TECHNICAL NOTE ON CONVERGENT PROGRAMMING

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Global Programme to End Child Marriage (the Global Programme) works with many partners to advocate for and support practical actions to end child marriage and promote gender equality and the empowerment of adolescent girls.

This technical note aims to provide practical guidance for the application of key concepts and effective approaches to convergent programming to end child marriage and promote gender equality. This note is evidence based and informed by promising practices of UNFPA and UNICEF. The references provide additional information for a deeper understanding of concepts and programming strategies.

DEFINING CONVERGENT PROGRAMMING

There is general consensus that while single-sector and 'magic bullet' interventions, such as cash transfers and access to education, can accelerate declines in child marriage, they will not be sufficient to end the practice. Convergent, multisectoral and multilevel approaches are central to policy and programming aimed at preventing child marriage and promoting gender-equitable attitudes and behaviours.

In line with this evidence, the Global Programme supports three main pillars of programming related to: individuals and communities; systems and services; and policies and data. In order to promote gender equality and the empowerment

of adolescent girls, the Global Programme supports a multi-pronged approach, with the goal of having services and interventions converge at the level of adolescent girls at the community level. Implementing different sectoral interventions in parallel (e.g., secondary education, adolescent sexual and reproductive health services) does not guarantee that individual adolescent girls will benefit from them. A convergent approach requires multisectoral design, planning, implementation, monitoring and programme coordination between implementing agencies and departments.

DEFINITIONS:

Convergence is the coming together and integration of two or more distinct entities (e.g., sectors, programmes, departments, agencies, or levels of implementation) to work towards a common goal.

Convergent programming refers to meaningful programmatic linkages that work to achieve greater results.

Multisectoral approaches aim to address one problem using different sectors.

Multi-pronged is when several distinct aspects or elements (prongs) converge to attack a common target from different angles.

TYPES OF CONVERGENT PROGRAMMING:

Geographic convergence occurs when multiple actors work jointly on a common issue in selected geographic or administrative areas, providing holistic support across the prevention and protection continuum. Geographic convergence is essential for implementation of the Global Programme at the community level.

Thematic convergence is coordination and integration across sectors, departments, ministries and agencies to build linkages between child marriage and related issues, such as education, sexual and reproductive health, child protection, prevention of gender-based violence (GBV) and humanitarian response. This includes supporting national, provincial and local-level government agencies on cross-sector planning, budgeting and coordination.

Coordination between different levels of government (national, provincial, district, community) and between government and civil society to enhance two-way flow of information, knowledge and accountability.

HOW TO PROMOTE CONVERGENT PROGRAMMING

Convergence throughout the Global Programme programming cycle

PROGRAMME CYCLE STAGES	EXAMPLES OF CONVERGENT PROGRAMMING
Conceptual convergence	**Common conceptual framework and theory of change based on a common understanding and interpretation of the best available evidence:** • Between gender, health and education sectors (e.g., life skills and comprehensive sexuality education in schools) • Between child protection and GBV services (e.g., violence prevention and response) • Between government and civil society (e.g., national action plans) • Between UNFPA and UNICEF[1]

Planning	• Joint planning with government and civil society partners • Supporting national, provincial and local government agencies in cross-sector planning, budgeting and coordination • Joint UNFPA and UNICEF annual work planning and common results framework
Implementation	• Providing holistic preventive and protective services in the same geographic or administrative areas targeting the most vulnerable adolescent girls and communities • UNFPA and UNICEF supporting the same package of initiatives in different geographic areas • Convergence through sector-specific investments in multisectoral government schemes
Policy advocacy	• UNFPA and UNICEF advocating jointly for allocation of public financial resources to prevent and respond to child marriage, particularly to geographic areas with high incidence/prevalence of child marriage • Coordinating advocacy – depending on the context, UNICEF may take the lead in some sectors (such as child protection and education), while UNFPA may lead in others (such as adolescent health and gender)
Monitoring and evaluation	• Common monitoring and evaluation frameworks (e.g., national action plans, in the Global Programme) • Joint missions and annual review meetings at country level • Aligning Global Programme reviews with national reviews • Joint evaluations and joint management response plans
Reporting	• Joint global annual report and country profiles • Joint global meetings with core donors

Lessons learned about convergent programming during Phase I (2016–2019) of the Global Programme

Convergence between UNFPA and UNICEF at the community level:

- Child marriage is influenced by factors beyond the control and mandates of the United Nations system;
- Ending child marriage will need a multisectoral approach and geographical convergence;
- Some momentum for socioeconomic change is needed to achieve significant progress;
- Changing social norms, particularly gender norms, at the structural, community, household, and individual levels is an important component of sustainable change;

What to avoid in convergent programming:

- Focusing primarily on integration at policy level without adequate support for integration in implementation
- Spreading programme resources too thinly and working across too many geographic areas and sectors
- Spending time and efforts on coordination without achieving better results
- Duplication of efforts
- Double-counting of targets and result

Measuring convergent programming in the Global Programme

The following Global Programme results framework indicators are designed to measure the outcomes and outputs of convergent programming.

OUTCOMES, OUTPUTS AND ENABLERS	INDICATORS
Immediate Outcome 2100: Increased capacity of education, health, child protection and GBV systems to deliver coordinated, quality programmes and services that meet the needs of adolescent girls and their families, including in humanitarian contexts.	**Immediate Outcome Indicator 2102**: Proportion (and number) of girls and boys in programme areas who accessed prevention and protection services.
Immediate Outcome 2200: Increased capacity of national and subnational social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes and services to respond to the needs of the poorest adolescent girls and their families, including in humanitarian contexts.	**Immediate Outcome Indicator 2201:** Proportion (and number) of girls (10–19 years old) benefiting from social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes.
Output 2210: Partnerships with governments, civil society organizations and other implementers supported to ensure that social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes and services are adolescent friendly, gender responsive, and reach the poorest adolescent girls and their families.	**Output Indicator 2211:** Number (and proportion) of partnerships (both formal and informal) established to deliver adolescent-responsive social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes and services.
Immediate Outcome 3100: Enhanced capacity of governments to fund, coordinate and implement national and subnational action plans and systems to end child marriage.	**Immediate Outcome Indicator 3102:** Expenditure on subnational action plan as a percentage of the subnational expenditure in programme areas.
Output 3120: Capacity-building and technical support provided to government to implement a budgeted multisectoral gender-transformative plan on ending child marriage across ministries and departments at subnational levels.	**Output Indicator 3121:** Number (and proportion) of subnational plans with evidence-informed interventions to address child marriage.
Enabler 4100: Efficient and effective management of partnerships and resources enables achievement of results.	**Enabler Indicator 4105:** Number (and proportion) of joint activities implemented with effective coordination between agencies. **Enabler Indicator 4106:** Number (and proportion) of localities with joint programme action.

EVIDENCE-BASED EXAMPLES OF CONVERGENT PROGRAMMING[2]

The following examples of convergent programming are arranged according to the three pillars of the Global Programme.

PILLAR 1 **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.**

- Intensive support to the most marginalized girls
- Family and community environment

Geographic convergence within the Global Programme has increased in the first phase, to 43 per cent of targeted implementation areas. Different interventions are increasingly reaching the same adolescent girls (and in select cases, boys) in these implementation areas, with support provided to improve coordination between service providers, and to build links between service providers, communities and civil society. In some countries, national action plans are being rolled out in a phased way, facilitating intensive programmatic support to the prioritized districts/provinces.

Examples:
- In **Mozambique**, the Global Programme scaled up the adolescent girls' mentorship approach to 1,629 community spaces in 19 districts in Nampula and Zambezia provinces, which were jointly targeted by UNFPA and UNICEF, reaching 221,234 adolescent girls with life skills education.
- In **Burkina Faso**, the Global Programme and UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation: Accelerating Change are targeting the same populations in the same geographic areas.

PILLAR 2 **Relevant sectoral systems and institutions effectively respond to the needs of adolescent girls and their families in targeted Global Programme areas.**

- System strengthening
- Poverty drivers

Thematic convergence: The Global Programme supports ministries to expand thematic linkages to address child marriage in the design, implementation and monitoring of their policies and programmes; for example, linkages between child marriage and other harmful practices, GBV, sexual and reproductive health, and the right to education and health. Support extends through the design of strategies and the delivery and monitoring of programmes and services, including training of service providers and NGO partners.

Illustrative examples for thematic convergence:
- Working with the ministry of health to provide quality, adolescent-friendly sexual and reproductive health programming, information and services to girls, including those at risk of child marriage and those already married, pregnant or with children.
- Working with the ministry of education to ensure that girls at risk of child marriage and married or pregnant girls are able to access and complete quality education. Relevant non–formal education actors are also involved to ensure that out-of-school girls are targeted with initiatives that promote quality non–formal education and, eventually, re-entry into formal education.
- Working with the ministry of gender to ensure that child marriage is adequately addressed within broader initiatives to promote gender equality, including those responding to and preventing GBV, and to ensure that gender transformation is mainstreamed in interministerial efforts.
- Working with key ministries in the national child protection system to strengthen services and response mechanisms for victims of violence, especially girls, and strengthen case management and the social service workforce to better respond to cases of child marriage.
- Working with the ministry of youth to encourage the meaningful participation of adolescent girls in sports and youth programmes.
- Linking programming, monitoring and learning, statistical data and qualitative research.

Examples:
- In **Nepal**, the Global Programme worked on enhancing school-based interventions to prevent child marriage and building links/referrals to the police, alongside other child protection services in the community.
- In **Zambia**, the Global Programme implemented guidance and counselling guidelines in schools, supported open learning and transit schools for out-of-school children, and enhanced referrals to health and protection services, resulting in improvements in school retention levels and learning outcomes for girls.

Coordination across levels: The Global Programme supports coordination and collaboration between different levels of government at national, provincial, district and community levels, and between government and civil society. This is particularly important for the decentralized funding and implementation of national action plans and centrally managed schemes and programmes, but is also important for partnerships with other civil society, academic and private sector actors that work on child marriage, and for the accountability of officials and local leaders to apply relevant laws.

Examples:

- In **Ghana**, the Global Programme engaged strategically in planning and budgetary dialogues at decentralized levels to support an increase in resource allocations for service provision relating to child marriage, child protection, and cases of sexual violence and GBV. Overall, 23,953 adolescent girls in and out of school accessed health and protection services in 2018.
- In **Zambia**, the two Global Programme priority districts (Katete and Senanga) have developed and launched district plans of action adapted from the National Action Plan for Ending Child Marriage and the Seventh National Development Plan. Both districts also developed costed, multisectoral operational frameworks

PILLAR 3 Enhanced legal and political response to prevent child marriage and to support pregnant, married, divorced or widowed adolescent girls.

- Laws and policies
- Data and evidence

Thematic convergence: National action plans developed with the support of the Global Programme (as well as other actors) are multisectoral by design, and require coordination and collaboration between different sectors, departments, ministries and agencies.

Examples:

- In **Ethiopia**, a single national strategy to address both child marriage and female genital mutilation has been developed.
- In **Ethiopia**, **Uganda** and **Zambia**, funding and implementation of the national action plans on ending child marriage have been progressively decentralized to subnational levels.
- In **Ghana**, UNFPA and UNICEF developed a common methodology for the joint delivery of empowerment interventions that reached 1,200 adolescent girls in convergence areas.
- In **Burkina Faso**, the Multi-Sectoral Platform for Implementing the National Strategy and Triennial Action Plan 2016–2018 were finalized in 2015. A multisectoral committee was launched the next year to coordinate implementation of the strategy at the national level, with responsibilities shared across 13 ministries, technical and financial partners, and civil society organizations. Chaired by the Ministry of Social Action and National Solidarity, the Ministry of Education as vice-chair and the Ministry of Gender as the secretariat also play key roles in the platform.
- In **Uganda**, the National Strategy to End Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy was based on a multidimensional vulnerability analysis pulling together data from various domains (such as health and education).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Girls Not Brides, Lessons Learned from National Initiatives to End Child Marriage – 2016, Girls Not Brides, London, 2017, <www.girlsnotbrides.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/GNB-Lessons_learned_national_initiatives-2016.pdf>, accessed 8 April 2020.
- Girls Not Brides, and International Center for Research on Women, Briefing Series: "Taking Action to Address Child Marriage: The role of different sectors", Girls Not Brides, 2016, <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/resource-centre/child-marriage-brief-role-of-sectors>, accessed 8 April 2020.
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- UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage, Phase II Design Workshop Report, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), New York, 2019, <www.unicef.org/media/54386/file/Global%20Programme%20to%20Accelerate%20Action%20to%20End%20Child%20Marriage%20Design%20Workshop%20Report.pdf>, accessed 8 April 2020.
- UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, Technical Note: Multisectoral approaches to end child marriage and to promote gender transformation, unpublished.
- United Nations Children's Fund, Convergent Programming Approach. Annex to the Pacific Island Countries Multi-country programme management plan 2013–2017. UNICEF, New York, 2013.
- United Nations Children's Fund, Draft Issue Paper on Convergence, UNICEF, New York, 2020.
- United Nations Children's Fund, Convergence Paper for Mid-Term Review – Pacific, UNICEF, New York, n.d.
- United Nations Children's Fund, Evaluation of the Convergence Approach in UNICEF supported programmes in the Pacific, 2008 – 2012, UNICEF, New York, n.d.

ENDNOTES

1   For more information, see UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, Phase II Programme Document 2020–2023, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), New York, 2019, <https://www.unicef.org/media/65336/file>, accessed 8 April 2020.

2   All examples were taken from the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage, 2018 Annual Report: Country profiles, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), New York, 2019, <www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/UNFPA-2.PDF>, accessed 8 April 2020 and UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage, 2018 Annual Report: Turning commitments into solid actions, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), New York, 2019, <www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/UNFPA-1.PDF>, accessed 8 April 2020.