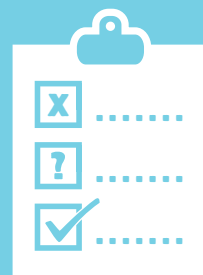


A CHECK-LIST FOR NATIONAL STRATEGIES TO END CHILD MARRIAGE





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February 2016

Every year 15 million girls are married before the age of 18. There is unprecedented recognition that child marriage infringes their rights and is a major setback to development.

Since 2011 a growing number of countries affected by child marriage have started to develop national strategies, action plans or country wide initiatives to address the practice. Due to the scale, complexity and urgency of addressing child marriage, these present critical opportunities to make progress at a scale that has not yet been achieved.

Why a check-list?

To date, there has been no consensus on what such initiatives should include and how they should be implemented to effectively address child marriage. This check-list is a tool for *Girls Not Brides* members and National Partnerships, as well as UN and government stakeholders, who are either in the early stages of developing a policy or strategy to address child marriage in their countries or reflecting on an existing national strategy and how to maximise its impact. It provides a framework for analysing the process of developing national strategies, provides suggestions for what content might be included in these strategies, and highlights questions to consider for how they could be implemented.

How to read the check-list?

The check-list encourages users to consider the strategy development process in their countries and consider questions in three areas, on a scale of 1 to 3:

1. The **process** for developing the national strategy
2. The **content** of what is included in the national strategy
3. The **implementation** of the national strategy

It is not intended as an evaluation tool for national strategies. It is rather intended as a reflection tool to help analyse where improvements could be made and efforts could be refocused, for example, in the context of developing implementation plans.

How was this check-list developed?

The check-list was developed by the *Girls Not Brides* secretariat with input from over 40 *Girls Not Brides* members across 17 countries, particularly those who have been involved in developing national strategies in their countries. The check-list has also been informed by feedback from UNICEF and UNFPA, and a number of supporting donors.

THE CHECK LIST

Please use the following scale to rate each item:

- 1 = yes
- 2 = to some extent
- 3 = no
- ? = unknown

1. STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

	Rating	Comment
Political commitment		
1. Was there a mandate from the top of government to develop the strategy? ¹	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Has the strategy been approved at the highest levels? Is there political will to implement the strategy? ²	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<hr/>		
Governance and accountability		
3. Is it clear who will hold organisational, financial and technical leadership for the development and implementation of the strategy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<hr/>		
Consultation process		
4. Was there a reasonable consultation period for developing it? ³	<input type="checkbox"/>	

1 Was it the Prime Minister or the Minister of Women and Children's Affairs or equivalent? The level at which the government mandates the strategy can impact how seriously ministries across government will take it and engage with its process of development and implementation.

2 Some countries have had to balance the value of a higher level Cabinet approval (and potential for greater funding, and cross governmental support), with the length of time such an approval could take. Political will to implement the strategy will be crucial.

3 Did the whole consultation period take place over the course of 6-9 months or was it rushed through quickly? Was there time in advance of consultations to review the draft strategy?

	Rating	Comment
Consultation process continued...		
5. Was the process well communicated and transparent? ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. Was a stakeholder analysis done to determine who needs to be involved in developing and implementing the national strategy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. Did the consultation process involve other relevant Ministries to discuss how the strategy could be implemented? e.g. those responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Girls' education ▶ Adolescent health including reproductive health ▶ Gender / women's affairs ▶ Access to justice ▶ Infrastructure and transport ▶ Water, hygiene and sanitation ▶ Nutrition ▶ Finance ▶ Social welfare / livelihoods ▶ Rule of law (e.g. police, judges, etc.) ▶ Other? Please specify. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. Did the consultation involve other relevant stakeholders? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Girls and boys already married ▶ Girls and boys at risk of being married as children (under 18) ▶ Communities affected (including key decision-makers in the family and key actors in the community) ⁵ ▶ Civil society organisations, including <i>Girls Not Brides</i> members and National Partnerships, international NGOs and community based organisations ▶ UN agencies ▶ Donors ▶ Other actors who could have an impact on whether and how the strategy will be implemented (e.g. religious institutions, the media, private sector and business, regional bodies, independent human rights institutions, legislative councils, parliamentarians, etc.) <p>Were any groups excluded from the process or not consulted in a meaningful way? ⁶</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

4 Was a clear consultation process outlined? Was it clear who would make decisions about the strategy and how? Were clear meeting objectives & expected outcomes defined for consultations? Was the process communicated to all stakeholders?

5 Decision makers in the family and key actors in the community will vary according to context but these often include fathers, mothers, mothers-in-law, traditional and religious leaders, teachers, and local health workers.

6 For example, minorities, displaced people, refugees, where relevant. The consultation might not be meaningful if it is not tailored to the specific audience and if it does not take into consideration how to communicate with them in a sensitive way.

Rating

Comment

Research and evidence

9. Is the strategy based on relevant data and evidence about:

Prevalence of child marriage in the country, including regional variations to identify high risk communities and girls?

A review of root causes of child marriage and barriers to ending it?⁷

A review of effective programmes and solutions (within and outside the country)?

2. CONTENT OF STRATEGY

Goal and longer term vision

10. Has a measurable quantitative goal for the reduction of child marriage been defined in the strategy? Is the goal achievable within the given time-frame?⁸

11. Does the strategy outline a vision beyond increasing the age of marriage and tackle the root causes of child marriage, such as gender inequality?

12. Does the strategy include a longer-term vision for addressing child marriage beyond the timeframe of the strategy itself?

7 It is important to look not only at the short term causes and consequences of child marriage, but also the root causes and structural barriers to addressing it.

8 As observed in the UNICEF Theory of Change and results framework, for most countries, success at the population level in terms of significantly reduced child marriage rates, is likely to occur over a minimum of a 10-30 year time period. Therefore it is important for strategies of more limited 3 to 5 year time-frames to include more realistic success indicators such as attitudinal and behaviour change among a critical mass of girls, families and communities.

Rating

Comment

Prioritisation

13. Have specific interventions been identified and prioritised in the strategy?⁹

Content

14. Does the strategy include provisions to both prevent child marriage and support girls already married or girls who have left marriages?

15. Does the strategy include provisions to:

Empower girls?

Mobilise families and communities?¹⁰

Provide services for adolescent girls?

Establish and implement laws and policies?

Synergies with related policies and compatibility with international human rights obligations

16. Does the strategy make links with existing policy initiatives in the country?

- ▶ Adolescent and Maternal Health (including sexual and reproductive health)
- ▶ Education
- ▶ Gender Equality
- ▶ Social protection
- ▶ Water, sanitation and hygiene
- ▶ Nutrition
- ▶ Child protection
- ▶ Poverty reduction
- ▶ Development
- ▶ Civil registration
- ▶ Other? Please specify

⁹ There is broad consensus about the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing child marriage in national strategies, however, for effective implementation, priorities should be identified based on evidence of what is most effective and most needed to address child marriage in the country.

¹⁰ For example, does the strategy promote community-based interventions which place the community at the centre of a reflection about existing harmful social norms? This should involve all members of the community in a collective and long-term process of questioning those norms to become actors of change.

	Rating	Comment
17. Does the strategy link to existing regional initiatives that the country is part of?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
18. Is the strategy in line with the government's international and regional human rights obligations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Evidence generation

19. Does the strategy include a research agenda to gather up-to-date evidence about what works and what does not?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
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3. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR STRATEGY

Implementation governance and accountability

<p>20. Is there an implementation plan for the strategy? If not, is there a time-line and responsible stakeholder for delivering a more detailed action plan?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Does it outline clear roles for different stakeholders (e.g. for government Ministries, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), parliamentarians, traditional and religious leaders, media, and girls / young people)? ▶ Does it include annual milestones? ▶ Are there clear lines of accountability for implementation of the plan? 	<input type="checkbox"/>	
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Rating

Comment

Capacity Development

- 21.** Is there a plan to support the capacity development of those working on child marriage with appropriate resources (technical and financial) to support implementation at national and sub-national level? If yes, does this include:
- ▶ Community based organisations and civil society organisations?
 - ▶ Local governance structures?
 - ▶ Government Ministries?

Coordination

- 22.** Is there a coordination mechanism? If so, is it:
- ▶ Between different government Ministries?
 - ▶ Between all relevant CSOs, including community based organisations?
 - ▶ Between all actors?

- 23.** Does the coordination mechanism have a clear mandate, goals and time-frame to report on progress?

- 24.** Is the coordination mechanism adequately resourced?
- ▶ Is there a dedicated position / post within the lead Ministry for coordination?
 - ▶ Are other relevant Ministries involved in the coordination mechanism?
 - ▶ Have they dedicated a certain period of time to coordination?
 - ▶ Do they meet regularly?

Communication

- 25.** Is there a launch or dissemination plan in place for the strategy?

- 26.** Will case studies be documented to show success stories?

Rating

Comment

Financing

27. Have the budgetary impacts of the plan been clearly costed?

28. Have CSOs been involved in the budget setting process?

29. Has the Ministry of Finance or a relevant Ministry approved specific budget lines for implementation of the strategy? How much?

Monitoring and Evaluation

30. Is there a strong monitoring and evaluation mechanism?

- ▶ Have baselines and targets been set?
- ▶ Have indicators to track impact, as well as outcomes, been identified?
- ▶ Is adequate data available to track progress on indicators?
- ▶ Is there any guidance for government, NGOs, community based organisations and other implementing partners for measuring their impact?
- ▶ Has an evaluation of the strategy been planned?
- ▶ Are there plans to involve young people and communities affected whilst monitoring and evaluating the strategy?

