AFRICA HEALTH
ORGANISATION

AHO STRATEGY AND PLAN OF ACTION FOR ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE

2020-2030

AFRICA HEALTH ORGANISATION

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1   Executive Summary:

This report presented the Africa Health Organisation's strategy between 2020 and 2030 to work towards the elimination of child marriage in Africa. Over one third of girls in Africa are married before the age of 18, impacting their health, earning prospects and independence. Therefore, it is vital that the rate of reduction of child marriage is dramatically accelerated to prevent the violation of the rights of millions more girls.

The key objectives of the strategy are to:

1. Accelerate the reduction of child marriage to work towards elimination of the practice.
2. Promote and support girls' education
3. Empower girls to gain independence and confidence
4. Change community attitudes and social norms towards child marriage

This will be implemented through:

1. Facilitating community education and conversation to create a collective vision for ending child marriage.
2. Providing knowledge to community leaders to guide discussions and change in tradition.
3. Providing families with materials and incentives for girls to attend school and remain unmarried.
4. Establishing the means to create girls' clubs, social networks and contact with role models to increase their confidence and empowerment.
5. Engage with local and national governments to promote consistent laws and campaigns against child marriage and towards gender equality in society and education.

Progress towards the elimination of child marriage will be monitored through a combination of official statistics and long-term assessment of the communities the AHO works with. This will be in the form of feedback from community members as well as evaluation of how attitudes towards child marriage have changed in their society.

2   Introduction

2.1   Background

Child marriage is a violation of human rights and a huge barrier to gender equality. Marrying before adulthood has severe impacts on a girl's health, education and exposure to abuse, as well as on a country's economy. UNICEF global database 2020 estimates that in sub-Saharan Africa, 35% and 11% of women now aged between 20-24 were married before the ages of 18 and 15 respectively. In Western and Central Africa, these figures are 39% and 13% [1].

The continuation of child marriage prevented the achievement of goals 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 [2]. It will also prevent the realisation of Target 5.3 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals [3] in 2030, unless the rate of progress is dramatically changed. Child marriage across Africa has seen a steady decline over the past 30 years, but at no rate significant enough to cause its elimination in the foreseeable future. With the current rate of decline, a quarter of African girls are still expected to be married in 2050 [4].

2.2 Impacts

2.2.1 Health and Mortality

For girls aged 15-19, childbirth is the leading cause of death globally [5]. The age group most likely to die through childbirth is girls under 15 [6], being five times more likely to die than those who give birth in their early twenties [7]. In 2017, nine African countries were on very high alert or high alert for maternal mortality rate [8], all of which have a high prevalence of child marriage.

It has been found that "adolescent mothers aged 10-19 years had higher risks of eclampsia, puerperal endometritis, systemic infections, low birthweight, preterm delivery and severe neonatal conditions" [9]. They also have a much higher risk of suffering from an obstetric fistula - 90% of fistula cases occur in Africa [10] and girls under 18 make up 65% of these [7]. Obstetric fistulas can cause pain, embarrassment and being thrown out of the family home [10], further degrading girls' prospects and position in society.

Child brides are at greater risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. This is the second highest cause of death for you adolescent girls and one of the leading causes of death for older adolescent girls and young women. Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rates of HIV among adolescent girls and young women in the world [11].

2.2.2 Education

A girl's marriage leads to the end of their education, if they have not left school already. Across Africa, 49 million girls are currently out of primary and secondary education, 31 million of those being out of secondary education. Girls are often denied education due to discriminatory policies against being married or pregnant [12]. This reduces their earning potential by 9% on average [13], corresponding to $60 billion in lost lifetime earnings [14], increasing their reliance on men and thus adding to inequality.

2.2.3 Economy

The economic impacts of child marriage amount to more than the African countries receive in aid [14], costing trillions of dollars between 2017 and 2030 [13]. In Niger alone, it was estimated in 2017 that the economy could save $25 billion by 2030 if it ended child marriage [15]. This is due to a lack of education and equal rights of child brides, as their opportunities are cut off once they are married.

2.2.4 Violence and Abuse

Globally, girls married as children are more likely to be subject to intimate partner violence (IPV), both sexually and physically [16]. This has been proved to worsen the mental, physical and sexual health of girls and women throughout their marriage [17] [18].

2.2.5 Lack of independence

All impacts listed lead to a lack of independence and empowerment of women. They are reliant on their husbands for income due to less opportunity for employment and the negative mental effects of being forced to marry young. Their lack of decision-making power badly impacts their health: 52% of young women and girls from rural areas of 28 African countries must have decisions about their healthcare approved by their husband or family [11].

Having no independence and poor access to information also inhibits change. Women who were married as children often help to force this fate onto their daughters, along with female genital cutting. This is due to the traditions in society that they do not have the power to challenge, or the exposure to better alternatives [19].

2.3   Stakeholders

2.3.1   Girls

The girls who are forced into child marriage are stripped of their rights, freedom and access to education. The elimination of child marriage would significantly lower their risk of health implications in childbirth and intimate partner violence. Additionally, it would provide a higher likelihood of being able to attend school and thus increase their potential for a future in which they are not dependent on men. Girls at risk of child marriage have the most to gain from its elimination, but the least power to incite change. Therefore, it is the responsibility of other stakeholders to give them the tools to help them avoid being subject to this harmful practice.

2.3.2   Families

The families of child brides feel they gain from marrying their daughters young, as they often receive a dowry and have one less child to provide for [7] [20]. However, child marriage reinforces the cycle of poverty, prohibiting females from become educated and financially independent. Therefore, it is important to educate families on the alternatives to child marriage and how they can be beneficial long term. Changing families' attitudes towards child marriage can have a large impact on the occurrence of this practice. Aid programmes have proved that entering into discussions with communities to provide more knowledge and education of its effects can dramatically change people's views [19].

2.3.3   Community Leaders

Traditional community leaders often have a very influential role within the community. Thus, the key to success of any projects implemented must be to gain their support and involve them in decisions. They are listened to and respected in the community, so are the most able to introduce new practices in an accepted manner [21]. Particularly for a view like child marriage, it has been demonstrated that one of the biggest ways to change a communities approach is to change their leader's way of thinking [19].

2.3.4   Governments

Governments are key beneficiaries in the elimination of child marriage, due to the vast cost of its effects and potential for increase in GDP if girls are allowed to finish school and have equal rights to work. They also have a lot of power in instigating change. It was found in a study of 12 African countries that having consistent laws on the minimum age of marriage being 18 resulted in a 40% lower prevalence of child marriage. It also led to 25% lower rates of teenage pregnancy [22]. In another study of 5 African countries, raising the legal marriage age from 15 to 18 was found to reduce child marriage by 6% on average. It was also found to significantly reduce domestic violence. However it is important to note the countries with the largest decrease in domestic violence also experienced strong community outreach and mobilisation efforts [23]. This shows the value in obtaining input from stakeholders at both a national and local level.

2.4   Prevalence and Current Progress

Figure 2.1 Shows the rate of child marriage in ten African countries with a high rate of child marriage [7]. As of 2017, Niger had the highest prevalence of child marriage of all countries in Africa, at 76%, with over one third of these girls being married below the age of 15 [15]. On average, girls married
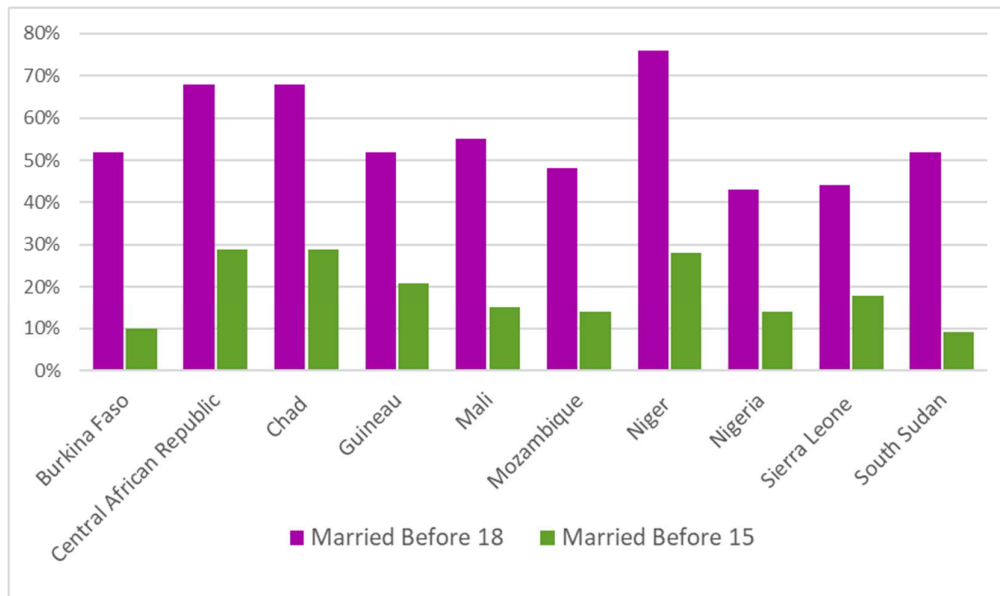

Figure 2.1: Child marriage rates in ten high prevalence countries [7].

under 15 make up one third of the total marriages. This is particularly concerning due to the increased severity of the impacts of child marriage on girls under 15.

In 2018, UNICEF produced figures demonstrating the scale of the acceleration needed to eliminate child marriage. Figure 2.2 shows that across the continent of Africa, the rate of reduction must increase by 26.4% to eliminate child marriage by 2030. Drastic action must be taken to achieve this. In the 25 years between 1990 and 2015, the most successful countries in reducing child marriage have been Rwanda and Guinea-Bissau, with reductions of 62% and 50% respectively. This shows that much faster progress is possible, even in countries with high prevalence of child marriage. However, even their yearly reduction rates are 5.6% and 3.9%, whereas their rates for elimination need to be 20% and 19% [24]. Therefore, high rates of acceleration are required in every country in Africa, even
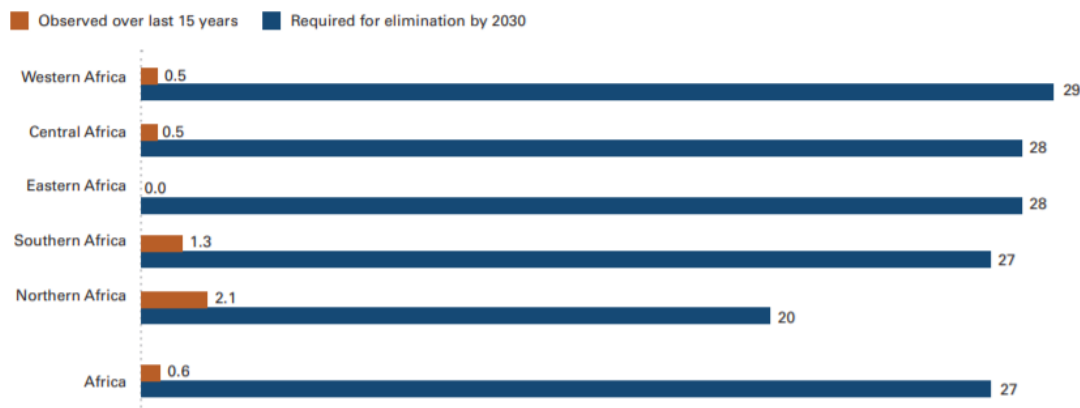

Figure 2.2: Yearly average reduction (%) of childhood marriage or union for women aged 20-24 [24].

those with the most progress. As the infant mortality rate in African countries decreases, there are more and more girls living in Africa. With the current rates of change, both the population of girls and the number of child marriages is set to more than double by 2050 [4].

2.5   Child Marriage and COVID-19

There is concern of how the rates of child marriage in Africa will be affected by the current pandemic, COVID-19. 700 million girls across the world were no longer allowed to attend school at the peak of the pandemic [25]. In many African countries, their parents' income has become less certain, there are reports of alarmingly high increases in girls being married off as children [26].

Key impacts on girls and efforts to end child marriage have been highlighted by UNICEF as:

- Decreased opportunities to disrupt child marriage
- Loss of social networks and support
- Increased risk of violence, abuse and exploitation
- Loss of livelihoods
- Less opportunity to take on positive roles in society [26].

These are likely to lead to a rise in child marriages, especially those of younger girls, due to a lack of opportunity for intervention. Girls have even less power to prevent their marriages as they cannot inform others that they are at risk. The increased exposure to abuse inhibits their sense of self-worth, making them more vulnerable and less likely to speak out, perpetuating the damaging cycle of child marriage.

2.5.1   Impacts of the 2014 Ebola Virus

The Ebola virus disrupted progress in reducing child marriage rates in West Africa between 2014 and 2016. In 2014, teenage pregnancies in Sierra Leone rose, indicating marriage may have also risen [26].

Due to being less valued in society, having a higher likelihood of being in informal work and having less importance placed on educating them, the virus disproportionately affected women and girls [26]. Many of the impacts were worsened by having to marry as a child, such as:

- Women and girls having a higher likelihood of infection due to their caring roles
- Increased danger of childbirth without access to medical facilities
- Lower nutrition, particularly affecting nursing mothers and their babies
- Higher risk of sexual abuse and marriage from being out of school, moving communities or from being orphaned through the virus
- Early marriage being seen as a more viable way to secure a living with the loss of jobs and education [27].

However, there is an opportunity to learn from Ebola when trying to minimise the impacts of COVID-19. Social distancing is reducing access to medical services and face-to-face interactions, key tools in combatting child marriage [26]. Therefore, there need to be strategies in place to reach women and girls online where possible and to provide information through the radio. Also, there must be a concerted effort to reconnect with people face-to-face when the rules allow.

Another key lesson is that epidemics disrupt society and can be used to accelerate social change. This can be used as an opportunity to create new networks [26]. Although, progress is and will continue to be disrupted by COVID-19, acting in the right way now could provide opportunity for quicker mobilisation of communities when recovering from the virus. The effect of COVID-19 must

be considered in the Plan of Action between 2020 and 2030, as it is likely to have long-lasting effects requiring a change in approach for eliminating child marriage.

3   Key Findings

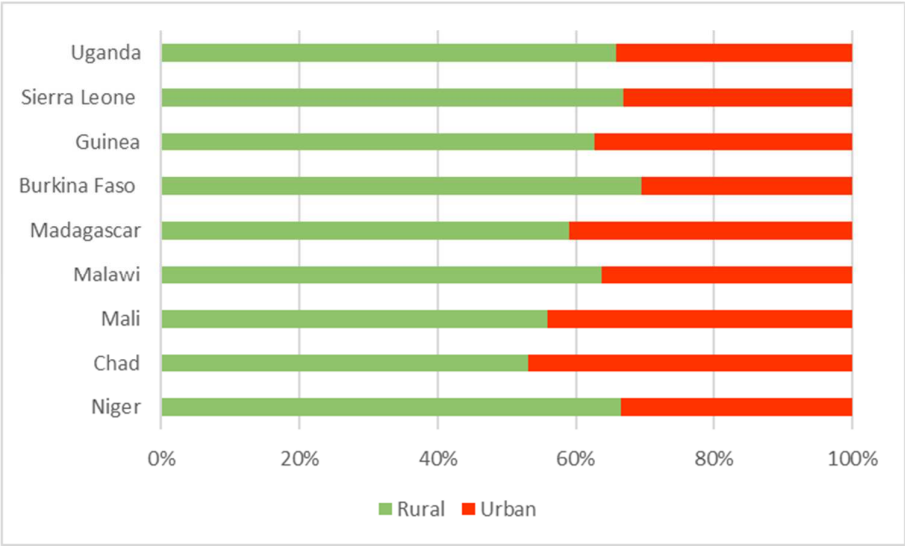## 3.1   Influential Factors

3.1.1   Residence

Figure 3.1: Proportion of Girls Married by Residence [1]

Figure 3.1 shows that child marriage is more prevalent in rural areas. In some countries such as Burkina Faso, Niger and Sierra Leone, living in a rural area means a girl could be twice as likely to marry before she is 18. 56% of Africans live in rural areas [28], thus in countries such as Chad, residence has little effect on the likelihood of being married as a child.
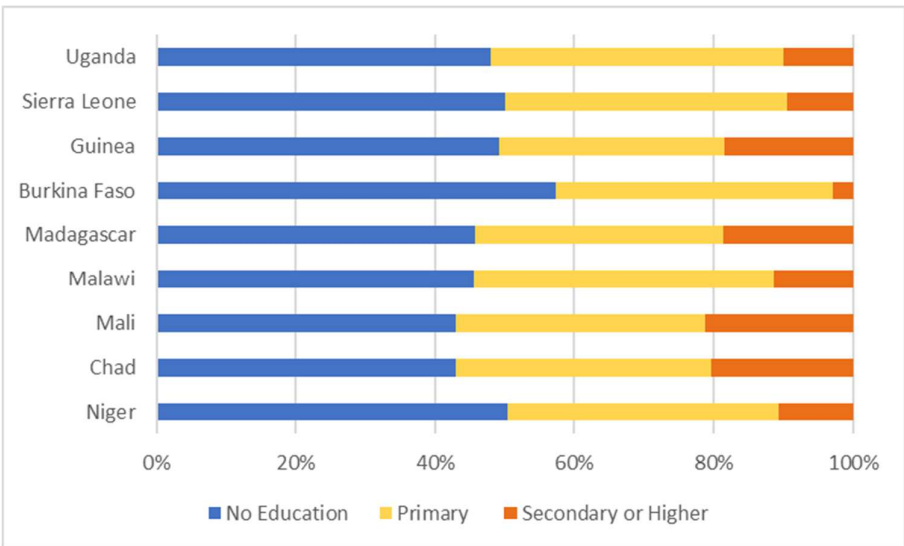
3.1.2   Education

Figure 3.2: Proportion of Girls Married by Level of Education [1]

Error! Reference source not found. displays the strong link between education and the rates of child marriage. From the countries surveyed, girls who have received no education are 71% more likely on average to be married before 18 than those who have received an education to secondary level or above.

As a result of the findings that education is the most influential factor for preventing girls marriage, it will be important to incorporate the key actions in the AHO's Strategy and Plan of Action for Girls' Education into its target for eliminating child marriage.

3.1.3   Family Wealth

It can be seen from Figure 3.4 that although there is some link between wealth and the rate of childhood marriage, the rate varies little between the first four quintiles in countries with a high prevalence of child marriage. For example, in Niger where the overall rate is 76%, the rates of child
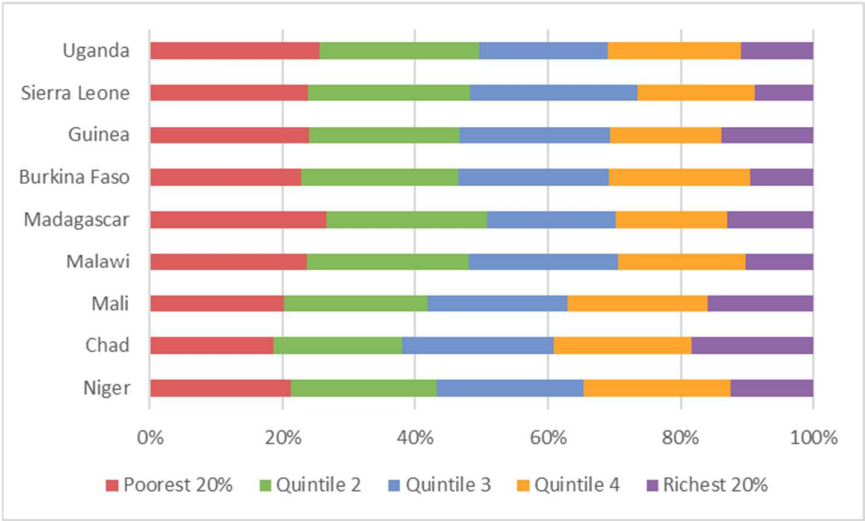

Figure 3.4: Proportion of Girls Married by Wealth [1]

marriage vary only between 80.5% to 84.5% in quintiles one to four. The rate of child marriage amongst the richest 20% is 47.5% [1]. This shows that in Niger, child marriage is prevalent at all levels of society and only significantly reduced among the richest members of the population.
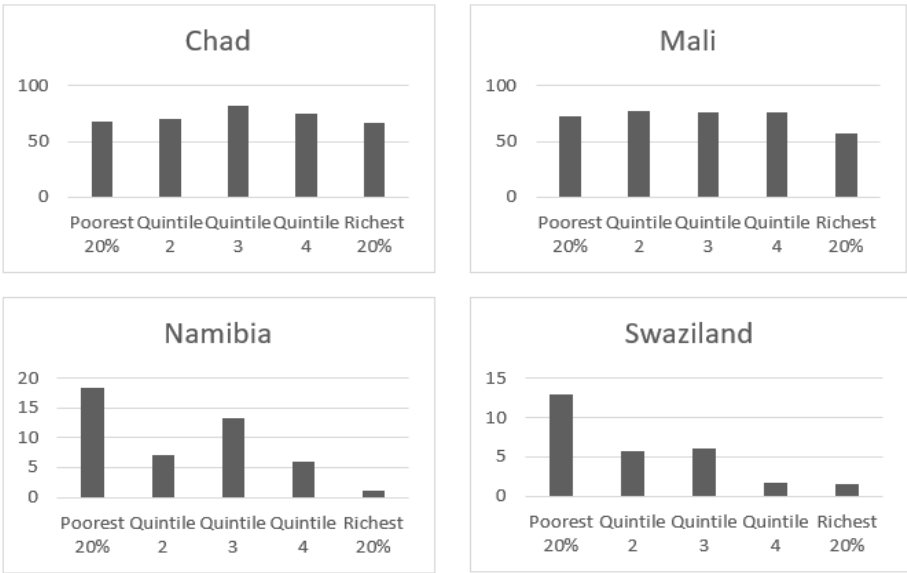

Figur[e]... [aga]inst low prevalence countries (Namibia and Swaziland) [1].

Upon review of the link between wealth and the rate of child marriage, the trend appears to vary with its prevalence in each country. For example, in high prevalence countries such as Chad, Mali and Niger, the rate of marriage seems to vary little with wealth, suggesting it is a cultural norm in all levels in society. However, in the countries with lower prevalence such as Namibia and Swaziland, child marriage is much more common in the poorer quintiles. These countries have a higher GDP per capita than the countries where child marriage is more frequent [29], which suggests wealth does affect child marriage rates in all cases.

3.2   Major Challenges

3.2.1   Legal marriage age/ Policies and Laws

There are countries in Africa in which the statutory law allows girls to be married as children, listed in

Table 3.1. Laws in some African countries prevent married women and girls from opening a bank account, signing a contract or carrying out paid work without the permission of their husbands [30]. These unequal laws worsen

the impacts of having to marry as a child as many rights are stripped from these girls without their consent.

Table 3.1: African countries where child marriage is still legalised [36].

Country	Legal Age for Girls	Legal Age for Boys
Burkina Faso	17	20
Cameroon	15	18
Chad	17	18
Gabon	15	18
Mali [31]	16	18
Niger [32]	15	18
Senegal [33]	16	18
Seychelles	15	18
Sudan (Islamic) [20]	10	10
Sudan (Non-Islamic) [20]	13	15
Tanzania* [34]	15	18
Zambia** [35]	21	21

*In October 2019, the Tanzanian high court ruled that the government must raise the legal marriage age to 18 for girls.

** Although the statutory law in Zambia requires both men and women to be 21 before marriage, the country uses a dual legal system and its customary law contradicts this. Marriage is allowed

under customary law if the person has reached puberty, the marriage has parental consent, a dowry has been paid and a marital ceremony has occurred [35]. These two laws being in direct conflict mean that child marriage is not illegal.

3.2.2   Changing Attitudes
The key to eliminating child marriage will ultimately be changing people's views on the value of women. This must be reinforced at a community level and integrated into the culture.

A major issue is that the education of boys is placed above that of girls. The view that it is more worthwhile for a girl to stay at home doing housework and having children above going to school is ingrained in many cultures [37]. On an economic level, it is clear the education of girls would have significant benefits in reducing poverty [13] and there is evidence that increased education contributes to gender equality [37]. However, their traditional role in society is reinforced by their lack of education and empowerment, a cycle which must be broken to eliminate child marriage and work towards gender equality.

3.3   Past Successful Initiatives

3.3.1   Financial Incentives for Continued Education
It has been found that level of education is the biggest indicator for child marriage, and the drive for parents to marry their daughters young is often financial. This implies that offsetting the cost of sending girls to school could keep them in education longer.

Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programs have been implemented in countries across the globe, including in continents such as South America, Africa and Asia. These have proven effective, particularly in the short term, for increasing the levels of schooling for children [38].

An example of a successful initiative to keep children in school is the Bolsa Escola in Brazil. This provided mothers with a conditional cash transfer, if their children between 6 and 15 regularly went to school. This resulted in a school drop-out rate of children part of the programme of 4.5%, against 17% of those who were not [39]. Similar success has been seen in Mexico, even when the reduction in child labour led to a 6% rise in wages. It was shown that families placed up to double the monetary value on education versus their child going to work [40].

There isn't yet enough evidence to conclude how effective CCTs have been in African countries, but the results so far indicate that they have a positive effect on children's education [41]. However, the majority of working girls in Africa are unpaid [42]. Therefore, CCTs in replacement of wages for girls to attend school may not be effective. It may be more appropriate to provide educational materials and uniforms free of charge, with a financial incentive or gift on the condition that the girl remains unmarried.

3.3.2   Case Study: Berhane Hewan Project in Rural Ethiopia
The Berhane Hewan project, carried out by the Population Council in rural Ethiopia between 2004 and 2006, implemented a range of strategies across 2 years to delay the age of girls' marriage. The outcome of the study showed that it was possible to delay the marriage of young girls between the ages of 10 to 14, with girls in this age group 90% less likely to be married at end line compared to baseline [43]. However, at the end of the study, the number of girls between 15 and 19 who were married had increased [44]. This indicates that many girls' marriages were delayed until after the age of 14, but not until reaching adulthood. Although this project did not achieve a great reduction in child marriage overall, the effects of the practice are more harmful the younger the age of the girl, and marriages were successfully delayed.

Table 3.2 shows the cost of the Berhane Hewan

Intervention	Cost per girl per year
School materials and uniform	$17
Community conversations	$30
Conditional incentives (2 chickens)	$32
Full model of all three interventions	$44

programme, with the combined total of all interventions costing $44 per year per girl. This demonstrates that it is possible for affordable programmes to have a strong impact. The Population Council also launched similar projects in Tanzania and Burkina Faso, finding that these programmes are most effective when all interventions are used in combination [43].

Thus, the proven approach of combining community conversation with financial support to stay in school and delay marriage can be taken forward as an action to implement as part of the AHO's strategy.

3.3.3 Changing Gender Norms

To progress in the longer term, it is key to change attitudes and thus societal gender norms. Proven methods of doing this primarily require communities to act collectively, resulting in a change of expectations from individuals. To establish the actions that must be taken to enable this, it is first necessary to identify a community's beliefs [37]. This must be done for each community worked with, to understand individual nuances.

Joint community decisions can be made by working with community members to establish their collective goals, create a vision, then work back from this to work out the requirements to fulfil this, along with educational input from facilitators [21]. Another proven method is the act of role-playing, where males and females swap roles, to experience one another's perspective. This can result in a more collaborative approach to traditionally gendered tasks [45]. Approaches addressing gender norms could be instrumental in reducing the rate of child marriage because they have proven to cause men to value and respect women more [45]. If a woman has more decision-making power in her own home, this provides a better role model for her daughter, as well as the possibility that the daughter will be allowed more opportunities and valued more. This works towards breaking the cycle of inequality, leading to long term change in attitudes and outcomes.

4 Strategy Objectives

The AHO plan of action on child marriage aims to fulfil the following objectives:

1. Accelerate the reduction of child marriage to work towards elimination of the practice.
    i. In the shorter term (1-3 years), delay the marriage of girls under 15 in the countries with highest prevalence
    ii. In the longer term (3-10 years), change attitudes towards child marriage to stop it being an accepted practice

2. Promote and support girls' education
    i. Emphasise the importance of completing secondary education
    ii. Teach girls of their potential from a young age
3. Empower girls to gain independence and confidence
    i. Create more social networks between girls
    ii. Develop programmes that provide role models for young girls
4. Change community attitudes and social norms towards child marriage
    i. Improve community education as to why child marriage is a harmful practice
    ii. Demonstrate the potential that girls have when given equal opportunities
    iii. Create a vision for a future benefiting from the elimination of child marriage

5 Strategy Proposal

5.1 Girls' Education

As level of education is the largest determining factor for age of marriage in Africa, it is vital to focus on keeping more girls in school. There are currently 49 million girls of school age in Africa who are not in education [12]. For the education rate of girls to increase, some require support to access the basic materials required to attend. Therefore, the AHO proposes to provide girls at risk of child marriage due to financial circumstances with the school materials, uniform and sanitary products they require. Depending on the target country, this is expected to cost $15 to $20 per girl per year.

It is important to consider that girls may not be able to attend school full-time due to domestic duties. Therefore, providing workshops and equipment for independent learning is recommended as part of supporting girls' engagement and mobilisation.

Conditional cash transfers are less likely to have as much of an effect as in other countries, due to the vast majority of working girls being unpaid, often in either domestic or farming roles [42]. This would also make the programmes more affordable and thus far-reaching. However, a conditional reward for finishing school and staying unmarried is proposed to increase the incentive for families.

Encouraging girls' education contributes to objectives 1 and 2 of AHO's strategy and is likely to be most effective in delaying the marriage of the youngest girls. It also supports Goal 1 of the AHO's Strategy and Plan of Action for Girls' Education, which has the target to reduce the number of girls out of education by 10% between 2020 and 2030. In line with this, the AHO intends to influence change in the governments' budgets for education, proposing spending of around 7% of GDP. This corresponds to budgets of around $2000 in primary and $3000 in secondary per pupil per year.

5.2 Girls' Empowerment

Empowering girls to know their rights and potential will help them to understand why they should not accept the tradition of child marriage. Giving them knowledge will empower them to speak up and be able to reason with those who may want her to marry young. Creating communication networks between other girls, educational institutions and influential people in the community can help to prevent families marrying off their children. The AHO proposes to empower girls through:

- Holding workshops to educate girls of their rights
- Creating a role model programme, so that girls have a mentor to learn from and help realise their aspirations
- Building social networks between girls through extra-curricular groups

- Providing more education on sexual and mental health
- Tackling discriminatory policy against married and pregnant girls, working with governments and local leaders

This work will compliment and build on the work that the AHO does in teaching female teachers to run girls' clubs and supporting local networks. These actions will contribute to the achievement of objectives 1. i, 2.ii, 3 and 4. ii.

5.3   Community Practices

A climate for change must be created by engaging with communities to create a drive for the elimination of child marriage. To initiate this, it is essential to educate communities on the negative impacts of child marriage as well as the opportunities created through further education and delayed marriage. Communities must also be empowered to make their own decisions on how to move towards a future without child marriage. Facilitating this requires learning about community dynamics and how to gain the best response from the communities involved. This is best achieved via an approach based on empathy and the aim of working towards a conversation in which everyone has equal opportunity to contribute to. The approach that facilitators take towards changing the social norms around child marriage is key to how they will be received and thus how much impact their work will have. These actions will contribute to achieving objectives 1 and 4 of the strategy on child marriage.

Increasing community exposure to communication networks via technology is also a key driver of change. The more interconnected societies become, the more they can learn from each other's successes and it had been proven that access to mass media can influence perspectives on gender norms [37].

5.3.1   Influence of community leaders
As community leaders tend to have a strong influence on their society, creating positive relationships between AHO members and community leaders is essential. The AHO will focus on gaining the approval of community leaders and providing them with the tools and knowledge to guide conversations on child marriage.

Community leaders can also have a strong influence on surrounding villages. Increased access to communication tools can facilitate this. Existing networks between villages will be considered when selecting communities to work with, to find those that can positively influence their neighbours and enable projects to have maximum impact in each area.

5.3.2   Project Initiation
Effectively commencing projects so that communities are engaged and on board will greatly increase their success. This can be achieved through carrying out the following stages:

1. Transparent selection of the communities engaged with, building trust and understanding between all stakeholders
2. Ask the communities of their values and goals for development
3. Identify and work with community leaders, giving them decision-making power in the direction of projects
4. Hold community elections to decide on the changes made and the key people involved in leading the projects
5. Goal prioritisation, starting with quick impact projects to reinforce the communities' belief in the work being done as well as to help create a vision for change.

5.4   Providing services

The AHO must engage with schools and health clinics in the areas they work in to support progress towards the elimination of child marriage. This will create more places for education on the sexual, mental and physical health implications of child marriage. It should also ensure schools can provide a support network for girls and offer more safe places to report being at risk of child marriage.

5.5   Campaigns

The AHO will engage with governments to launch government-backed campaigns for girls to stay in school and remain unmarried as children. The emphasis of these campaigns should be on the link between education and earning a good wage, to lift families and communities out of poverty. This approach is likely to be most impactful as it advertises how ending child marriage is beneficial for all.

Local campaigns from community leaders will also be crucial in sharing information, due to them being trusted in society and able to talk to people who may not have access to radio or the internet. The focus of local campaigns should be on a vision for a better community, in order to create a drive for change. This should create a positive atmosphere around the efforts to eliminate child marriage, leading to more community backing.

6   Financial Requirements

6.1   Education Incentive Scheme

Programmes providing support to attend school have proved most effective for girls between the ages of 10 and 14. Of the 49 million girls out of education, it is estimated that approximately one third are of this age and that the provision of materials for girls to attend school will cost $15-20 per pupil per year. Therefore, the cost to fund all girls across these four key years would be up to US$1.3 billion. In line with the AHO's Strategy and Plan of Action for Girls' Education, the cost of increasing the proportion of girls in school by 10% in the next 10 years would thus be between US$240 and US$330 million. The work that the AHO carries out in advising governments to raise their spending on GDP to 7% will also contribute to increased affordability for girls to attend school, further reducing the rate of early drop-out.

6.2   Girls' Empowerment Programmes

The AHO believes that African governments should spend $100 per person per year on healthcare. As child marriage causes many health problems for girls, some of this budget being spent on child marriage elimination would lead to less cost in the long term for this demographic. Therefore, the AHO advises that governments should allocate 20% of this budget for the demographic of girls aged between 10 to 19 towards health education and advice. This includes sexual, physical and mental health. There are an estimated 140 million girls of this age across Africa [46], thus the governmental budget towards this should amount to US$2.8 billion per year in total, distributed according to populations of each country. The AHO proposes to teach community members how to create workshops and communication networks to empower girls through its engagement programmes, the costs of which are estimated in section 6.3.

6.3   Community Engagement

It has been found that the threshold proportion to instigate social change is 25% [47]. Therefore, the AHO aims to implement community engagement programmes in one quarter of societies in need in Africa. In total, this amounts to reaching around 122 million people in both cities and villages to end child marriage. This could equate to running between 10,000 to 100,000 engagement programmes

across the course of time taken to end child marriage. The communities chosen must have strong communication networks with at least 3 others averaging a similar size, to have the power to drive universal social change.

Based on costing approximation methods researched by the WHO, it is thought that a community engagement programme lasting one year would cost up to US$10,000. In the next 10 years, the AHO aims to reach 10,000 communities across Africa, costing US$100 million.

7   Monitoring and Evaluation

The impacts of the interventions will be monitored continuously by the AHO through the course of their implementation. This will allow for continuous improvement of facilitation methods and programmes, to ensure they are having the positive impact they intend to. Evaluation will have a strong focus on feedback provided by the communities involved in intervention, alongside the statistics used to measure change. This is because the more positive those involved with the programmes feel about them, the more long-term the effects will be. This can help the AHO to approach communities with increasing understanding and experience less resistance.

7.1   Success Indicators

As child marriages are not always officially registered, it is key to measure other indicators in combination with child marriage statistics. Therefore, the success indicators that should be monitored to evaluate progress towards eliminating child marriage are:

1. Official marriage statistics
2. Fertility rates
3. Girls' education and school drop-out rates
4. The volume of data collected and recorded by local and national governments
5. Rates of female genital cutting
6. Rates of intimate partner violence
7. Occurrences of health implications due to child-bearing and sexual activity

These indicators have been identified as factors having a causal link to child marriage. As many of these official figures are unlikely to accurately reflect reality, they will be used collectively to create a view of overall progress.

As well as success indicators collected from statistics, it is vital to ensure the changes in attitudes of communities are realised long-term. This can be facilitated by AHO members returning to communities periodically during the first few years of implementation to assess progress and helping with any new challenges they may be facing due to the changes occurring in their society.

8   Conclusions

With the current state of progress, the number of girls married as children will double by 2050. Thus, the AHO recognises the vast increase in work that must be done to eliminate chid marriage. In the short term, material incentives for keeping girls in education and unmarried are recommended to delay the earliest marriages. In the longer term, it is vital to educate communities of the practice's negative impacts that reinforce poverty. To do this, the AHO proposes to facilitate community conversations to change attitudes towards child marriage, focusing on positive relationships with

community leaders and enabling communication with neighbouring villages. It also plans to work closely with governments to ensure they promote a consistent message against child marriage.

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