



COUNTRY SUMMARY

MOZAMBIQUE

2023 Annual Results and Phase II (2020-2023) Report

UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage

**end
child
marriage**

A voice. A chance. A future.



Co-funded by the European Union



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Situation of adolescent girls and child marriage

Mozambique has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world and has the second highest rate in the Eastern and Southern Africa region, with the practice affecting almost one in every two girls. There are 4.8 million child brides in Mozambique of whom 1.6 million were married before the age of 15. Just over half (53 per cent) of young women in Mozambique were first married or in a union before the age of 18, and 17 per cent before the age of 15, compared with a regional average of 36 per cent in southern and eastern Africa¹.

Child marriage is more prevalent in rural areas where 61.9 per cent of young women aged 20–24 were married by the age of 18, compared with 38.1 per cent in urban areas. As seen elsewhere in the world, the drivers of child marriage in Mozambique include high levels of poverty, gender inequality,

poor access to quality education, limited life choices, cultural norms (especially those related to initiation rites) and high levels of adolescent pregnancy.

Despite legislative progress, including the National Gender Policy (2018) and the Law for the Prevention and Fight against Child Marriage (2019), implementation gaps persist. The 2019 government decentralization policy reform has complicated this, altering state bodies' roles and responsibilities at provincial and district levels.

The conflict in Cabo Delgado has had a devastating impact and is a factor in high rates of child marriage and teenage pregnancies. The UN has noted a trend of girls' abductions into armed groups leading to forced marriage, early pregnancy, and children born of conflict. Access to services for these children is challenging due to stigmatization and difficulties reaching suitable facilities.

2023 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Reached more than **50,000** girls with life skills and comprehensive sexuality education.



Involved **46,821** young men and boys in dialogues on gender transformation and child marriage.



Supported **4,000** girls to enrol in, return to, or remain in school.



Reached close to **2 million** people through media with key messages about child marriage, girls' rights, and gender equality.



Processed **156,296** calls, with 103,212 involving interventions, for improving the handling of VAC and child marriage cases by the Child Helpline (LFC).



Engaged over **37,000** community members in dialogues and consensus-building on gender equality and alternatives to child marriage.



Engaged over **784** local gatekeepers, including traditional, religious and community leaders, in dialogues and consensus-building to end child marriage.



Supported **157** service delivery points to provide quality health, education, and protection services for girls. Supported the reactivation of **43** Child Protection Communities Committees.



Established **57** partnerships to support social protection and girls' economic empowerment.



Led the development of the National Plan of Action for Children III (PNAC 2023–2032). This plan, emphasizing the end of violence against children and child marriage, was completed in December 2023 and is pending approval.

The Global Programme's Phase II (2020–2023) vision is for adolescent girls, especially the most marginalized, to fully enjoy their childhood free from the risk of child marriage, and experience healthier, safer, and more empowered life transitions, including making choices about their education, sexuality, relationships, marriage, and childbearing. The Global Programme supports governments and civil society partners, including women- and youth-led organizations and feminist movements, to accelerate action to end child marriage. At the heart of the theory of change is an adolescent

girl-centred approach that empowers individual adolescent girls to make decisions about if, when and whom to marry, within a web of support that involves her family, the community (including boys and men), service providers, society and public structures, institutions, systems and services, laws, and policies.

Phase II was implemented guided by programme principles, core approaches and key strategies as follows:

Principles and approaches

- ⌵ Human rights-based approach.
- ⌵ Gender transformation and the rights of women and girls.
- ⌵ Leave no one behind and an intersectional approach.
- ⌵ Adolescent girl-centred approach to development, empowerment, and protection.
- ⌵ Systems strengthening and community mobilization.

Aims from Phase II programme document

- ⌵ Use the demonstration and catalytic power of (i) strengthened systems; (ii) mobilized communities; and (iii) empowered girls to further accelerate progress at significantly large scale.
- ⌵ Scale up interventions and strengthen systems to reach more girls, locations and countries.
- ⌵ Increase political and social support to end child marriage.
- ⌵ Engage more governments, donors and actors.
- ⌵ Finance and implement budgeted plans.
- ⌵ Achieve demonstrable change in some significant locations of considerable size.

Strategies from Phase II theory of change

- ⌵ Create and expand opportunities for the empowerment of adolescent girls.
- ⌵ Promote a supportive and gender equal family and community environment.
- ⌵ Strengthen governance to prevent child marriage.
- ⌵ Enhance sustainability and impact of child marriage programmes.
- ⌵ Build partnerships and leverage additional resources and co-investments.

OVERALL PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

Table 1: Summary of output indicator performance for 2023 and Phase II (2020–2023)

Indicator	2023		PHASE II (2020-2023)	
	Targets	Results	Targets	Results
Indicator 1111: Number of adolescent girls (aged 10–19) who actively participated in life skills or comprehensive sexuality education interventions in programme areas	56533	50455	184,215	59,140
Indicator 1121: Number of girls (aged 10–19) supported by the programme to enrol and/or remain in primary or secondary school	2340	4254	7,876	7,956
Indicator 1211: Number of boys and men actively participating in group education/dialogues that address harmful masculinities and gender norms	21500	46821	30,800	69,061
Indicator 1221: Number of individuals (boys, girls, women and men) who participate in group education/dialogue sessions on consequences of and alternatives to child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls and gender equality	21142	37370	238,516	211,022
Indicator 1222: Number of individuals (boys, girls, women and men) reached by mass media (traditional and social media) messaging on child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls and gender equality	2700,000	1997330	10,370,000	11,210,330
Indicator 1223: Number of local actors (e.g., traditional, religious and community leaders) with meaningful participation in dialogues and consensus-building to end child marriage	250	784	850	1,872
Indicator 1231: Number of civil society organizations newly mobilized in support of challenging social norms and promoting gender equality by the Global Programme (cumulative)	2	3	8	8
Indicator 2121: Number of primary/secondary/non-formal schools in programme areas providing quality gender-friendly education that meets minimum standards	110	60	460	431
Indicator 2131: Number of service delivery points in programme areas providing quality adolescent-responsive services (health, child protection/ gender-based violence) that meet minimum standards	28	96	90	142
Indicator 2211: Number of partnerships (both formal and informal) established to deliver adolescent-responsive social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes and services	6	61	12	66
Indicator 3111: Number of policies or legal instruments addressing child marriage drafted, proposed or adopted at national and subnational level with Global Programme support (cumulative)	4	6	22	13
Indicator 3121: Number of subnational plans with evidence informed interventions to address child marriage	12	10	34	20
Indicator 3211: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that focus on what works to end child marriage (cumulative)	4	11	15	24
Indicator 3212: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that apply a gender analysis (cumulative)	-	5	8	16
Indicator 3221: Number of South-to-South cooperation (conferences, expert visits, peer consultations, study tours, communities of practice) supported	-	2	1	2

Providing intensive support to marginalized girls

The Global Programme has effectively empowered girls to make informed decisions about marriage and their sexual and reproductive health, thereby transforming their knowledge, context, and environment. The 2023 Phase II independent evaluation concluded that the Global Programme increased the knowledge and skills of targeted adolescent girls at risk of, and affected by, child marriage, equipping them to make informed decisions and choices regarding marriage, education, and sexual and reproductive health. The Global Programme facilitated access to comprehensive sexuality education and life skills education for both in- and out-of-school girls. In some cases, this was combined with economic empowerment interventions designed to mitigate poverty drivers of child marriage.

In 2023, the Global Programme enhanced the knowledge and life skills of 55,320 adolescent vulnerable girls through peer-to-peer activities facilitated by community mentors. Through participation in Capoeira (a martial art) and self-help groups, girls have seen a boost in self-

esteem. Initially timid and reserved, they now actively engage, laugh, sing, and are open to trying new movements. Capoeira has improved their sleep and strength, and reduced sadness. Capoeira Para um Futuro (Capoeira for the Future) is helping most of the 3,920 girls rescued from child marriages or abusive situations to process their experiences, to heal, build their resilience, and to rediscover their inner strength.

In 2023, the Global Programme's interventions, in alignment with local partners, enabled 4,006 vulnerable girls to reintegrate and continue their education in primary and secondary schools. Remarkably, close to 95 per cent of these reintegrated girls have successfully transitioned to higher classes. This significant achievement has been made possible through the continuous support and engagement of the girls' parents and guardians. Mentors and community leaders have played a crucial role in this process, emphasizing the importance of education for the girls' future, and fostering family support for their educational aspirations.



Enhancing the family and community environment

The 2023 Phase II independent evaluation found that the Global Programme mobilized community stakeholders to contribute to changing the social and gender norms that perpetuate harmful practices. This has included the engagement of traditional and religious leaders – and increasingly, parents and caregivers – as agents of change. An important priority of the Global Programme in Phase II was the engagement of boys and men to promote healthy relationships, positive masculinities and gender equality, and countries designed and initiated interventions accordingly. Engagement with extended families has however been more limited, despite their important role in decisions related to child marriage in many contexts.

In 2023, community dialogues engaged 37,370 members, leading to a strong stand against child marriage and violence. The Global Programme also involved 46,821 young men and boys in dialogues on gender transformation and child marriage. Consequently, 1,099 community action plans were developed to combat child marriage, with an expected 80 per cent completion rate leading to public declarations against the practice. Pre- and post-dialogue tests revealed a 76 per cent increase in adolescents, both boys and girls, feeling empowered to negotiate for their marriage to occur after 18. Additionally, there was a 31 per cent decrease in adults who strongly believed in marrying their daughters before 18.

The advocacy for gender equality and positive masculinities by male mentors has had far-reaching positive impacts, freeing boys and young men from restrictive and harmful traditional male stereotypes and norms. A boy participating in the mentorship programme in Zambezia shared his transformative experience: *“We have grown up learning that men and women have separate roles and that men should always be the dominant decision makers in the family. However, after attending this training, I have realized that this practice is detrimental and infringes on women’s rights. Men and women have equal rights, and when gender equality is achieved, it benefits everyone. We should not oppress women; instead, we should work together for the development of our community. There must be equality and gender equity*

between men and women.”

In 2023, the Global Programme also reached nearly two million people through social media posts, disability-inclusive TV and radio spots on children’s rights and child marriage. The Global Programme also collaborated with young artists to launch the Art for Social Change initiative that creates culturally relevant content, launching two songs that were played on various media.

Religious and traditional leaders have significantly contributed to changing gender norms. Their ongoing engagement has led to a decrease in child marriage and an increase in reported cases. Specifically, in 2023, 3,930 cases of child marriage and sexual violence have been identified and reported at community level compared to 2,376 in 2022. In 2023, the Global Programme engaged 784 religious leaders to champion the cause against child marriage, culminating in 52 communities making public declarations against child marriage and violence.

Enhancing sustainability of interventions by building resilient systems

The 2023 Phase II independent evaluation found that, by design, the Global Programme embeds ownership and sustainability elements through four of its outcomes aimed at strengthening government systems and community structures. This approach is delivering positive signs, particularly in countries with strong commitment and leadership from their national and subnational government and local structures. With some increased capacity from the sectoral systems, Global Programme interventions are delivering in the areas of education, health, gender-based violence (GBV), child protection and, to a lesser extent, social protection services.

In 2023, the Global Programme and its partners revitalized community structures and services, enhancing the prevention and response to child marriage and violence. This collaboration resulted in the reactivation of 43 Child Protection Community Committees, which referred 2,910 cases to social services, 1,363 to health services, 1,428 to the police, and 263 to the Attorney General’s Office. Some cases were referred to

multiple services. Out of these, 1,101 cases have been successfully resolved.

In 2023, the Global Programme introduced a real-time monitoring system to improve joint reporting of child marriage cases. Collaborations with the Supreme Court and Prosecution led to the introduction of mobile courts in Zambezia Province for child marriage and violence against children (VAC) cases. These mobile services are crucial in ensuring equal access to services for the most remote communities. The programme also strengthened its engagement with the Department of Religious Affairs in the Ministry of Justice. High-ranking officers from this department were deployed to nine districts to collaborate with local religious leaders on issues related to child marriage, violence against girls and women, and harmful social norms.

In 2023, the Global Programme enhanced the Child Helpline (LFC) to improve the handling of VAC and child marriage cases. This included

various trainings and a first-time health programme for LFC staff on identifying and referring adolescents with mental health issues. The LFC processed 156,296 calls in 2023, with 103,212 involving interventions. These led to 6,296 cases involving 6,617 victims, mainly male children from provinces like Zambezia, Nampula, Inhambane, and Cabo Delgado. The most reported cases involved child marriages, access to education, and violence/sexual abuse, primarily affecting female children aged 12 to 17.

Of all the reports, 61 per cent were referred to various entities, notably the police (26 per cent), social action (13 per cent), and youth education (14 per cent) sectors. By year-end, 2,766 cases were assisted (72 per cent of referred cases), and 1,920 cases were fully closed (50 per cent of referred cases). Compared to 2022, there was a 1 per cent increase in calls made by children and increases of 23 per cent, 10 per cent, and 7 per cent in cases, victims, and referrals, respectively.



Expanding partnerships

The 2023 Phase II evaluation highlighted the Global Programme's success in catalysing efforts at all levels to end child marriage. This was achieved through joint programming, partnerships, advocacy, and knowledge-sharing. The Global Programme worked with other initiatives, expanding reach, coverage, and funding. It used evidence and tools to raise awareness and inform advocacy and programming. The Global Programme capitalized on the momentum of the SDG agenda which prioritizes the elimination of harmful practices, including child marriage. Since 2015, ending child marriage has been prioritized by UN agencies' country programmes. The Global Programme fostered partnerships with civil society organisations (CSOs), aiding their national expansion. All countries established strong partnerships with governments and CSOs, and to a lesser extent, feminist organizations and the private sector. However, mobilizing new CSOs was a challenge and this was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic which has forced many CSOs to downsize or shut down.

In 2023, the Global Programme collaborated closely with women's rights and youth-led organizations. This included capacity-building for Girls Not Brides Mozambique (CECAP) members via a partnership with the CECAP Chair, the Mozambican Association for Family Development (AMODEFA), and direct collaboration with the Federation of Women's Association of Mozambique (NAFEZA). Engaging grass roots youth- and women-led CSOs in community dialogues left them equipped to conduct these dialogues themselves and serve as community databases for case reporting and follow-up, even without funding. A notable example is a youth association in Ituculo, Nampula, which, after participating in community dialogues, now receives support from a local farmers' association to continue sensitization against child marriage and other forms of violence against children.

Additionally, the Global Programme partnered with the Forum of Mozambican Associations of People with Disabilities and AIFO, an INGO specializing in disability inclusion and health. This partnership enabled the engagement of a broad network of young people with various disabilities

in target provinces, involving them in activity design and execution. In 2023, this was evident in the Youth Provincial Forums and CECAP-hosted webinars on GBV prevention and response.

Addressing poverty

Poverty and lack of economic opportunities are key drivers of child marriage. The 2023 Phase II evaluation found that Global Programme countries have linked with social protection and economic empowerment interventions to tackle poverty-driven child marriage. Yet, in most countries, these linkages remain limited, despite economic insecurity being a significant driver of child marriage, especially in polycrisis contexts. The Global Programme has shown some successful examples of partnerships with government-led programmes, but social protection or economic empowerment opportunities that could benefit girls and mitigate poverty-driven child marriage has not been fully explored. Successes include school subsidies, incentives, vocational training, and start-up funds. However, these interventions often have a limited focus on economic empowerment and income-generating activities and have little connection to social protection schemes.

The Reality Check study, conducted by the Global Programme and Rapariga Biz programmes in Nampula and Zambezia provinces in 2022, underscores the need for greater investment in economic empowerment and alternative livelihoods through job opportunities. In 2023, The Global Programme aided grass roots self-help groups in establishing 48 savings and loans groups, extending financial assistance to 972 vulnerable girls and their families to delay child marriage.

Facilitating supportive laws and policies

The 2023 Phase II evaluation revealed that the Global Programme's partnerships and advocacy played a key role in renewing commitments to combat child marriage globally, regionally, and nationally. The programme aided governments in formulating laws, policies, strategies, and costed

action plans. However, the adoption of these measures has been slow, and government funding for these plans remains limited. Moreover, in some countries, enforcing age-limit laws for marriage can unintentionally heighten the vulnerability of adolescent girls and their families.

In 2023, the Global Programme extended technical and funding support to the Mozambique Government to implement laws against child marriages and provide complementary justice services to adolescents. The programme continued to support justice sector coordination mechanisms, focusing on districts like Milange, Maganja da Costa, and Pebane. To address age determination issues impeding VAC and child marriage cases, a retroactive birth registration blitz was conducted in Zambezia Province, registering 7,631 individuals, including 1,641 adolescents. A mobile courts initiative was also launched to facilitate access to justice services.

In 2023, the Global Programme supported the Government to develop the Programa Geracao Biz (PGB) 10-year 2024–2033 national strategy. The strategy references the high child marriage rate in Mozambique and its correlation to early and unplanned pregnancies. The Global Programme provided support to the development of the new National Plan of Action for Children (PNAC III), which focuses on child marriage and VAC.

The Global Programme also implemented a joint activity with community CSOs – FDC, Kamba and the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Action (MGCAS) – to develop a mobile application for reporting child marriage cases. The app leverages multiple technologies to improve referral pathways and response to cases of violence against children and gender-based violence. The initiative piggybacked on an existing agreement between UNICEF and Vodacom, reducing implementation costs. The mobile system for the USSD application had a preliminary test in 2023.

Building a new generation of data and evidence

The 2023 Phase II evaluation revealed that the Global Programme has produced significant evidence on effective strategies to end child marriage, especially during COVID-19. This evidence has informed understanding, advocacy, policy, and strategic direction. The programme has boosted investment in research partnerships at global and regional levels to identify and fill evidence gaps, produce new evidence, and build research capacity at the country level. Despite these advancements, there are still country-level gaps in the evidence that indicate a need for continued investment.

In 2023, the Global Programme generated five new pieces of evidence, including a regional study on GBV in humanitarian settings, a child marriage strategy by Child Frontiers, a mapping of USSD, a social norms baseline briefing note, and a monthly report through the real monitoring app.

From 2019 to 2023, the programme provided technical and financial support to the Mozambique Government to generate and use population data, including key child marriage data. The findings have informed policies and strategies, including the PGB National Strategy 2024–2033.

In June 2023, the programme launched a real monitoring app for partners to record child marriage cases and referrals. Regular meetings are held to analyse the data collected and provide recommendations.

The programme is supporting the Ministry of Education in developing an evaluation of the implementation of *Circuitos de Interesse* (CI), a national school-based platform. The evaluation, expected by July 2024, will focus on CI's role in increasing student access and retention, particularly in preventing school violence and gender-based violence.

Programme challenges

In 2023, the Global Programme faced several challenges:

- The envisaged catalytic impact was hard to achieve due to the funding structure and disruptions from natural disasters.
- There was a significant lack of adequate funding and capacity within line ministries to prevent and respond to child marriage. Most funding sources were earmarked for conflict response in the country's north.
- The gap in the government's human resources among social workers and inadequate capacity of government structures like MGCAS affected programme implementation.
- Weak multi-sectoral coordination continued to impact effective and efficient service delivery, despite improvements supported by the Global Programme and other initiatives.
- The Capoeira programme faced challenges in finding suitable places for practice in remote communities, and language barriers were a constraint as girls in these communities did not speak Portuguese.
- School reintegration support for vulnerable girls and young women was challenging. Enrolment of out-of-school girls is only possible at the start of the calendar year, and girls rescued from child marriage later in the year must wait until the following year to enrol.

Lessons learned

- The Global Programme supported the Ministry of Education and Human Development (MINEDH) and subnational education authorities to build the capacity of students/girls aged 10–19 in life skills with a gender approach. However, implementation was challenging due to poor Portuguese language skills among children from remote areas. Accompanying these children with their teachers, who help explain and translate the content, proved effective despite the higher cost.
- The effectiveness of including teachers who know the local culture and customs to help explain and translate life skills subjects in local languages was a key lesson.
- Each community and district perceives and receives Capoeira differently, and the programme must be flexible and adapted to each location. Coordination with psychologists/occupational therapy was crucial in this regard.
- Engaging community leadership at the highest level possible is crucial to accelerate the ending of harmful practices and promote new and positive social norms beneficial for the rights of girls and women.

Priorities for the way forward

- Expanding the Global Programme to humanitarian settings: The programme will expand to Cabo Delgado Province, addressing the needs of adolescent girls in the region.
- Prioritizing the mentorship of boys and young men: Phase III will continue to prioritize this transformative approach.
- Strengthening partnership with matronas (traditional birth attendants) and traditional leaders: The Global Programme will address initiation rites as a harmful practice.
- Investing in the mobilization of youth and youth-led organizations: The Global Programme will support national youth networks and the National Youth Partners Group.
- Prioritizing strengthening the link between monitoring, generating and incorporating data into programme initiatives: The Global Programme will continue to support MGCAS to conduct joint monitoring visits.

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