Subharti says that her inspiration to say no came from initiatives by UNICEF and ActionAid on the need to end child marriage and empower adolescents, the Balya bibaha pratirodh manchnow programme which is working towards ensuring that girls stay in school and get married only after they have reached the minimum legal age.

Subharti is today an active member of the programme in her home district of Dhenkanal, participating in different training activities and meetings on adolescent empowerment and child marriage. Currently, she is involved in creating awareness among adolescents not to marry at an early age, that they should understand the importance of education and, more importantly, higher education. She is creating awareness on the effects and legal consequences of child

marriage within her locality, and is a true champion, inspiration and role model for many adolescent girls.

Subharti is continuously working to increase awareness on sanitation, physical distancing and wearing of masks to prevent COVID-19. “I am actively involved in the COVID-19 response work,” she says. “I got relevant information from the Anganwadi [rural childcare centre in India] worker of my village about the importance of hand washing, social distancing and the use of masks, and basic information about the virus. I feel privileged to be a part of this work and serve my village and I feel happy to see that the villagers are giving a positive response. I have also been supporting the ‘preschool kid to learn’ through Ghare Ghare Arunima programme. I feel proud and happy when I see the smiles on the faces of children while reciting songs and telling stories during my engagement in the programme. The local community has greater acceptance of me and of my leadership as I belong to their own community.”

*** Name changed to protect her identity.**

Girls in Purulia district, West Bengal, India, raise awareness on child marriage through creating a human chain in January 2019.

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Transformation through life-skills

Tasnim is a 14-year-old girl, currently in eighth grade at school. She lives in Bani Al Awam District, Hajjah Governorate, in Yemen. Tasnim is a shy girl and does not feel comfortable speaking in public. However, when she was at risk of being married to her cousin by her father, she joined the life-skills programme available in her school.

Through the sessions of the programme, Tasnim feels she has been transformed. She has gained new skills and discovered interests in art, poetry and music. Through sustained advocacy with her father, using the negotiation skills she acquired from the life-skills sessions, Tasnim was able to convince him to cancel the planned marriage.

Today, Tasnim is not only an advocate for herself, but she has also worked with social workers in her community to help another 12 adolescent girls to return to school in September 2020. She has become a champion for awareness-raising among her peers and in her community on the harms of child marriage and of dropping out of school early.



A champion for awareness-raising among her peers and in her community on the harms of child marriage and of dropping out of school early.

Tseganesh Dansa in Boloso Bombe woreda, Southern Nations Nationalities and People's region, Ethiopia, is happy that her parents support her not to get married young, but to stay in school.

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Girls intervening to stop their peers' marriages

Education around life-skills, human rights and communication carried out in the regions of Maradi, Tahoua and Zinder in the Niger has increased the capacity of adolescent girls to protect themselves and their peers against child marriage.

Thanks to the education, the girls are increasingly able to influence decision-making processes in their communities and they sensitize their peers through door-to-door visits and participatory community workshops where they share their knowledge. Supervised by qualified community facilitators, they also represent adolescent girls in the local child protection committees, to ensure that their interests are taken into account.

Safiya Ibrahim from Maradi Region is one of these girls. Safiya is 15 years old and a member of the child protection committee in her village. "I feel very useful in the community because I intervene a lot with the committee to raise awareness about child marriage. Things have really changed since becoming a 'protection correspondent'. I feel proud to be able to help my friends and sisters, and all my friends respect me and want to chat with me to benefit from the messages I am sharing."

Thanks to the actions and interventions of the girls, more than 700 cases of child marriage were annulled or postponed in 2020, despite the COVID-19 pandemic.



I feel proud to be able to help my friends and sisters.



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Students in front of Hamani Goussou school in Niamey, the Niger, on the first day of school after months of closures due to COVID-19.

How school can build a girl's confidence



The story of 14-year-old Salmu Alhassan is common to many children who are born with a disability in Ghana. For these children, enjoying their human rights, including their right to education and their right to be protected from harmful practices such as child marriage, is not a given reality.

Salmu, born in Yoggu community in Tolon District of Ghana, is a girl with both hearing and speech impairments. Her parents, Alhassan Fuseini and Salima Sandema Naa – both of whom are farmers – discovered Salmu's impairments when she was a toddler. They took her to various health-care facilities to seek help but without results. Because of family financial constraints, Salmu was not able to go to school – she became very shy and timid, and often kept to herself.

Salmu's father, Alhassan Fuseini, tells how the story changed for Salmu:

“

One day, a non-governmental organization called NORSAAC [Northern Sector Action on Awareness Centre] had a meeting in our community and all the children attended. When Salmu was asked a question and she could not answer, she began to cry. The local organization staff facilitating the meeting came home with my daughter. Ever since that day various partners have collaborated to ensure that my daughter enjoys her right to education and to a better future. NORSAAC referred Salmu's case to the Department of Social Welfare, which facilitated the process for her enrolment in school with the Ghana Education Service.



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Final-year students in Ghana prepare for examinations during COVID-19.

Through the Promoting Adolescent Safe Spaces (PASS) project, implemented by NORSAAC in Northern, North East and Savannah regions under the Global Programme, many vulnerable adolescent girls now have an opportunity to build networks of support, strengthen their skills and knowledge about their rights, and learn how to access the services that they need. According to Nancy Yeri, Programme Officer with NORSAAC, the organization linked with the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development and the Special Education Unit of the Ghana Education Service in Tolon District in November 2019 to ensure that Salmu could be admitted to Savelugu School for the Deaf. The District Director of Social Welfare and Community Development encourages parents of children with disabilities to collaborate with partner organizations to ensure that the children can enjoy their rights and that they can reach their full potential.

“

This change [being enrolled in school] has made Salmu very happy. Salmu is now able to socialize with family members, since she has been back home after the closure of schools in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Nancy Yeri,
Programme Officer, NORSAAC**

“

I went to visit Salmu while she was in school and she did not cry, neither did she show any sign that she wanted to go back home with me. My daughter is happy, and the family is happy too.

**Alhassan Fuseini,
Salmu's father**

THE GLOBAL PROGRAMME HAS ENSURED THE CONTINUED PROTECTION OF GIRLS THROUGH TELEPHONE HELPLINES AND OUTREACH OF SOCIAL WORKERS

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When marriage is seen as a protection



On 26 April 2020, a marriage was planned in Jatav Mohalla, Maniya, Shivpuri district, Madhya Pradesh, India. The bride-to-be was Neetu, a 17-year-old girl.

Neetu's family are marginalized, landless and poor, living in a thatched house. Her father, Sunderlal, is dead, and her mother and younger brother are daily wage workers, while Neetu stays at home and takes care of household chores. Both Neetu and her brother are school dropouts; Neetu dropped out of education to take care of her sister who was living with disabilities, before she died two years ago.

Neetu is aware of the legal age of marriage in India but did not oppose the planned marriage as she has been frightened by some incidences of molestation in her neighbourhood. When her mother and brother must go to work, she remains at home alone, which poses a threat to her safety. Further, her grandmother had wished for her to get married. Because of this, when her mother asked for her to get married, Neeta gave her consent.

Since the marriage was planned during the COVID-19-induced lockdown, special permission was required from the Sub-Divisional Magistrate to be allowed to host any type of social ceremony, such as

a wedding. In the application to the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Neetu's mother gave a false affidavit regarding Neetu's age – and with that the family was given approval to host the wedding.

However, the Anganwadi (rural childcare centre in India) went to the wedding ceremony for age verification and Neeta was found to be a minor. The Sub-Divisional Magistrate was immediately informed, and they gave the order to cancel the marriage ceremony.

A team from Childline (the national child telephone helpline), the police and the Department of Women and Child Development arrived at the wedding ceremony to make sure the marriage was not going to take place and to provide counselling to Neetu and her mother.

During counselling by officers from Childline, Neetu expressed a desire to learn and practise stitching work. Bearing this in mind, and with the aim of providing her with vocational skills to create alternatives for her life beyond child marriage, the Department of Women and Child Development provided a sewing machine for Neetu to work towards her dreams.

Child helpline intervenes to stop a marriage

Sixteen-year-old Surma lives in the district of Bhola, a remote part of Bangladesh. She has always wanted to study to be able to find a good job – full of dreams for her future.

However, Surma's father is a farmer and, because of his low income, he has never been very keen on letting Surma continue her education.

One day, the Child Helpline of the Department of Social Services received a call saying that a child marriage was about to take place within an hour – around 9:30 in the evening. While gathering information about the situation, the helpline team found out that a marriage of the girl had been stopped once before by the mobile team of the helpline together with a local government representative, a child affairs police officer and a social services officer. However, since the nationwide COVID-19 lockdown, the family had thought that they could use the situation and secretly get their daughter married.

Despite the lockdown, when the information of the impending child marriage came to the attention of the team, the local chairman, a social services officer and a child affairs police officer accompanied by a government administrative officer, took prompt steps to save the girl.

The team went to the remote area – in the dark of night, during the lockdown and in heavy rainfall – to stop the marriage. As soon as they arrived at the spot, the groom and his family ran away.

The administrative officer held discussions with Surma's family, with the family emphasizing the tough situation they had been and still were in, and how they had already spent a lot of money on the wedding. However, after the administrative officer explained the harmful consequences of child marriage, Surma's family promised to not try to have her married before she is an adult.

As the promise was made, the administrative officer left the house around 11 p.m. However, Surma's family did not keep their promise – rather they broke it the same night, when it was even darker at 2 a.m. With this, Surma's dreams for the future were further away than ever before.



Adolescents in Jamalpur, Bangladesh, have gathered to listen to a radio programme on education and health issues.

Shortly after, the Child Helpline again received information about Surma's case and administrative officers reached out to the family again – expressing how they put Surma's life and future in danger because of the decision to have her married as a child. Surma's father explained that how, due to the COVID-19 emergency, it had become hard for him to bear all the expenses of the family. He felt sorry for the situation but did not see any alternative given his financial situation – the economic conditions of the family had forced him to make the decision.

At last, considering the age of Surma and the external factors, the administration felt obliged to approve the marriage under certain conditions. These included that Surma must be able to continue with her education and the newlywed couple must not plan on having children until Surma is at least 18 years old. Both families accepted all the conditions. To ensure that these are all met, social service officers continue to keep in touch with the family to help ensure Surma and her dreams are protected.

Coordination work to stop a planned child marriage

Anita* is around 13 years old and lives with her family in Chandan block of Banka district, Bihar, India. Her family consists of her father Raju, a daily wage worker, and her mother Sonamani Devi, as well as her two younger brothers and one younger sister. Anita has never gone to school, and the family is living in a vulnerable situation, living only on the daily wage of Anita's father. Because of this, Anita's parents felt the need to marry off their oldest daughter, to ease the financial burden of the family. Hence, a wedding was arranged in the nearby location of Bakua More.

On 24 March, the 'Vikas Mitra' (meaning 'development friend', a person assigned to connect households with government officials administering social welfare programmes) of the panchayat (village council) found out about the impending marriage planned for the following day. The Vikas Mitra contacted the Block Welfare Officer in Chandan who in turn contacted ActionAid's District Coordinator. Together, they informed Childline, the national child telephone helpline, the Mahila helpline, the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (official head of the district sub-division), the District Development Council and the Block Development Officer, requesting them to act.

Despite the national COVID-19-induced lockdown, teams from the Childline, the Block Development Officer, the Circle Officer, the Station House Office and the police rushed to the home of Anita and her family. Together, they informed Anita's parents

about the illegality of marrying off their daughter before age 18, and the harms that might come to her with child marriage. Speaking to the outreach team, Anita's parents apologized to her for the plans they had made – coming from unawareness and ignorance of the potential consequences of their action – and signed an agreement stating that they will not marry off their daughters before they turn 18 years old, but rather give them the opportunity to go to school and grow.

*** Name changed to protect her identity.**

Girls from the Kanyashree Club in West Bengal, India, where they are participating in life-skills sessions for their empowerment.

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THE GLOBAL PROGRAMME HAS CONTINUED TO PROVIDE GIRLS WITH ACCESS TO SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH INFORMATION AND SERVICES

“

I'm much better after getting health and psychological support and I am going to continue my studies and learn a career that helps me support myself and my family.

Rania, 16, is a mother of a child with disabilities in Yemen.

© UNICEF/UNI1287347/Mostafa

I will deliver safely



Counselling session with Ikamah Abdul-Rakib (in blue dress and face mask) and her family members, led by Enock Turkson, community health nurse with Pusuga Community-based Health Planning and Service.

Ikamah Abdul-Rakib is a teenage girl from Pusuga, a community in Nanumba North Municipal District, Northern Region, Ghana. At age 17, when she was in form 3 at Bimbilla Junior High School, Ikamah got pregnant.

Ikamah is part of the Safety Net Programme implemented in the country with the financial support of the Government of the Netherlands. As part of the programme activities, community health nurses at the Pusuga Community-based Health Planning and Service (CHPS) visit pregnant adolescent girls at their homes, to check up on how they are doing and counsel them and their families on care during pregnancy and childbirth.

“The nurses have been visiting me at home for about two months now. When they first visited me, they talked to me and my husband’s parents about the support I need from them to go through the pregnancy till I deliver. They told me I should eat well and take all the medicines the nurse gave me. I learned a lot that day because I was new to some of the things. My husband and in-laws equally learned a lot that day and they now know how to support me through my pregnancy,” Ikamah said.

Before the visit of the nurse, Ikamah was not attending the antenatal clinic, even when she was feeling unwell. Her husband was always busy with his work as a tractor operator and did not make time for her. Even when she persistently asked him to take her to the health-care facility, he came up with excuses why he could not join her, and she ended up not going at all. After the community health nurse started visiting her at home, the situation changed.

“

My husband is now always available and accompanies me to the clinic. He even gives me eggs and fruits to eat and supports me with house chores. Had it not been for the intervention of this programme, I do not know what would have become of me and my pregnancy. I now attend antenatal care regularly. I am confident I will deliver safely, and I believe my baby will come out healthy as well.

Ikamah said

In the future, Ikamah dreams of becoming a hair-dresser. To the programme and the health workers of Pusuga CHPS, she expressed “Npaaya,” meaning ‘I am grateful’.

Support to young women to provide for themselves

Halima, 21 years old, got married when she was only 13. Her father married her away not only because of customs and traditions present in the place where they live in Yemen, but also because of the economic crisis in the country. Halima's father believed that her marriage would be the thing that would help him make some money and ease the family's overall financial burden.

One year into the marriage, Halima gave birth to a child. Thanks to her work with henna engraving, she was able to meet the needs of herself and her baby.

As the war broke out in Hodeidah, Halima, her husband and his family had to flee the conflict and relocated to Raydah District, 'Amran governorate, where her husband had relatives. Soon, she gave birth to her second baby. Halima's life became more difficult after she was displaced with her husband and his parents, being away from her own family. She was subjected to violence from her parents-in-law and also her husband started treating her violently.

Later Halima's husband divorced her because of economic circumstances, after physically abusing her throughout the marriage. The constant violence Halima was subjected to caused her to develop psychological and health problems.

After her divorce, Halima attended an awareness session about child marriage arranged by the

Yemen Women Union in the camp for internally displaced persons. She was then referred to receive the health services she needed, and was provided medication, attended training courses and learned many life-skills. After the training, Halima chose to pursue her earlier interest in doing henna engraving as a profession to make a living. Psychosocial support sessions have helped Halima improve her mental health, and she still takes her medication regularly.



Thanks to God, I am very happy because I am able to support myself and I do not need help from people. I work and I make a living [to provide for] myself and my kids.

Halima said about her life now.

Amina*, was forced to leave school and marry as a child. But today, she is divorced and an advocate against child marriage in her community in Yemen.

© UNICEF/UNI337488/

Sanitary pads to support girls during the pandemic



Firdaus Tawiah (centre) with her two friends holding their three-month supplies of sanitary pads and soap.

Firdaus, 16, is an adolescent girl residing in Ekumpoano in Ekumfi District of Ghana's Central Region.

She lives with her parents and four siblings. The team met her during a community-based mentorship session with adolescent girls at Ekumpoano. She expressed her joy for the dignity kit intervention carried out by the non-governmental organization International Needs Ghana (INGH) to support girls in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“

I never dreamt of this intervention. Buying a pad for 7 cedis* every month has not been easy. Sometimes I buy sanitary pads from the savings I do with the little my parents give me to spend in school, but due to the COVID-19 crisis, there have been disruptions in the economic activities of my parents. This has made it very difficult for them to give me money as they used to. This [support] will help me the next three months.

said Firdaus Tawiah

* About 1.2 US dollars

THE GLOBAL PROGRAMME HAS CONTINUED TO ENHANCE THE LEGAL AND POLICY ENVIRONMENT TO PROTECT GIRLS' RIGHTS

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GIRLS NEED TO
STUDY DON'T MARRY
THEM OFF

Spreading awareness on the legal age of marriage

Neha D/o Ramesh Patel, 17, lives in Madhya Pradesh, India. Neha is a school dropout after she failed to pass her high school exams and had to leave her studies. She is now restricted to her house and manages household chores. In 2019, after the elopement of her elder sister, Nikita, and the death of her mother due to leukaemia, relatives of Neha pressured her father to marry her off as soon as possible. Her father is a farmer with one acre (0.4 hectares) of land, working together with Neha's younger brother who is also a school dropout. Hence, the marriage of Neha was planned for 12 June 2020.

The marriage was stopped thanks to a proactive intervention of the District Administration. Neha's father told them that he is illiterate and did not know about the law against child marriage. He stated that after the elopement of his older daughter, Neha is not allowed to go out alone and if she wants to go to the market or some other place, her grandmother, aunt or another member of the family accompanies her. However, the District Administration team oriented him on the law during their intervention, and he agreed to postpone the marriage of Neha for another year.

Neha, on the other hand, said that she was aware of the legal age of marriage, but she did not resist or try to stop the marriage as her grandmother was unwell and had wished for Neha to marry.

“

Time has changed now, and it is difficult to handle adolescents. The fear of elopement and threats by adolescents to commit suicide are frightening. But laws are made for the social good and have to be followed by everyone.

said Neha's father

In 2019, district authorities in Parbatpur Vidyapith, West Bengal, India, stopped the planned marriage of then 16-year old Rakhi Ghosh, and supported her to go back to school.

© UNICEF/UN0331567/DBS

Amid war-torn Yemen, a child marriage stopped just in time

Maram and Nedal are two young girls living with their parents in Ibb, Yemen. Maram is 10 years old and Nedal is 8 years old.

Their mother has always had fights with their father who wanted to use their young daughters to get money by marrying them off. After divorcing Maram from her first husband-to-be, the father planned to marry her off to a 53-year-old man for a great deal of money.

Child marriage has long been a scourge in Yemen, one of the few countries in the region without a legal minimum age of marriage. In a 2013 survey, nearly 32 per cent of women aged 20 to 24 said they were married before reaching 18, and more than 9 per cent were married before age 15.

"I just divorced Maram from her last husband and married her off to another rich man," the father told his wife.

According to a recent report, child marriage has also increased as the devastation of the ongoing war has worsened and an estimated 14 million people face famine.

As a young girl, Maram did not understand anything of what her father was saying; however, her mother's face made her feel that a bad thing was going to happen.

“

I always had fights with my husband who insists on using his young daughters to get money by marrying them off due to the difficult living conditions.

Maram's mother told the Yemen Women Union

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"I want to tell the world that we girls are capable of doing many things that you thought we couldn't. I've heard boys say that we are useless, and we're only created to work in the home. But I know that girls have the same rights in society. We have the right to work and to education, the right to be protected from violence, the right to vote, and the right to be protected from early marriage and the right of choice when it comes to choosing the right partner."

Ahed, 18, lives in Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan.

During the conflict, women's and girls' welfare has deteriorated in every sense. Judicial and social institutions have broken down, and 1.83 million children have lost access to school, including over 830,000 girls. Without an education or social protection, many child brides have nowhere to turn.

However, this time Maram's mother decided not to let it happen. She could not bear to see her daughter getting abused for the sake of money. So, she escaped to the local authority with her two daughters to report about her husband and the planned illegal marriage of her daughter.

Upon reporting, the local authority transferred them to the Yemen Women Union, and the mother and her daughters were safely moved to one of the Yemen Women Union shelters, supported by UNFPA, to ensure they are protected from the father and the planned marriage.

These types of cases are known to take a long time before action is taken. However, the Yemen Women Union, in cooperation with the security and judicial authorities, provided Maram with legal support which resulted in her father being forced to dissolve the marriage and sign a commitment on not marrying off his daughters until they are older and have the possibility to choose for themselves.

On the way back to their home, the first thing Maram and her sister Nedal did was to call their friends so they could play together – allowed to be the children they really are.



One day, my father came and told me that I would be getting married. He said it is only for my sake, and that the husband's home is a better place for me.

recalled Maram.



I am going to do anything, anything to make this marriage stop.

declared Maram's mother.



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