



HER  
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APRIL 2019

# ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2018

# HER CHOICE

BUILDING CHILD MARRIAGE FREE COMMUNITIES



Ministry of Foreign Affairs



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

For Her Choice, one of the most important activities of 2018 was the Midline Evaluation Study. This research was conducted by the University of Amsterdam/AISSR, in collaboration with all alliance and country partners. The final Midline Evaluation Report was submitted to the ministry by the end of January 2019.

The HER CHOICE team is proud that this research shows that, halfway through the programme, our joint efforts have already led to tangible results on the targets set for most indicators. This Annual Report for 2018 reflects this progress too, despite many challenges.

At the same time we see that, if we want to amplify our impact, we will have to put additional emphasis on certain activities and strategies.

Subjects that will need additional attention during the remaining grant period are:

- Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), implemented through a nested approach involving girls, teachers and communities, is necessary to achieve more impact.
- Even more attention for involvement of men and boys on addressing issues like gender based violence.

Moreover, we have started to look ahead to the follow up for HER CHOICE, where findings from the midline research also give direction. First, we will pay more attention to activities for married girls and their barriers in terms of educational participation, income generation and child care support. Second, the relationships between teenage pregnancy and child marriage will receive more focused attention. We will start discussions on our follow up program with the partner organisations in the countries where we work during several linking & learning meetings in the coming months.

We are as determined as ever to improve the lives and the future opportunities of girls in the countries where we work, and would like to thank the Ministry for its ongoing support towards this goal.



## 2. CONTEXT ANALYSIS

*This chapter gives an overview of the enabling environment and larger context for NGOs addressing child marriage in all programme countries: to what extent the (political) situation has changed and which developments have taken place in the 'room to move' for the implementing partners.*

### **Bangladesh**

In order to eliminate child marriage through institutions, programmes and combined efforts, the National Plan of Action to End Child Marriage (2018-2030) has been adopted by the Bangladesh Government. The goal of the NPA is to end marriage of girls below the age of 15, to reduce by one third the rate of marriage for girls aged 18 by 2021, and to completely eliminate child marriage by 2041.

In addition, the government enacted the Child Marriage Restraint Rules 2018 and the Dowry Prohibition Act 2018, which are very significant legal tools to contribute to ending child marriage. However, despite having this strong legal framework, Bangladesh still has one of the highest rates of child marriage worldwide.

During the past year the current government came into power - reportedly, through irregularities during the national election in 2018. This has resulted in a political situation with shrinking democratic space, growing violence and bad governance. Further deterioration of this situation may, despite of the favorable legal and policy framework for addressing child marriage, hamper the realisation of the objectives of the HER CHOICE program.

## Benin

2018 has been an interesting year for Sexual and Reproductive and Rights (SRHR) issues in Benin, and more specifically for addressing the issue of child marriage. In June, the Government of Benin, the Netherlands Embassy and the Association for Education, Sexuality and Health in Africa (APESSA) launched the pilot phase of the Sexual Health Education in School curricula. In September, the National Guide for Parental Dialogue on Sexuality and Reproductive Health (SRH) was published, which intends to support parents to talk with their children about SRH issues. In addition, the government is planning to punish school-related gender-based violence, including the removal of teachers from the public service when it is proven that they made school girls pregnant.

Furthermore, the NGO ESAM Benin and the Netherlands Embassy are setting up the National Partnership for the Elimination of Child Marriage in Benin. This coalition aims to strengthen the dialogue and synergy of actions between organisations working in this field. On December 12<sup>th</sup>, THP-Benin took part in the very first session initiated for this purpose. It is expected that further meetings will be held with all stakeholders, including the Government, for the completion of this process.

## Burkina Faso

The year 2018 was marked by a high number of terrorist attacks in regions all over the country. This has resulted, among other things, in the total or partial closure of health centres and schools in those regions, the latter depriving more than 99.000 students of the right to education. This has also effected the working conditions of local partners organisations AJBF, AFDP and Dembagnouma, who are active in the affected regions.

The adoption of the new Penal Code on the incrimination of violence against women, girls and children on May 31, 2018, constitutes a significant advocacy tool for CSOs, among which HER CHOICE partner organisations.

Nevertheless, these organisations need to actively continue their efforts in order for the government to realise the adoption of a new Code of Persons and Family (CPF) that will fix the minimum age for marriage to 18 years for both girls and boys.

## Ethiopia

The year 2018 was a turning point for the country from being considered a *fragile state* to a more democratic country. The new government has been exerting its utmost effort in ensuring the rule of law in the country. This has been done by rebuilding democratic institutions such as the Election Board, revitalizing the working modality of the parliament and establishing an elder's council that facilitates reconciliation and relaxation of restrictive laws. Accordingly, the current government has recognised the need for an amendment to the Charities and Societies Law of Ethiopia, while planning to remove the restrictive elements of the law in the near future. This will include the possibility of a 'right based education', which among other aspects will allow young people to discuss SRHR issues openly. The last R in the SRHR can then be openly used, as up until now it is common practice to refer to SRH.

The government has also been working towards achieving its commitment of ending Child Marriage by 2025. National and local governments have been providing more support to NGOs and programmes that address child marriage.

Furthermore, the revised Ethiopian Family and Penal Code has prohibited CM/FGM as a violation of girl's right. The government organised a decentralised process to set up crucial committees and sub-committees in the villages. These committees involve representatives of women's associations, agriculture extensions, schools and health centres, police, religious leaders, and elders. The committees promote communication, project coordination, girls' empowerment, quality and youth-friendly SRHR service delivery and evidence generation.



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In general, it can be said that the socio-political atmosphere in the country has changed for the better. Additionally, there is an increasing number of female leadership in government and politics, which provides a good gender example within the African continent. It also sets a good example for girls that are finishing their education in different parts of Ethiopia.

## **Ghana**

The political environment in Ghana has been very peaceful. The Government of Ghana, through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, continued to support CSOs working in the area of child marriage through stakeholder engagements and the establishment of an online platform developed by the Child Marriage Unit of the same Ministry. Through this medium, members received weekly information on government efforts to address cases of child marriage. Reminders are given by the unit on priority areas of the National Strategic Framework on Ending Child Marriage, for members to work within this framework. Due to this favorable environment, work in the field is expanding and an increasing number of organisations are reaching out by providing education on child marriage and related issues.

## **Mali**

In 2018, preparations have been going for the introduction of the National Programme against Gender-based Violence, which is a legal proposition to be launched in 2019. Lobby for the adoption of this law has had positive results and the law itself is expected to contribute significantly to the success of the HER CHOICE programme in Mali.

Many educational strikes took place in the country by teachers asking for better labour conditions, which seriously affected the continuity of education of the target group. At the same time, students organised protests in reaction to this, which, besides their claim to a proper education, had a negative impact on educational results and study rhythm. These issues were discussed within HER CHOICE girls' clubs, enabling students to actively contribute to the organisation of their self-education and alternative education during strikes.

A large part of the population still has to deal with political unrest and physical insecurity. Northern Mali, which in the past has been occupied by jihadists, is still abandoned. Hundreds of thousands of persons have been internally displaced to other parts of the country. Insecurity has spread to the central region which was formerly considered safe. Many immigrants from surrounding countries are entering the country from the south. In Mopti some schools have been shut down as a consequence of local ethnic unrest, sometimes combined with gang violence.

Besides the mentioned educational strikes, there have hardly been particular circumstances in the programme areas that hampered implementation. If necessary, all community members are involved in organizing alternatives, including religious leaders, health extension workers, teachers, school principals and young people.

## **Nepal**

A majority government led by the Communist Party of Nepal has been installed after the national election, as are province governments in all seven provinces. Mrs. Bidhya Devi Bhandari has been nominated as president for the second time. Federal, province and local governments have come up with their policies, programmes and budgets, in which issues of girls and women are reflected as priority. Different laws and policies are being amended or developed, that have impact on girls and women. Dialogue and consultations among government, civil society and other stakeholders are taking place on issues like child marriage, chhaupadi (menstrual taboo), girls education, development and related issues. In addition, local governments, including those where HER CHOICE is being implemented, are addressing the issues of girls and women locally. The programme ensures that these policies and programmes effectively address the needs and problems of girls and women.



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Worth mentioning is also, that the programme has been approached for collaboration by local government and civil society stakeholders. For instance, the Bakaiya Rural Municipality has declared itself a 'child marriage free municipality' in coordination and collaboration with HER CHOICE local implementing partner CWIN.

### **Pakistan**

In July 2018, general elections were held, and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) emerged as the ruling party. Education, child protection and population welfare are among the key areas of the current government. Bedari is utilizing these priorities as entry points to work with the government on ending child marriage. The Child Marriage Bill has been tabled in the Punjab Assembly and Senate. HER CHOICE local partner Bedari is in close contact with the presenters of these bills and is lobbying with other stakeholders to support the passing of the bills.

Pakistan has hardened its stance towards national and international NGOs in recent years. As a result, the Interior Ministry has asked 18 international NGOs to wind up their operations, which also has a significant impact on national NGOs working on rights of women and girls. Especially those working on SRHR and human rights are facing serious challenges.

Furthermore, the long registration process is a major hindrance in smooth programme implementation. These attempts are creating a climate of fear among NGOs focussing on human rights. CSOs have raised these concerns with the relevant authorities and are expecting a dialogue to improve the situation.

### **Senegal**

A increasing mobilisation of stakeholders on the issue of child marriage is currently taking place in Senegal, which is partly a result of the national campaign of the African Union that was launched in June 2016.

Additionally, the Coalition of Civil Society Organisations for the Abandonment of Child Marriage, initiated by the HER CHOICE programme in 2017, as well as the Multi-Stakeholder Framework for the Abandonment of Child Marriage, adopted by this coalition, strengthens the lobby & advocacy work. The Framework brings together civil society organisations, embassies, as well as directorates of the Ministry of Good Governance and Child Protection and of the Ministry of Family and Gender. This contributes to a much needed enabling environment as a counterpart to the still existing general resistance to change.

### **Sierra Leone**

2018 was a progressive year for HER CHOICE in Sierra Leone. The general elections gave CSOs the opportunity to secure political commitment to end child marriage and promote free quality education for girls. After the elections, local partner OneFamilyPeople and others NGOs engaged the First Lady, the Vice President and the Ministers of Education and Social Welfare through dialogue, in order to ensure that government promises were being translated into action. The first action was the launch of Free Quality Education by the President of the Republic, which is inclusive for children with disabilities. This was followed by the launch of the First Lady's Hands Off Our Girls campaign to address rape, child marriage and teenage pregnancy in Sierra Leone. Local chiefs, councilors, parliamentarians and the police's Family Support Unit worked in solidarity with Mother Led Protection Units (MLPUs) to prevent and respond to child marriage cases in communities. Communities increasingly regard child marriage as a crime that is punishable by law, and which can be reported and enforced by the Family Support Unit of the Sierra Leone Police.

### **Uganda**

In May 2018, the Government of Uganda through the Ministry of Education and Sports launched the National Sexuality Education Framework. However, clear implementation of the sexuality



education package as articulated in the framework has not taken place. The hurdles that stand in the way of this implementation are:

- Despite extensive consultation from all key stakeholders in this process, sections of key actors and influencers still remain unconvinced that the framework in its current form is fit for Uganda. A number of human rights-based organisations, led by the Center for Health, Human Rights & Development (CEHURD), took the government to court saying that the framework in its current form is discriminatory and violates fundamental human rights to access basic information.
- The Ministry of Education and Sports yet needs to clearly define and engage partners on next steps towards implementation of the framework.
- Partners remain unsure of what issues can or cannot be implemented in the current framework.

This current environment presents a significant bottleneck in implementing activities of the HER CHOICE programme, especially under Strategy I, II and III.

### 3. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

*This chapter shows a summary of the progress towards objectives of the two main goals of the partnerships: result area 1 and/or 4 of the Dutch SRHR policy, on the basis of the outcome indicators of the six strategies of HER CHOICE.*

*Under **Progress towards results**, an indication is given of achieved results in 2018 of each strategy, based on observations of implementing partners (country reports) and on output results (see **Output results 2018**).*

*Under **Changes to the original planning**, budget deviations of more than 25% per strategy are explained.<sup>1</sup> In paragraph 3.7 **Overview of changes in implementation per country**, deviations of more than 10% per country are explained. These changes correspond to page 2 - 3: 'Realisation vs budget per country' of **Annex I - Financial Report 2018**.*



#### 3.1. Strategy I

*Invest in girls, their knowledge, skills related to SRHR and participation in society, thus enhancing their comprehension of the negative effects of child marriage and of alternative options.*

##### Implementation

In all programme countries, life skills and leadership training for girls and boys and regular meetings of adolescent clubs (girls, boys or mixed) have been carried out, in order to strengthen knowledge and skills in the field of SRHR, to provide information on the (negative) effects of child marriage, to improve self-confidence and to provide skills in peer education and counselling.

THP **Bangladesh**, for instance, carried out documentary screenings on life skills and leadership, knowledge based competitions such as debates and quizzes, and regular meetings of student units. In some countries, like in **Ghana**, health staff partnered with school authorities and teachers to organise SRHR education in schools. In **Uganda**, peer educators took part in girls' mentorship camps, where they had an inspiring and transformative opportunity by learning from national SRHR mentors, and taking part in speak-out sessions alongside leading girl champions of Girls Not Brides Uganda.

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<sup>1</sup> For countries where more than one alliance member is involved, the member is mentioned to which this applies.

<sup>2</sup> For countries where more than one alliance member is involved, the member is mentioned to which this applies.



In **Ghana**, out-of-schools girls and boys were reached with SRHR education at the adolescent corners created at the THP epicenter to render SRH services.

In **Ethiopia** (ESD), **Nepal** and **Pakistan** (Bedari), the Children as Researchers method was introduced through training by Alliance member ICDI. This pilot attested that children have the potential and capacity to identify issues, mobilise others and develop plans of action. Young people engaged in the action research were able to identify causes of CM, gender inequality and how to effectively handle such issues. It provided them with the opportunity to acquire knowledge, develop skills, build friendships and support networks, and to have their concerns taken seriously. In Ethiopia, 5 researches were done in two intervention regions, with a total of 57 young people participating. In **Pakistan**, parliamentarians in Chakwal appreciated the results of the research by young people, and promised to join hands with them to address the issues of their findings

In **Uganda**, accelerated support was provided to HER CHOICE peer educators – where at the same time stakeholders were directed by government to use, in the absence of an approved framework, the Presidential Initiative on AIDS Strategy to Youth (PIASCY) as a training guide, which is not very comprehensive.

In **Benin** a need for additional capacity building and awareness-raising actions has been identified in order to fully support peer educators and to consolidate learning that leads to the desired change in behaviour.

In **Ethiopia** an unexpected result of increased awareness on the negative effects of FGM has been reported, which is that girls are taken away from their community for FGM in other areas.

## Changes to the original planning (see Annex I – Financial Report)<sup>2</sup>

### *Over spending:*

In **Ethiopia** (ICDI) and in **Senegal** it turned out to be necessary to make extra investments on SRHR and life skills training of girls.

## Progress towards result

- Girls increasingly show self-confidence in expressing their views in community meetings/rallies

All implementing partners report that adolescent girls increasingly show empowerment, confidence and self-esteem. They have gained influencing, negotiation and bargaining skills and improved their problem solving capacity. Girls are actively participating in community meetings, processions and rallies, and are able to confidently express themselves and raise awareness on negative impacts of child marriage, FGM and other SRHR and gender issues. They express their opinion in clear messages and, according to CWIN, Nepal, ‘in a bold voice’. Girls address SRHR issues among peer groups, siblings and parents - and support peers who are still victims of harmful practices. Girls organise and manage events at village level, initiate door-to-door campaigns, and express themselves through sport competitions, street & market place shows, drama, poems and other creative means. They address decision makers at local, regional and even national level during events like international Women’s and Girls’ days. CWIN (**Nepal**) reports that, as a result of the programme, local government offices are involving girls in policymaking and budgetary processes, while taking their opinions into consideration. In **Sierra Leone** the HER CHOICE sport and life-skills programme has built an ‘army of girls’ activists’ that promote school enrolment and retention of girls by working with MLPUs and local leaders. In Uganda a peer educator from the Namayumba epicenter co-moderated the first ever National

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<sup>2</sup> For countries where more than one alliance member is involved, the member is mentioned to which this applies.

Girls' Summit, while at a round table session a 17 year-old deaf HER CHOICE peer educator shared experiences of sexual exploitation and abuse that deaf girls face, assisted by a sign language interpreter.

- Girls have an increased knowledge on negative effects of CM/FGM<sup>3</sup> and knowledge and skills to claim their SRHR

In all programme countries, partners report that most of the trained girls and boys are *remarkably* aware of SRHR, negative effects of child marriage, early pregnancy and FGM (if applicable), are aware of the legal conditions for marriage and have improved skills to claim their SRHR. Partners from **Mali**, for example, report that girls express their rejection of child marriage and FGM, reaffirm their rights to a proper choice of their partner and to continue their education.

#### *Standing up against marriage*

Partners from **Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali** and **Nepal** report that a growing number of girls and boys are capable of taking the decision if, when and whom to marry. They are increasingly confident to oppose child marriage and to protect themselves and peers from it. Sometimes they do this by reporting cases to schoolteachers, project officers, child helplines and local police, or by seeking refuge at counselling centres or social welfare services. Dialogue between parents and children around sensitive issues such as SRHR is slowly starting. CWIN (**Nepal**) reports that parents' traditional ideas on marriage are being transformed. They are aware of the negative consequences of child marriage and increasingly believe in the value of education. Some parents leave the decisions about marriage to their daughters and sons. In Makwanpur, around 30 adolescent girls and boys, who regularly meet at the empowerment centre, pledged their commitment not to marry before the age of 20 in written forms.

#### *Claiming their SRHR and refusing unprotected and unwanted sex*

Partners from **Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Pakistan** and **Sierra Leone** report that girls' skills in claiming their SRHR are enhancing. Some girls succeed to oppose to sexual harassment, and unwanted and unprotected sexual relations. An increased number of adolescents and married girls visit health facilities for family planning services and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), sometimes accompanied by their mothers or partners. Bedari (**Pakistan**) reports that most of the girls are sharing harassment and SRH issues with their mothers, as well as initiating discussions among themselves. Partners from **Burkina Faso** report a decrease in teenage pregnancy and STDs.

Partners from **Bangladesh, Ghana, Ethiopia, Nepal** and **Sierra Leone** report that young people are increasingly standing up against sexual abuse, and refer such cases to teachers, counsellors and/or police. In **Sierra Leone**, boys are teaching their peers to respect and protect girls through their Sisters' Keeper Initiative. In **Nepal**, a rape case, where the father and brother were perpetrators and tried to suppress the case, was reported to the Child Helpline Banke and the police by girls of the adolescent forum, demanding for necessary legal action. In **Bangladesh** local administrations take more initiatives to enforce the law against sexual harassment.

#### *Claiming their right to education*

Partners from **Bangladesh, Ethiopia** and **Mali** report that an increased number of married and divorced girls claim their right to (continue their) education. THP **Ethiopia** reports that married girls are challenging their family and husband, and forcing divorce to pursue their

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<sup>3</sup> In countries where FGM is practiced.



education. In **Mali**, girls have contributed to the reinsertion in school of their peers who had abandoned the educational system, due to adverse livelihood conditions, teenage pregnancy and child marriage.

### 3.2. Strategy II

*Improve access to formal education for girls, in order to get as many girls to school and minimise drop out.*

#### Implementation

In all programme countries, a range of activities has been carried out to improve girls' and boys' access to school and to minimise their dropout. Strategies to motivate girls, boys and their parents to seriously invest in schooling may include: providing insight on the long-term benefits of education through girls' clubs and parent meetings; deployment of inspiring role models; providing scholarships for the poorest families; dropout monitoring; sexual harassment prevention committees and teachers patrolling against eve teasing; providing alternative education spaces to reinforce students in risk of dropping out and/or to reintegrate students. Partners in all programme countries have been working on the improvement of girl-friendliness of schools and on training teachers to improve their SRHR teaching skills.

#### Changes to the original planning (see Annex I – Financial Report)

##### *Over spending:*

In **Bangladesh** (ICDI) and **Ethiopia** (SKN and THP), extra activity was added to improve access to education for girls and to support them to pursue higher education opportunities. In **Benin**, a petition approach was used to advocate for girl-friendly measures in schools. This was not foreseen but proved to be crucial for the success of the activity.

##### *Under spending:*

Due to national elections in 2018, the political situation in **Bangladesh** was very unstable, which affected the planned activities in schools. Only 5 of the 55 planned Annual Award Winning Ceremonies by THP Bangladesh took place in 2018. The others are shifted to January 2019.

ESD **Ethiopia** with consent of ICDI has decided to re-direct some of the budget from this strategy to Strategy III (see also explanation under Strategy III).

In **Mali**, there had been extra emphasis on Strategy I and II during the first 2 years of the programme. Therefore, less means were necessary to implement Strategy II in 2018.

In **Uganda**, the DAC commemoration was jointly organised for central epicentres to attain high leverage on advocacy for girls' rights. Secondly, Graduation of Functional Adult Literacy (FAL) learners did not take place in all epicenters as envisaged, because learners needed yet to meet requirements by the Ministry. Those learners who missed out in 2018 are planned to graduate this year.

#### Progress towards result

- Increase in % of girls 12-<18 enrolled in primary and secondary school
- Increase in % of girls regularly attending formal education

Partners from **all programme countries** report that enrolment and regular attendance of girls in primary and secondary schools has significantly increased. Additionally, improvement of academic results of the targeted students, sometimes as a result of the tutorial support to low performing students, has been noticed. In some intervention regions in **Mali**, all children that could attend school are indeed attending. ESD (**Ethiopia**) reports an increase of 49% of girls' enrolment in a secondary high school (SNNPRS region) as a result of HER CHOICE staff's



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continuous motivating discussions with students and parents, as well as self-help groups support to the poorest families. In **Senegal**, the flow of girls from primary to secondary schools in intervention areas has increased between 90 and 98%. THP **Ghana** reports an increase of girls in junior high school who excelled in their Basic Education Certificate Examinations to enter senior high.

In **Burkina Faso, Ethiopia** and **Ghana**, a number of child-mothers have returned to school after childbirth, thanks to the sensitisation to overcome the stigma of being a child mother.

In order to increase girls' enrolment in high school, Bedari (**Pakistan**) provided bicycles to 13 girls. As one of these girls' is a Religious Leader, this inspired 11 more families to purchase bicycles for their daughters - which means a significant change of social norms.

- Increase in % of schools that are girl-friendly

In the implementation areas of **all programme countries**, schools have increased girl-friendly measures like clean, separate toilets, a safe space for girls to rest and freshen up, dignity toolkits containing relevant information materials and sanitary pads,

THP **Uganda** and ESD **Ethiopia** conducted campaigns to break the stigma around menstruation. This included training boys to make re-usable sanitary pads to prevent girls from dropping out of school because of menstrual hygiene issues. Also, an assessment exercise was conducted, using the HER CHOICE visualisation tool, aimed at inspiring school managers to invest in girl-friendly school environments. In most implementation areas, girls – and sometimes boys – have been taught to produce sanitary pads themselves.

In **Senegal**, a number of schools in the regions Bounkiling and Kolda have adopted charters of non-violence for a child-friendly environment. THP **Ethiopia** and **Ghana** organised peer-education, involving boys to act against gender violence both in school and in the community. This has resulted in a reduction of harassment of girls in schools and beyond.

- Teachers are increasingly able to teach about SRHR

Teachers and sometimes school leaders **in all programme countries** have worked on the improvement of their SRHR teaching skills and to provide an adolescent-friendly environment. This includes awareness of the responsibilities to support students to continue their studies, to ensure that their rights are respected and protected, and to prevent abuse and harassment. Sometimes teacher support groups or counsellors, to whom students can share their concerns confidentially, have been established in schools. In **Benin**, this has resulted in bringing back to school several girl students who had dropped out.

Partners from **Ethiopia** report that teachers are increasingly able to facilitate SRHR with a special focus on comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) through the use of targeted training manuals, also due to a changing country context (see chapter 2). Additionally, teachers are encouraged by the psychological, cultural and moral changes observed in their students.

Bedari (**Pakistan**) reports that, in spite of training, teachers need additional support to provide SRHR teachings more confidently.<sup>4</sup>

### 3.3. Strategy III

*Improve access to youth-friendly SRHR-services for girls (and boys) by improving health services and by actively referring girls (and boys) to health workers.*

## Implementation

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<sup>4</sup> Findings from the HER CHOICE Midline Study show that teachers in many countries are still uncomfortable in teaching certain SRHR related subjects.



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In **all programme countries** implementing partners have collaborated with health centres, clinics and local governments in order to refresh training and further sensitise health workers on the provision of counselling and guidance on SRHR issues to young people, while respecting their safety, confidentiality and privacy. Referral systems to health centres within schools and communities and links to teachers and local leaders have been further established and strengthened.

Activities under Strategy III are implemented in different ways, depending on the local context. In **Benin**, for instance, trained health workers have run campaigns for the provision of SRHR services in close collaboration with *Association Béninoise pour la Promotion de la Famille*. THP **Ethiopia** has organised community-based workshops on family planning for religious leaders, elders, and change agents. School management, village leadership and the health centres made a joint SRHR plan, which is being regularly reviewed. In **Sierra Leone**, as an effort to increase access to SRHR services, older girls were trained to act as sexual health educators for their younger peers. Schools and clinics are creating safe spaces where girls can feel comfortable to ask sexual health-related questions.

### Changes to the original planning (see Annex I – Financial Report)

#### *Over spending:*

From experience and research it has become clear that clean and safe sanitation is an important factor to keep girls in school. However, the costs for these facilities turned out to be higher than planned. Therefore, ESD **Ethiopia** with consent of ICDI decided to invest extra means on this strategy.

In **Mali**, the focus during the first two years of the programme had been mainly on Strategy I and II. In 2018, therefore, extra focus has been laid on Strategy III.

#### *Under spending:*

In **Ethiopia** the majority of the animator training workshops on family planning were executed by THP in collaboration with health extension workers and school management, and by integrating with local community leaders at the Epicenter level. Through this approach, THP Ethiopia has discharged these activities efficiently at the lowest cost and could spend less than budgeted on this strategy.

In **Senegal**, it turned out that less training of health facility personnel was necessary, because health facilities were already functioning at a fairly good level.

### Progress towards result

- Increase in % of health facilities that offer YFHS services to unmarried and married girls and boys
- Increase in % of girls accessing SRHR services

As a result of training of health workers to offer youth friendly health services and the establishment of referral mechanism in schools, married and unmarried adolescent girls and boys in **all programme countries** have increased access to these services and receive more support, confidential counselling and information on SRHR. **Countries in Africa** also report an increased use of contraceptive methods among young people. THP **Bangladesh** observed that health workers have an open and positive attitude towards providing services on SRHR related questions and issues. THP **Ghana** offers separate rooms for youth in health centres, called adolescent corners. Adolescents can visit these clinics at times when there are less other clients, so that more attention and time is given to them. All activities of adolescents are coordinated by special focal persons. Some unmarried girls come to the clinic with their partners for family planning and pregnancy testing services. Partners of the married girls, and other boys and men were targeted and reached with SRHR education.



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Partners from **Mali** report that adolescent girls attend health services without shame, and the percentage of girls visiting these centres has increased in 2018. Confidential information providing and counselling has contributed to the reduction of teenage pregnancies and the wish to get married and to become pregnant at a young age. The majority of girls use contraception. In **Pakistan**, at the start of the HER CHOICE programme, health staff denied the incidence of pregnancies among unmarried girls, but have now started to share such cases, including the referrals they make.

OneFamilyPeople (**Sierra Leone**) reports that, by providing youth friendly SRHR services through collaboration with community health clinics, girls have developed skills and confidence to discuss sensitive issues with their parents. As a result, more and more parents are joining their daughters to family planning. Through the monthly information sharing meetings with OFP staff and health workers, stakeholders show real commitment to address issues related to child marriage, FGM and SRHR.

In **Uganda**, the Directorate of Public Prosecution has advised THP epicenters to ensure that health workers doing medical examinations preserve evidence of sexual abuse.

Bedari (**Pakistan**) mentions that, although health facilities for married and unmarried girls and boys have improved, a lot still needs to be done to make them more effective.

### 3.4. Strategy IV

*Improve the economic security of girls and their families, since poverty is an important factor for child marriage, especially in the rural areas.*

#### Implementation

Under this strategy partners in all **programme countries** except for Pakistan<sup>5</sup>, have supported self-help groups (SHGs) to initiate income-generating activities (IGAs) like petty trading and farming business. Such activities include: jewellery making, tailoring, production of organic fertiliser and pesticides, processing and conservation of local products, livestock breeding, tree plantation, etc. Members of SHGs have also been trained in financial management, development of small enterprises and marketing of products. Members have been shown the benefits of reinvesting in their group and have received recognition when they succeeded to save. Finally, SHGs have been encouraged to initiate a basic mutual help system to meet the social needs of their members

Additionally, THP **Bangladesh** has provided Participatory Action Research workshops, regular reflection meetings and skill-building training to empower marginalised women to organise themselves in self-help groups. THP **Ethiopia** has scaled up activities of its rural microcredit bank, which mobilises saving, provides loans and capacity building on income generating activities through community-based workshops and peer education. THP **Uganda** provided capacity building on economic skills and enterprises to young mothers, survivors of child marriage, school drop outs and girls heading families.

#### Changes to the original planning (see Annex I – Financial Report)

ESD **Ethiopia** with consent of ICDI has decided to re-direct some of the budget from this strategy to Strategy III (see also explanation under Strategy III), which resulted in under spending of Strategy IV compared to the original budget.

#### Progress towards result

- Women generate greater income for use in household /for education
- Increase in households with improved economic status

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<sup>5</sup> Strategy IV is not implemented in Pakistan under HER CHOICE.



Partners from **all programme countries** report that through activities under Strategy IV, the savings of SHGs have increased and the economic security and status of the majority of participating households has improved. Apart from sufficient food for the family, also school fees could be paid and educational materials purchased, by which the school attendance of girls has improved. Additionally, extra income has been invested in development of living standard and livelihood variation, in order to assure a better future.

THP **Bangladesh** reports that women from self-help groups are able to effectively manage their savings, which have increased compared to the previous year. THP **Ethiopia** states that attitudinal change of communities towards self-rural banks and saving is promising.

ESD (**Ethiopia**) reports that, as a result of SHG activities, group members' household income has enhanced, and women's saving culture has increased from an average saving amount of 38.716 birr in 2017 to an average of 63.563 birr in 2018.

In implementation areas in **Ghana**, teachers report about a positive change in behaviour of parents towards the provision of school needs for their wards. Women who were engaged in community meetings also reported of some financial relief in catering for their children and family. Apart from money for their daily expenses they also managed to have savings at the Microfinance banks.

School directors in **Mali** confirm that the poorer mothers demonstrate a good management of their income obtained by income generating activities, by which they accomplished paying school costs of their daughters, and are able to sustain these activities also when the support from the programme stops.

### 3.5. Strategy V

*Transform social norms that are detrimental to achieving gender equity in education, decision making, and access to services by mobilising and supporting communities, including boys, men, women and leaders to promote girls' rights and gender equity.*



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#### Implementation

Activities under Strategy V are aimed at mobilizing communities and raising awareness, through testimonials and by educating leaders and other community members on gender equity and on negative effects of child marriage and FGM. Awareness raising has been realised through campaigns and events in public places and places of worship, and through radio and television broadcasts.

#### Changes to the original planning (see Annex I – Financial Report)

##### *Over spending:*

In **Bangladesh**, extra staff capacity was required from the Bangladesh THP office to coordinate and organise the women leadership development and youth leaders training, court yard meetings with women, and violence against women campaign.

In **Mali**, the local government elections were an excellent opportunity for partners to additionally invest on sensitisation of communities on the importance of school attendance of girls and negative effects of child marriage.

##### *Under spending:*

ESD **Ethiopia** with consent of ICDI has decided to re-direct some of the budget from this strategy to Strategy III (see also explanation under Strategy III).

In **Nepal**, the costs of training for parents and awareness raising actions turned out to be lower than anticipated.

#### Progress towards result

- Traditional and religious community leaders increasingly active in condemning CM

Partners in **all programme countries** report that, due to training and other programme interventions, traditional and religious leaders are increasingly standing up against child marriage and other harmful traditional practices, and contribute to building child marriage free communities.

Dalit (**Bangladesh**) reports that Union Parishad representatives have committed publicly to not attend in marriage functions, which by law are defined as child marriage. Besides, local and religious leaders have teamed up with adolescents, adults and police to discuss, reflect and take collective actions to prevent child marriage in the locality. In **Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali** and **Pakistan**, religious leaders increasingly make calls on children's rights and publicly condemn child marriage and FGM during sermons in churches and mosques. In **Ghana**, an increasing number of community chiefs and partners volunteered to be trained as change agents in their communities. In **Mali**, certain leaders act as advisors on questions related to child marriage.

- Increasing % communities with members active in publicly tackling CM
- Increasing % of communities give greater decision making space to girls and reject CM/FGM\*

In all programme countries, community members, often inspired by leaders, have increased their positive attitudes towards the value of girls' education and gender equity, and enhanced their efforts to abandon child marriage. Community members have been active in realising awareness-raising sessions on negative effects and legal implications of child marriage and other harmful traditional practices, through community conversations, theatre performances, rallies, radio broadcasts, etc., and on actions to protect girls against it. More opportunity is offered to girls in decision-making and to speak out at community meetings and events. Additionally, parent - child dialogues have been initiated in many programme sites, to give girls more opportunities to participate at the decision making level within the family.

THP **Bangladesh** reports that some of their communities have declared zero tolerance to child marriage. Thanks to the programme interventions, child marriage is no longer practiced in intervention villages of THP **Ethiopia**. Also, medical clearance and certificates to define the age of girls are established as a prerequisite to prevent child marriage. In **Nepal**, a team from the school community led by the Principal of the Naragram School stopped some adolescents from getting married, after they were absent from school. Child marriage is now often a topic of discussion in many communities, and multiple stakeholders start to realise that they have the obligation to address this issue. With the influence of CPC members and trained religious leaders, 34 child marriages were stopped in intervention areas in **Pakistan**. Attitudinal change of community members is visible through the stamp that is being posted on the doors of households under Child Marriage Free Village Campaign. The number of houses has increased from 30 in the first year to 260 at the end of 2018.

### 3.6. Strategy VI

*Create an enabling legal and policy environment on preventing child marriage by supporting traditional leaders and (local) authorities to enforce national policies on preventing child marriage.*

#### Implementation

Activities under this strategy include providing information and training for members of the local council and other stakeholders on national and international legislation concerning child marriage, FGM and child protection, and to facilitate discussions on improvement of reporting





systems (including birth registration) and bylaws. Such discussions are facilitated at local and at district level.

Activities also include awareness raising for girls and community stakeholders on protective laws and bylaws and on (local) protective frameworks.

### Changes to the original planning (see Annex I – Financial Report)

#### *Over spending:*

In **Bangladesh**, extra staff capacity was required from the Bangladesh THP office to coordinate and organise the women leadership development and youth leaders training, court yard meetings with women, and violence against women campaign.

In **Uganda** additional means were invested because of the participation of THP staff in conferences and meetings, and the support of the National Girls' summit held in Mbale.

#### *Under spending:*

In **Benin**, the production cost of communication media, as part of the sensitisation actions on birth registration, laws on child rights and child marriage, etc., proved to be higher than budgeted. Therefore, THP Benin decided to postpone the implementation of these activities until 2019 in order to better capitalise on the available resources.

Because of the political and cultural sensitivity in **Senegal**, activities on this strategy had to remain restricted.

### Progress towards result

- Increased % of communities in the process of developing by-laws to prohibit CM/FGM
- Increasing % of districts (or other administrative level) have an operational reporting system in place to document breaking of laws concerning birth registration, CM/FGM, sexual assault



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In **Bangladesh**, the Union Parishad (UP) is strictly following the law on birth registration. The Upazila and District level government offices are concerned about incidents of child marriage and are prepared to take legal action in case of trespassing. By the newly enacted Child Marriage Restraint Roles 2018, each union should have a child marriage prevention committee, but only in a few unions such committees had been formed. THP then supported the UPs to form committees and managed that by December 2018, 55 committees were formed in all HER CHOICE Unions. These committees build mass awareness against child marriage, implement action plans to prevent child marriage, and provide recommendations to the Upazila child marriage prevention committees.

In **Benin** the minimum age of marriage under the Code des Personnes et de la Famille 2002 is 18. However, difficulties remain in enforcing this laws because of socio-political and cultural realities. The existing *Centre de Promotion Sociale* is meant to raise awareness on birth registration and to identify cases of child abuse and forced marriage, but is not very effective. HER CHOICE contributes to the law enforcement by setting up monitoring bodies in the communities.

In **Burkina Faso**, at the national level, a process triggered by the Multisector Platform for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Marriage (CONAMEB) has led to a significant impetus to end child marriage. The programme supported the development of local laws on child marriage, FGM and children's rights. A reliable system of reporting child marriage cases has been put in place. The age of married girls is being monitored through marriage records in mosques.

In **Ethiopia**, functional community bylaws have been developed and materialised among social institutions called Iddirs, and local communities. Some have already revised existing bylaws and some are in the process of being revised, in order to address child marriage. They included different articles that address child marriage, FGM and sexual assault, as well as regulate school

attendance. Also, a system has been put in place to act upon the breaking of these bylaws. However, in some cases the outreach of bylaws should be scaled up and disseminated to the community.

In **Ghana** all communities except for the comparison epicenters have developed bylaws to prohibit child marriage, and progress has been made on their enforcement. Programme staff continues to advocate for the introduction of an operational reporting system to document birth registration, child marriage, sexual assault and related issues.

In **Mali**, in some villages, religious leaders refuse to perform and celebrate child marriage without the explicit consent of the girls, and insist on knowing the age of the girls before performing a ceremony. Three villages in implementation areas have abandoned child marriage and FGM altogether. Birth registration is officially starting in some implementation zones.

In **Nepal**, different laws and policies are being amended or developed to fit in the federal structure of the state. Governments at federal, province and local level are engaged in developing programmes to address the issues of girls and women, along with the need of their protection, development, and participation. In addition, local governments are planning to declare the intervention area as child friendly municipality, whereby child marriage is one out of 39 issues that should be addressed. More importantly, a significant number of women are representing the local government, who are concerned with issues of girls and women.

In **Pakistan**, CPC members in the implementation area have signed a resolution to end child marriage and are making efforts to achieve this objective. These efforts include: assisting villagers in birth registration, marriage registration, enrolment in schools and registration for getting a national identity card. In case of incidence of child marriage, CPC members engage with the relevant government department. In many of such cases, girls and women also approached Bedari. Actions by CPC also include:

- The girls of Lahore presented their issues around access to school to the Punjab Transportation Minister who ensured to address this as a priority.
- During a policy dialogue on child marriage, Chairman Council of Islamic Ideology and member of National Assembly committed to support the action to end child marriage.
- At the Provincial Conference and Parliamentary Dialogue organised by Bedari in November 2018, legislators formed an advisory working group of parliamentarians to combat child marriage and to improve girls' education in Punjab.

In **Senegal**, some villages have already adopted local charters on the prevention of child marriage and others continue the process of developing regulations and conventions. At the national level, the National Platform on Child Marriage that has been put in place is also a significant milestone that enhances the impact of the HER CHOICE programme.

In **Sierra Leone**, bylaws prohibiting child marriage, sexual violence and discrimination on the basis of gender or disability, with heavy fines on perpetrators, have been developed and are being promoted in public gatherings. Community leaders have joined forces with the MLPUs to fight these injustices against women and girls in their communities.

In **Uganda**, all districts where HER CHOICE is being implemented have established mechanisms like the District and Sub County OVC (Orphans and Vulnerable Children) committees. These bring together all relevant actors such as the director of public prosecution, judiciary, Uganda police force, local government officials and non-state actors to discuss and enforce laws against child marriage. THP-U also developed a leaflet on the existing laws and policies on ending child marriage that has been widely disseminated in all project sites.

- Increased % of girls who know about protective laws regarding CM/FGM
- Increased % of girls who feel supported by official institutions when they face violation of their rights

In **Bangladesh**, adolescent boys and girls are reporting pre and post child marriage incidents to the police station and Upazila administration. In response, police and Upazila level government



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officials are providing full support to the effected girls in case of (intended) child marriage or other violations of their rights.

As a result of their involvement in the programme, girls in implementation areas in **Ethiopia** better understand protective laws regarding child marriage and FGM and the number of girls who ask support from legal institutions has increased. Community members are also active in providing protection to those girls who may become subject to child marriage by bargaining effectively to stop the marriage. This makes girls feel protected when they face violation of their rights. At the macro level, partners in Ethiopia advocate with decision makers for the creation of an enabling environment for girls.

In **Ghana**, all club members and schools in implementation areas were regularly reached with education on child rights and laws on child marriage, FGM, sexual assault and other abuse against children. They also received information on official institutions responsible for the protection of their rights and how cases of abuse can be reported.

In the municipality of Touna, **Mali**, it was decided that a marriage will be held only on the basis of consent between the boy and girl, with the supports of the parents. This is the case in all villages of the municipality.

### 3.7. Overview of changes in implementation per country

*(see Annex I - Financial Report)*

In **Benin**, the production cost of communication media, as part of the sensitisation actions on birth registration, laws on child rights and child marriage, etc., proved to be higher than budgeted. Therefore, THP Benin decided to postpone the implementation of these activities until 2019 in order to better capitalise on the available resources. This resulted in an under spending of 11% of the total country budget in 2018.

In **Pakistan** a total of 16% under spending was caused by exchange rate gain. The amount that was thus saved will be redirected to extra activities in 2019.

### 3.8. Own contribution

During the HER CHOICE inception phase, when the Theory of Change was contextualised per country and activities were planned in more detail, it turned out that some implementation costs had been under budgeted. The same applied to management and administration costs for the lead applicant<sup>6</sup>. Additionally, it was decided that implementation in the Ethiopian Oromia region was to be excluded from funding by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, upon suggestion of the Netherlands Embassy in Ethiopia.

For this reason, Kinderpostzegels has contributed additional funding in order to realise a smooth implementation of all essential program activities.

The Hunger Project was asked to work in Benin by the Netherlands Embassy in the inception phase. The funding there was at a lower level than in other countries, due to this later addition to the programme. THP was able to find another private donor to help fund the activities. In addition, THP also spent more time on management and administration costs than budgeted, particularly on advocacy, the synergy with other alliances and Girls Not Brides.

The University of Amsterdam (UvA) put in more hours than budgeted for research and PME activities.

In total, an additional 10% was added to the 2018 budget by these contributions.

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<sup>6</sup> Management and administration costs of the lead applicant (Kinderpostzegels) are budgeted for 2% of the total costs

Activities that were additionally funded from own contributions in 2018 are:

Alliance member	Country	Activity	Amount	Percentage
Kinderpostzegels (SKN)	Burkina Faso	All activities by partner ADEP in Koudougou and Kaya	€45.000	
	Ethiopia	All activities by partners ADAA (Oromia) and ODWaCE (all areas); Partner Midline training; Additional coordination costs	€82.050	
	Mali	Audit costs; All activities by partner REPAME; Partner Midline training	€36.720	
	Senegal	All activities by partner Enda in Bounkiling	€40.500	
		Managem. & administr. costs	€109.950	
<b>Total SKN own contribution Her Choice 2018</b>			<b>€314.220</b>	
The Hunger Project (THP)	Benin	Activities by THP Benin	€10.000	
		Managem. & administr. costs	€33.871	
<b>Total THP own contribution Her Choice 2018</b>			<b>€43.871</b>	
UvA		Managem. & administr. costs	€19.945	
<b>Total UvA own contribution Her Choice 2018</b>			<b>€19.945</b>	
<b>TOTAL OVERALL OWN CONTRIBUTION HER CHOICE 2018</b>			<b>€378.036</b>	<b>10%</b>



## 4. ANALYSIS OF PARTNERSHIPS

### 4.1. Added value of working as an alliance

Alliance members and implementing partners experience added value in working as an alliance. Through the Alliance, members have access to innovative approaches, in addressing the complexity of child marriage and all that is related to this issue. Problems are being tackled from the roots through the Alliance's broad, community-based approach. Because of the multitude of expertise of its members, working as an alliance enables multi-dimensional interventions. Partners from **Burkina Faso** report that the HER CHOICE programme has been the first that offers a holistic response to the social phenomenon of child marriage at the national level.

Through capacity building and organisational development, partner organisations have become, within the space of three years, reference structures in the field of child protection in their respective countries. Partner organisations have teamed up as national HER CHOICE alliances – at the same time reaching out for collaboration with other alliances, within countries and beyond, leading to greater influencing capacity of national policy agendas.

The variety of expertise and implementing abilities of the different organisations is complementary and contributes to mutual strengthening. The AISSR-UvA brings in research capacity, which helps to understand progress, as well as find answers to challenges. ESD (**Ethiopia**) states that HER CHOICE has helped them to boost their lobby, advocacy and influencing ability and build their image and credibility.

CWIN (**Nepal**) reports that, by working as part of the HER CHOICE Alliance, communities with high prevalence of child marriage could be better identified and a wider group of people and stakeholders such as schools, health centres, community groups, parents, religious leaders was reached. An added value of the programme is also, that governments and stakeholders of all provinces expressed their commitment to collaborate in addressing the issues of girls and adolescents through policy and intervention. Bedari (**Pakistan**) reports that interaction with HER CHOICE partners during the Asian linking & learning meeting has enhanced their capacity to work on addressing child marriage. For instance: the use of photos and posters to communicate to people who don't read (learned from CWIN, Nepal); girls making own sanitary pads (learned from ESD in Ethiopia); knowledge on Children as Researchers, and the importance of the first 1.000 days in a child's life (learned from ICDI).

## 4.2. Dutch alliance members & local implementing partners

The collaboration between the Dutch alliance members and the local implementing partners is based on the partnership model and is marked by mutual respect.

**Ethiopian** partner ESD states: 'Since the beginning of HER CHOICE ESD has been working and implementing the project in partnership and close collaboration with ICDI with a sense of responsibility, trust, understanding, equality and mutual respect. The openness, support, transparency, professionalism and sense of accountability that we observed on behalf of the Netherlands' team helped us to realise our set objectives to the best level. ICDI has been instrumental in supporting ESD with new methods of work, such as Children As Researchers and Girls Quat, and advice on how to approach child marriage in innovative and effective ways.

HER CHOICE believes that local ownership is the key factor to achieve sustainable results. International and local partners work side by side to generate knowledge and good practice to support networks and to build on local assets.



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## 4.3. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Netherlands Embassies

The HER CHOICE programme is implemented in partnership with the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The collaboration with the Ministry is marked by an active exchange of insights and expertise and by mutual support and appreciation. Meetings with the contact person of the Ministry and the coordinators of the three Child Marriage Alliances supported under the SRHR Partnership (the More Than Brides, the Yes I Do and HER CHOICE Alliance) take place on a regular basis.

From 13 - 19 May, a delegation of representatives of the Ministry and the three Child Marriage Alliances paid a joint visit to Ethiopia, accompanied by the national coordinators of the HER CHOICE (FSCE) and Yes I Do (Plan Ethiopia) Alliances. The delegation had meetings with the Netherlands Embassy, UNICEF, UNFPA, and the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs in Addis Ababa, and paid field visits to project sites of the HER CHOICE and Yes I Do Alliances in the neighbourhood of Bahir Dar.

In August, HER CHOICE has provided the main input for the Dutch contribution to the 10 questions of the OHCHR Note Verbale on Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Humanitarian Settings, upon request of the Ministry.

Finally, the Ministry has participated in the partnership review that was conducted by an external consultant as part of the Midline Review. The outcome of the review was, that relations are mutually perceived as positive, constructive and with a clear added value.

Implementing partners in **Bangladesh, Benin, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Pakistan, Senegal** and **Uganda** regularly meet with representatives of the respective Dutch Embassies to share the Annual Report and other information on the HER CHOICE programme and to

exchange opportunities for collaboration. Embassy representatives have been invited by partners to attend special events and field visits. Likewise, partners were invited by embassies to events, workshops and meetings aimed at collaboration with partner NGOs. Most embassies have offered to support the implementation by offering a platform to promote (aspects of) the program.

Dutch Embassies in **Ethiopia** and **Uganda** invited HER CHOICE partners to give input on their Embassy's multi-annual country strategy (2019-2022), which translate the Policy Document of Minister Kaag to the national contexts. On the learning forum held in the Embassy's compound in Ethiopia, the Embassy advised the alliance members to establish one big alliance at national (Ethiopian) level. The HER CHOICE Alliance Ethiopia took the first initiative to bring together all alliances supported by the Netherlands government (HER CHOICE, Yes I Do, GUSO and GAA) to discuss this proposal. Participants appreciated the advice of the Embassy and agreed to follow up on this.

In **Burkina Faso**, the Netherlands Embassy is in the process of installation. Collaboration has started in December 2018 during the national HER CHOICE Midline meeting, and will continue in 2019. In **Nepal** and **Sierra Leone** no Netherlands Embassies exist.

#### 4.4. Other child marriage alliances and Girls Not Brides

##### *Collaboration in the programme countries*

In the **all programme countries**, alliances have been established between civil society and/or governmental organisations to join forces in addressing child marriage. HER CHOICE partners often play an active role in such alliances. They meet on a regular basis to organise joint advocacy, review strategic and legal frameworks, realise awareness-raising campaigns, and share their learnings and best practices.

In **Bangladesh**, THP and Dalit have worked closely with the alliance of National Girl Child Advocacy Forum (NGCAF) and Girls Not Brides (GNB) to initiate advocacy efforts for promoting girl's rights and halting child marriage. Best practices, successes and challenges of the HER CHOICE programme have been shared with these alliances, which works as a window to promote the intervention at national level. The adolescent club members of Dalit participated in a national workshop of GNB and shared their working experience. This encouraged and inspired them to enlarge their work at community level.

THP **Benin** is member of the National Zero Tolerance for Child Marriage Campaign and the Technical and Financial Partners Group of Gender and Social Protection, and is associated with the National Partnership for the Elimination of Child Marriage.

In **Burkina Faso**, the collaboration with the National Coalition against Child Marriage continues to occupy a prominent place in the activities of the program.

First steps were made by HER CHOICE partners in **Ethiopia** to start a platform of Dutch funded alliances, together with Yes I Do, GUSO and the Girls Advocacy Alliance. Learning forums and different regional and national level workshops were facilitated at Hawassa (SNNPRS), Bahir Dar (Amhara) and Bishoftu (Oromiya).

HER CHOICE partner THP **Ghana** is member of the Child Marriage Network created by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection. Here, information was shared on the HER CHOICE programme, weekly updates were given on government efforts and activities of other civil society organisations addressing child marriage, and opportunities for collaboration were shared.

In **Mali** HER CHOICE partners continue to work with the More than Brides Alliance at the national level, as well as on the local level in Segou.

In Mali, REPAME has transformed itself into Girls not Brides Mali. All HER CHOICE partner organisations are members of this network, which provides them with the opportunity to collaborate and share information in order to better pursue their common goal.



CWIN (**Nepal**) is founding member of Girls Not Brides Nepal actively participates in all its programmes. CWIN has supported GNB Nepal in developing an advocacy plan and uses it to integrate issues of child marriage in the local planning process. This year GNB in coordination with CWIN organised an interaction programme on the role of stakeholders on minimizing child marriage in 5 municipalities of Kanchanpur District. Furthermore, an intergenerational policy dialogue on ending child marriage was organised in Kanchanpur and Bardiya at province and district level.

Bedari (**Pakistan**) is member of four relevant national alliances: Child Rights Movement (CRM), Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG), Alliance Against Child Marriages (AACM), National Humanitarian Network (NHN), Caucus of Civil Society Network to address Child Marriages. Bedari has been actively engaged with these alliances and has presented its work to national and International forums through these alliances.

Bedari staff is engaged in the Skype meetings with Girls Not Brides at South Asian regional level. During a consultation with GNB members, it was agreed that Bedari will initiate the provincial chapter of the partnership in Punjab. Bedari is in process of organising members for this chapter and expects that a first meeting will take place in the first quarter of this year.

Enda Jeunesse Action (**Senegal**) coordinates the coalition of civil society actors working for the abandonment of child marriage, in close collaboration and with support of the Girls Not Brides Secretariat in London. This year, the coalition has received financial support for the celebration of International Girls' Day and for a capacity building workshop on advocacy.

One Family People (**Sierra Leone**) has regular contact with the Girls Advocacy Alliance, funded by the Netherlands.

As a member of the Uganda Child Rights NGO Network (UCRNN), THP **Uganda** participated in different stakeholder dialogues that were co-organised with the Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Children. As part of the Joining Forces Coalition, a global movement of child rights actors, THP-U participated in the validation process for the Child Rights Situational Analysis Report for Uganda. THP-U is a very active member of Girls Not Brides Uganda. The Namayumba epicentre hosted GNB members during the Girls Speak Out session, where peer educators shared experiences and challenges and GNB Uganda members provided inspiration and motivation for the girls to remain in school and avoid child marriage. Also, THP-U joined GNB Uganda to participate in a hiking event to break stigma around menstruation. In Mbale, THP-U co-organised the 2018 National Girls Summit, which was co-moderated by a HER CHOICE peer educator. The 6 HER CHOICE strategies were share at the GNBU annual partner's event.



Members from THP Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana and Uganda, SKN partners from Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal, ESD (Ethiopia), CWIN (Nepal) and Bedari (Pakistan) attended the Girls Not Brides Global Meeting in Kuala Lumpur.

Her Choice gave presentations on 'What if girls under 18 choose to marry?' from research findings of the AISSR, which shows that the assumption that girl are generally pressured into marriage does not always apply, and on the 'Girls' Quat', the quality assessment tool developed by ICDI. Her Choice participants jointly gave a poster presentation, as a general introduction on the programme. The event presented an excellent opportunity to network, exchange and gain knowledge on many relevant topics.

ESD reports: "There, among the major issues that were discussed with the East African counterparts, consensus was reached to establish an East Africa level GNB network."

#### *Collaboration between child marriage alliances in the Netherlands*

Regular meetings between the three child marriage alliances took place, in order to align activities, to share learnings and to organise joint activities. The two other child marriage alliances took part in the partnership review that was conducted within the scope of the

Midterm Review. The outcome of the review was, that collaboration was mutually perceived as very positive and constructive, with the intention “to always make it work”.

Also, meetings with the research institutions (AISSR, Population Council and KIT) took place, to share methodologies used in research and share research findings.

The HER CHOICE, Yes I Do and More than Brides Alliances founded the Dutch chapter of Girls Not Brides in November 2016 and, since then, jointly form its Steering Group. The three working groups, namely: a) Assessment of child marriage in the Netherlands; b) Working on child marriage in countries of the Global South; and c) Advocacy and communication on child marriage have met regularly during the year and organised activities.

The GNB Netherlands’ Annual Event took place in December, which included a theme meeting on child marriage amongst refugees and in Roma communities, and a lecture on divorce after child marriage.

## 5. GENDER AND INCLUSION

### 5.1. Engagement of boys and men

In **all HER CHOICE countries**, boys and men are engaged in most programme activities. All partners are conscious of the fact that boys and men are key players in changing social norms in favour of girls’ and women’s rights and gender equality. An increasing number of boys and men are becoming true allies and role models in this process. Boys and men are slowly turning into partners who have a shared responsibility with girls and women. According to CWIN (Nepal), boys and men are not just involved in activities, but are also actually leading women’s rights and gender awareness activities in all project implementation areas.

Partners report that male and female teachers, and sometimes student units (consisting of ca. 40% male students, THP Bangladesh), are jointly turning schools into girl-friendly places. Boys and girls increasingly participate in sports together, as well as in a variety of SRHR activities.

The majority of partners report that at village level development teams have been formed, of which more than half are men, to mobilise and empower villagers to take action against child marriage and to promote women’s rights and gender equality.

Partners from Ethiopia report that boys are now producing sanitary pads together with girls, and become supportive rather than teasing girls during menstruation. In the beginning phase of the Self Help Groups, a majority of the husbands did not allow their wives to go to the weekly meetings. Through time, husbands are supporting their wives and sometimes even join them to the weekly saving and discussion sessions.

Dalit (**Bangladesh**) reports that boys have become aware of issues of child marriage and women’s rights and are now raising their voice against harmful practices against girls. Adolescent boys of the Komorpole village went to the police station to report child marriage incidents. According to the team of Tambacounda, **Senegal**, boys and men denounce more cases of child marriage than girls.

In **Ethiopia**, partners are working on the mainstreaming of the Gender Transformative Approach (GTA), and organisations are trained to this end with the support of Rutgers. CWIN (**Nepal**) is founding member and national coordinator of the Men Engage Alliance, which advocates for the status of girls and women in society.

### 5.2. Engagement of disadvantaged groups

Disadvantaged groups - such as girls hiding at home, disabled girls, children of minorities and the poorest of the poor – are being consciously involved in the activities implemented through the





HER CHOICE programme, because they are at the highest risk of becoming involved in harmful practices like child marriage. The following are some examples of how extra emphasis has been laid on the inclusion of disadvantaged groups.

THP **Ethiopia** has allocated 10% of the budget for the benefit of disadvantaged beneficiaries. To this effect, a school has been supported with special need facilities, like desks, and scholastic materials. Additionally, traumatised girls have received psycho-social consultation.

Bedari (**Pakistan**) encourages and motivates community members to bring disabled persons to programme activities, also motivating and facilitating them to register as a person with disability with the Social Welfare Department. This enables them to receive special provisions such as health facilities and job quotas.

OneFamilyPeople (**Sierra Leone**), being a disability focused grass roots organisation, ensured that disabled girls and boys were always included in programme activities. Both disabled and non-disabled girls facilitated life-skills sessions. The programme has strengthened the social ties between girls and boys with disabilities and those without in HER CHOICE communities.

Partners from **Senegal** report that, although children with disability are equally welcome to all programme activities, answering to their special needs remains a challenge due to lack of appropriate equipment.

## 6. LINKING & LEARNING and EVENTS

Linking & learning forms an important element of the HER CHOICE programme. Members of the HER CHOICE Alliance all have their own fields of expertise. By working as an alliance they complement each other. Activities to promote linking and learning are organised at local, national and international level in order to share knowledge, experience and lessons learnt and to widen support networks.

2018's regional linking & learning event was realised October in Hawassa, **Ethiopia**, and was hosted by THP Ethiopia. Representatives of three Anglophone African programme countries (**Ethiopia, Ghana, Uganda**) as well as from Kinderpostzegels, The Hunger Project, ICDI and AISSR-UvA participated in the event. The meeting offered the opportunity for learning and for sharing experiences, methodologies and good practice, as well as for discussing implementation challenges. Special topics were the Children as Researchers training, delivered by ICDI, and the CSE approach for adolescents in Ethiopia. The event also contributed to the strengthening of the collaboration with governmental and nongovernmental actors to address SRH in Ethiopia. Experiences, best practices and learnings were presented and shared by each country.

In **all programme countries**, events have been organised on the regional and/or national level, often on days of international significance, like the Day of Zero Tolerance on FGM (6 February), the Day of the African Child (16 June) Day of the Girl (11 October) or the Day of the Child (20 November). These events included festivities, debates, theatre performances, and presentations, in the presence of ministers, ambassadors or other officials and were often broadcasted on radio or television. Some partners also organised actions to contribute to the International 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence Campaign.

The launch of the new comparison villages, which were included in the HER CHOICE programme as of mid 2018, was also accompanied by festivities in a number of programme countries.

At the Child Led Bazaar from 26<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> July in Bahir Dar, **Ethiopia**, girl representatives from the HER CHOICE and Yes I Do alliances, members from the Amhara Children's Parliament, teachers, representatives from the Amhara, Oromia, SNPPR and from federal governmental institutions, UNICEF and Plan International Ethiopia all participated. The event was organised by the HER CHOICE Alliance Ethiopia through its linking & learning initiative. The girls exhibition displayed materials with the message "I am a girl child, do not make me a child mother!" A girl named



Kedija from Aleyu Amba impressed government officials with an eloquent speech on the importance of preventing child marriage. Moreover, the confidence and public speaking skills of girls won over many decision makers.

Club members, patrons, girl coordinators (37 girls and 26 boys) and directors of education participated in the second HER CHOICE 5-day educational camp at the Koforidua Technical University, organised by THP **Ghana**. The aim of the camp was to empower girls and boys to identify their rights and responsibilities in society as well as build their self-confidence to complete their basic education and aspire them to continue to the tertiary level. Facilitators took participants through leadership skills, studying skills, good grooming, SRHR and children's rights. Participants experienced this camp as a life changing experience.

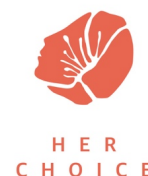
**Nepal**, at present, is in the process of formation of different level governments. CWIN, in this context, organised consultations with national and province level stakeholders, including members of parliament, on child marriage, child protection, violence against children, education, etc. in order to sensitise stakeholders on the issues of girls. All levels of stakeholders have expressed their commitment to work on the issues through policy and programmes. CWIN also submitted suggestions to Ministries and other national authorities, based on their review of the new constitution and relevant laws. Moreover, the 5<sup>th</sup> Convention of the National Adolescent Girls Network was organised by CWIN, where 40 adolescent girls representing 23 districts met to discuss various adolescents issues.

In addition, ICDI together with CWIN organised training on Children as Researchers in the Makwanpur district for project staff and adolescents, with the objective to develop children as researchers so that they are able to identify issues and lead the research themselves.

In **Pakistan**, Bedari organised a provincial conference on Violence Against Girls in Punjab on 29<sup>th</sup> November with parliamentarians and policy makers participating. The event ended with the recommendation to address issues related to girls education as a tool to end child marriage. The conference was followed by a dialogue with parliamentarians to address these recommendations and resulted in the formation of a working group of parliamentarians to take the agenda forward.

In **Senegal**, partners participated in the National Meeting on Child Marriage held on June 21<sup>st</sup> at the Ministry of Good Governance and Child Protection. At this meeting, the Multi-Stakeholder Platform to Address Child Marriage has been instituted.

OneFamilyPeople (**Sierra Leone**), together with ICDI and Kids Advocacy Network organised a National Children and Youth Summit on 4th April at Conner Lodge, Freetown. The summit attracted ca. 100 participants from across the country, including children, youth (including disabled), teachers, policy makers and civil society groups. The Vice President in his keynote informed participants that his government will promote free quality education for all and will combat child marriage and sexual violence perpetrated against women and girls, by improving the policy environment for the protection of girls including those with disabilities. He invited civil society to build strategic partnerships with the government, so as to monitor and engage line ministries to ensure effective implementation.



## 7. RESEARCH

### *Midline training workshops*

During 2018, the AISSR conducted the midline study in the 10 project countries. Similar to the baseline study, this process involved a series of (four) regional training workshops during which the AISSR team, in collaboration with local research coordinators, trained staff members of Her Choice partner organisations on the 'what, how and when' of the midline study. Again similar to the baseline, these HC colleagues subsequently took on the role of supervisors of the local data collection teams. We were fortunate enough to be able to work with a relatively consistent

team, that is, many colleagues from partner organisations as well as a number of local researchers taking part in the midline had also been involved in the baseline study and were thus familiar with the design of the study, the tools and expected outputs.

The four training workshops were held between January 2018 – March 2018, beginning in Nepal for the South Asian HC partners and ending in March in Ethiopia for HC partners from Ethiopia, Ghana and Uganda. An important issue addressed during the training related to the shift from paper-based to digital data collection tools -- to improve the quality of data collection and facilitate data analysis, we made use of SurveyCTO software for midline data collection. During the training workshops, participants were familiarized with the software and basic troubleshooting issues. Participants practiced using the software in mock interviews with one another, and during the pretesting of tools in communities. The various trials using SurveyCTO during the training offered the AISSR team the possibility to provide detailed feedback on how the software had been used and where there was space for improvement. The latter primarily concerned the more qualitative, open questions, which required more of participants' interviewing skills.

Participants were updated on the small changes made the study, that is, our efforts to, where possible, reduce the length of questionnaires, as well as improve the formulation of certain questions and, to enhance data quality, breaking down the focus group discussion groups with young women and men into two separate age groups (12-14 and 15-17). Finally, the planning of the midline study was discussed and agreed upon during the workshops, including the purchase of mobile phones or tablets for digital data collection, the training of the data enumerators (by supervisors and local researchers) as well as the data collection periods.

#### *From workshops to data collection*

Following the pretesting of the research tools during the workshops, the tools were finalized in SurveyCTO English and French, and necessary adjustments were made to country contexts. This country adaptation included adapting names of research locations and adding correct descriptions of school levels. Our colleague, Dr. Fousseynou Bah of the *Université des Sciences Sociales et de Gestion de Bamako* designed the English and French language SurveyCTO tools for the eight HC data collection tools. Where required, the final phase of the design of tools in SurveyCTO involved the translation of tools into local languages by local researchers.

Following the training workshops, a series of webinars were organized for all local researchers on technical issues related to the use of the software. These webinars also provided an opportunity for local researchers from the different regions and countries to connect with one another. Following these webinars, teams started the data collection (May-June). Most local researchers submitted their reports between September – October 2018, largely focusing on the data collection process and some initial analysis of the data. The AISSR team started the process of data cleaning as soon as completed data sets were uploaded on to the server by local researchers, the analysis of cleaned data taking place in November -- December 2018. The draft midline study synthesis report was planned to be discussed and validated in the third week of January 2019, the final report to be submitted to the Alliance and the Ministry by 31 January 2019.

#### *Other developments*

Other important developments and events in 2018 include the development and acceptance of the AISSR's team proposal for a Special Issue on child marriage and the notion of choice by the journal *Progress in Development Studies*, a journal that is read by mixed audience of academics, policy-makers and practitioners. This Special Issue is expected to be published in the second half of 2019.

The Her Choice AISSR PhD candidates spent 2018 collecting their data in their respective research sites (Nepal and Pakistan), and will be writing up their dissertation in the period



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between early 2019 to mid-2020. Finally, our team lost a member – Katie Hodgkinson, who obtained a PhD scholarship in the United Kingdom – and gained a new member, Albena Sotirova, a highly skilled quantitative researcher.

## 8. COMMUNICATION

HER CHOICE has chosen a united, coordinated communication approach, which allows alliance members and local partners to communicate a joint message to stakeholders and to the public. This adds to the ownership of the programme, and to the joint commitment as an alliance. Moreover, it gives the programme a clear identity and more visibility to the outside world. Communication tools are designed to serve a practical purpose and to support the implementation of the programme. They help alliance members in the Netherlands as well as partner organisations in the programme countries to provide information on the HER CHOICE goals, to connect with stakeholders and to communicate relevant messages to the public. For this purpose, communication tools, based on the needs of the partners, have been developed both in English and in French language, as the programme is being implemented in 7 Anglophone and 4 Francophone countries. HER CHOICE has a website ([www.her-choice.org](http://www.her-choice.org)) and a brochure in English and French (the English in an African and an Asian cover version). Country coordinators share pictures from their trips and the communication coordinator is filing them. The communication strategy and approach are described in more detail in the HER CHOICE Communication Plan.

In 2018 the HER CHOICE story has been spread across various platforms:

- Weekly news items were written and posted on the HER CHOICE website. With short stories, photos, blogs and messages we presented all our activities, results and achievements in the 11 countries where HER CHOICE was active.
- HER CHOICE was active on social media multiple times a week with tweets, both on Twitter and Facebook.

These activities were managed by a communication coordinator, appointed to this task from within one of the Alliance partners (ICDI).

### *Joint communication of the three Child Marriage Alliances in 2018*

The three Child Marriage Alliances, supported under the SRHR partnership by the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs, i.e. More than Brides (lead organisation Save the Children), HER CHOICE (lead organisation Stichting Kinderpostzegels Nederland) and Yes I Do (lead organisation Plan Nederland) have agreed that, wherever appropriate and justified, joint communication of a common message will strengthen the overall objective, which is to end child marriage in all programme countries.

## 9. CHALLENGES

During the third implementation year, alliance members and implementing partners of the HER CHOICE programme have been confronted with a number of challenges. In most cases, it was possible to take actions to overcome these obstacles. Below, examples of such challenges are summarised.

Because of the national election held in **Bangladesh** on December 30<sup>th</sup>, the political situation was extremely challenging across the country and throughout the year. The implementation of programme activities was difficult due to security reason and some schools and education



officers were non-cooperative to realise the program. This challenge has been met by revising the plan and shifting some activities to the next year.

Support of locally elected representatives and marriage registers is important. They usually blame each other for child marriage. THP Bangladesh is trying to engage both groups in advocacy events and enlist their public pledge against child marriage.

In **Benin**, people in some localities are still reluctant to denunciate sexual abuse and child marriage. However, the award for monitoring groups, the involvement of municipal authorities in awareness-raising activities, and the adoption of a ministerial decree sanctioning the perpetrators of school-age pregnancies are measures that influence the decrease in sexual abuse and child marriages.

In **Burkina Faso**, the resistance of traditional and religious leaders that still exists in some localities might be blocking the process of adopting the new law on child marriage. To overcome this challenge, partners continue to negotiate with relevant stakeholders and create a synergy of actions.

As there is a new administration in **Ethiopia**, CSOs are trying to position themselves between different sets of public messages and are searching ground for implementing a rights based approach and being able to develop a more open relationship with the government and its officials.

The practice of FGM still takes place in areas outside of the implementation fields and migrates as a problem. This results in kebeles that may be child-marriage free, but at the same time girls are secretly taken away to be subjected to FGM.

The already high turnover and over-stretch of teachers, school principals and government officers was further deteriorated because of activities and government assignments related to the actual political developments.

In **Mali**, the absence of adequate legislation remains a problem. There is no law against FGM and the legal minimum age of marriage remains 16 years.

Teacher strikes and absence of classes imply a delay for students.

These obstacles are addressed by sensitising decisive agents (area leaders, religious leaders and community leaders), and by lobbying for the adoption of laws against child marriage and for schooling of girls and by providing training on national and international laws on child marriage to decision makers and elected officials.

In **Nepal**, the belief of the Muslim community that a girl should be married at an early age creates an increasing challenge to gain commitment against child marriage. Another challenge is, that child love marriage is on the rise due to the growing impact of social media and to the possibility of young people to have regular contact through their phones. CWIN works on gaining the support of multiple stakeholders by constructively mobilizing and engaging them and by addressing the issues of adolescents in local communities. The programme has also provided orientations and trainings for adolescents on a regular basis so as to sensitise them on the negative impact of child marriage and the importance of SRHR. Child Helpline 1098 is regularly providing emergency support and services along with mass awareness campaigns through outreach programmes in the project implementation areas. Moreover, the challenges identified by the project are linked with local governments and other stakeholders for their support and priority.

In **Pakistan** the programme had to deal with two governments during 2018: before and after the elections in July. Advocacy efforts had to be redesigned in the light of priorities and mood of the new government. Consistent follow up with the newly elected representatives helped in building the rapport. As a result, an MPA from the ruling party has presented a bill in the Punjab assembly on rising the age of marriage.

Getting a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from Government is still a challenge. NGOs are being restricted to continue their work without NOC. However Bedari completed the third year of the HER CHOICE programme on the basis of personal relations and by engaging the government



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officials in the activities in communities. Although most of the implementation proceeded without hurdles, Bedari received a notice from the district government in Vehari to close the work and office in October 2018. Therefore they officially stopped their work at district level and managed to continue their community activities by talking to the district government in confidence.

The government is very conscious about any research activity being held in the field, for which the conducting of the midline evaluation was a challenge, especially because it involved using recording devices. We managed to do this activity by clearly communicating that the study's aim is just to evaluate the results of the work we are doing.

In January, the incident of a child sexual abuse and murder in the Punjab Province has on one hand created awareness among parents and teachers about the importance of sex education and child protection mechanisms, while on the other hand in some areas it has created a negative impact on the work of NGOs, blaming them for such incidents. Bedari dealt with the situation by engaging likeminded CPC members and district officials for their activities.

In **Senegal**, the formalising of SRHR teaching at all levels and their integration in the official curricula presents a challenge because of the high number of teachers and other influential figures who do not approve it. To overcome this challenge, partners try to buy in education system authorities at the department level, by presenting them with customised teacher trainings.

A key challenge experienced in **Sierra Leone** during the implementation of HER CHOICE, was to deliver life-skills sessions to visually impaired and hearing impaired young people in a friendly format. To address this challenge, OneFamilyPeople translated the facilitation guide in braille and trained a visually impaired young girl to deliver the weekly sessions. For the hearing impaired, they assigned a sign language translator to co-facilitate with a non-disabled young girl. Most of these children are now seeing themselves as leaders and are taking part in school and community activities and are building trusting friendships with their non-disabled peers.

The ban on comprehensive sexuality education in schools in **Uganda** affected the quality of in-school programmes in the country office. THP Uganda collaborated with the District Education Officers (DEOs) to support the school programme that is aligned to the acceptable ministry standards. In the mean time however, a new challenge has been presented by the Ministry of Education and Sports, by launching a new sexuality education policy framework, for which guidelines to the implementation process are currently being developed.



## 10. LESSONS LEARNED

We conclude this report with a few inspiring examples and key learnings, as far as they have not yet been mentioned in Chapter 2.

### *Planting trees for girls*

In **Bangladesh**, adolescent clubs facilitated by Dalit have taken the lead to plant two trees - one fruit and one forest - at each homestead where girls have found safe travelling from home to school.

### *Dreaming of a bicycle*

Once it was a dream for a bunch of girls to go to school by paddling their own bicycles. Now it has come true in the school, where THP **Bangladesh** is working. Nearly 903 girls are going to schools by riding their own bicycle.

### *Best performer award*

As a result of a performance review and monitoring visit filed by the zonal and district level government, THP **Ethiopia** has been awarded a certificate as best performer in the district.

### *Self produced sanitary pads*

This has been mentioned before, but is important enough to be repeated: in many countries adolescent girls may miss out on an average of 5 school days per month because of the lack of sanitary pads during their menstruation. Which is 50 learning days per academic year. HER CHOICE partners address this problem by providing training on how to produce reusable sanitary pads to girls *and* boys, which leads to a decrease in girls' dropout in schools and to a shift of existing dynamics in implementation areas.

### *Children as researchers*

Engaging children in simple action research helps them to proactively engage in matters that affect them and to be part of a solution through identifying their issues, engaging the wider public, planning actions in collaboration with other actors, and implementing them accordingly. When findings were shared with policy makers in **Pakistan** by children themselves, they appreciated the work and promised to take actions.

### *Financial autonomy for women*

Women who experience financial autonomy in **Mali** have a greater say against marriage of their daughters, because they pay for the costs to keep them in school.

### *Sensitisation of local government and religious leaders*

Many partner report on the importance of regular information providing, coordination and collaboration with local governments, which results in support and services from these governments. In **Nepal** local government has allocated budget to support the children in need in their annual planning. Religious leaders use religious sermons to preach against child marriage and harmful practices.

### *Adolescent Empowerment Center*

This centre in **Nepal** has been very helpful for those adolescents who were married in their early age and hiding at home without any knowledge and awareness related to SRHR and the negative implications of child marriage.

### *Embassies as allies*

In **Senegal**, the support of the embassies as allies in the advocacy process, proved to be crucial to push the state in establishing the rule of law to encounter socio-cultural and religious resistance.



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## LIST OF ANNEXES

- Annex I - Financial Report for 2018
- Annex II - HER CHOICE Human Interest Stories 2018









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HER CHOICE is an alliance of four Netherlands-based organisations: Stichting Kinderpostzegels Nederland (lead organisation), The Hunger Project (THP), International Child Development Initiatives (ICDI) and the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR) of the University of Amsterdam.

These organisations combine their efforts with 27 local partner organisations to address child marriage in eleven countries. The programme runs from January 2016 to December 2020 and is implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs