Malawi Government

National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage in Malawi

October, 2024

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Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome
AU	African Union
CBO	Community Based Organization
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSE	Comprehensive Sexually Education
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CVSU	Community Victim Support Unit
ECM	Ending Child Marriage
EMIS	Education Management Information System
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus
IEC	Information Education Communication
MDA	Ministries, Department and Agencies
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MIP 1	Malawi Implementation Plan 1
MDHS	Malawi Demographic Health Survey
MoGCDSW	Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare
NSECM	National Strategy to End Child Marriage
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
NSO	National Statistical Office
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
TP	Traditional Practices
TOC	Theory of Change
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
MW2063	Malawi Vision 2063
YFHS	Youth Friendly Health Services

Foreword

Although the legal age of marriage is set at 18 years, Malawi continues to register persistently high rates of child marriage: 38 in every 100 girls under 18 years get married in Malawi. At a global scale, Malawi has the 14th highest prevalence of child marriage in Africa and the fourth-highest child marriage prevalence in East and Southern Afric. Child marriage affects both girls and boys, but it affects girls disproportionately: only 7 % of the boys get married before the age of 18 while for girls, it is higher at 38 %. Child marriage is driven by poverty, prevailing social and cultural norms`, low education levels, teenage pregnancy and sexual exploitation, peer pressure and limited enforcement of child-related laws. Child marriage is one of the critical factors that limit the chances of Malawi achieving her full human capital potential and contribute to economic development. The country cannot afford to let this status quo continue. The National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage in Malawi (NSECM) underlines the commitment of the Government and its partners to intensify their efforts towards having a Malawi free of child marriage. This Strategy provides a situation analysis and extent of the problem of child marriage in Malawi, its driving factors, and consequences. It further outlines the strategic focus areas of interventions and the key milestones to be achieved by 2030.

The development of this strategy has come at an opportune time and within the context of Malawi 2063 First 10-Year Implementation Plan (MW2063and MIP 1), particularly Enabler 5, referring to Human Capital Development. The NSECM will also operationalize the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act and provisions of national policies related to children, youth, and gender. It is also linked to regional and global commitments, including the SADC Model Law, the African Union Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

The strategy has been developed through a participatory consultative process involving stakeholders at national, district and community levels involving government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and academia as a reflection of joint commitment to eliminate child marriages in Malawi. I would like to specifically mention USAID through Palladium PROPEL Health who played a pivotal role from the very beginning by proving financial and technical support. In addition, some UN agencies also took part by providing technical support during the review of the initial drafts and further guiding the process to ensure the strategy is aligned to the national, continental, global instruments on children and ending child marriage.

I therefore call upon all stakeholders to commit to the implementation of the Strategy. On its part, the Government through the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare (MoGCDSW), will provide the needed policy guidance and oversight, coordination and leadership, and resource mobilization necessary to push the agenda forward and ensure that NSECM is effectively implemented. We are also committed to strengthening strategic partnerships with non-state actors within the civil society, private sector, donor community and development partners who are engaged in the fight against child marriage.

Jean Muonawouza Sendeza, MP
Minister Of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare

Acknowledgements

The strategy is a product of close collaboration and participation amongst a wide range of stakeholders, including government MDAs, CSOs, academia and development partners in child protection. The Government of Malawi (GoM) commits to providing leadership in policy coordination, partner and resource mobilisation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting on NSECM. Our success in the implementation of the strategy will depend on the leadership of Government and its commitment in collaboration with stakeholders. In this respect, a fervent call is being made to all partners at national, district and community levels to take the NSECM seriously and implement the activities detailed in the strategy with diligence and urgency to end child marriages.

The development of this Strategy has been a long and participatory process involving an extensive review of relevant policies and documents on child marriage from the MDAs, civil society organizations (CSOs) and UN agencies. The insightful input from all the partners and stakeholders has been critical throughout the strategy development process. The Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare (MoGCDSW) is therefore grateful for the technical and financial support from all partners that made the development of this Strategy a reality.

Further, appreciation is extended to members of the Task Force and officers in the Departments of Child Affairs and Planning and Research in the MoGCDSW, who all showed great commitment to the development of the strategy. I would also like to recognize the financial support towards national task force consultations from UNDP, Firelight Foundation, Plan International, Save the Children International, Oxfam, WoRLEC, CEYECE, and AMREF Tikweze Umoyo. All district and community members in Chikwawa, Mangochi, Zomba and Mzimba deserve special recognition for sparing their time to participate as key informants and in focus group discussants during the triangulation sessions of the process.

We also wish in a special way to express our gratitude to Dr. Benjamin Kaneka, the consultant, for facilitating the strategy's development process.

The collaborative and participatory spirit demonstrated during the development of NSECM should continue during the implementation so that the goal of ending child marriage by 2030 is achieved.

Nertha Semphere Mgala, PhD
Secretary for Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare

01 Introduction

The National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage (2024 - 2030) has been developed through a consultative process that builds on the successes of the previous strategy, and addresses gaps noted during implementation and reviews processes. The implementation of the National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage (2019 - 2023) registered a number of achievement but the key milestones include the review of the penal code and other safeguarding policies and the strengthening of the community structures such as mother groups, Community Victim Support Unit and Chiefs Forums. These milestones have greatly contributed to the reduction in the prevalence of child marriages from 42% Malawi Demographic Health Survey (MDHS, 2015) in 2015 to 37.7% in 2020 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS, 2020). This strategy is guided by global, continental, and regional instruments and protocols; and systems that ensure a comprehensive and inclusive approach to eradicating child marriage in Malawi. It is also aligned to the Malawi 2063 First Ten (10) Year Implementation Plan (MIP-1).

1.1 Situation Analysis

1.1.1 Prevalence of Child Marriage

Child marriage is defined as any formal marriage or informal union between a child under the age of 18 and an adult or another child (UNICEF, 1989); and is a global problem with 15 million children married every year before reaching the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2016). Child marriage threatens rights of children to education, protection, health, and civic participation that are detrimental to overall national development.

Malawi has one of the highest rates of child marriages in the world with a prevalence of 38% of the women aged 20-24 being married before the age of 18 years (MICS, 2021). This represents a decrease in child marriage among females as in 2015/16 it was at 43% (MDHS National Statistical Office, 2017) and it was at 49.9% in 2013/2014 (National Statistical Office, 2014). Eight percent (8%) of the females get married before the age of 15. Only 7% of the boys get married before the age of 18 (MICS, 2021) and this represents a marginal decline from 2015/2016 when it was at 6% (National Statistical Office, 2017). The prevalence of child marriage in Malawi is higher than the average in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) which is at 31% for females who get married by the age of 18 years. Only 4% of the males are married by the age of 18 years in SSA (UNICEF, 2023) compared to 7% in Malawi. Child marriage is more prevalent in rural areas where 46% of women aged 20-24 get married before the age of 18 compared to 32% of women of this age group in urban areas (National Statistical Office, 2021). Soon after the launch of the NSECM in 2019 there was an increase in the number of cases of child marriage in Malawi and this was mainly due to the public awareness campaigns but also the COVID-19 epidemic (MoGCDSW, 2022)

1.1.2 Drivers of Child Marriage

1.1.2.1Poverty

Forty Eight percent of the child population in Malawi is multidimensionally and monetary poor (Child Multi-Dimensional Poverty Report, 2023). Child marriages reduce the economic burden for

providing for adolescent girls in the households and therefore are regarded as a motivation factor for parents and girls to get into such marriages (Journal of Adolescent Girls, 2021). In matrimonial communities, the son in law relocates to the girls homestead and support the girl's family in kind (cultivating the fields) or cash. On the cultural perspective, the family would be motivated to get the cattle (bride wealth) paid for the bride to uplift themselves out of poverty or to pay for her brother's bride wealth.

1.1.2.2 Harmful Practices and Traditions

A 2019 University of Zurich study corroborates the earlier findings by the 2006 Malawi Human Rights Commission report. Both reports highlight practices including *"kupimbira"*—marrying off daughters to settle debts; *"kuhara/chitomero"*—pre-arranged future marriage agreements; "bonus wife"—giving a husband a younger sister or niece of his wife as his second wife; and *"ukwati wotulira"*—a practice where a girl found pregnant is taken by her relatives to the boy's family to force them into marriage. Such practices and traditions perpetuate gender biases that prime girls for marriage. In addition, higher proportion of girls take part in initiation rituals more than boys that include both sexual and non-sexual practices. Traditional sexual initiation rituals are closely related to child marriages as they are often intended to prepare children for adulthood but may also involve teen forced and unprotected sexual intercourse. However, two thirds of the respondents in the study (University of Zurich et al. 2019) consider these practices as valuable.

The report on evaluation of the NSECM found that some harmful practices and norms are no longer practised or have been modified. However, meaningful change in norms has been limited because the approaches did not address the entrenched cultural value systems that are root causes of child marriage. These harmful practices are perpetuated by initiators, counsellors, and chiefs as they financially benefit or in kind (MoGCDSW, 2022; Munthali & Kok, 2018). In addition, good practices have been poorly documented hence affecting replicability potential. There is therefore a need for novel interventions as deeply entrenched harmful norms that glorify child marriage still prevail.

1.1.2.3 Peer Pressure and Social Norms

The desire to conform to societal and peer expectations leads to child marriages among girls. It so happens that most of the girls in the village are married. Social norms that prioritise marriage and motherhood over individual aspirations have been passed on to girls by their married peers to influence their decisions (UNICEF, 2018). Girls may internalise the belief that marriage is their primary role and purpose. In addition, girls also lack voice in the decision-making processes involving their lives hence they are pressured into marriage.

1.1.2.4 Weak Legal Enforcement

Despite having laws that set the minimum age for marriage at 18, Malawi struggles with weak enforcement (Plan International, 2016). Families and communities often face no consequences for arranging such marriages, allowing the practice to persist. There is also fear of retribution stops people intervening or reporting child marriages. There is inadequate knowledge of the law on the part of parents, traditional leaders, religious leaders, and all those who are involved in the process. Even in situations they know the law, most people in the rural areas do not know the ages of children so they just measure by physical maturity. Where cases of child marriages have been taken to law enforcement agencies such as the police and courts, delays in dealing and concluding such cases decreases trust among communities in law enforcement agencies (Bantwana, 2019).

In addition, other factors include limited access to financial and human resources by the justice system, long distances to courts, lack of witness protection mechanisms and absence of birth registration documents to determine legal age.

1.1.2.5 Teen Pregnancy and Sexual Exploitation

The adolescent girl is vulnerable to sexual exploitation that can often lead to teen pregnancy and in turn result in coerced unions. Malawi Demographic Health Survey (MDHS, 2016) reports that 29% of women aged 15-19 have begun childbearing. Teenage pregnancies contribute to a rise in cases of child-to-child marriages. This is in addition to child marriages an older male and a younger female.

1.1.2.6 Low Education Levels

Low education levels exacerbate child marriages. Girls with low educational attainment are more likely to be married off in their early teens. When educational opportunities are scarce, girls are at greater risk of becoming child brides. High repetition rates in primary school often forces girls to drop out of school and contribute to child marriages. Boys who drop-out of school and earn income are also at high risk of entering into a child marriage. 52% of women who were married before the age of 18 have none or only pre-primary education and 16% of men who were married before the age of 18 have none or only pre-primary education (Girls not Brides, 2018).

1.1.2.7 Humanitarian Crises

Natural disasters

Humanitarian crises intensify existing vulnerabilities relating to poverty, health, and gender inequality. This is because they disproportionately effect already vulnerable communities and populations. Frequent climatic changes including droughts, floods, unstable rainfall patterns, and cyclones; and pandemics exacerbate the struggles of those already facing barriers to education and sexual and reproductive health rights, particularly girls in emergency settings. Natural disasters and pandemics can strain the socio-economic fabric of families, sometimes compelling children to engage in transactional sex, leading to teenage pregnancies and child marriages as they strive to support their families.

Disease outbreaks

Disease outbreaks such as COVID-19 disrupted the gains made in reducing child marriages as evidenced by an increased reported cases of child marriage from 1,969 in 2018 to 20,109 in 2020; and teen pregnancies to 44,178 (MoGCDSW, 2020). Cases decreased to 5,843 in 2021, indicating the strong influence of COVID-19 on the spike of child marriages and awareness campaigns which followed.

Other drivers include a desire to start a family; to be independent from the parents and the desire to spend time with a partner (University of Zurich et al. 2019).

1.1.3 2019-2023 NSECM Implementation Gaps

The review of the 2019-2023 National Strategy on ending Child Marriage revealed several critical gaps that need to be addressed if the gains that have been registered during its implementation are to be sustained. These gaps include the following:

Cultural Norms and Practices

- Meaningful change in norms has been limited because the approaches did not address the entrenched cultural value systems that happen to be the root causes.
- While there were reports of progress on modifying harmful cultural norms, meaningful norms change has been limited due to superficial norms change approaches that do not address the entrenched cultural value systems. In addition, good practices have been poorly documented hence affecting replicability potential.

Laws and Access to Justice

- Justice for survivors and punishment for perpetrators were also impeded by age-cheating, suspected bribery, and survivors/witnesses failing to appear for court sessions due to their inability to afford transport fares.
- Access to justice for survivors and punishment for perpetrators is also limited by programmatic efforts that are more focused on social issues of withdrawing children from child marriage, than on tracking ECM cases and supporting the pursuit of justice for survivors.
- Despite the existence of laws on ECM and some notable efforts to enforce them, justice was not easily accessible to all. The key gaps included inadequate public awareness of the laws and policies more particularly in the rural areas, weak enforcement mechanisms and limited resources affecting the pace and scale of enforcement of the laws and policies.
- Many people have been reached with the message that child marriage is a harmful practice and criminal. Nonetheless, many more, particularly in hard-to-reach areas, remain unreached.
- The ECM laws in Malawi establish an offence of forcing a person into child marriage or to be betrothed. Also, the laws provide for persons who are not below the age of 18 to get married but do not establish an offence related to child marriage if persons below 18 get married and if there is no evidence of coercion in the child marriage.

Data and Systems

- Data on key ECM components are unconsolidated, leading to challenges in accurately assessing trends and implementing targeted interventions. The Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS,) which was designed to monitor child rights abuses, including child marriage, is operational in 13 districts, and there were constraints in expanding it due to limited funding. Further, M&E practices vary among stakeholders, with some having dedicated units and systems for internal learning, but external dissemination and lesson-sharing were limited.

Coordination and Resources

- The strategy did not have adequate mechanisms to hold stakeholders accountable.
- There was a limited commitment to disclose funding information.
- The Ministry reported that it was not provided with adequate resources to coordinate NSECM.

1.2 Linkages with Legal and Policy Frameworks

1.2.1 International and Regional Frameworks

1.2.1.1 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The agenda 2030 recognizes the need to eliminate child marriages to achieve gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. Sustainable Development Goal 5 target 5.3 specifically calls for the elimination of child marriage, emphasizing the interconnectedness of development

goals. By addressing child marriages, Malawi contributes not only to the well-being of its children but also to the broader global agenda for sustainable development.

1.2.1.2 The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

Malawi's commitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is deeply entrenched in its legal and policy frameworks, specifically drawing inspiration from CRC Article 24. This article explicitly recognizes the right of the child to be protected from traditional practices that are prejudicial to their health and development. In response, Malawi has implemented a multifaceted approach, incorporating CRC principles into its legal landscape. By aligning its legal framework with the CRC, the strategy demonstrates a commitment to ensuring the rights, well-being, and future of children in Malawi.

1.2.1.3 The Convention on Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

Malawi is a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Notably within Articles 5 and 16, the CEDAW advocates for the elimination of harmful cultural practices and discrimination against women and girls in all its forms, including child marriages. Being a party to the CEDAW, Malawi paves way to address critical root causes of child marriages through this strategy.

1.2.1.4 SADC Model Law on Eradicating Child Marriage and Protecting Children already in unions.

The Model Law on Eradicating Child Marriage and Protecting Children already in Marriage provides a common framework for lawmakers, policymakers, service providers and civil society to end child marriage and protect children already in marriage. It aims at harmonising national legislation, policies, strategies, and programmes with relevant regional and international instruments related to the empowerment of women and girls to eliminate discrimination and to achieve gender equality and equity. This strategy directly aligns to the provisions within the SADC Model Law.

1.2.1.5 Family Planning (FP) 2030 Commitments

FP 2030 is a global partnership that aims to empower women and girls by investing in rights-based family planning programs. Government of Malawi FP 2030 commitment 6 emphasised on the need to address socio-cultural practices and end child marriages by 2030. The strategy provides for a more integrated and coordinated effort towards eradicating child marriage in Malawi.

1.2.2 National Legal and Policy Frameworks

1.2.2.1 The Constitution of Malawi

Section 20(1) of the constitution explicitly articulates the state's obligation to protect children from exploitation and harmful cultural practices. In addition, section 13 reaffirms the commitment to non-discrimination, emphasising the equal protection of all children. This provision serves as the cornerstone for subsequent legal measures, policies and strategies aimed at eradicating child marriage.

1.2.2.2 Childcare, Protection and Justice Act (CCPJA)

The CCPJA is a comprehensive legal instrument for addressing child protection issues, including child marriage. It localises the provisions of the CRC and other international legal frameworks on the protection of child rights. Section 81 of the CCPJA prohibits child marriage, setting the stage for a robust legal response.

1.2.2.3 MW2063 and its First Ten (10) Year Implementation Plan (MIP-1)

MW 2063 recognizes and protects the rights of our children and future generations by ensuring that the decisions we make and actions we take, are not made or taken to their detriment. It further commits to ensure that children are fully supported and protected by the law and the requisite social services that enable them to live and grow to their full potential. The Gender Equality outcome area under Human Capital Enabler in MIP-1 attains to enforce laws that protect the rights of women, girls, boys, and men against all forms of violence and laws to end child marriage.

1.2.2.4 National Children Policy

The Policy commits to protect children from child marriages by establishing a protective environment for children. This strategy forms an implementation framework for National Children Policy.

1.2.2.5 Other Child Related Laws and Policies

There are several child related laws and policies that promote the eradication of child marriages in the country. The key child related laws include Gender Equality Act; Prevention of Domestic Violence Act; Prevention of Trafficking in Person Act; Marriage Divorce and Family Relations Act and Education Act. On the other hand, some of the policies include National Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights Policy; Re-admission Policy; National Population Policy; National Social Welfare Policy; National Gender Policy; National Education Policy, National Youth Policy. Strategies that are critical are as follows: The National Child Protection Strategy (2022-2026), NPA for Vulnerable Children (2022-2026), National Strategy on Adolescent Girls and Young Women; and Youth Friendly Health Services Strategy; National Male Engagement Strategy on Gender Equality, Gender Based Violence (GBV), HIV and AIDS and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR).

On the overall, the legal, policy framework in Malawi is generally strong. What is inadequate is enforcement and implementation.

02 Strategic Direction

2.1 Goal

To reduce the prevalence of child marriage from 37.7% to 20% by 2030.

2.2 Guiding Principles

Implementation of this Strategy will be guided by the following principles:

i. Child Centred: Implementation of the strategy positions the child at the centre to promote the best interests and development of the child.
ii. Gender Transformative Approaches: Interventions address and change the underlying social norms, behaviours, and power dynamics that perpetuate gender inequalities.
iii. Multi-sectoral Approach: Strategies and interventions leverages on expertise, knowledge, skills, and engagement of different stakeholders across all levels.
iv. Human rights-based Approach: Ensures that human rights are promoted, protected, and upheld.
v. Transparency and Accountability: Implementation aligns and complies to prevailing laws, policies, and guidelines.
vi. Evidence Based: Integrates research, data, and use of verifiable evidence to inform decision making.
vii. Community Ownership: Meaningful involvement and participation of individuals particularly beneficiaries and communities in designing, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of ECM interventions.
viii. Inclusivity and Non-discrimination: Accounts for broader needs of the child, family, and community irrespective of their age, sex, disability status, religion, ethnicity, location, and economic status.
ix. Child's right to participation: Children shall be given the opportunity to voice opinions in all matters that concern them depending on their age and maturity, and to participate in solutions to ending child marriage as agents of change. Empowering adolescents (especially girls) enhances their ability make decisions about their own lives and creates an enabling environment for consulting with other children and adolescents, and wider society.
x. Sustainability: Including the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach

1.3 Objectives

i. To transform norms and promote social and behaviour change in cultural norms, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours that perpetuate child marriage.
ii. To increase access to quality, equitable, and relevant education.
iii. To reduce Vulnerabilities to prevent ECM
iv. To support economic empowerment and livelihood for girls and boys, their families, and communities.
v. To promote access to comprehensive information and services for adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR).
vi. To strengthen ECM System in multi-sectoral coordination, implementation, and monitoring of ending child marriage programmes.
vii. To enhance ECM response mechanisms to mobilise human and financial resources

2.4 Theory of Change

The Theory of Change (TOC) depicts strategic interventions anticipated to contribute to the overall goal of reducing child marriage from 38% to 20% in 2030. The implementation of this Strategy will also result into other outcomes such as empowered communities capable of addressing harmful practices and norms, reduced school dropout rates, improved school retention and improved knowledge of SRHR knowledges and uptake of contraceptives. The successful implementation of this Strategy will depend on Government and stakeholders mobilising adequate financial resources, closing the existing human resource gaps, capacitating human resource accordingly and undertaking a comprehensive awareness campaign on the disadvantages of child marriage. It is an outcome-based framework that provides a comprehensive understanding of which interventions are likely to contribute to the desired impact or change. The current program's main target group is the girl child and applies a life-course approach of a 12-year-old girl in cognizance of the fact that she will have different and changing needs throughout her teen years some of which might precipitate the risks of getting married while still a child. This reflects the program's focus on leaving no one behind and by targeting the furthest behind first in achieving the results.

This TOC supports the realization of the goal by prioritizing six interconnected, transformative and girl child-centered results. The interconnected nature of the six result areas is expected to contribute to the achievement of universal access to various services particularly sexual and reproductive health and rights, which in turn would ultimately lead to continued education and poverty reduction dividends. When 12-year-old girl child is supported to exercise her rights to, stay in school and access essential sexual and reproductive health services, child marriage and childbearing decreases. In addition, ECM is a health, economic and development issue that is a also a manifestation of various forms of policy, economic, administrative and social discrimination against the girl child and gender-based violence. The following is a schematic elucidation of the six focus areas and outcomes:

Context: Child Marriage Prevalence rate in Malawi is at 37.7%. Child marriage is exacerbated by poverty, social cultural norms, access to education, limited implementation of legal and policy frameworks. Child marriage leads to poor education, health and livelihood outcomes for boys and girls thereby affecting their human capital potential and socio-economic development.
Strategic Pillars of Intervention
Strategic Objectives
Community engagement
Quality, equitable, and relevant education
Livelihood economic Empowerment
Comprehensive information and services
Legal and Policy frameworks
Protection and Services
Multi-sectoral Coordination
Resource Mobilizations
Strategic Interventions
Meaningful participation; Engagement of gate keepers; Capacity building; Transformative community dialogue; Social and behavioral change; Intergenerational dialogue; and Parenting program.
Compulsory primary education and ECD; Sanitary materials for menstrual hygiene; Provision and access of bursaries; Safe schools; School based child protection structures; Construction of change rooms and hostels for girls; and Mentorship, role modelling, and peer to peer education
Capacity building in entrepreneurial and business skill; linkage and referrals to vocational, life skills and microcredit programmes; conditional social protection programs; and home craft programmes.
Capacity for stakeholder on CSE; Revision of the education curriculum; adult to children communication; ASRHR information and services; Referral and linkages systems; Community based ASRHR services; System strengthening for stakeholders.
Popularize child protection laws and policies; Capacity of community structures; Capacity of law enforcement agencies; Access to justice; Harmonize child related laws; Childbirth registration; Capacity building of service; and standard package for survivors.
Capacity building for service providers and community structure; Standard packages; linkage and pathways for services; safeguarding mechanisms in humanitarian
Collaboration mechanisms; Data management; Research; Joint planning; Coordination structures
Financing of the strategies; Lobby for pooled funding; private sector engagement
Impact/Outcomes
Reduced Child Marriage from 37.7% to 20% by 2030
Empowered Communities
Reduced dropout rates
Improved retention in school
Improved livelihood and economic opportunities
Improved SRH Knowledge and Practices
Strengthened Implementation and Enforcement of laws.
Strengthened systems.
Evidence based multisectoral response.
Improved service provision

03 Key Result Areas and Interventions

This section outlines the Key Result Areas and Key Interventions that are set to achieve the objectives and contribute to the goal of this strategy. The strategy has eight (8) result areas comprising of the following: Deconstruct harmful cultural practices; Keeping boys and girls in school; Livelihoods and Economic Empowerment; Comprehensive Knowledge and Access to Services for Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health; Legal and Policy Environment; Child Protection Services; Coordination; and Resource Mobilisation.

- **KRA 1. Deconstruct Harmful Cultural Norms:** underscores the role of the community as gatekeepers of culture and traditions to address harmful cultural norms and practices. As such, engagement and empowerment of community structures will support interventions for ending child marriages and deconstruct harmful cultural norms.

- **KRA 2. Keeping boys and girls in school:** Economic Impact of Child Marriage report by World Bank, 2017 suggest that increasing girls' education is one of the best ways to avoid child marriage. Each year of secondary education may reduce the likelihood of marrying as a child or having a first child before the age of 18 by six percentage points.

- **KRA3. Sustainable Livelihoods and Economic Empowerment:** Poverty significantly contributes to child marriage. Implementing economic empowerment programs can mitigate poverty-related risks that lead to child marriages for both boys and girls. Additionally, such programs can enable families to better support the education of their children and provide the children with other necessities.

- **KRA 4. Comprehensive Knowledge and Access to Services for Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health:** Limited knowledge about sexual and reproductive health often leads to teen and unplanned sex and teenage pregnancies. Improving access to these services and resources will reduce teen pregnancies, promote healthier outcomes, empower youth, support gender equality, and strengthen communities.

- **KRA 5. Legal and Policy Environment:** Strengthened and enforced legal and policy environment prohibits child marriage, safeguards the rights of girls and boys, protects them from violence, and promotes the right to access justice. The success of these laws and policies depends on how well they are implemented, enforced, and monitored to address the gaps of weak enforcement.

- **KRA 6. Child Protection Services:** Improving access of child protection services for GBV survivors and children play a crucial role in ending child marriage by addressing root causes, vulnerabilities, and support for affected children.

- **KRA 7. Coordination, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning:** Prioritisation of coordination and collaboration among stakeholders and sectors ensures sharing of information, resources, and expertise to promote synergies that effectively contribute towards achievement of the shared goal. Strengthening coordination structures at national and the sub-national levels is therefore critical. Further, promoting research, data management and sharing, monitoring and evaluation will improve evidence-based decision making.

- **KRA 8. Resource Mobilisation:** Limited financial and human resources have slowed down implementation of interventions for ending child marriage. Therefore, attainment of the desired results and outcomes require innovative financing and resource management.

Each Key Result Area will have specific objectives, specific outcomes and strategic interventions and activities outlined in the table 1.

Table 1: Key Result Area and Strategic Interventions

Key Result Area	Objective	Strategic Intervention	Activities	Outcome
KRA 1. Deconstruct Harmful Cultural Practices	**1.1** Promote community engagement for positive change in cultural norms, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that perpetuate child marriage.	**1.1.1** Promote meaningful participation of relevant stakeholders to identify child marriage interventions.	**1.1.1.1** Conduct youth engagement sessions and needs assessment on child marriage.	Empowered communities that challenge and address harmful cultural norms.
			1.1.1.2 Disseminate gender and child-related laws.	
		1.1.2 Engage gatekeepers, religious, and community leaders to transform harmful socio-cultural norms.	**1.1.2.1** Orient gatekeepers, religious leaders, and parents to transform harmful norms including GBV.	
			1.1.2.2 Facilitate transformative community dialogue sessions.	
			1.1.2.3 Disseminate and orient initiators on the manual.	
		1.1.3 Facilitate social and behavior change to end child marriages.	**1.1.3.1** Facilitate safe spaces, mentorship sessions, and interface meetings between children, parents, and community leaders.	
			1.1.3.2 Identify parent role models for mentorship.	
		1.1.4 Implement and roll out Parenting Program.	**1.1.4.1** Conduct parenting skills trainings and establish parenting circles.	
			1.1.4.2 Facilitate intergenerational dialogues and advocacy platforms for parents and children.	
			1.1.4.3 Disseminate the parenting manual.	
KRA 2. Keeping Boys and Girls in School	**2.1** Increase access to quality, equitable, and relevant education.	**2.1.1** Advocate for enforcement of compulsory primary education.	**2.1.1.1** Conduct awareness campaigns and training on standardized data collection tools.	Reduced dropout rates and improved retention of boys and girls in schools.
			2.1.1.2 Review the Education Act for enforcement.	
			2.1.1.3 Implement universal school feeding programs.	
			2.1.1.4 Lobby for more teachers and better infrastructure.	
		2.1.2 Strengthen provision of early childhood education.	**2.1.2.1** Strengthen and provide early childhood education and development.	

Key Result Area	Objective	Strategic Intervention	Activities	Outcome
			2.1.2.2 Build caregiver capacity.	
			2.1.2.3 Conduct community awareness on ECD.	
			2.1.2.4 Provide recreational services at ECD centers.	
		2.1.3 Facilitate provision of menstrual hygiene management facilities.	**2.1.3.1** Provide reusable sanitary pads and conduct community sensitization on menstrual hygiene including male champions.	
		2.1.4 Expand provision of bursaries (fees and educational supplies) at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels.	**2.1.4.1** Expand access to bursaries and establish community structures responsible for education support.	
			2.1.4.2 Train bursary committees and create awareness of available opportunities.	
		2.1.5 Upscale the safe schools' initiative.	**2.1.5.1** Create violence-free learning environments.	
			2.1.5.2 Establish multidisciplinary child protection committees at school level.	
			2.1.5.3 Strengthen child-friendly reporting mechanisms and build evacuation centers where needed.	
		2.1.6 Strengthen school-based child protection structures.	**2.1.6.1** Establish and strengthen child protection reporting systems.	
			2.1.6.2 Train and refresh child protection committees.	
		2.1.7 Advocate for construction of change rooms and hostels for girls in schools.	**2.1.7.1** Lobby stakeholders to support the construction of change rooms and hostels.	
			2.1.7.2 Sensitize village committees to include construction in their action plans.	
		2.1.8 Strengthen mentorship, role modeling, and peer-to-peer education.	**2.1.8.1** Provide career talks and guidance. **2.1.8.2** Introduce study circles and assign council officers to facilitate mentoring programs.	

Key Result Area	Objective	Strategic Intervention	Activities	Outcome
		2.1.9 Male engagement on sanitary materials and personal hygiene.	**2.1.9.1** Raise awareness of male engagement in menstrual hygiene.	
			2.1.9.2 Train men on sanitary material and personal hygiene management.	
KRA 3. Sustainable Livelihoods and Economic Empowerment	**3.1** Support economic empowerment and livelihood for girls, boys, their families, and communities.	**3.1.1** Build capacity of girls, boys (14-17 years), and their families in entrepreneurial and business skills.	**3.1.1.1** Conduct entrepreneurship and innovation training.	Improved livelihoods and economic opportunities for girls, boys, and families.
			3.1.1.2 Facilitate the formation and training of Village Savings and Loan (VSL) groups.	
			3.1.1.3 Conduct financial literacy education in children's clubs.	
		3.1.2 Support linkage and referrals for boys and girls to vocational and life skills programs.	**3.1.2.1** Link boys and girls (14-17 years) to vocational and life skills programs.	
			3.1.2.2 Conduct life skills training in children's clubs.	
		3.1.3 Promote access to social protection programs to address child marriages.	**3.1.3.1** Target vulnerable households in social protection programs and lobby for increased coverage.	
			3.1.3.2 Conduct financial literacy education in children clubs.	
		3.1.4 Link families to microcredit facilities, savings clubs, and other financial opportunities.	**3.1.4.1** Identify microfinance institutions and banks to offer low-income financial products.	
			3.1.4.2 Assess families for loan linkages.	
		3.1.5 Advocate for the reintroduction of home craft programs for livelihood improvement.	**3.1.5.1** Conduct community-based training on home craft programs.	
			3.1.5.2 Lobby for financial and human resources to support home craft programs.	
KRA 4. Comprehensive Knowledge and Access to Services for Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health	**4.1** Promote access to comprehensive ASRHR information and services for adolescents.	**4.1.1** Scale up and build capacities of stakeholders to implement CSE curricular for in- and out-of-schoolchildren.	**4.1.1.1** Orient key stakeholders on CSE curriculum. **4.1.1.2** Train community service providers and conduct quarterly review meetings.	Improved SRH knowledge and practices among youth.

Key Result Area	Objective	Strategic Intervention	Activities	Outcome
			4.1.1.3 Monitor the implementation of CSE curricula.	
		4.1.2 Advocate for the revision of the education curriculum to incorporate CSE.	**4.1.2.1** Lobby for curriculum revision and secure resources.	
		4.1.3 Advocate for the contextualization and ratification of the ESA commitments across line ministries.	**4.1.3.1** Lobby for ESA ratification across relevant ministries.	
		4.1.4 Implement parent-to-child communication strategies.	**4.1.4.1** Train TOTs on parenting sessions.	
			4.1.4.2 Establish parenting circles and train facilitators.	
			4.1.4.3 Conduct review meetings and joint monitoring.	
		4.1.5 Increase awareness and promote access to integrated ASRHR/HIV/FP/SGBV services.	**4.1.5.1** Train community stakeholders.	
			4.1.5.2 Conduct awareness meetings and promote service uptake in youth clubs.	
			4.1.5.3 Print and distribute IEC materials.	
		4.1.6 Promote utilization of ASRHR/HIV/FP/SGBV services by adolescents and young people.	**4.1.6.1** Accredit YFHS service delivery points and develop a directory of services at TA level.	
		4.1.7 Strengthen inter-sectoral referral, linkages, and feedback systems.	**4.1.7.1** Map service providers, conduct TWG and coordination meetings, train on case management, and disseminate referral pathways.	
KRA 5. Legal and Policy Environment	**5.1** Strengthen the legal and policy frameworks on ending child marriage.	**5.1.1** Popularize child protection laws and policies.	**5.1.1.1** Raise awareness on child-related laws using handbooks.	Strengthened implementation and monitoring of child-related laws.
			5.1.1.2 Print and disseminate IEC materials on laws.	

Key Result Area	Objective	Strategic Intervention	Activities	Outcome
		5.1.2 Build capacity of community structures and law enforcement to support child-related laws and policies.	**5.1.2.1** Empower law enforcement on interpretation and enforcement.	
			5.1.2.2 Print legal documents for stakeholders.	
			5.1.2.3 Review legislation on religious institutions to protect children and women.	
		5.1.3 Expand access to justice through innovative approaches.	**5.1.3.1** Conduct court circuits in remote areas and mobile victim support sessions.	
		5.1.4 Strengthen birth registration systems.	**5.1.4.1** Advocate for removal of fees for late registrations.	
			5.1.4.2 Support community-based birth registration and national birth registration campaigns.	
			5.1.4.3 Support the development of a CRVS system strategy.	
KRA 6. Child Protection Services	**6.1** Enhance protection and services for survivors and children at risk of child marriages.	**6.1.1** Build capacity of service providers on case management.	**6.1.1.1** Strengthen child protection structures and implement case management for early identification and referral.	Improved support for survivors of child marriages and at-risk children.
			6.1.1.2 Scale-up vocational skills training for girls at risk.	
		6.1.2 Develop and implement a standard package for survivors.	**6.1.2.1** Provide start-up packages for vocational skills trainees.	
			6.1.2.2 Establish one-stop centers in health facilities.	
		6.1.3 Promote awareness of case management and reporting pathways.	**6.1.3.1** Conduct awareness campaigns and train community structures on case management and reporting pathways.	
		6.1.4 Strengthen linkages to services for survivors.	**6.1.4.1** Map service providers and establish networking among them.	

Key Result Area	Objective	Strategic Intervention	Activities	Outcome
			6.1.4.2 Establish one-stop centers in health facilities.	
		6.1.5 Mainstream safeguarding mechanisms during disasters.	**6.1.5.1** Establish/revamp children's corners and safe spaces.	
			6.1.5.2 Train children's corners facilitators and strengthen youth-friendly health services.	
KRA 7. Coordination, Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Resource Mobilization	**7.1** Strengthen coordination, implementation, and resource mobilization for ECM programs.	**7.1.1** Review and strengthen collaboration mechanisms among stakeholders.	**7.1.1.1** Conduct quarterly Child Protection TWG meetings.	Strengthened evidence-based multi-sectoral response and improved resource mobilization for ECM programs.
			7.1.1.2 Conduct joint supervision of ECM programs.	
		7.1.2 Strengthen child marriage data management and utilization.	**7.1.2.1** Develop standardized data collection tools and mobilize resources for research on ECM.	
		7.1.3 Promote research on child marriages.	**7.1.3.1** Engage academia and other stakeholders to conduct research on ECM.	
		7.1.4 Enhance joint planning, implementation, monitoring, and resource mobilization by stakeholders.	**7.1.4.1** Conduct joint monitoring and evaluation.	
			7.1.4.2 Organize a national symposium on ECM.	
			7.1.4.3 Lobby for funding from stakeholders.	
			7.1.4.4 Establish a pool fund with development partners.	
		7.1.5 Strengthen coordination structures at district and community levels.	**7.1.5.1** Train community structures on child-related policies and laws.	
			7.1.5.2 Conduct refresher courses for child protection workers.	
			7.1.5.3 Engage private sector for ECM interventions.	
		7.1.6 Ensure transparency and accountability in resource management.	**7.1.6.1** Capacitate relevant workforce on public resource management.	
			7.1.6.2 Conduct reporting and evaluation meetings.	

04 Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

4.1 Implementation of National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage

Implementation of this strategy will employ the multi-sectoral approach involving the Government, civil society organisations, the academia, media, the private sector, and the communities. Below are some of the key roles and responsibilities of these stakeholders:

Table 2: Stakeholders and Their Roles

Stakeholder	Roles
Ministry responsible for Child Affairs, Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare	1. Coordinate all stakeholders implementing the Strategy. 2. Provide overall policy and technical guidance for implementation of the Strategy. 3. Facilitate implementation and institutionalisation of the Strategy in the public sector. 4. Ensure accountability for the resources allocated for the implementation of the Strategy. 5. Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Strategy. 6. Facilitate linkages with other existing plans, programmes, and policies. 7. Build the capacity of line Ministries and other stakeholders in strategies for ending child marriages. 8. Mobilise resources and partners to fund the Strategy. 9. Ensure mass dissemination of the Strategy and its M&E Plan. 10. Submit Periodic Reports to the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) on the implementation of activities towards ending child marriage. 11. Organise meetings to disseminate results so that they are utilised for programming and informing project implementation. 12. Provide appropriate and timely capacity building for Gender Focal Points and other staff in collaboration with the MoGCDSW. 13. Develop guidelines for child development and engagement. 14. Build capacity of workers, child engagement structures and regulate conduct; and 15. Promote the Child Justice and Protection Act
Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs	1. Collect data related to activities for ending child marriage. 2. Collate data from various implementing entities. 3. Analyse and prepare composite M&E reports to facilitate accountability in the implementation of the activities under their purview. 4. Facilitate quarterly implementation monitoring visits. 5. Provide feedback to implementing agencies based on M&E reports. 6. Implement and report on programmes for ending child marriage. 7. Provide policy guidance on M&E.
Ministry of Education	1. Implement the readmission policy and National Strategy on Girls Education Strategy (NGES). 2. Provide safe schools and adequate teachers. 3. Review the Gender transformative Curriculum 4. Implement the school feeding program. 5. Ensure linkages and promote common programs to address violence and gender responsiveness in schools.

Stakeholder	Roles
Ministry responsible for Local Government	1. Provide guidance on institutionalisation of strategies on ending child marriages within the decentralization process. 2. Facilitate integration of the Strategy into local government policies and programmes. 3. Disseminate and advocate for the implementation of community activities and behaviour change intervention with traditional leaders. 4. Enforce and monitor of the implementation of the strategy
Ministry of Health	1. Ensure access to SRHR and quality service delivery 2. Provide Mental Health and Psychosocial support during humanitarian crises
Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs	1. Facilitate the technical review and harmonisation of laws on ending child marriage.
Ministry of Information and Digitalisation	1. Support and facilitate behaviour and social change communication at household and community levels through community Awareness activities.
Ministry of Trade and Industry	1. Link families to SMEs and micro finance institutions
Ministry of Agriculture	1. Support households with livelihood interventions. 2. Conduct trainings in agri-business entrepreneurship 3. Build capacity in food processing. 4. Liaise with MBS in quality products assessment
Ministry of Homeland Security	1. Support handling of cross border child marriage cases. 2. Facilitate safeguarding of cyber system
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	3. Facilitate ratification of regional and global commitments on ending child marriage
Other MDAs	1. Ensure linkages with the National Girl Education Strategy,d Girls Education and Communication Strategies and the Readmission Policy. 2. Ensure linkages and promote common programmes to address violence and gender responsiveness in schools
The Judiciary	1. Facilitate effective implementation of child justice system including mobile legal clinics. 2. Facilitate access to justice at all levels
National Child Justice Forum (NCJF)	1. Strengthen coordination of child justice system 2. Facilitate the development of child marriage case handling guidelines and procedures 3. Translate and disseminate child marriage laws.
National Registration Bureau	1. Ensure every child aged below 16 years is registered. 2. Ensure every child aged below 16 years is issued a birth certificate. 3. Issuing national IDs to every child aged between 16 and less than 18 years. 4. Share vital statistics on the number of babies born to mothers aged less than 18 years.
Malawi Law Commission	1. Review child and gender related laws. 2. Raise awareness on child and gender related laws
Malawi Human Rights Commission	1. Investigate child marriage cases. 2. Raise awareness on child rights. 3. Reporting to national, regional, and global bodies on the status of human rights in the country 4. Advocacy on ECM
Parliament	1. Enact child and gender related laws. 2. Appropriation of resources on ending child marriage

Stakeholder	Roles
	3. Ensure adequate budgetary allocation across ministries for the prevention child marriage. 4. Ensuring accountability to commitmentsadopted in regional and global fora. 5. Advocate for national laws and policies to be adopted, reviewed, strengthened, and implemented
Malawi Police Services	1. Investigate and prosecute child marriage cases. 2. Raise awareness on child rights and reporting pathways. 3. Facilitate victim support services
NGORA	1. Ensure transparency and accountability. 2. Mapping of ending child marriage stakeholders
National Planning Commission	1. Ensure incorporation of ECM in national plans
National Statistical Office	1. Inclusion of child marriage indicators or modules in national surveys 2. Publicising and sharing of statistics on child marriage to ensure easy accessibility of quality data
National Children Commission (NCC)	1. Lobby for resources for the implementation of the ECM strategy. 2. Monitoring the implementation of the strategy by all stakeholders
Local Councils	1. Coordinate government and non-governmental stakeholders at district level in implementing the Strategy. 2. Implement, monitor, and report on various aspects of the Strategy. 3. Provide on-going monitoring and technical support to child protection structures. 4. Follow up with implementing entities to ensure that information for the Strategy. 5. M&E system is generated and collated on a continuous basis. 6. Coordinate data and information gathering for appropriate indicators at the district level. 7. Support implementing agencies with data analysis.
The Civil Society	1. Participate in assessing the performance of project outputs and management processes. 2. Participate in assessing the performance of community level institutions. 3. Follow up and ensure accountability on local level actions arising from the participatory M&E exercises. 4. Advocate for the financing and implementation of the strategy. 5. Strengthen monitoring of implementation of ECM strategy 6. Provide oversight for NGOs in their participation in ECM. 7. Consolidation of data on ECM from partners and NGOs
NGOs	1. Implement the Strategy at all levels. 2. Provide reports to the MOGCDSW in accordance with the implementation framework. 3. Mobilise resources for the Strategy. 4. Support regular review meetings to assess the progress of implementing the Strategy. 5. Ensure wide regional and community outreach of programmes aimed at ending child marriages. 6. Popularise the ECM strategy at community level
Development Partners	1. Provide technical and financial support to the MoGCDSW and other stakeholders in the implementation of the Strategy

Stakeholder	Roles
Media	1. Raise awareness on ending child marriage, child related laws and policies. 2. Provide evidence through investigative journalism. 3. Advocate on various issues concerning child marriage
Private Sector	1. Implement programmes aimed at combating child marriage. 2. Support stakeholders implementing the Strategy as part of corporate social responsibility.
Traditional Leaders	1. Transforming harmful socio-cultural norms and practices 2. Maintain marriage registers at community level. 3. Raise awareness on the dangers of child marriage. 4. Support case management of child marriage cases
Academia	1. Conduct research on child marriage. 2. Advocate for incorporation child protection issues into the education curricular
Children and Youth	1. Advocate for the implementation of child and youth related laws and policies. 2. Participate in decision-making processes regarding child and youth issues
CBOs	1. Community mobilisation on child related interventions 2. Raise awareness on child rights. 3. Support management of child marriage cases 4. Implement child related interventions. 5. Support children that are at risk of child marriage
Communities	1. Support ECM interventions 2. Report child marriage cases to relevant stakeholders

4.2 Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

A monitoring and evaluation framework has been developed to easily track the overall implementation of the NSECM. It includes indicators and targets to check progress and document best practices. The MoGCDSW will also work with other Government MDAs in order to access independent data systems such as the Education Management Information System, DHIS2, DHAMIS and youth management information system to track cases of child labour. The MoGCDSW will also rely on reports on child marriage from District Social Welfare Officers, District Youth Offices and CSOs. National surveys such as MDHS and MICS conducted by the National Statistical Office will be used to determine prevalence of child marriage.

4.3 Budget

The implementation of this strategy will cost US$89,407,555 over the period 2025-2030 and 83% of the resources will be spent on enhancing the educational system as detailed in Table 5;

Implementation Plan

Strategic Intervention	Activity	Timeline	Responsible
Objective 1: To promote community engagement for positive change in cultural norms, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours that perpetuate child marriage;			
Community Engagement	Consolidate community engagement and advocacy with comprehensive programs for both parents and chiefs to modify social norms under their jurisdictions.	2024-30	MOGCDSW
	Streamline dissemination of accurate information with skills training for community gatekeepers and youth advocates.		
	Capacity building for law enforcement to enforce ECM-related laws.		
	Integrate awareness programs targeting political leaders, officials, and community members on ECM laws and policies.		
Coordinated support systems for CM survivors	Develop an integrated child-sensitive social protection program to prevent child marriage and support at-risk families.	2024-30	MOGCDSW
	Combine services for withdrawn children with outreach programs for boys under the principle of 'leave no one behind,' utilizing role-modelling and other innovative approaches.		
Objective 2: To Increase access to quality, equitable, and relevant education			
Enhancement of Education Systems	Improve and expand equitable and quality education measures, to improve retention and access to upper primary classes and secondary schools	2024-30	MOE HESLGB
	Implement comprehensive violence and abuse prevention and protection measures for children in schools.		
	Ensure enrolment and access to education for all school-going children through free education and readmission policies,		
	Provide financial support to extremely poor households to cover direct and indirect schooling costs.		
	while securing safe and inclusive learning environments in schools.		
Objective 3: To increase access to Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) and SRH information and services for girls and boys;			
Provide age appropriate CSE and SRH information and services to girls and boys	Offer in-service training for all CSE teachers to address emerging issues such as new technologies.	2024-29	MOH MOY MOE
	Promote behaviours change and communication interventions on SRH at family and community levels, including contraceptive use.		
	Improve access to Youth Friendly Health Services and enhance the capacities of service providers through refresher training.		
Objective 4: To empower girls and their families with the provision of economic and other livelihood opportunities;			
Economic Empowerment and Livelihood Initiatives	Promote child development and enhance parental care through culturally relevant education and support services. Improve planning for children deprived of family care by scaling up the provision of and access to support services for vulnerable families.	2024-28	MOGCDSW EP&D

Strategic Intervention	Activity	Timeline	Responsible
	Strengthen the capacity of the national childcare and protection sector to prevent and protect children against all forms of violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect.		
Objective 5: To foster a legal and policy framework for the full enforcement of laws to end child marriage;			
Legal and Policy Framework Enforcement	Disseminate translated versions of ECM laws to grassroots communities and school-based groups like mother groups.	2024-30	MOJ MLS MOH&S POLICE NRB
	Conduct law awareness campaigns and support circuit courts in hard-to-reach areas.		
	Engage with the Ministry of Justice to review and address legislative gaps and build capacity for law enforcement and judiciary officers on ECM laws.		
	Support the development and strengthening of the civil registration system for universal birth registration and adherence to regional child protection standards.		
	Enforcement of child marriage related laws		
Objective 6. To strengthen multi-sectoral implementation and coordination mechanisms and monitoring and evaluation structures for ending child marriage.			
Increased Financial Resources for ECM	Designate a focal person for the next National Strategy on ECM within Child Affairs to anchor planning, monitoring and implementation of the Strategy including follow-ups with stakeholders on data and reports.	On-going	MOF MOGCDSW MOLG LGFC
	Conduct comprehensive mapping of ECM programs and stakeholders with a view to assess the gaps to inform geographical targeting for effective ECM response		
	MoGCDSW should develop a calendar of regular coordination meetings, and resort to exploit the virtual space to conduct the meetings if financial resources don't permit physical meetings.		
	Have a dedicated budget for coordination of ECM at national and district levels and to lobby for the same with the with the Ministry of Finance and Parliament.		
	Discuss and agree among ECM stakeholders to establish and agree on a minimum set of core activities and indicators and activities that all ECM stakeholders should periodically report on.		
	The MoGCDSW and Ministry of Finance should establish a basket fund for ECM to hold Government and development partners to commit to specific funding allocations and promoting equitable ECM programming for hard to reach and under-served areas, otherwise not targeted by ECM stakeholders.		

Strategic Intervention	Activity	Timeline	Responsible
	MoGCDSW should conduct advocacy activities to argue out the case for investing in ECM in Malawi as part of national development in tandem with MW2063.		
Robust Data for implementation and M and E	Develop a robust data capturing, management and analysis system that would enhance proactive rather than reactive programming.	2025-27	Planning and Research
	Create an evidence-based and enabling learning environment to facilitate and inform effective child participation processes, with data collection and evaluation as a basis for all interventions		
Multisectoral collaboration response to disasters and humanitarian crises	Advance community mobilization to build the capacity of women, families, and communities to engage actively with each other and duty bearers.	2024-29	MOGCDSW DODMA DOEA
	Eliminate corrupt and exploitative practices during disasters and humanitarian crises.		

05 Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Framework

Table 3: M&E Matrix.

Results	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Means of Verification	Reporting Period	Lead Institution
Objective 1: Promote community engagement for positive change in cultural norms, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours that perpetuate child marriage						
Outcome 1: Empowered communities that challenge and address harmful cultural norms, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours	Percentage of community members who report a positive mindset change	TBD	10%	Survey Reports	Bi-Annually	MoG
Output 1.1: Streamlined dissemination of accurate information and skills training	Number of community leader trained on addressing harmful cultural norms	TBD	600	Training reports	Quarterly	MoGCDSW
	Number of young people trained on addressing harmful cultural norms	TBD	1200	Training Report	Annually	MoY
Output 1.2: Enhanced law enforcement capacity for ECM-related laws	Number of law enforcement officers trained on ECM laws	TBD	1000	Training Reports	Quarterly	MoGCDSW and MoJ
Output 1.3: Awareness Campaign on ECM laws among political leaders and community members	Number of people reached with advocacy messages	TBD	500,000	Advocacy activity reports	monthly	MoG
Output 1.4: Outreach programs for boys and girls withdrawn from child marriages	Number of children withdrawn from child marriage	TBD	30,000	Annual Report	Annually	MoGCDSW
	Number of youth empowerment clubs	TBD	300	Youth Club Registers	Annually	MoY
	Number of Children Corners established	TBD	300	Children Corners Registers	Annually	MoGCDSW

Results	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Means of Verification	Reporting Period	Lead Institution
Objective 2: Increase access to quality education for boys and girls						
Outcome 2: Improved school enrolment and retention rates for girls and boys	Transition Rate to secondary school.	42.7 (Boys) 42.5 (Girls)	60	School registers	Annually	Min. of Education
	Number of CM survivors provided with education support.	TBD	5000	Annual Reports	Annually	MoG
	Drop-out Rate Primary (Girls)	4.8	3.0	Education Statistics Report	Annually	MoE
Output 2.1: Parenting Program to nurture love for education	Number of parenting sessions implemented.	TBD	300	Reports Minutes	Quarterly	MoGCDSW
Output 2.2: Equitable and quality education measures expanded	Net Enrolment Rate – Primary	88	95	EMIS	Annually	MoE
	Gender Parity Index – Secondary Enrolment	0.96	1	EMIS	Annually	MoE
Output 2.3: Comprehensive violence and abuse prevention measures in schools	Number of schools with Child Protection Committee/ Mother groups	To be established	To be established	Police reports	Quarterly	Min. of Gender
Output 2.4: Increased number of boys and girls accessing bursary Programs	Number of boys and girls enrolled in bursary schemes (disaggregated by levels of education and sex)	TBD	50000	Reports	Quarterly	Min. of Gender Min. of education
Objective 3: Promote access to comprehensive knowledge and services for adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health						
Outcome 3: Improved SRH knowledge and practices among youth	4.1. Number of youths accessing and participating in SRH services.	TBD	TBD	Ministerial Annual Reports	Annual	Ministry of Health
	4.1 Number of child/teen pregnancies reported	TBD	TBD	Ministerial Annual Reports	Annual	Ministry of Health
Output 3.1: In-service training for CSE teachers	4.1.1.Number of teachers trained on emerging SRH issues.	TBD	1000	Ministerial Annual Report	Annual	Ministry of Health

Results	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Means of Verification	Reporting Period	Lead Institution
	4.1.2. Number of children reached with CSE information.	TBD	300,000	Ministerial Annual Report	Annual	Ministry of Health
Objective 4: Economically empower Girls, Boys, families, and Communities						
Outcome 4: Increased economic opportunities for girls, boys, and their families	Number of CM survivors' households provided with economic empowerment package	TBD	5000	Ministerial Reports	Annually	MoGCDSW
Output 4.1: Integrated child-sensitive social protection programs	Number of CM survivors' households benefiting from social cash transfer	TBD	5000	Annual Report	Annually	MoGCDSW
	Number of CM Survivors households participating in VSL Programmes	TBD	5000	Annual Report	Annually	MoGCDSW COMSIP
Objective 5: Strengthen and enforce legal and policy frameworks on ending Child marriages						
Outcome 5: Enhanced enforcement of ECM laws	Number of cases successfully completed under relevant laws	TBD	500	GBV Reports	Annually	MoGCDSW, MoJ and MPS
Output 5.1: Dissemination of ECM laws to communities	Number of community sessions on ECM laws	TBD	300	GBV Reports	Annually	MoJ and MoGCDSW
Output 5.2: Capacity building for law enforcement and judiciary on ECM laws	Number of judiciary and law enforcement officers trained	TBD	300	GBV Reports	Annually	MoGCDSW
Objective 6: Strengthen Multi sectoral, coordination, implementation, and monitoring of ending child marriage programs						
Outcome 6: Effective ECM program coordination and evaluation	Number of multi sectoral engagement meetings conducted	TBD	60	TWG Reports minutes	Quarterly	MoGCDSW
Output 6.1: Dedicated budget for ECM coordination	% of ECM MoGCDSW Annual Budget Allocated of the Annual Target	TBD	1%	Budget Documents	Annually	MoGCDSW
Output 6.2: Development of a robust data management system for ECM	ECM Indicators included in the CPIMS	No	Yes	reports	Monthly, Quarterly and Annually	MoGCDSW

Table 4: Communication for ECM Strategy

Priority Area	Desired Outcome	Core Messages	Target Audiences	Communication Channels
Economic Empowerment of Girls and their Families	Increased economic opportunities for girls and their families	Alleviation of poverty is key to ending child marriages	Policy makers and Politicians Private Sector Civil society organizations (CSOs) Girls and families Public Community Leaders District Councils	Print Media (Posters, Leaflets, TV, Banners, etc.) Music, Drama, Radio, Community dialogue meetings, Community leaders (Religious, Opinion, Political and Cultural) interface meetings
Eliminate Harmful Socio-cultural Practices	Reduced prevalence of harmful social cultural practices that precipitate child marriages	Elimination of harmful social and cultural norms contributes to reductions in CMs	Community Leaders Media CSOs District Councils Girls Girls and young women Networks	Community (Religious, Opinion, Political and Cultural) leader's interface meetings; Print Media (Posters, Leaflets, Banners, etc.) Drama, Radio, Community dialogue meetings, Briefing papers Documentaries, Factsheets Mentorships in safe spaces
Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)	Improved CSE knowledge and practices among youth	Comprehensive knowledge about sex and sexuality is key to the reduction of teenage pregnancies and child marriages. Girls' networks	Policy makers (politicians, MOE. MOH) Girls Public Community Leaders District Councils Development Partners, Ministry of Gender and youth.	Policy Briefs, Panel Discussions, Community (Religious, Opinion, Political and Cultural, angaliba and anankungwi) leader's interface meetings; Print Media (Posters, Leaflets, Banners, etc.) Drama, Radio, Community dialogues, Briefing papers Documentaries, Factsheets, Road show awareness sessions, open days, focus group discussions. Use of youth clubs/groups. Mentorships in safe spaces
Robust Enforcement of ECM related Legal Policy and Strategies	Enhanced policy advocacy, awareness and enforcement capacity for ECM-related policies and laws	Enforcement of existing laws and policies is key in protecting girls from GBV and maltreatment and supporting of CM survivors	Civil society organizations (CSOs) Academia Policy makers Media, Local authorities, law enforcement,	Policy Briefs, Panel Discussions, Community (Religious, Opinion, Political and Cultural) leader's interface meetings; Print Media (Posters, Leaflets, Banners, etc.) Drama, Radio, Community dialogue meetings, digital and Social media, Mentorship

Priority Area	Desired Outcome	Core Messages	Target Audiences	Communication Channels
			Community, traditional and religious leaders, Parents and guardians, AGYW, ABYM, men and boys	Programme, safe. spaces, Briefing papers Documentaries, Factsheets
Youth Friendly Health Services	Improved SRH knowledge and practices among youth	SRHR services that are accessible and youth friendly contributes to reductions in teenage pregnancies and subsequent child marriages	Policy makers (politicians, MOE. MOH) Civil society organizations (CSOs) Girls Networks Girls Development Partners	Print Media (Posters, Leaflets, TV, Banners, etc.) Drama, Radio, Community meetings, Community dialogues with Religious and Opinion leaders, Briefing papers. Documentaries Mentorships in safe spaces Factsheets
Quality education for the youth particularly the girls	Improved school enrolment and retention rates for girls	Access to quality education particularly for girls reduces school dropout and child marriages	Development partners Policy makers (politicians, MOE. MOH) Civil society organizations (CSOs) Public	Print Media (Posters, Leaflets, TV, Banners, etc.) Drama, Radio, Community meetings, Community forums with Religious and Opinion leaders,
Strengthen ECM implementation, coordination, and M&E	Effective ECM program implementation, coordination, and evaluation mechanism	Strong coordination of ECM interventions among stakeholders is key to effective programming for ECM	CSOs NGOs, Policy makers (MOGCDS& relevant ministries) Development Partners	Policy Briefs, review meetings/joint monitoring, reliable information and data management systems on ECM, Documentaries, Dialogues at National level with stakeholders

06 Estimated Cost for Implementing the ECM Strategy

Table 5: Estimated Cost for Implementing the ECM Strategy in US$

Strategic Intervention	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Objective 1: To facilitate positive change in harmful social, cultural, and religious norms, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours that drive child marriages;					
Modification and elimination of harmful social and cultural norms	1,058,760	1,217,574	1,400,210	1,610,241	1,851,777
Coordinated support systems for CM survivors	713,980	821,077	944,238	1,085,874	1,248,755
Objective 2: To increase access, uptake, and utilization of quality social services (education, health, child protection, at national, district and community levels					
Enhancement of Education Systems	42,619,920	49,012,908	56,364,844	64,819,570	74,542,506
Objective 3: To increase access to Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) and SRH information and services for girls and boys;					
Provide age appropriate CSE and SRH information and services to girls and boys	3,633,000	4,177,950	4,804,642	5,525,338	6,354,139
Objective 4: To empower girls and their families with the provision of economic and other livelihood opportunities;					
Economic Empowerment and Livelihood Initiatives	504,000,000	579,600	666,540	766,521	881,499
Objective 5: To foster a legal and policy framework for the full enforcement of laws to end child marriage;					
Legal and Objective 6: Ensure national laws, policy and strategic frameworks related to ending child marriage are effectively enforced and implemented. Policy Framework Enforcement	505,500	581,325	668,523	768,802	884,122
Objective 6: To strengthen multi-sectoral implementation and coordination mechanisms and monitoring and evaluation structures for ending child marriage.					
Increased Financial Resources for ECM	1,840,500	2,116,575	2,434,061	2,799,170	3,219,046
Robust Data for implementation and M and E	85,000,000	97,750	112,412	129,274	148,665
Multisectoral collaboration response to disasters and humanitarian crises	158,400	182,160	209,484	240,906	277,042
Grand Total	**51,119,060**	**58,786,919**	**67,604,956**	**77,745,700**	**89,407,555**

07 Annexes

Annex 1: Theory of Change

7.1 Risk Management and Mitigation Strategies

Strategic Intervention Area	Potential Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Strategy
Modification and Elimination of Harmful Social and Cultural Norms	Community resistance to change	Medium	High	Engage community leaders, use culturally sensitive advocacy, educate to shift perspectives.
Coordinated Support Systems for CM Survivors	Inadequate resources for support	High	High	Secure funding through partnerships, allocate government budgets, mobilize community resources.
Enhancement of Education Systems	Dropout rates due to financial constraints	High	Medium	Implement scholarship programs, provide financial aid, enforce free education policies.
CSE and SRH Information and Services Provision	Cultural barriers to sexuality education	Medium	High	Tailor CSE programs to culture, involve parents/community leaders, emphasize health benefits.
Economic Empowerment and Livelihood Initiatives	Limited access to economic opportunities	Medium	High	Create vocational training, support entrepreneurship, collaborate with private sector.
Legal and Policy Framework Enforcement	Gaps in law enforcement	High	High	Train law enforcement officers, clarify legal provisions, engage judiciary for ECM law support.
Financial and Data Resource Enhancement	Inaccurate or incomplete data collection	Medium	Medium	Develop data management systems, train in data collection and analysis.
Multisectoral Collaboration in Response to Disasters and Humanitarian Crises	Coordination failures during crises	Medium	High	Establish communication channels, define roles/responsibilities, conduct emergency drills.

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