MEASURING PROGRESS

Recommended Indicators For *Girls Not Brides* Members Working To Address Child Marriage

A USER'S GUIDE

Developed with support from the Aspen Planning and Evaluation Program at The Aspen Institute

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1. INTRODUCTION

Girls Not Brides is a global partnership of more than 500 members from over 70 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and the Americas united by a commitment to end child marriage. In 2014, *Girls Not Brides* developed a common Theory of Change to End Child Marriage with input from over 150 members and other experts. The Theory of Change articulates not only our vision - a world without child marriage where girls and women enjoy equal status with boys and men and are able to achieve their full potential in all aspects of their lives - but also the intermediate steps needed to make progress along the way.

Tracking progress towards achieving this ambitious vision can often seem daunting for practitioners, donors and even evaluators. Measuring complex changes in social norms, or changes in the capacity of organisations working to address child marriage, can be particularly difficult. Yet carefully thinking through the appropriate indicators helps us all to assess and record advances towards changes in policies, attitudes, and behaviours related to child marriage and the welfare of married girls, and whether our programmatic interventions and policy priorities are focused in the right areas.

Many *Girls Not Brides* members are working towards achieving outcomes and results mentioned in the Theory of Change through their programmes or advocacy efforts. Some have come across measurement challenges when trying to understand the impact of their work. To help advance the discussion on evaluating progress, *Girls Not Brides* commissioned the Aspen Planning and Evaluation Program to develop a Menu of Recommended Indicators to help measure intermediate progress towards ending child marriage.

This short user guide explains how to read the Menu of Recommended Indicators and offers practical tips for how *Girls Not Brides* members can use it in their work. The Menu of Recommended Indicators can be found on the *Girls Not Brides* website. In addition, you may be interested in learning more about how the Theory of Change was developed and is being used (*Girls Not Brides* Theory of Change to End Child Marriage and User Guide).

To send feedback or comments on these resources, please contact info@GirlsNotBrides.org

2. THE MENU OF RECOMMENDED INDICATORS ON CHILD MARRIAGE

The Menu of Recommended Indicators has been designed as:

▶ **A tool for *Girls Not Brides* members and national partnerships to support your learning and evaluation work.** It can help you think about the most useful and practical indicators for your organisation and your context, and supplement existing monitoring and evaluation frameworks. You may also find the Menu useful in tracking progress, learning from successes and challenges, focusing your work and supporting your advocacy efforts.

▶ **A resource to inform discussion around national level indicators and national strategy development.** To date, there has been no consensus about the best indicators to show intermediate progress towards addressing child marriage. The indicators in the Menu present a starting point for further discussion, and to build consensus around the most relevant and useful indicators for tracking intermediate progress towards ending child marriage and empowering married girls within their own contexts.

▶ **A resource for donors to be able to track progress towards the longer term goals of ending child marriage and ensuring girls can thrive.** It is important to note, however, that this Menu does not present a judgement on the relative value of some indicators or programmatic activities over others.

Grounded in the *Girls Not Brides* common Theory of Change, a global overview of what needs to be done to address child marriage, the Menu of Recommended Indicators is the first comprehensive resource collating intermediate indicators to address child marriage and support married girls. It is not intended to be a definitive guide, but rather a starting point which we can build on over time, especially as our understanding evolves on how to measure progress towards ending child marriage and social norms related to the value of girls.

The Menu of Recommended Indicators is organised into three main parts:

1. Indicators that directly measure the prevalence of child marriage. These can be used to understand the situation of child marriage in different countries.

2. Indicators that are useful for strategic planning and advocacy. These include national indicators, for example, for measuring gender inequality, female employment, or girls' secondary school completion, which members and national partnerships may use to plan and prioritise their work on child marriage.
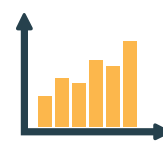
3. Indicators that capture progress toward each of the nineteen outcomes and thirteen results described in the *Girls Not Brides* Theory of Change (organised by strategy: Empower Girls, Mobilise Families and Communities, Provide Services, and Establish and Implement Laws and Policies). These can be used to strengthen monitoring, learning and evaluation frameworks.

All the indicators are accompanied by a suggested data source, as well as brief methodological notes. A list of Online Data Sources is also provided at the end of the Menu of Recommended Indicators with links to publicly available data.

3. USING INDICATORS – PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

Not all indicators will be applicable to every *Girls Not Brides* member; an indicator that is relevant and appropriate for one organisation working in one context may be completely inappropriate for another member. We encourage *Girls Not Brides* members to identify the indicators that are most relevant to your activities and the outcomes and results you are trying to achieve. For example:

A. To help demonstrate **progress**, **impact** and **accountability** in programmes

Used well, properly designed indicators can help you credibly demonstrate progress and impact. They can help you compare your actual results with expected or anticipated results (i.e. performance targets), and document or recognise trends. This in turn helps to ensure accountability both to the people you work with and to your donors. To mobilise additional resources and partners, it is essential to be able to demonstrate progress and accountability.

EXAMPLE: Demonstrating progress towards empowering girls

Imagine you provide safe space clubs for unmarried girls to help increase age of marriage and age of first birth. You select a variety of indicators to help show an increase in the number of girls who access the clubs on a regular basis and that your curriculum is educating girls about their rights and entitlements. You may consider using some of these indicators from the *Girls Not Brides* Menu of Recommended Indicators:

▶ OG1 Indicator: Percentage of girls who know their rights and entitlements.
▶ OG2 Indicator: Percentage of adolescent girls who are members of groups for girls that address life skills, protection, nutrition, health, sexual health and reproductive health rights, gender norms etc.
▶ RG2 Indicator: Percentage of unmarried girls who are confident in their ability to pursue alternatives to child marriage.
▶ RG3 Indicator: Percentage of girls who feel able to say no to sexual activity.

While it would be difficult to show impact on rates of child marriage and early pregnancy, you could show progress towards empowering girls, one of four key strategies highlighted in our global Theory of Change.

It can be particularly difficult to define and measure progress when you are trying to influence social norms underlying the practice of child marriage. Many complex factors can contribute to shifts in community (or national) norms about child marriage and related issues. This makes it particularly challenging to measure a specific organisation's contribution to these changes. The Menu of Recommended Indicators provides examples of indicators which might capture normative change.

Let's walk through an example:

EXAMPLE: Influencing norms around child marriage

▶ OFC3 Indicator: Percentage of individuals who think that people in their community disapprove of child marriage.

Data source: Survey of individuals in the target population.

Let's suppose that your organisation seeks to prevent child marriage by changing people's perceptions of the social norms in their community. Your theory is that, by increasing parents' perceptions that most other parents in the community disapprove of child marriage, you will make them less likely to marry their children early. You might start out by conducting a baseline survey to see what percentage of parents think that other parents in the community disapprove of child marriage before you begin a new intervention. You would then conduct a follow-up survey after the intervention is underway (or completed) to see if you made progress on this indicator.

A potential survey question could ask parents to agree/disagree with the statement: "Most parents in my community disapprove of child marriage." You can use this survey question to calculate the percentage who believe that parents in their community disapprove of child marriage.

When considering intermediate indicators of progress, it is also important to look at the capacity of service providers to do their work well. Capturing changes in service provider's capacity to better understand the needs of girls and work in a way that supports them is a valuable, if often overlooked, endeavour. These changes may not immediately improve the lives of girls or women, but they are all important means to that vital end. Indeed they may be a necessary prerequisite for the success of other activities.

EXAMPLE: Capturing changes in service provider's capacity

Let's say your organisation is working to address child marriage through the education system, knowing that education is a protective factor against child marriage. You notice high school drop out rates among girls who are then married. Yet teachers in the school do not seem to have the knowledge or capacity to act on the problem.

The Menu of Recommended Indicators provides a few examples which organisations might use to measure training activities, such as:

▶ OS1 Indicator: The percentage of schools that have staff trainings and procedures on how to address and take action on VAW/G at school, including reported cases of sexual abuse.
▶ OS3 Indicator: The percentage of service providers in health and education who have received training on child marriage laws, risk factors for child marriage, and how to report law violations.

Indicators which measure steps in the policy change process, including the capacity of organisations to advocate for that policy change are important. Why? Policy change can take years - even decades - to achieve, yet intermediate steps in the policy change process and an organisation's own capacity to advocate, can show that you are moving in the right direction. While the Menu of Recommended Indicators doesn't include such indicators, tools such as the online Advocacy Progress Planner, are also useful in helping advocates who want to plan and evaluate their own advocacy efforts.

B. To plan and prioritise, and support advocacy and communications work

The indicators in Section 2 of the *Girls Not Brides* Menu of Recommended Indicators may provide a good starting point for you to analyse the relationship between your country's development indicators and the local situation of child marriage, which could help you decide where to focus your advocacy efforts. Supporting statistics can also help strengthen your communications and messaging.

EXAMPLES: Using indicators to focus your advocacy efforts

Let's say you are making the case for the importance of targeting married adolescent girls as an underserved group by health services. Your analysis of your country's Gender Inequality Index value reveals that the maternal mortality ratio has dropped but the adolescent fertility rate remains high. That information may help you decide to shift your advocacy priority towards advancing legislation / policies that would improve adolescent access to comprehensive sexuality education or to contraception.

Or imagine you have a strong focus on encouraging secondary school completion. You learn that a new Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) shows a drop in the proportion of women in a specific region with at least some secondary school education. You might use that information to reconsider your messaging strategy in that region, for example countering a perception within the Ministry of Education that girls are receiving adequate schooling.

4. TIPS FOR USING INDICATORS

Well-chosen indicators can help you in your work, but sometimes it can be overwhelming to know how best to choose and use them. When deciding on which indicators work for you, consider the following key issues:

1. Start with your baseline

To be able to say whether something is changing over time, you must gather baseline information – where the indicator stands before the implementation of a programme or activities. Then you can collect more data to assess progress over time.

2. Think about what data you can actually collect

Before conducting your own survey, look out for what data may already be available from other sources. Remember that conducting your own survey can be quite costly so consider carefully if you want to commit to that indicator. If another indicator is used by a government Ministry and they gather and share data every year – and the data are trustworthy – you are in luck!

If you do conduct your own survey, consider different types of survey options. Depending on how many individuals participate in a given programme, it may be very costly to survey all participants. You could consider random sampling (also called probability sampling) when conducting large surveys. If you have a list of the full population of interest (for example, a complete roster of programme participants, or a list of all households or schools in the target area), you could select a random sample to survey and then draw inferences about the broader population based on that random sample.[1]

3. Clearly define the scope of your activities

Think about the geographic scope of your activities and who you want to influence. Are you working with individual girls in one community? Or trying to influence norms in communities across a whole district? Or advocating for policy change at the national level?

Remember: the larger your target audience, the harder it is to determine how much your specific efforts contribute to the results. For example, it would be difficult (often impossible) to show the contribution that a single organisation's efforts made to passage of a national policy or a change in nation-wide public support for ending child marriage. By contrast, if a programme engages with a large proportion of the population in a given community, you can more precisely measure your impact on individual-level and community-level changes.

4. Remember that indicators can answer some, but not all questions

Used well, indicators provide useful information about progress made towards expected or desired results. And they can tell us if we have made no progress at all! They are less helpful for answering questions about why results were or were not achieved, or why unintended results arose. And they can only partially point the way toward actions that may need to be taken to improve results. Perhaps most importantly, indicators should not be used as definitive assessments of programme success or failure; rather, they are usually best used to chart progress and to highlight areas that may need further study and adjustment.

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1   There is no single standard for how large a random sample needs to be; it will vary depending on context, the unit of analysis, and the intended use of the survey data. Generally speaking, the larger your random sample, the more likely you are to capture a representative cross-section of the larger population. But there are diminishing returns the closer your sample size approaches the actual population size.

ANNEX: EVALUATION TERMS AND DEFINITIONS[2]

Baseline: Information collected before or at the start of a project or programme that provides a basis for planning and/or assessing subsequent progress and impact.

Benchmark: A standard against which results are measured.

Data: Information collected and analysed to serve as the basis for conclusions and recommendations.

Evaluation: A systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, programme or policy. Evaluations might be undertaken to (a) improve the performance of existing interventions or policies, (b) assess their effects and impacts, and (c) inform decisions about future programming. Evaluations generally include systematic collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative information.

Goal: The higher-order objective to which a project, programme, or policy is intended to contribute.

Impact: A result or effect that is caused by a project or programme. Impact is often used to refer to higher level effects of a programme that occur in the medium or long term, and can be intended or unintended, and positive or negative.

Indicator: Things that can be counted or measured that provide reliable means to measure progress towards objectives.

Monitoring: The process of checking progress and quality over time. Monitoring is used to inform managers about the progress of an ongoing intervention or programme and to detect problems that may be able to be addressed through corrective actions.

Objective: A statement of what one expects to achieve through one's activities.

Outcomes: In the *Girls Not Brides* Theory of Change, outcomes are conditions and attitudes that need to change before changes in behaviour can be seen.

Results: In the *Girls Not Brides* Theory of Change, results are changes in the behaviour of individual girls, families, communities, and others, which will be necessary to achieve the desired impact.

SMART objectives: A statement of what one expects to achieve that is Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-Bound.

Strategy: A method or plan chosen to bring about a desired goal or solution to a problem.

Theory of Change: A Theory of Change usually describes how and why a programme is expected to work and explains the underlying causal chain or theory that connects the building blocks and ultimate goal. It is often depicted as a map or pathway of change. As one expert says, it is "a roadmap to get you from here to there."

The *Girls Not Brides* Theory of Change serves a slightly different purpose – to unite and support a global movement by outlining the range of approaches needed to end child marriage.

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[2]   The majority of these terms have been adapted from USAID Glossary of Evaluation Terms (2009)