Save the Children

GENDER NORMS, CHILD MARRIAGE AND GIRLS' EDUCATION IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

Assessing the role of education in the prevention and response to child marriage

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CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

ASRHR	Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
CM	Child Marriage
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
DSPS	Direction des Strategies, de la Planification et des Statistiques
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MNCP	Marriage No Child's Play
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
UIS	Unesco Institute for Statistics
WCA	West and Central Africa

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite efforts to end child marriage globally, an estimated 12 million girls are still married each year[1]. West and Central Africa is particularly affected, harbouring six of the top 10 countries with the highest prevalence of child marriage in the world. Rooted in unequal gender norms and discriminatory cultural traditions, the practice is often exacerbated by poverty and humanitarian crisis. Although many factors interact with regard to child marriage, there is one particular link that stands out: the relation between high child marriage rates and low levels of girls' education. The correlation between the two phenomena has been largely recognized. Specifically in West and Central Africa, where 28 million girls have no access to education[2], there is a clear relation between child marriage and girls' lack of learning opportunities. However, there is limited knowledge on how this correlation works specifically. Depending on the geographical and socio-economic context, child marriage can either be a cause or a consequence of girls' lack of educational opportunities. This study aims at deepening our understanding of this relation within 3 specific geographical contexts, in Niger, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire. It looks at context-specific drivers of child marriage, and zooms in on the role of girls' education among those drivers. In general, the study seeks to shed light on how gender norms define perceptions and behaviours around both girls' education and child marriage. The purpose of the study is to contribute to better informed programming on child marriage, and more specifically on what role education interventions can play in both the prevention and the response to child marriage.

Using a mixed methods approach, the study entails two components: a field research in the North-East of Cote d'Ivoire, looking into the locally defined drivers of child marriage and girls' school drop-out, and a series of interviews with program beneficiaries in Niger and Sierra Leone, assessing the impact of education on the empowerment of married adolescent girls. In total, the researchers interviewed 340 adolescent girls and 173 adults, using a combination of semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and key informant interviews.

The study demonstrates how deeply rooted gender norms guide choices around girls' education, fertility and marriage. Furthermore, it shows how drivers of child marriage and girls' school drop-out are contextually defined. In Niger, parental choices are mainly driven by tradition, and gender norms confine girls to a position of obedience and submission to men. In Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire, child marriage and girls' school drop-out is primarily linked to early pregnancy. Early pregnancy, or the fear for it, pushes parents to marry their daughters early and/ or withdraw them from school. In all 3 countries poverty is an exacerbating factor, causing parents and girls to look for options that mitigate their financially precarious situation.

Education is shown to play a clear role in both the prevention and the response to child marriage at a practical level. Its influence is less clear when it comes to truly shifting underlying gender norms. Education can keep girls from being married, as long as the financial means, the learning outcomes and the girl's health situation (i.e. not being pregnant) allow the girl to remain in school. However, when one of these conditions is not met, a girl's education is easily interrupted, and child marriage is seen as a viable alternative. Deeply rooted conceptions about girls' and women's position within society inspire these choices. Women are primarily valued for their role as procreators and household managers. In Cote d'Ivoire and Niger, in line with these conceptions, a girl's education is mainly conceived of as traditional and religious teaching, to be administered within the home environment. Formal education is less seen as a priority in a girl's path towards becoming a socially respected woman.

With regard to the response to child marriage, education can contribute to the empowerment of married adolescent girls. Education interventions are shown to increase girls' economic empowerment, their knowledge of SRH issues and their feeling of self-esteem. However, the interventions make a limited difference with regard to girls' decision-making power, neither to the traditional power relations between men and women. As with the preventive role of education, education interventions for married girls have a clear practical impact, but don't manage to shift the underlying gender norms which dictate a girl's position within the community.

Based on the study results, the following recommendations with regard to girls' education and child marriage programming and policies can be formulated:

[1]UNICEF (2018), Child Marriage Around the World infographic (accessed May 15, 2018).
[2]Save the Children (2017), Promoting girls' right to learn in West and Central Africa. (Based on data from UIS.)

1. **Support adolescent girls to reach positive learning outcomes and continue their education:**

   - Provide girl friendly, safe and protective learning environments

   - Promote gender-sensitive teaching & curricula

   - Provide scholarships to disadvantaged girls and/or cash transfers to vulnerable families

   - Work with communities to create an enabling environment where girls receive the space and time to go to school and do their homework

   - Abolish discriminating laws and practices against pregnant girls in school & support pregnant girls and adolescent mothers to continue their education

2. **Provide learning opportunities for married adolescent girls:**

   - Ensure formal education is adapted to the situation of married adolescents (proximity, school hours, childcare, female teachers, …)

   - Provide literacy/numeracy courses and vocational training that meet the learning needs of married adolescents and that help them in earning an income

   - Provide life skills training that is focused on equitable relationships and enhancing self-esteem

3. **Empower adolescent girls to manage their sexual and reproductive health and avoid unintended pregnancy:**

   - Integrate comprehensive sexuality education into the standard education curriculum

   - Raise awareness on sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender equality

   - Ensure that adolescent girls and boys have access to youth-friendly SRH services

4. **Address underlying drivers of child marriage and school drop-out by shifting unequal gender norms:**

   - Promote gender-transformative education curricula and pedagogy, in order to unlock the transformative power of education in shifting social norms

   - Complement education interventions with contextually appropriate community engagement programs

   - Ensure that community sensitization and engagement approaches are long-term, participatory, and engage a broad range of actors within the community

INTRODUCTION

In West and Central Africa (WCA) 70% of girls enter primary school, but only 36% finish lower secondary school[3]. Adolescence is a critical phase for girls in this region, and many of them don't get the chance to continue and complete their education. Additionally, West and Central Africa has some of the highest child marriage rates in the world. In West Africa 42% of women are married before the age of 18[4]. Child marriage and girls' education are interlinked in various and complex ways. Child marriage can be either a cause or a consequence of school drop-out. In either case unequal gender norms are often at the basis of parents' choices to keep their daughters out of school and/or marry them at an early age. This research seeks to gain insight in the specific interplay between gender norms, school drop-out and child marriage in West and Central Africa. It addresses some of the following questions: Do girls drop out of school because they have to get married? Or are girls being married because they have dropped out of school? How do norms, attitudes and perceptions of the role of girls and women in society influence these decisions? Which strategies can we adopt to work towards a positive shift in norms and behaviors? And finally, what role can education play in empowering already married girls?

This study builds on the insights from the report Toward an end to child marriage, published by Save the Children in 2018. It zooms in more closely on West and Central Africa, and puts a particular focus on the link between child marriage and girls' education. Within three specific geographical areas in Niger, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire, it seeks to understand how locally defined gender norms underpin choices on child marriage and girls' education. It aims at providing a detailed view on the contextually specific drivers of child marriage and girls' school drop-out. Additionally, the study looks into ways in which education can contribute to the empowerment of already married girls. In talking with married adolescent girls in Niger and Sierra Leone, it expresses their views on what works in providing learning opportunities for them, and how this has contributed to their empowerment. In general, the study seeks to understand which role education interventions can play in both the prevention and the response to child marriage. The overall goal is to improve Save the Children's programming on child marriage and girls' education, and feed into country offices' public campaigns on these subjects.

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[3] Save the Children (2017), Promoting girls' right to learn in West and Central Africa. (Based on data from UIS.)
[4] Save the Children (2017) child marriage factsheet WCA (data compiled from UNICEF, UNFPA and UN DESA Population Division data sets).

CONTEXT

The issue of child marriage

Despite efforts to end child marriage globally, an estimated 12 million girls are still married each year[5]. A large part of them live in West and Central Africa. Six of the top 10 countries with the highest prevalence of child marriage in the world are situated in West and Central Africa. In Niger, for example, prevalence of child marriage is 76%[6]. Although child marriage in the region is declining, it is at the slowest rate of any region worldwide. If current trends continue, almost half of the world's child brides in 2050 will be African[7].

Girls who are married young experience a grave violation of their human rights and see their development compromised in a number of ways. Their health is undermined, with marriage increasing the likelihood of early pregnancy and vulnerability to HIV. The practice is also associated with a higher risk of intimate partner violence and other forms of violence. In general, child marriage perpetuates inequality. Girls who enter into child marriage can experience social isolation, are more vulnerable to forced domestic work and have their access to employment opportunities restricted or denied. This reinforces a cycle of poverty for the girl and her future daughters, and negatively impacts national economies[8].

Photo : Louis Leeson / Save the Children

Isha* attends a community group supported by Save the Children, where she receives support, counselling and access to health and education services.

Sierra Leone

[5] UNICEF (2018), Child Marriage Around the World infographic (accessed May 15, 2018).
[6] UNICEF global databases 2018, accessed October 15, 2019 on https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/where-does-it-happen/atlas/#/
[7] https://data.unicef.org/resources/child-marriage-in-africa-brochure-2018/
[8] https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/what-is-the-impact/

It has been shown that there is a strong correlation between child marriage and girls' education. In Sub-Saharan Africa child marriage is a strong determinant of girls' low education attainment. The literacy rate among women who married as children is 29%, as compared to 54% among women who married after age 18[9] . Child marriage can either be the cause or the consequence of school drop-out. Pushing a girl into marriage because of traditional norms often means withdrawing her from school. Even if a girl does not leave school immediately after being married, the duties of married life and associated childbearing severely limit a girl's possibilities to complete her education. Conversely, marriage may be seen as an alternative after a girl has dropped out of school. Poor learning outcomes, low economic relevance, and perceived safety risks linked to school can lead parents and/or girls to believe that marriage is a better option. In humanitarian contexts these mechanisms are further exacerbated. Insecurity and displacement reduce access to school, and parents see marriage as a way to protect their daughter from violence or as a strategy to face income shocks.

In any case, **providing education for girls has proven to be one of the best strategies to reduce child marriage.** Save the Children has calculated that universal secondary education for girls could avert 21,9 million child marriages by 2030 in Sub-Saharan Africa[10] . In the same logic, the World Bank estimates that in West and Central Africa every additional year a girl spends in secondary school reduces her probability of marrying before age 18 by an average of 7 percent[11] . Despite these perspectives, girls' access to education in West and Central Africa remains the lowest in the world. 28 million girls in the region are out of school . Especially during adolescence many girls drop out of school[12]. Reasons for girls dropping out are child marriage, but also early pregnancy, school-related gender-based violence, poor education quality and poverty. Underneath all these factors are unequal gender norms. Restrictive gender roles feed into thinking about the value of girls and their education. In turn, the education system reinforces these norms rather than teaching gender equality and empowering girls.

Credit photo : Victoria Zegler

Bintou, 14 writting a letter to her sponsor. Letter writing not only supports childhood literacy but also allows for children to build relationships with someone who believes in them, who believes that they can succeed.

Mali

[9] Nguyen and Wodon (2014), Impact of child marriage on literacy and education attainment in Africa.
[10] Save The Children (2018), Working together to end child marriage.
[11] World Bank (2017), Education des filles et mariage précoce en Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre. Eléments d'analyse pour la réunion de haut niveau d'octobre 2017 pour mettre fin au mariage des enfants en Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre.
[12] Save the Children (2017), Promoting girls' right to learn in West and Central Africa. (Based on data from UIS.)

The girls from Niger and Sierra Leone who were

Programs addressing child marriage

involved in this study participated in some of the few Save the Children programs that also target married adolescent girls. Save the Children's review of child marriage programs (both implemented by Save the Children and other organisations) revealed that very little organizations are focusing on supporting married girls. Among the 52 Save the Children programs that were reviewed, only 13 sought to address the needs of married girls, either exclusively or together with unmarried adolescents[13] . And within the few programs that offer response strategies for married girls, both by Save the Children and other organisations, even fewer include education interventions. Most programs focus on SRH knowledge and services, positive parenting, marital relations, and economic empowerment.

There is thus a lack of experience within and outside Save the Children in using education as a response mechanism to empower married girls.

With regard to prevention, on the other hand, education interventions are well recognized as a successful strategy to prevent child marriage. In Save the Children's review of child marriage programs, various education projects were cited as critical child marriage prevention interventions. Among these interventions figure efforts to ensure the safety of girls both in and on the way to school, strengthen legal frameworks to guarantee access to education until the age of 16, integrate child marriage, gender and girls' rights into the standard curriculum, and improve the quality of education[14] .

Credit line: Jonathan Hyams / Save the Children

Isatu, 11, reads a book from a Save the Children supported community library in Kroo Bay, Freetown, Sierra Leone.
Save the Children support not only through traditional and formal education but through creative learning environments and tools.

Sierra Leone

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13 Save the Children (2018), Toward an end to child marriage. Lessons from research and practice in development and humanitarian sectors.

14 Idem.

A young mother at a learning center in Burkina Faso. participating in the Youth in Action (YIA), The program supports young people who are out of school by providing them with education, skill-building and entrepreneurial opportunities.

Burkina Faso

In **Niger**, interviews for this study were conducted among adolescent girls who participated in the Marriage: No Child's Play program. Marriage: No Child's Play is Save the Children's most comprehensive and largest funded child marriage program. This five-year program (2016-2020) is currently implemented in India, Pakistan, Malawi, Mali, and Niger by the More than Brides Alliance, which includes Oxfam, Simavi, Population Council, and Save the Children. The program aims at preventing child marriage, as well as providing support to already married girls.

The program aims at achieving 5 key outcomes:

1. Young people are better informed about SRHR and empowered to voice their needs and rights.

2. Increased access to formal education, economic opportunities and child protection systems for girls at risk of and affected by child marriage, and their families.

3. Increased utilization of SRHR services that are responsive to the needs of young people, particularly girls at risk of, or affected by, child marriage.

4. Increased engagement and collective social action against child marriage and in support of ASRHR.

5. Development of a supportive rights-based legal and policy environment against child marriage.

Strategies to achieve these outcomes include empowering adolescent girls with life skills and youth-responsive SRHR education, increasing access to education and economic opportu¬nities as alternatives to marriage, engaging a variety of stakeholders to change social norms and build a supportive community environ¬ment, and working with local partners and the government to conduct policy dialogue and advocacy activities to improve national legisla¬tive and policy environments.

In Niger, the program is implemented in the regions of Maradi and Tillaberi. These are both regions with high levels of child marriage (77.9% in Maradi, 41.0% in Tillaberi), and very low levels of schooling for adolescent girls (3,7% of 15-year-old girls were enrolled in school in Maradi in 2018, 38.3% in Tillaberi)[15] . The program's baseline report shows that in both regions girls' school enrolment begins to decline around age 14. Low economic engagement and low school enrolment suggest that few options exist outside of marriage for adolescent girls in these regions.

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[15] Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data cited in More Than Brides Alliance (2018), Midline Evaluation Report.

In **Sierra Leone** the study worked with adolescent girls who participated in the Right to be a Girl project. The project runs over 4 years (2017-2021) and its main goal is to prevent and reduce the acceptance and practice of child marriage, while ensuring that adolescent girls who are already married have access to health, education and protection services, as well as social support and livelihood opportunities. Activities are implemented in 24 communities in the Pujehun district.

The project aims at achieving 3 key outcomes:

1. At least 1,080 married adolescent girls benefit from stronger social networks and more positive relationships with their husbands; increased economic assets, education and livelihood opportunities; and demonstrate increased knowledge and use of healthy childcare practices;

2. 800 unmarried adolescents (400 male, 400 female) demonstrate increased use of safe sexual reproductive health (SRH) practices, amidst more frequent conversations with their parents on SRH issues, within communities that are taking actions to address teenage pregnancy and early marriage;

3. The national government of Sierra Leone and Pujehun local government take specific steps to address adolescent pregnancy and early marriage through legislative change, policy implementation and/or budgetary allocations.

The project aims at achieving sustainable change at the individual, household/community, and district and national level. Strategies to attain these outcomes are safe spaces for married girls, home visits, support for education, vocational training and financial strengthening activities, village savings and loans associations, life skills training, community engagement, local and national advocacy, and public awareness campaigns.

In Sierra Leone 39% of girls are married before the age of 18[16]. At the same time the country has one of the highest adolescent pregnancy rates in the world. In 2013 28% of adolescents between ages 15 and 19 had already been pregnant[17]. With regard to education, 65% of girls complete primary school, while 42% reach the end of lower secondary and only 15% manage to complete upper secondary education[18]. Most of the girls involved in this study (90%) had once gone to school. But 78% of them had dropped out in primary or secondary school. 22% are still continuing their education.

In **Cote d'Ivoire**, the research was conducted in the Kabadougou region, which is part of the department of Odienné, situated in the North-East of the country. The North-East of Cote d'Ivoire is characterized by high levels of child marriage, with 48% of girls being married before the age of 18 (the average rate for the whole country is 32,1%). This region also has the lowest gender parity indices: 0,88 in primary school and only 0,45 in secondary school. 42,7% of girls finish lower secondary school, and only 19,4% manage to complete upper secondary education[19]. The study worked with both out-of-school girls and girls that are still continuing their education.

[16] UNICEF (2017), State of the World's Children.
[17] Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) Sierra Leone, 2013.
[18] Unesco Institute for Statistics (UIS), 2017.
[19] All data obtained through DHS 2012 and MICS 2016, https://dhsprogram.com/publications/publication-FR330-Other-Final-Reports.cfm.

Save The Children programs to address child marriage in West and Central Africa:

Program or Intervention	Country, Years	Target Populations	Description
Marriage: No Child's Play	Mali, Niger, 2016–20	Adolescent girls (married and unmarried) and stakeholders	Model social-ecological program to enable girls to decide if and when to marry and pursue their SRHR in a supportive environment
The Right to be a Girl	Sierra Leone, 2017–21	Married and unmarried girls	Social-ecological approach to prevent and reduce the acceptance and practice of early marriage, while ensuring support for adolescent girls who are already married
Life Steps	Nigeria, 2014–17	Adolescents, families, communities, government and religious leaders	Comprehensive model to address child marriage at every level from adolescent empowerment and vocational skills training to family and community knowledge en-hancement, to training CSOs and strengthening the legislative framework
Bien Grandir! (Growing Up Great!)	DRC, 2015–20	Very young adolescents aged 10–14 and parents, newly married couples, first-time parents, and teachers	In-school and out-of-school club activities as well as family and community engagement to improve gender-equitable norms, family planning, and SRH practices and outcomes
Pan-African CSE and Information Project	Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal	Community members, including parents, teachers, community and religious leaders	SRHR education to change restrictive perceptions around gender, sexuality, and child marriage
Reducing Child Early and Forced Marriage	Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, 2018–21	Unclear	Child marriage prevention integrated with SRH, education and child protection
Resources Towards Elimination of Child Vulnerability (REVE)	Cote d'Ivoire, 2015–20	Girls aged 12–24, parents, and community members	Awareness raising and sensitization of parents, caregivers and community mem-bers and empowering girls with accurate information and education covering CSE, cultural pressures, early pregnancy, gender norms, GBV, and consequences of CM
That's No Way to Marry	Mali, Niger, 2015–16	Adolescents, communities, teachers, and other stakeholders	SRH and CM training in existing youth clubs, training of teachers and other professionals on child rights and protection, and a radio campaign
Every Last Child	Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Senegal, Sierra Leone, 2016–ongoing	Various, including adolescent girls	Global advocacy initiative to contribute to SDG targets and SC's breakthrough ambitions, focusing on exclusion. Select countries focus on CM.

Source: Save the Children (2018), Toward an end to child marriage. Lessons from research and practice in development and humanitarian sectors.
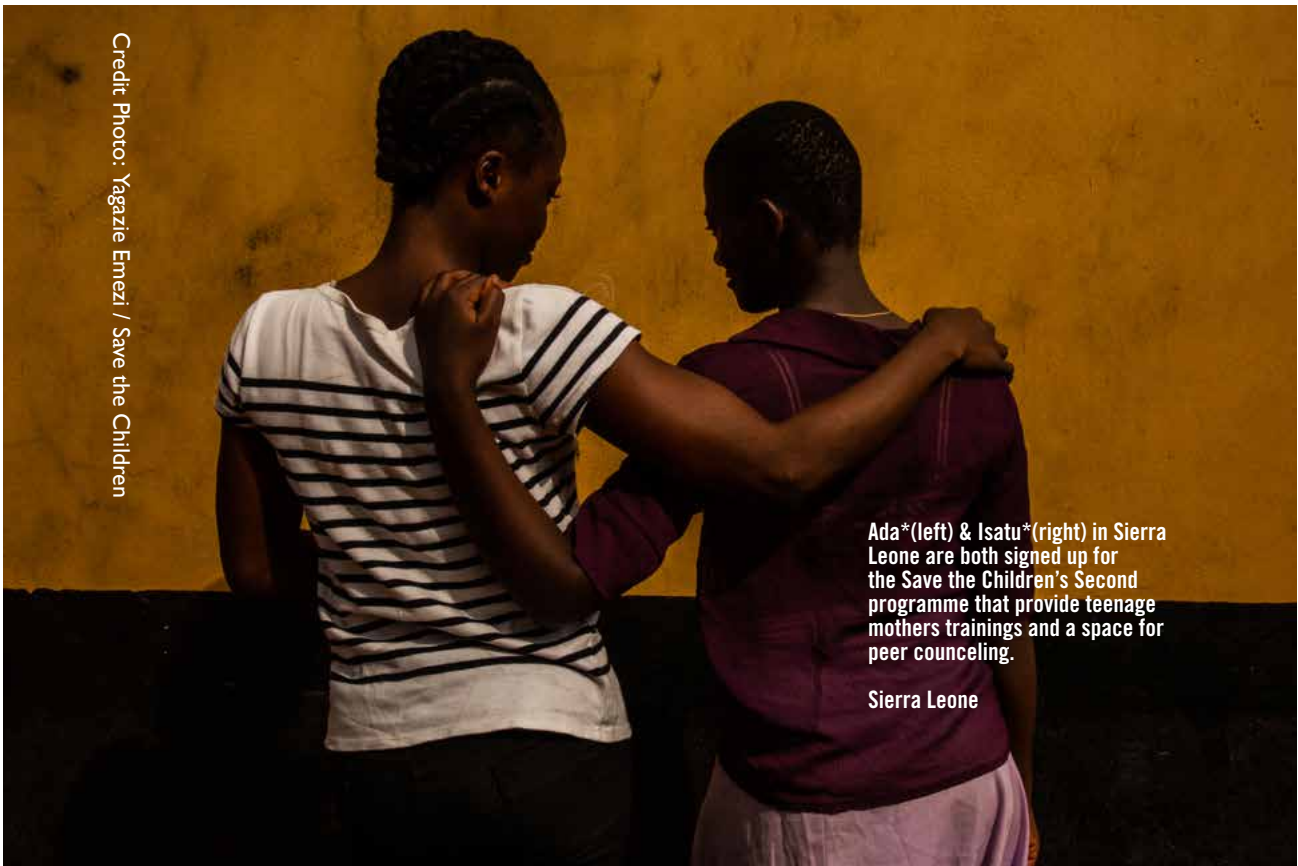
Ada*(left) & Isatu*(right) in Sierra Leone are both signed up for the Save the Children's Second programme that provide teenage mothers trainings and a space for peer counceling.

Sierra Leone

METHODOLOGY

The study uses mixed methods, and includes 2 major components: a field study in the North-East of Cote d'Ivoire, and interviews with beneficiaries of Save the Children programs in Niger and Sierra Leone. The field study in Cote d'Ivoire uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. The study was conducted in 5 communities in the Kabadougou region: 3 neighborhoods in the city of Odienné and 2 villages in the Odienné department. The 3 neighborhoods have been selected because they each represent a different set of socio-economic characteristics and housing types (residential, popular and peripheral). Each of the neighborhoods and the villages has a primary school, and is within reach of a lower secondary school. Participants for the research were grouped in 3 different levels. At the macro-level the study includes the 'Direction Regionale de l'Education Nationale' (DREN), 'Inspection de l'Enseignement Prescolaire et Primaire' (IEPP) and 'Centre Régional de la Mutualité des Œuvres Sociales en Milieu Scolaire' (CREMOSS). The mid-level includes the community leaders (religious leaders and neighborhood and village chiefs), and civil society organizations working on education and women's and children's rights (CARITAS, ISTA). And at the micro-level the study worked with teachers and head teachers, parents and adolescent girls and boys.

The quantitative part of the research includes surveys administered with 150 schoolgirls (from 4th grade to lower secondary school), 75 out-of-school girls, and 69 teachers. Two types of surveys were used: one elicitation survey for the teachers (appendix 7), and another survey for the adolescent girls (appendix 8). The elicitation survey was used to collect social representations of child marriage and girls' education, and to explore the link between school drop-out and child marriage. The survey for the girls was used to gather the perceived reasons for school drop-out and child marriage. The qualitative part of the research comprises of 44 semi-structured interviews, 12 focus group discussions and 5 life stories. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents, community leaders, school inspectors and civil society actors. The interviews aimed at exploring drivers of child marriage and school drop-out, past and present strategies to retain girls in school and to avoid child marriage, and suggested solutions. 12 focus group discussions have been organized, 5 with schoolgirls, 5 with schoolboys, 1 with female parents and 1 with male parents. The discussions evolved around drivers of child marriage and school drop-out, as well as the role of women within the community. In each community (5) one out-of-school girl has recounted, through a life story, her experiences with dropping out of school and/ or getting married.

The **Niger** study uses a qualitative method, based on interviews and focus group discussions with beneficiaries from the Marriage No Child's Play (MNCP) program. The research is not meant as an evaluation of the program's impact, but rather as a complement to formal evaluations by adding children's voices. The study was conducted in 4 of the 10 villages that are involved in the MNCP program. In each village, 2 to 3 individual interviews with married girls were conducted, as well as 1 focus group discussion with married girls, and 1 with husbands of married girls. In each focus group 7 to 9 persons participated. A total of 9 individual interviews and 8 focus group discussions were included in the study. In total 70 persons participated in the study (40 women and 30 men). 3 different interview tools were used, one for the individual interviews (appendix 1), one for the focus group discussions with the married girls (appendix 2) and one for the discussions with the husbands (appendix 3). The tools were developed to elicit social representations of marriage, gender roles, and education, as well as perceived benefits of the program. In order to explore the program's possible effects on empowerment, the tool included elements of empowerment based on van Eerderwijk et al. (2017)[20] .

The researchers selected those elements which had a link with the program's objectives. These elements were Agency – with as subcomponents decision making, collective action, and leadership – and Resources – with subcomponents bodily integrity, critical consciousness, and assets. Questions used to explore these components were partially taken from existing tools, such as the ones used by Buchmann et al. (2018)[21] and Glennerster et al. (2018)[22] .

The **Sierra Leone** study also uses a qualitative method, based on key informant interviews, focus group discussions and individual interviews with beneficiaries of the Right to be a Girl Program. The study conducted 5 focus group discussions with a total of 50 married adolescent girls, 20 individual interviews with married girls, 20 individual interviews with the husbands of the married girls, and 10 key informant interviews with stakeholders that had been involved in the project and regularly interacted with the married adolescents. Interview tools were pilot tested and adapted to the local context (appendix 1-3). The data were collected in the Pujehun district in the South of Sierra Leone, in the communities of Jendema, Sulima and Fairo (close to the border with Liberia) and in Karlu and Matakan (closer to the town of Pujehun).

Credit Line: Diana Zeyneb Alhindawi / Save the Children

Laoure*, 15 was promised to marriage by her deceased father. Her mother, Saadatou*, refused, instead wanting Laoure* to stay in school. Save the Children learnt about the case through the local child protection services and stepped in to pay back the dowry on behalf of Saadatou* and allow Laoure* to stay in school.

Niger

[20] A. van Eerdewijk, F. Wong, C. Vaast, J. Newton, M. Tyszler & A. Pennington (2017), White Paper: A Conceptual Model of Women and Girls' Empowerment.
[21] N. Buchmann, E. Field, R. Glennerster, S. Nazneen, S. Pimkina, I. Sen (2018), Power vs Money: Alternative Approaches to Reducing Child Marriage in Bangladesh, a Randomized Control Trial.
[22] R. Glennerster, C. Walsh, L. Diaz-Martin (2018), A Practical Guide to Measuring Women's and Girls' Empowerment in Impact Evaluations.

RESULTS

The social meaning of marriage

Niger, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire show significant differences with regard to the drivers of child marriage that are evoked in the study. However, in all 3 countries marriage is clearly an important social institution. It constitutes one of the building blocks of tradition and religion. **Marriage is an essential step towards the social integration of a person within the community.** It grants women with a particular social status and offers respect and dignity to both the women and their families. It can even increase the level of support received from the community. The notions of respect and honor are very present in the interviewees' discourse. In the Muslim communities there is also a religious aspect to marriage, in that it ensures a godly reward to the married women. Men have to complete their study of the Quran before getting married, so they will know the rights and obligations linked to marriage.

> *"Marriage increases a woman's value."*
> *(Girl, Niger)*
>
> *"Marriage is a woman's future."*
> *(Girl, Cote d'Ivoire)*
>
> *«It's important because a woman has the right to a home. When a girl is married there is respect for her."*
> *(Woman, focus group discussion, Cote d'Ivoire)*
>
> *«In our Islamic custom, if a woman is married, she is respected, she is much respected.*
> *If a woman is married, when she dies, on the day of her prayer, everyone is focused on saying the prayer because she is married."*
> *(Woman, focus group discussion, Cote d'Ivoire)*

Gender roles

Conceptions of marriage show how gender roles are defined within the community. In all 3 countries, Niger, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire, there is a clear division of roles between women and men within marriage. Men are the main providers, both in financial and sexual terms. A man has to serve his wife's financial and physical needs. **Women have to take care of the children and household chores.** In the interviews in Niger, a lot of emphasis is put on the concept of obedience. Women have to obey their husbands in every aspect of life. They have to ask their permission for the majority of their activities, such as leaving the house, starting an economic activity, etc. In most cases women are allowed to make their own decisions with regard to their revenues from economic activities and visits to the health center.

Men are the decision makers, although they do consult their wives on the decisions that concern the family and the household. As one man put it: "My wife is my ally whom I consult". Sexual obligations seem to work in both ways. Women are said to have to accept each 'invitation to the bedroom' from their husbands. Conversely, a husband has to respond to the sexual requests from his wife. Disobedience to the husband can cause a woman to suffer violence and can lead to divorce. Strikingly, the interviewed women in Niger seem to put the responsibility for the violence upon themselves, saying that "most of the time it's the women that cause the violence because they are difficult". In general, marriage is linked to the notion of freedom in somehow contradictory ways. Marriage gives a girl freedom, because she is liberated from her parents' authority and she can manage her own household. At the same time this newly found freedom is restricted because of the submission to her husband's will. The girls who participated in the Niger study cited this restricted freedom and the expected obedience as one of the main disadvantages of marriage.

These socially established gender roles also define the meaning of a girl's education. In both Niger and Cote d'Ivoire, education for girls is essentially seen as traditional and religious education. The responsibility for this education lies first and foremost in the hands of the family. And marriage constitutes an essential part in a girl's education. It is the final accomplishment of the 'good education' a family has offered their daughter. In Niger, once a girl gets married, it is then her husband who becomes her main 'educator'. He is responsible for her moral and religious education. These conceptions of education put a large emphasis on education within the home, rather than formal schooling.

> *"My husband's responsibilities towards me are feeding me, dressing me, being in my bed and educating me with regard to my behavior and my religion."*
>
> *(Girl, Niger)*

Photo: Yagazie Emezi / Save the Children

Single mother at 15, Isatu*, is now participating to the Save the Children's Second Chance Project that supports child mothers through vocational training in order for the young girls to start up their own businesses or get employed.

Sierra Leone

Drivers of child marriage

The studies in Niger, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire suggest important differences in the reasons for marrying a girl before the age of 18. **In Niger, tradition has a big influence on decisions around marriage.** Several girls involved in the study state that their parents married them off, "because I had the age to get married". Girls get married for the simple fact that they have the age which is traditionally seen as the right age to marry. Almost all the girls and women involved in the Niger study have been married off by their parents or grandparents. This custom doesn't seem to change over time. What does change is that the girl herself is now more involved in the decision making and that she gives her consent to the marriage

> *"My grandmother decided to marry me off, because I was under her responsibility and to protect our family's reputation since I had the age to be married."*
> *(Girl, Niger)*

In Cote d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone child marriage is in the first place a response to the widespread issue of early pregnancy. Pregnancies during the school career ('grossesses en milieu scolaire') are a big concern in both Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire. In 2016-2017 the Ministry of Education in Cote d'Ivoire recorded 4276 cases of pregnancy in the school environment, of which 4137 in secondary school, and 139 in primary school[23] . Child marriage is seen as an adequate response to this problem. Interviewed schoolgirls in Cote d'Ivoire cite "pregnancy during the school career" and "controlling a girl's sexual life" among the most important reasons for child marriage. However, the exact response differs between Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire. In the Sierra Leone study girls are said to get married after they have become pregnant, so the husband can provide for the adolescent mother and her baby. In the Cote d'Ivoire study parents marry their daughters 'preventively', to avoid that they become pregnant outside of marriage. They start considering marriage from the moment their daughters reach puberty and have their first menstruation.

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[23] Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et de l'Enseignement Technique, Rapport d'analyse statistique du Système Educatif 2016-2017, Direction des Stratégies, de la Planification et des Statistiques (DSPS).

«Because if she gets pregnant before the age of 18, there are girls who get pregnant at 12 or 13. Now why are you going to leave her roaming around until she's 18. You say she has to choose her husband, you say if someone comes to see you, you can't force her. If she gets pregnant, the gentleman now says that pregnancy there is not for me. How to act then? So it is the very law that has spoiled our customs.»
(Parent, Cote d'Ivoire)

«Here in our region it's not a question of age. Normally if your parents agree with the person who wants to marry you, and you both love each other, at 15 years old, 16 years old, if you agree, and you like each other, the family does the wedding.»
(Woman, Cote d'Ivoire)

"Because the first man I was pregnant from denied me and so after giving birth my grandmother said I should get married and so the parents of my husband decided to marry me for their son."
(Girl, Sierra Leone)

"When girls get pregnant in school, they are being rejected by their parents."
(Girl, Sierra Leone)

What is common in Niger, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire is that marriage is a matter of honor. It is the parents' responsibility to marry their daughters, preferably as virgins or at least without having children. If they succeed in doing this, it strengthens their social status and brings honor upon the family. In the opposite case, when a girl becomes pregnant without being married, it brings shame and dishonor upon herself and the family.

«Marriage here is a matter of honor. First of all, it is a contract between two families. For the girl who gets married a little earlier, especially a virgin, it is an honor for the family. We know that in the tradition, the girl who gets married early is a virgin. It proves that the girl has received a good education from her family."
(Woman, Cote d'Ivoire)

«Marriages are always based on the old traditions. As long as your daughter is not married, you are not well regarded in the neighborhood, especially on the religious side.»
(Community leader, Cote d'Ivoire)

Apart from the traditional meaning of marriage and the importance of avoiding pregnancy outside of marriage, there is also a more pragmatic reason for marrying a girl early. Marrying a daughter can alleviate the family's financial burden. This reason is evoked in all 3 of the studies, in Niger, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire. When asked about the main causes of child marriage, both schoolgirls and teachers in Cote d'Ivoire cite poverty as the number one cause. In the Sierra Leone study many girls testify that their parents couldn't take care of them, and that their husband took over the role as main provider. In marrying off a daughter, the family will have one mouth less to nourish, while at the same time receiving a bride price in the form of gifs and money. In a region where many families are socially and economically vulnerable, this can be a catalyst for child marriage. It can even be part of a formal financial pact between families, in terms of debt relief.

«There is a problem of poverty in the villages. There are a number of pacts. The majority of parents are farmers. If the parent has no means and has taken out a loan from someone who has more means than he does, he will have to give his daughter in marriage to pay off this debt.»
(Teacher, Cote d'Ivoire)

The role of girls' education in the prevention of child marriage

Within this context of socially defined meanings of marriage and womanhood, girls' education plays a specific role. In the Kabadougou region in Cote d'Ivoire girls' access to education has improved in recent years. In primary school girls' participation rates even exceed those of boys (see figure 1). Interviewed teachers and community members indicate the law on compulsory education, the fact that education is free, and increased awareness among parents as the main reasons for this change.

"In the past, parents were very reluctant to send their girls to school. With them, it is the boy who takes care of the family and the girl is relegated to the second role. Today, as a consequence of awareness campaigns, we often have more girls than boys in the classroom. Parents have understood that the girl can take care of the family better than the man. There is a balance here." (Head teacher, Cote d'Ivoire)

However, girls' participation in school decreases when the girls reach secondary education. In Kabadougou region, lower secondary school shows a gross enrolment ratio for girls of 48,40%, against 53,80% for boys. In upper secondary school rates drop even lower, with 18,90% for girls, against 26,90% for boys (see figure 1). More than half of the girls who enter primary school don't make it into lower secondary school. And only one in five girls succeed in going through to upper secondary school.
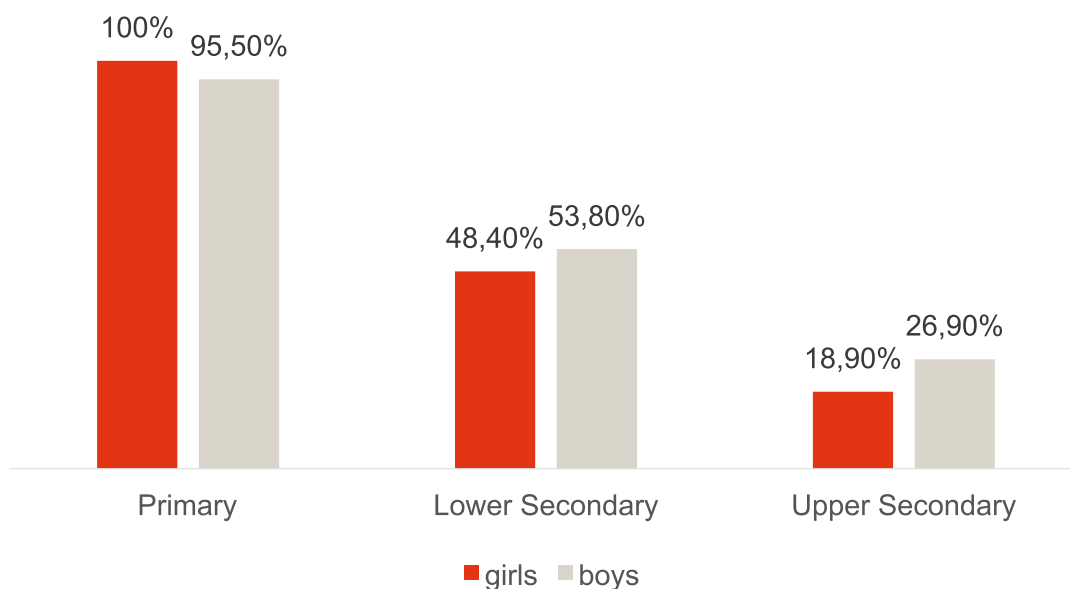
Figure 1: Gross enrolment rates in primary and secondary school in 2017-2018 in Kabadougou region.
Source: Ministry of Education statistical data 2017-2018, DSPS.

"It must be said that in pre-school and primary, girls generally go to school on the same basis as boys. This is the observation we make at the level of primary school entry. It is with time that we notice that the pattern will be reversed, i.e. as schooling progresses and therefore when we arrive in the upper classes we realize that the number of girls has decreased compared to boys."
(School inspector, Cote d'Ivoire)

This decrease in girls' participation in school during adolescence is a largely documented phenomenon in West and Central Africa. The transition from primary to secondary school is challenging for a large group of girls across the region.

As indicated before, in West and Central Africa 70% of girls enter primary school, but only 36% finish lower secondary school[24] .

The reasons cited for this drop-out at the end of primary school differ slightly from one group of respondents to the other. A first group of interviewees were the girls who dropped out of school themselves. The number one reason evoked by these girls was a lack of financial means within the family (32%)[25] . The second most cited reason was early pregnancy (16%). And the third most frequently named reason was having to do the school year over at various times (15%). Child marriage only accounted for 4% of cited reasons for school drop-out (see figure 2).
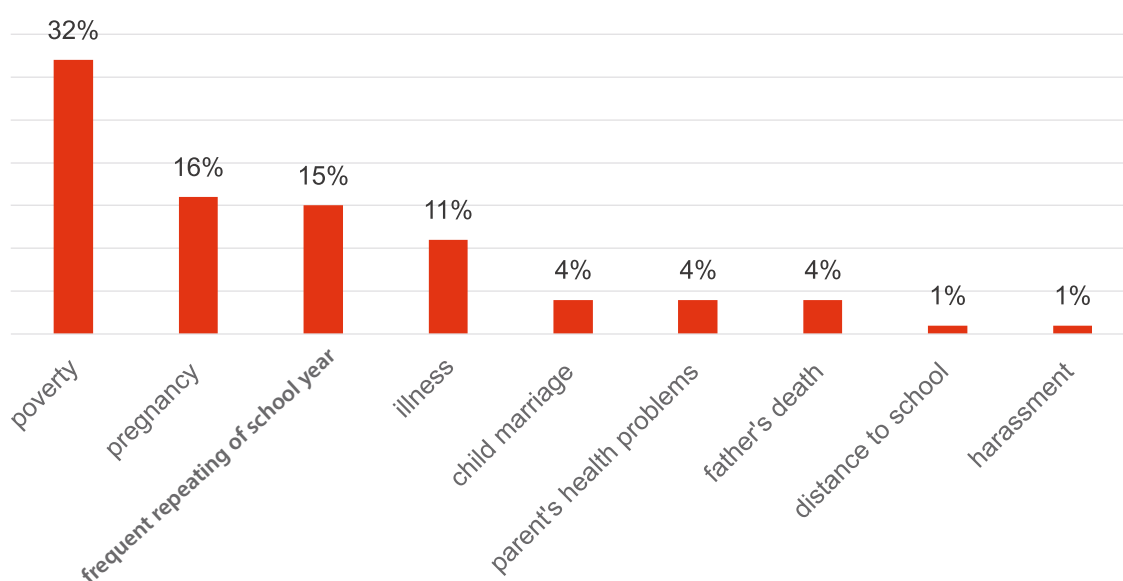
Figure 2: Reasons for school drop-out according to out-of-school girls

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[24] Save the Children (2017), Promoting girls' right to learn in West and Central Africa,
    (Based on data from UIS.)
[25] Respondents could choose more than one reason in a list of reasons.

Girls that are still in school give different reasons for school drop-out, or attribute different weights to the same reasons. They cite early pregnancy as the number one reason why girls abandon school (60%). The second most cited reason is child marriage (47%). Lack of financial means only comes third in the interviews (33%) (see figure 3).
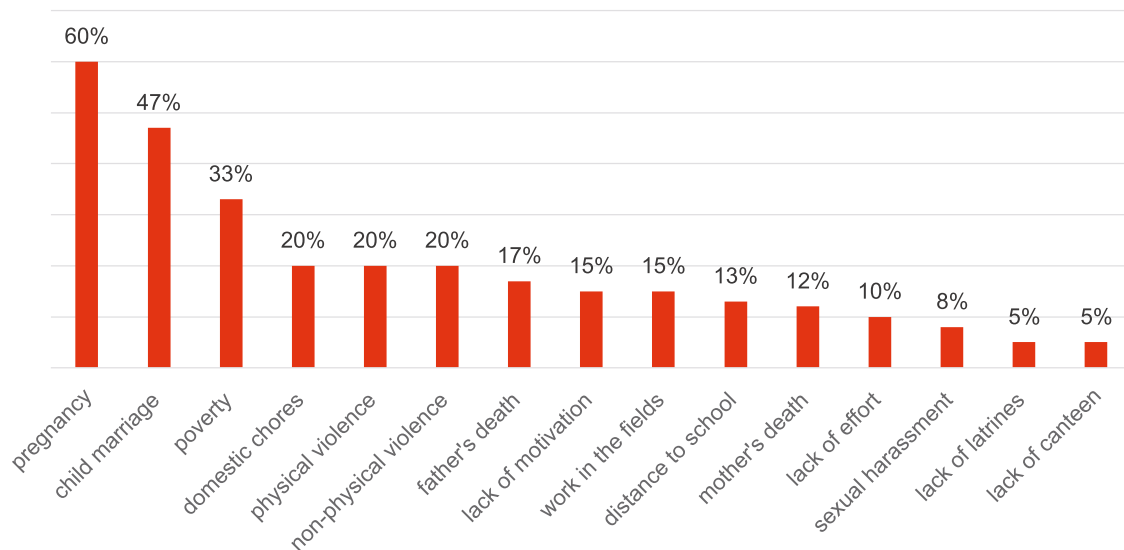

Figure 3: Reasons for school drop-out according to schoolgirls.

Although poverty and pregnancy are cited by both schoolgirls and out-of-school girls as reasons for drop-out, they are attributed different weights. Out-of-school girls see poverty as the main cause of abandoning school, whereas schoolgirls consider pregnancy as the most important barrier to continuing a girl's education. School girls cite child marriage as the number two reason for school drop-out (47%), whereas out-of-school girls only attribute a minor importance to this phenomenon (4%). A hypothetical explanation for this difference might be that schoolgirls are sensitized about child marriage and thus recognize it more easily as a possible reason.

When asked about the most important reasons for girls to abandon their education, teachers and school authorities evoke the same ones as the interviewed girls, in the following order of importance: poverty, child marriage and early pregnancy. Beside these elements they also cite the parents' lack of awareness, girls working in the fields or in the household, girls not being interested in school, girls being attracted by earning an income. Several of these reasons could be linked to the first one cited, namely the family's lack of financial means.

When talking about early pregnancy and child marriage as reasons for school drop-out, teachers tend to attribute this to the 'biological readiness' of the girls at a certain age. They emphasize that the girls in their area are physically mature at a young age. One head teacher states that "in the villages, the girls from 5th grade are women". The fact that these observations come from mostly male teachers is worrying, given that Cote d'Ivoire has a well-known problem with school-related gender-based violence perpetrated by teachers.

Once a girl is married, she might still have the permission to continue her education. However, the responsibilities of her new role will make it difficult for her to complete her education.

Teachers, girls and community members also cite poor learning outcomes as a reason to withdraw girls from school. Poor learning outcomes can be caused by various indirect factors, such as work in the household for example. Too many household chores can cause a girl to miss class or to not do her homework, influencing her school results in a negative way. Several respondents suggest that this comes before child marriage, and that marriage is only seen as an alternative once the girl has stopped school because of her poor learning outcomes. They state that most girls are allowed to go school and remain there when they have good results. However, when a girl's results start to fall back, when she has to do the school year over, and/or when she eventually drops out, parents will consider marriage as a viable alternative. Sometimes it is the girls themselves who tend towards marriage, because they are demotivated by their poor results in school.

In summary, with regard to girls dropping out of school in Cote d'Ivoire, 4 elements interact: poverty, pregnancy, poor learning outcomes and child marriage. Although the results are not clear-cut, child marriage seems to be less important as a driver of school drop-out in itself, and is rather a response to the other factors pregnancy and poor learning outcomes. When a girl drops out of school because of poor learning outcomes, parents will marry her to avoid the dishonor of a girl becoming pregnant outside of marriage (see below, scenario A). Or, when she stops school because of pregnancy, they will also marry her, so she will not become an unmarried mother (see below, scenario B). In either case, early pregnancy, or the fear of it, plays a pivotal role in parents' decision-making process.

Poverty is an exacerbating factor in all of this. Because of their precarious financial situation, many girls engage in unsafe sexual contacts as an economic transaction. This makes them highly vulnerable to early pregnancy. Poverty also increases parents' fear of unwanted pregnancy, since it will mean an additional financial burden upon the family.

A strong difference with the Niger study, is that the girls in the Kabadougou region seem to have more agency. They seem in some cases to take the initiative to engage in sexual activity. Girls are said to be able to make the choice between attending school or engaging in encounters with boys. Parents try to control this sexuality through marriage. As one community member put it: "If the child wants to study, you will her support her, but if she wants the boy, you will marry her." This is in stark contrast with the study results in Niger, where traditions around child marriage dictate that adolescent girls are confined within a mainly passive, obedient role.

The role of girls' education in empowering married girls

Whereas the Cote d'Ivoire study shed light on the link between a girls' education and the possibility of her getting married, the Niger and Sierra Leone studies assessed what education can mean for the empowerment of already married girls. The adolescent girls who were interviewed for the Niger study participated in Save the Children's 'Marriage No Child's Play' program. They were all married before the age of 18. Most of them had never gone to school. Some had completed the first years of primary school. Through the program the girls participated in literacy classes, awareness raising sessions on child marriage, children's rights and sexual and reproductive health, and a training on income generating activities. The focus was put on literacy and vocational training, rather than reintegration in the formal education system. The interviewed husbands do state that they would allow their wives to go back to formal school, but only under certain conditions. The conditions being that the wives don't spend too much time in school, that the school is in the village and that the teachers are women.

The girls who participated in the Sierra Leone study were involved in Save the Children's 'Right to be a Girl' project. Most of them were married before the age of 18. The vast majority had once gone to school, but most dropped out either in primary or in secondary school. Through the project they participated in vocational and life skills training, awareness raising sessions on child marriage, children's rights and sexual and reproductive health, and safe spaces. Some girls received support to return to formal education. The majority of the husbands said that they would agree with their wives going to school and would be willing to support them. Some didn't agree, because they wanted their wives to take care of their children, husband and home.

Girls who have participated in the programs in both Niger and Sierra Leone state that this has been useful for them because they acquired competencies in income generating activities and they increased their knowledge on children's rights, child marriage and sexual and reproductive health. The girls in Sierra Leone who chose to return to formal education say that they are happy to be back in school and that they hope to fulfill their dreams in the future. The respondents in the Niger study indicate the literacy courses as the most important contribution of the program, because now they can read and write and use this for their economic activities. They now also help their children with their homework and encourage them to do well in school. In Sierra Leone both married girls and their husbands praised the vocational skills and business training, because the girls are now earning an income and they feel more confident and self-reliant.

Both programs are said to have raised awareness on child marriage and early pregnancy within the community. Respondents state that they are empowered to act as mediators within the community, and that they inform community members on the risks of child marriage. They say that girls are now encouraged to complete their education and wait until the age of 18 to get married. Thanks to the sessions on sexual and reproductive health most women now go to the health center for pre- and post-natal consultations, they know their rights and they do family planning. And most of the husbands accompany their pregnant wives to the center. In general, most of the respondents say that they have gained self-confidence and that they now feel capable of helping other community members.
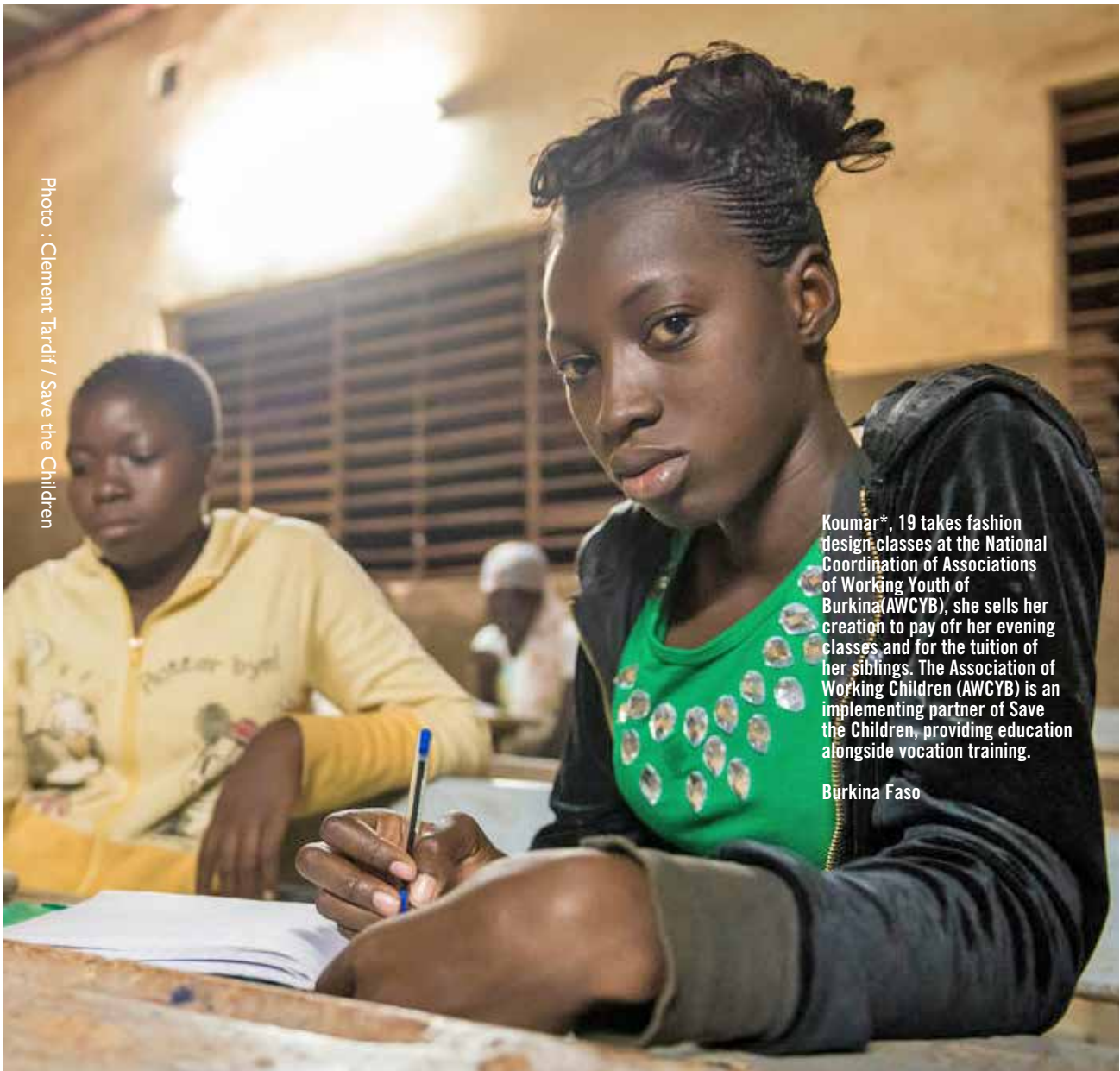
Koumar*, 19 takes fashion design classes at the National Coordination of Associations of Working Youth of Burkina(AWCYB), she sells her creation to pay ofr her evening classes and for the tuition of her siblings. The Association of Working Children (AWCYB) is an implementing partner of Save the Children, providing education alongside vocation training.

Burkina Faso

Respondents in both Niger and Sierra Leone say that thanks to their newly acquired competencies they now receive more respect from their husbands and in-laws. They are able to have better conversations with their husbands, and settle disputes within the family. The program seems to have slightly increased their decision-making power. Respondents in Niger state that they are more involved in decisions concerning their children, health and household expenses than before. In Sierra Leone the married girls acknowledge that there is now more dialogue within the household and that they are free to take a number of decisions, such as how to dress or undertake certain activities. However, in Niger, this is still a 'consulting' role and there seem to be little changes in the overall rules of obedience towards the husband's authority. The majority of women still state that they can't make decisions on their own. With regard to family planning women are now better informed, but they still need their husband's permission to put it into practice. Very few of the respondents have managed to get permission from their husbands to start using contraceptives for example.

Women also still need to ask for permission to go visit friends or family or to go to the market. Neither are there any new domains of decision making in which the women are involved since the program. Only for visits to the health center half of the women say they wouldn't need their husband's formal approval. In Sierra Leone also there are still a number of domains in which the girls can't make decisions without their husband's approval, such as going to visit friends or going to the market. The interviewed husbands also clearly state that their wives shouldn't decide how to spend the money they earned from their income generating activities.

"Ever since I have participated in the project I get more involved in household decisions. Before I didn't say anything, I just observed." (Married girl, Niger)

"Thanks to the literacy classes I can now help my children with their homework. I make riddles for them to stimulate them." (Married girl, Niger)

To summarize, the learning opportunities offered to the girls in the program seem to have empowered them in a number of areas. They are better able to manage their economic activities, they take on leadership roles within the community when it comes to raising awareness about child marriage, and they become more involved in certain decisions with regard to the family and the household. In general, the girls testify having gained self-confidence and feeling more respected by their husbands. However, their decision-making power is still limited by the overall rule of obedience towards the husband, and final decisions are still to be taken by the husband.

The example on family planning shows this very clearly. Thanks to the program the women are now better informed on the different options for family planning, but they still don't have the power to decide about this without their husbands' permission. In this context, education is able to empower married adolescents at an individual level, but it doesn't bring about changes in the underlying gender norms within the community. The empowering potential of education interventions is limited to a certain extent because of broader social norms that go beyond the scope of the intervention. In order to tackle these limits, education interventions will have to be complemented by larger social norms change programs.
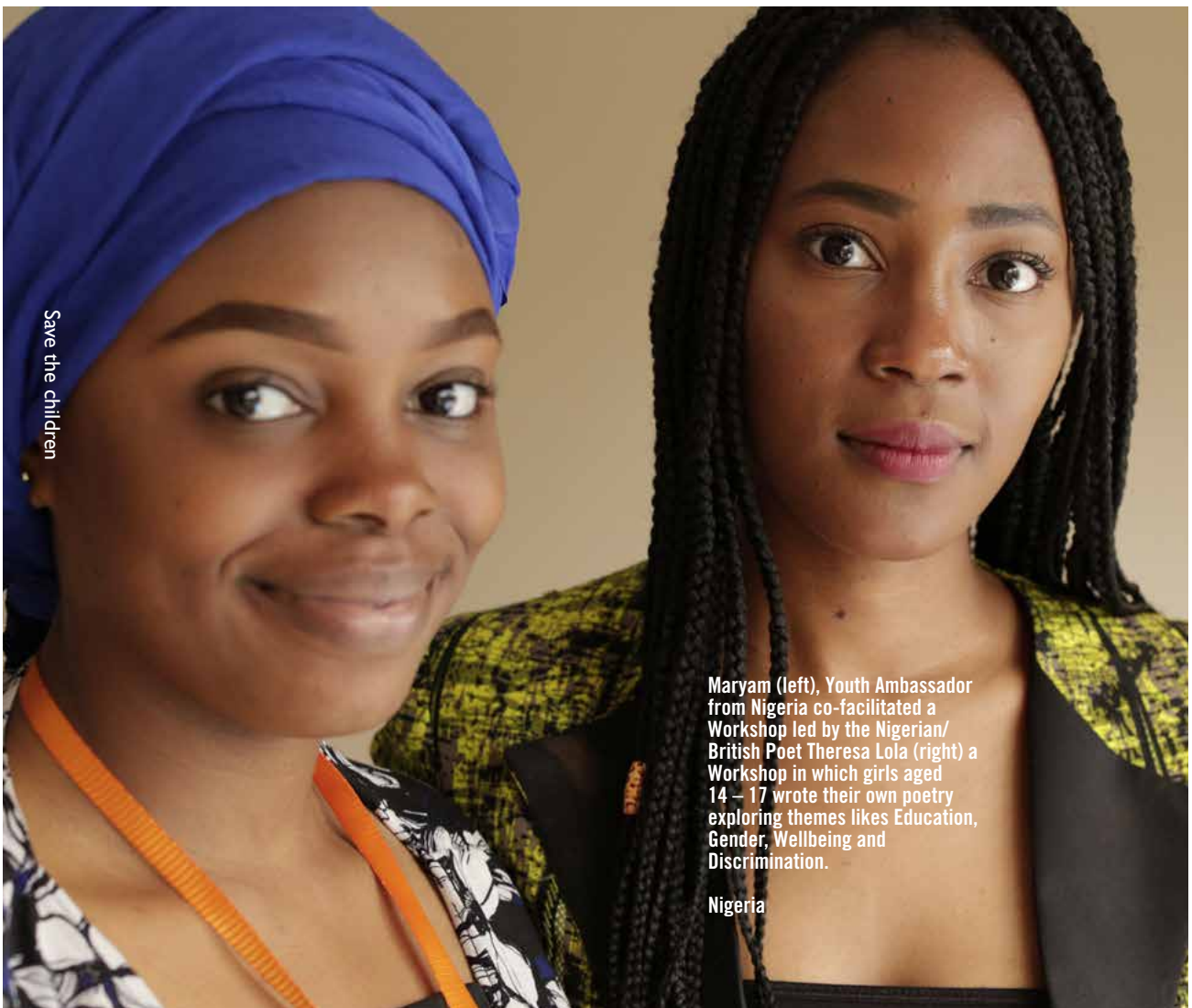
Save the children

Maryam (left), Youth Ambassador from Nigeria co-facilitated a Workshop led by the Nigerian/ British Poet Theresa Lola (right) a Workshop in which girls aged 14 – 17 wrote their own poetry exploring themes likes Education, Gender, Wellbeing and Discrimination.

Nigeria

CONCLUSION

This study has shed light on how education can play a role in both the prevention and response to child marriage. It has also shown how drivers of child marriage differ according to geographical contexts. And it has demonstrated how deeply rooted gender norms guide choices around a girl's education, fertility and marriage. Although results have to be handled with care due to small sample sizes, especially for Niger and Sierra Leone, the study provides useful orientation for further research and debate.

In Niger child marriage is mainly driven by strong traditional values and norms. These norms are both based on culture and religion. Adolescent girls are seen as traditionally 'ready' to be married when they reach puberty. Marriage is a matter of honor and respect. Gender norms confine girls to a position which is mainly marked by obedience and submission. In Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire the main driver of child marriage is early pregnancy. Marriage is used either as a preventive measure, or a response to early pregnancy. Parents marry off their daughters to avoid that they become pregnant outside of marriage, or to ensure that they are taken care of once they have become pregnant. As opposed to the more passive role of girls in Niger, in Cote d'Ivoire adolescent girls seem to have more agency, especially when it comes to their sexual activity. In all three countries poverty is a strong underlying factor. It pushes parents and adolescent girls to look for options to mitigate their precarious situation. In general, child marriage is driven by multiple and interacting factors, all reinforced by unequal gender norms.

Education is mostly valued for its practical meaning, and it that sense it plays a clear role in both the prevention and the response to child marriage. But it doesn't seem to change deeply entrenched conceptions on the role and position of girls and women. Education is able to prevent child marriage, when all surrounding factors (financial means, education quality, health situation) are positive. However, when one of these factors is negative, child marriage is easily seen as a viable alternative. In Cote d'Ivoire, respondents state that they send their girls to school, because it's mandatory, not because they believe formal education will help them to better fulfill their socially defined role. School enrolment rates for girls have increased, but gender norms and a girl's future perspectives have remained the same. In both Cote d'Ivoire and Niger education for a girl is mainly seen as traditional education, more than formal schooling. It is within the home and the family that a girl learns how to be a good mother and wife. Formal schooling seems to be 'tolerated', but is easily stopped when aggravating factors such as poor learning outcomes or pregnancy arise. The perceived value of girls' education in itself is thus not strong enough to compete with the deep-rooted beliefs about a girl's position in society.

The same goes for education for married adolescent girls. Our study shows that the education interventions offered by Save the Children are mainly valued for their practical usefulness. Girls and husbands testify that the literacy courses and vocational training have helped them to earn an income, and to assist their children in doing homework. It has also made the girls feel more self-confident, and has contributed to more respectful relationships within the household and the community. In this sense the education interventions have clearly contributed to the empowerment of adolescent married girls. However, the empowerment remains limited by the unchanged social norms that dictate a girl's obedience toward her husband. Decision making power remains primarily in the hands of men, and education doesn't seem to change these rules. In order to have a stronger empowering effect, education interventions for married girls will thus have to go hand in hand with long-lasting and comprehensive social norms change programs.

11-year-old Zeinabou walks to school with her girlfriends Rakia and Aicha, 11, in Maradi, Niger. Zeinabou participates in the basic education program as well as Literacy Boost.

Niger

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Support adolescent girls to reach positive learning outcomes and continue their education:

- ✓ Provide girl friendly, safe and protective learning environments

- ✓ Promote gender-sensitive teaching & curricula

- ✓ Provide scholarships to disadvantaged girls and/or cash transfers to vulnerable families

- ✓ Work with communities to create an enabling environment where girls receive the space and time to go to school and do their homework

- ✓ Abolish discriminating laws and practices against pregnant girls in school & support pregnant girls and adolescent mothers to continue their education

2. Provide learning opportunities for married adolescent girls:

- ✓ Ensure formal education is adapted to the situation of married adolescents (proximity, school hours, childcare, female teachers, …)

- ✓ Provide literacy/numeracy courses and vocational training that meet the learning needs of married adolescents and helps them in earning an income

- ✓ Provide life skills training that is focused on equitable relationships and enhancing self-esteem

3. Empower adolescent girls to manage their sexual and reproductive health and avoid unintended pregnancy:

- ✓ Integrate comprehensive sexuality education into the standard education curriculum

- ✓ Raise awareness on sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender equality

- ✓ Ensure that adolescent girls and boys have access to youth-friendly SRH services

4. Address underlying drivers of child marriage and school drop-out by shifting unequal gender norms:

- ✓ Promote gender-transformative education curricula and pedagogy, in order to unlock the transformative power of education in shifting social norms

- ✓ Complement education interventions with contextually appropriate community engagement programs

- ✓ Ensure that community sensitization and engagement approaches are long-term, participatory, and engage a broad range of actors within the community

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 : Interview Guide for individual interviews with girls in Niger/Sierra Leone

Issues	Information to be gathered
General Information	
Interviewer's identity/interview information	Interviewer's name and surname Place, date, duration of the interview
Respondent's identity	Respondent's name, surname and age Respondent's husband's name, surname and age
Respondent's educational situation	**What we want to know :** All the information available with regard to the respondent's educational situation, more particularly : • For those who are in school whether marriage could stop them from continuing their education • For those who stopped going to school whether it was marriage that stopped them • For those who have never gone to school whether they have had other learning opportunities **Examples of questions :** • Have you ever been to school? • If yes, Are you currently in school? • If no, when did you stop studying? • What is the highest level of education you attained? • What are the main reasons why you dropped out of school? • Did you stop before or after your marriage/ pregnancy? • How long before or after? • If yes, what is your current school level? • What level do you wish to reach? • What are the difficulties you have in attending classes? • Do you get to school on time? • Is the distance affordable? • Have you any concern in terms of safety and security in the journey to school or within the school? • Can you stay in class from beginning to end? • Do you have any kind of thoughts that prevent you from staying concentrated? • Do you have any constraint in doing home-work? • Do you have support from family members in terms of help in doing chores? • Have you ever received a training? • What kind of training?
Current and previous marital situation	**Examples of questions :** • Are you currently married? If no, were you married before? Are you betrothed or promised? • When did you get married? • Who decided to marry you? • At what age did you get married? • In your opinion, why did he/she decided to marry you? • Where do you live? • Do you have children? How many? Age of each child? Where do they live?

Opinion and expectations regarding marriage	**What we want to know:** what marriage represents for the girls, what they expect from it and how they experience it **Examples of questions :** • What does marriage mean to you? • What are the benefits of being married? • What are the challenges or inconveniences? • What is the ideal age to get married? Why? • How do you think a girl should choose a good husband? • How do you think a man should choose a good wife?
Relationship with the husband and/or the in-laws	**What we want to know :** How is the girl's relationship with her husband and with her in-laws and did she experience violence? **Examples of questions :** • How would you describe your relationship with your husband? • What are your duties towards your husband? • Do you respect them? What happens if you do not respect them? • What are your husband's duties to you? • Does he respect them? What happens if he does not respect them? • Has it ever happened that your husband was beating you, or insulting you or acting in any way aggressive towards you? • What happened? Was it justified in your opinion? • Do you think this could happen again in the future? • Is it common to see in your community a man beat, insult or abuse his wife? • How are the relationships with your in-laws? • What are your duties towards your in-laws? • Do you respect them? What happens if you do not respect them?
Program outcomes	
Program's perceived benefits	**What we want to know :** Do respondents think the program was useful for them and which activities have been the most useful ? **Examples of questions :** • How has your participation been in the program? • Has the program been useful to you? • How did it help you? • Which intervention / activity helped you the most? • How did it help you? • Overall, did you notice any significant changes in your life since your participation in the program? Which changes?
Focus on the program's education activities	**What we want to know :** What have respondents learned from the education activities and which benefits did it bring to them ? **Examples of questions :** • What did you learn mainly about ******? • How do you put it into practice? • What change has this brought to your daily life?

Focus on empowerment through education		**What we want to know :** Did education activities enhance respondents' empowerment and in which way ? **Examples of questions :** • Have your different trainings given you any idea about your rights? • As a young girl, what rights can you enjoy? • According to you, do you have sexual and reproductive rights? Which ones? • Do you think you have rights related to domestic violence? Which ones?
Agency	Decision-making	• Have you noticed changes in your relationship with your husband since your participation in the program? What kind of changes? • Is the knowledge you're getting from the project trainings helping you in gaining power within the relationships with your husband? In what way? • Do you have more freedom to make decisions about yourself? In which types of decision for example? • Are you free to decide how to dress? • Free to undertake activities that make you happy? • Are you permitted to go visit friends or family whenever you feel like it? • Are you free to go to the market or just go out for a walk without being accompanied or having to ask permission? • Do you need formal permission to go seek for care in a health facility when you are sick or when your child is sick (if applicable)? • Has your learning from the project contributed to any changes in this regard? • What aspect of your learning has contributed the most? • Are you more involved in decision making in your home since your participation in the program? • In what kind of decisions, for example, are you involve or do you involve yourself? • How are you involved? • Are there specific decisions about which you did not get involved before; but you are now involved in these decisions since your participation in the program? Which decisions? • How has your participation in the program contributed to these changes? • Have you noticed any changes in your position or relationship with your in-laws since your participation in the program? What kinds of changes? • What aspect of the program helped most for this? • Did your different trainings contribute to it? How?
	Collective action	• Has the program allowed you to develop relationships with other girls of your age? How? • Since the program began, have you undertaken activities together with girls of your age aiming at addressing your concerns, on your own initiative? • What kinds of activities were these? What was the purpose of these activities? • Did your learning from the program help you in doing these?

	Leadership	• Personally, has this program enabled you to gain confidence in yourself? How? • Do you believe in your capacity to engage yourself and succeed in the activities that are aimed at your personal development? • Have you ever done it? If yes, why? If No, why not? • Do you believe in your capacity to initiate, participate and succeed in activities that will help other girls to develop personally? • Have you ever done it? If yes, why? If no, why not?
Ressources	Bodily integrity	• It is often said that a girl's body belongs only to her and she is the only one who can decide who can touch her. Do you agree with that? Why or why not? • Are there situations in which a girl can refuse to have sex with her husband? What are these situations? • What if she just does not feel like having sex? • Does a husband have the right to refuse to have sex with his wife? Why or why not? • Have you and your husband ever discussed birth spacing (planning for the number of children you will have and when you will have them/time in between)? • Did you come to an agreement on this question? • Is it ok for him that you use modern contraceptives/family planning? • Did the information that you have received from the safe spaces activities (Or from the home visits from the mentors) help you convince him? • What do you think might help to convince your husband to agree for you to use contraceptives? • What kinds of decisions have you been able to make on your sexual and reproductive health with the information and knowledge you have received from the program? • Have you or he ever (together or separately) went to the health centre to test or get treatment for sexually transmitted infections or HIV? • What do you think might help your husband to be more supportive of your sexual reproductive health needs? • Have you experienced violence since the program began? • Did you experience more violence than before the program? • Did your learning in ***** in particular contribute to it? How?
	Critical Consciousness	• Do you think there are constraints in your community that only girls face? What are these? • Why do you think only girls face them? • What do you think is the best way to help girls cope? • What role do you think you should play in helping other girls to eliminate or reduce these constraints? • Do you think the program activities are making (or can make or will make) your community supportive to the girls in dealing with these constraints?
	Assets	• What types of income-generating activities (cash or in-kind) are available in your village for girls of your age? • Do any of these activities interest you?

		• Have you ever undertaken any of these activities? If yes, which activity? • Who helped you lead / manage the activity? How did he/she help you? • Who took the important decisions in this activity? • Was this activity in the family or outside of the family? • How did you use the money or goods you earned? • Who decided how to use your earnings? Why? • Did you use some of the cash or in-kind you gained for your personal expenses? • Overall, did your trainings in this program help you start, manage, or distribute the earnings of this activity? How?
Respondent's personal expectations		**What we want to know :** Does the program take into account the respondents' real preoccupations; have their expectations with regard to the program been met; what are their suggestions to improve the program? **Examples of questions :** • I would now like you to tell me about your dreams, your personal aspirations… • What do you want to achieve for yourself? • Do you think you can achieve these dreams? • If yes; What would let you achieve it/ if no; What would stop you from achieving these dreams? • What are the things you would like to have that seem inaccessible to you? • What are the things you wish you could do, but you do not think you should do it; or you are afraid; or you are not allowed to do it? • Are there specific thoughts, beliefs or attitudes from your community that prevent you from progress in meeting your dreams? What are these? • Who or what group of persons exactly in the community are behind these behaviours and attitudes? • How do you think the program can support you in achieving your dreams? • What are the things in your opinion that the program has failed to address? • What are your suggestions for improving the program?

Appendix 2: Interview Guide for Focus Group Discussions with married girls in Niger/Sierra Leone

Theme/Questions	Information to collect
Interviewer identity / Interview information	Location, Date, Duration, Interviewer's name

About marriage and Marital relationships

- At what age do girls tend to get married in your community?
- Why do you think girls marry at this age?
- Who exactly in the community decide if, when and to whom a girl will get married?
- Are the girls concerned (and/or the women in the community) involved in the decision-making process?
- Where do married girls live (with own family/ with in-laws/ with husband and children only)?
- In case of separation with which of the parents do the children live? Is there a difference according to the reason for the separation (divorce / repudiation / widowhood)?
- What are the benefits of being married?
- What are the challenges or inconveniences of being married?
- What are a wife's duties towards her husband? What happens if she does not respect them?
- What are a husband's duties towards his wife? What happens if he does not respect them?

- General discussion about violence in marital relationships (what/who can bring violence into marital relationships? what happens when there is violence or abuse in the marital home?)

- General discussion about relationships between girls and their in-laws

Program information

- How has your participation been in the program? Positive and negative…
- Has the program been useful to you? How did it help you?
- Which intervention / activity helped you the most? How did it help you?
- Overall, did you notice any significant changes in your life since your participation in the program? What change(s)?

Program's educational component

- What did you learn/are you learning from the various safe space sessions and other activities?
- What do these learnings bring to you?
- How do you put them into practice?
- What change has this brought to your daily life?

Girls' empowerment through education

Is the knowledge you're getting from the project trainings helping you:

- to gain power within the relationships with your husband? In what way?
- to have more freedom to take personal decisions without asking permission? In what way?
- to be more involved in decision-making in the household? In what way?
- to gain more respect, help end consideration from your family? In what way?
- to take a leading role in the home? In the community? In what way?
- to make decisions on sexual and reproductive matters? In what way?
- to undertake income-generating activities? To decide alone what to do with the money you earn?
- to have separate savings and decide alone how to use them?

Appendix 3: Interview Guide for Focus Group Discussions with husbands in Niger/Sierra Leone

Thème	Renseignements à recueillir
Identité de l'enquêteur / Renseignements sur l'entretien	Lieu, date, durée, nom de l'enquêteur

L'éducation des filles

- Que pensez-vous de l'éducation des filles ?
- Est-ce bon pour toi que ta femme aille à l'école ?
- Si non, pourquoi ?
- Si oui, êtes-vous prêt à l'aider à réussir ses études ?
- Selon vous, quelle est la meilleure façon de l'aider à réussir ?

Relations conjugales

- Quels sont les avantages d'être marié ?
- Quels sont les défis ou les inconvénients du mariage ?
- Quel est l'âge idéal pour se marier pour un homme ? Pourquoi ?
- Comment pensez-vous qu'un homme devrait choisir une bonne épouse ?
- Quel est l'âge idéal pour se marier pour une fille ? Pourquoi ?
- Comment pensez-vous qu'une femme devrait choisir un bon mari ?
- Quels sont les devoirs d'une femme envers son mari ?
- Que se passe-t-il si elle ne les rempli pas ?
- Quels sont les devoirs d'un mari envers sa femme ?
- Que se passe-t-il s'il ne les rempli pas ?
- Discussion générale sur la violence dans les relations conjugales (qu'est-ce qui mène/peut mener á la violence dans les relations conjugales ? que se passe-t-il lorsqu'il y a violence ou abus dans le foyer conjugal ?)
- Question générale sur les relations entre leur famille et leur femme (Comment sont les relations ? Comment leur famille se comporte-t-elle envers leurs épouses et vice versa ?)

Rôle des femmes et des filles

- Selon vous, à partir de quel âge une fille peut-elle être considérée comme une femme ?
- Quel est le rôle des femmes au foyer ? Dans la communauté ?
- Quel est le rôle des filles à la maison ? Dans la communauté ?
- Que doit représenter une femme pour son mari ?
- Y a-t-il des tâches que seules les filles et les femmes doivent accomplir ? Lesquels ?
- Y a-t-il des tâches ou des postes inaccessibles aux femmes et aux filles ? Lesquels ?

L'autonomisation des femmes

- Que pensez-vous du fait que votre femme ait plus de liberté pour prendre des décisions personnelles sans votre permission ? (décider comment s'habiller, rendre visite à des amis ou à la famille, aller au marché ou se promener, chercher des soins dans un établissement de santé pour elle ou ses enfants)
- Que pensez-vous du fait que votre femme soit plus impliquée dans la prise de décision concernant le ménage ?
- Que pensez-vous du fait que votre femme gagne plus de respect, de soutien et de considération de la part de votre famille ?
- Que pensez-vous du fait que votre femme joue un rôle de premier plan au foyer ? Dans la communauté ?
- Que pensez-vous du fait que votre femme prenne des décisions en matière de procréation ?
- Que pensez-vous de la décision de votre femme de faire l'amour ou non ?
- Que savez-vous des contraceptifs modernes ?
- Est-ce bon que votre femme les utilise ? Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ?
- Que pensez-vous du fait que votre femme entreprenne des activités génératrices de revenus ?
- Que pensez-vous du fait que votre femme décide seule de ce qu'elle doit faire de l'argent qu'elle gagne ?

Appendix 4 : Interview guide for for interviews with parents/ community members in Cote d'Ivoire

1- Dans votre communauté à quel âge une fille est-elle considérée comme une femme ?

2- Quel est le rôle de la femme dans votre communauté ?

3- A partir de quel âge une fille peut-elle se marier ou peut-elle être donnée en mariage dans votre communauté ? Pourquoi ?

4- Entre aller à l'école et se marier qu'est-ce qui est plus important pour votre jeune fille ?

5- Quelle est votre priorité entre la scolarisation d'un garçon et celle d'une fille ? Pourquoi ?

6- Pour vous est-ce qu'une fille a les mêmes chances qu'un garçon de réussir à l'école ? pourquoi ?

7- Pensez-vous qu'il est difficile de scolariser les filles ? Pourquoi ?

8- Quels sont les obstacles rencontrés par les filles dans leur scolarisation ?

9- Quelles sont les raisons pour lesquelles les filles quittent l'école ?

10- Selon vous, pourquoi la majorité des filles ne réussissent-elles pas à l'école ?

11- Pensez-vous que la gratuité de l'école peut contribuer à la scolarisation des filles ? Pourquoi ?

12- Que pensez-vous des femmes qui sont allées à l'école et qui sont devenues aujourd'hui Ministre, Docteur, Magistrat, etc. ?

13- Etes-vous prêt à laisser votre fille aller à l'école tant qu'elle le souhaite ?

14- L'avis de l'imam ou du leader religieux compte-t-il dans les décisions que vous prenez pour vos filles ? Pourquoi ?

15- Certains parents pensent qu'il faut donner la jeune fille en mariage très tôt, qu'en pensez-vous ?

16- Que pensez-vous des filles qui refusent le mariage pour continuer leurs études ?

17- Savez-vous qu'il est interdit par la loi de donner sa fille en mariage avant qu'elle n'ait 18 ans ? Si oui, pourquoi acceptez-vous quand même cela ?

Appendix 5 : Interview guide for interviews with teachers and head teachers in Cote d'Ivoire

1. Quelle est la situation de l'éducation des filles dans votre localité ?
   Quels sont les obstacles rencontrés par les filles dans leur scolarisation ?

2. Quelle(s) conception(s) a-t-on du mariage dans votre localité ?

3. Le mariage précoce ou le mariage des enfant est-il une réalité dans votre localité ?

4. Comment le mariage précoce dans cette localité affecte-t-il la scolarisation des filles ?

5. À partir quel âge et de quelle classe les filles quittent-elles l'école pour aller se marier ?

6. Quel est le profil scolaire des filles qui quittent l'école pour se marier ?
est-ce de bonnes élèves ou non ?

7. Quels sont les moyens dont vous disposez pour lutter contre le mariage précoce des filles scolarisées ?

8. Les enseignants travaillent-ils en collaboration avec les parents y compris les leaders religieux pour l'amélioration de la scolarisation des filles ? Comment ? Pourquoi ?

9. Les enseignants travaillent-ils en collaboration avec les parents y compris les leaders religieux pour mettre fin au mariage précoce des filles ? Comment ? Pourquoi ?

10. Selon vous, pourquoi la plupart des filles ne réussissent-elles pas à l'école ?

11. Le mariage précoce ou forcé y est-il pour quelque chose ?

12. En tant qu'enseignant, quelles sont vos actions en faveur de la scolarisation des filles ?

13. Que proposez-vous pour améliorer la scolarisation des filles ?

14. Que pensez-vous de la politique de l'école obligatoire ?
    Peut-elle mettre fin au mariage précoce ?

15. Quelles sont les contraintes selon vous pour cette politique ?
    Quelles sont vos solutions pour la bonne marche de cette politique
    et pour l'amélioration de la scolarisation de la fille ?

Appendix 6 : Interview guide for focus group discussions with out-of-school girls in Cote d'Ivoire

1. Que représente le mariage pour une femme dans votre communauté ?

2. A quel âge les filles se marient-elles ou sont-elles données en mariage dans votre communauté ? Pourquoi ?

3. Entre aller à l'école et se marier qu'est ce qui est plus important pour la jeune fille dans votre communauté ? Pourquoi ?

4. Avez-vous été à l'école ? Si oui, jusqu'à quel niveau ?

5. Pensez-vous que le mariage est la chose la plus importante dans la vie d'une femme ?

6. A quel âge avez-vous été mariée ?

7. Aujourd'hui, en regardant votre situation de vie, est-ce que vous encourageriez vos filles à avoir la même vie que vous ?

8. Avez-vous une fille déjà mariée ? A quel âge a-t-elle été mariée ?

9. Avez-vous été consultée par votre mari avant qu'il prenne la décision de la donner en mariage ? Comment avez-vous réagi face à cette décision ?

10. Aujourd'hui, certaines filles refusent de se marier parce qu'elles veulent aller à l'école. Que pensez-vous d'elles ?

11. Savez-vous qu'il est interdit par la loi de donner sa fille en mariage avant 18 ans ? Si oui, pourquoi acceptez-vous quand même cela ?

12. Quels sont les moyens dont vous disposez pour stopper le mariage précoce des filles (scolarisées ou non) ?

13. Quelles sont vos propositions pour l'amélioration de la scolarisation des filles ?

14. Que pensez-vous de la politique de l'école obligatoire ? Peut-elle mettre fin au mariage précoce ?

Appendix 7: Survey for teachers in Cote d'Ivoire

I-Les raisons du mariage précoce

Quelles sont les causes du mariage précoce ou forcé dans votre région ? Veuillez proposer cinq (05) mots ou expressions qui vous viennent immédiatement à l'esprit.

Réponses	Rang

Veuillez classer ensuite vos réponses selon l'ordre d'importance que vous leur accordez, du plus important au moins important (soit de 1 à 5) dans la colonne de droite.

II-Les raisons de la déscolarisation des filles

Quels sont les causes de la déscolarisation des filles ? Veuillez proposer cinq (05) mots ou expressions qui vous viennent immédiatement à l'esprit.

Mots ou Expressions	Rang

Veuillez classer ensuite vos réponses selon l'ordre d'importance que vous leur accordez, du plus important au moins important (soit de 1 à 5) dans la colonne de droite.

III-Lien entre le mariage précoce ou forcé et la déscolarisation de la fille

Veuillez indiquer laquelle des deux assertions vous semble la plus juste dans le contexte du mariage précoce ou forcé et de déperdition scolaire dans votre région. Indiquez votre choix en cochant en dessous de celui-ci.

Le mariage précoce conduit à la déscolarisation des filles.	La déscolarisation des filles conduit au mariage précoce.

Justifier votre réponse ………………………………………………………………………………………………………
………
………
……………………………………………………………………

Sexe : F [ ]   M [ ]

Ancienneté dans le corps : ----------------------

Ancienneté dans la région : ---------------------

Appendix 8 : Survey for students in Cote d'Ivoire

Identification
Classe :………………………………

Sexe : M   F F

Âge :…………………………………

Ethnie :……………………………… .

1. Selon vous, qu'est ce qui pourrait expliquer l'abandon de l'école par certaines filles ?

	Oui	Non
Grossesse		
Mariage consenti		
Mariage forcé		
Pauvreté des parents		
Exigences des travaux domestiques		
Exigences des travaux champêtres		
Manque de motivation		
Distance de l'école		
Violence (Harcèlement sexuel)		
Violence morale (moquerie)		
Violence physique (coups et blessures)		
Manque d'effort personnel (paresse)		
Absence de latrine (Toilettes, WC)		
Absence de cantine		
Redoublements répétés		
Problème de santé d'un (des deux) parent(s)		
Problème de santé chez la fille		
Famille nombreuse		
Décès du père		
Décès de la mère		
Autres (Préciser) :		

2. Connaissez-vous des filles qui ont abandonné l'école ?

Oui ☐   Non ☐

Si oui, pour quelles raisons l'ont-elles fait ?

	Oui	Non
Grossesse		
Mariage consenti		
Mariage forcé		
Pauvreté des parents		
Exigences des travaux domestiques		
Exigences des travaux champêtres		
Manque de motivation		
Distance de l'école		
Violence (Harcèlement sexuel)		
Violence morale (moquerie)		
Violence physique (coups et blessures)		
Manque d'effort personnel (paresse)		
Absence de latrine (Toilettes, WC)		
Absence de cantine		
Redoublements répétés		
Problème de santé d'un (des deux) parent(s)		
Problème de santé chez la fille		
Famille nombreuse		
Décès du père		
Décès de la mère		
Autres (Préciser) :		

3. Le mariage précoce ou forcé conduit-il à l'abandon scolaire des filles ?

Faux ☐   Vrai ☐

4. L'abandon scolaire conduit-il au mariage précoce des filles ?

Faux ☐   Vrai ☐

5. Selon vous qu'est ce qui peut amener une jeune fille à se marier ou des parents à donner leur fille en mariage sans son consentement ?

	Oui	Non
La coutume/tradition		
La religion		
La pauvreté		
Les craintes des parents		
Le regard des autres membres de la communauté		
La pression des parents		
Le respect pour les parents		
La recherche de la protection d'un homme		
L'échec scolaire		
Le fait de chercher à éviter les grossesses en cours de scolarité (hors mariage)		
Le contrôle de sa vie sexuelle		
Le fait de chercher à éviter les violences sexuelles		

6. Selon vous, quelles sont les responsabilités de l'homme et de la femme dans le foyer ?

	D'accord	Pas d'accord	Ne sais pas
Donner un bain aux enfants et les nourrir sont la responsabilité de la mère			
Le père est le responsable du foyer			
Une femme devrait toujours obéir à son mari, même si elle n'est pas d'accord			
Les hommes ont besoin de plus de soins car ils travaillent plus que les femmes			
Les filles n'ont pas besoin d'aller à l'école pendant aussi longtemps que les garçons			
Les garçons sont naturellement plus intelligents que les filles			
Si un garçon touche une fille à l'école, c'est probablement sa faute parce qu'elle a fait quelque chose pour l'attirer.			
Il y a des moments où un garçon a besoin de battre sa petite amie			
Les filles aiment se faire taquiner par les garçons			
Quand les filles portent des jupes courtes, elles montrent aux garçons ou aux hommes qu'elles veulent être touchées			
Parfois, les filles doivent faire des choses pour leurs enseignants afin d'obtenir de bonnes notes			
Question pour l'enquêteur (ne lisez pas à haute voix): Pensez-vous que l'enfant comprend ces questions?			
Question pour l'enquêteur (ne lisez pas à haute voix): Pensez-vous que l'enfant a répondu honnêtement?			

Save the Children

GENDER NORMS, CHILD MARRIAGE AND GIRLS' EDUCATION IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

Assessing the role of education in the prevention and response to child marriage

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ON THE COVER:
Mame (12) at a centre created to protect girls and young mothers in vulnerable situations, on the outskirts of Dakar, Senegal.

Photo: Jordi Matas /
Save the Children

Save The Children – WCA RO Dakar, October 2019