

SHARED FUNDING TO AMPLIFY EXPERTISE ON CHILD MARRIAGE IN UGANDA

Despite 40% of girls being married before the age of 18, child marriage often goes unreported in Uganda.

Child marriage is rooted in gender inequality and harmful social norms whereby parents believe that marrying their daughters will bring financial security. Poverty and limited access to education have an impact on girl's lives – schools may be a long way away from their homes, and a fear of travelling due to risks of violence may stop them attending school. Growing stigma and lack of awareness among communities about girls' rights has led to many girls feeling they have no voice.

In a bid to unite civil society and generate dialogue at all levels, 11 organisations established *Girls Not Brides* Uganda in 2013. Members believe that child marriage impedes nearly all aspects of their work, whether they provide children with access to quality education, empower families to become economically independent, or work to improve the health of women and girls. *Girls Not Brides* Uganda now has over 70 members.

Securing collective funding and commitments from local governments enabled members to address child marriage

In 2015 the government of Uganda launched the African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage, together with the first ever National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy (2014/15 to 2019/20). In partnership with UN agencies and other civil society organisations, *Girls Not Brides* Uganda played a crucial role in providing expertise on child marriage and the experiences of community-based organisations.



Strategy implementation at the regional level has been challenging. In some communities in the Western Region, girls are led to believe that getting married at an early age is prestigious. Dropping out of school is common, especially when girls get older, which is hindering advocacy efforts. A lack of accurate statistics on child marriage makes it difficult for the National Partnership to rate how much work they have achieved as a collective. With funding from AmplifyChange, *Girls Not Brides* Uganda works across six districts to obtain data that will help inform and strengthen their collective advocacy efforts at the district level.

Girls Not Brides Uganda member Child Rights Empowerment and Development (CEDO) is Regional Coordinator for the Western Region. CEDO is implementing a project in Masindi District with the objective of increasing commitment of policy and decision makers to implement the National Strategy to End Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy. They are doing this through data collection, identifying champions and holding regular engagement meetings with key influencers.

Regular engagement meetings at the district level help CEDO influence decision-makers and advocate for the work of ending child marriage. As a result, the project secured commitments of 2 million Ugandan shillings from the local government to work on

ending child marriage, and 1 million at the sub-county level.

“Without the [National Partnership] I don’t think I would have the confidence and information to engage at the district and community level,” says Peace Patricia Aanyu, Programme Officer at CEDO. She firmly believes this work wouldn’t have been possible without the National Partnership collectively applying for and receiving funding. The partnership enables members to work collectively to strengthen their messaging and have a multiplier effect across six districts. It helps CEDO to reflect on and prioritise child marriage within their general child protection programme, and it creates visibility in and outside of the district with activities endorsed at the national level.

Hope Nankunda, Executive Director of Raising Teenagers Uganda and Regional Coordinator for the Central Region, provides expertise to members on advocacy and communications. Hope has seen a clear change – members are sharing stories of their work on the ground, inspiring other members to apply ideas to their work. The collective grant enabled this sharing of lessons and experiences, and gave access to training, for which funds were previously not available.

Members of *Girls Not Brides* Uganda aim to embed the work at the district level and after the grant.

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GIRLS NOT BRIDES

The Global Partnership
to End Child Marriage