**Draft for the BMZ input for the OHCHR report ‘Progress toward ending child, early and forced marriage’ (2014/2015)**

1. **Areas in which Germany’s official development cooperation is actively involved in efforts to end child marriage**

Supporting partner countries in meeting their human rights commitment to protect children from early and/or forced marriage is a concern of Germany’s development cooperation. Child marriage not only violates the rights of girls and boys to protection against every form of exploitation and harmful traditional practice: early marriage also greatly limits the ability of minors to exercise their right to freedom of expression, places restrictions on their access to education and infringes their right to the highest attainable standard of health, including access to sexual and reproductive health services.

Strategies and targeted measures aiming to put in place a sustainable protective environment in which girls and boys can develop and flourish, must take as their starting point the complex reasons for marrying children at a young age. Germany’s development cooperation views this as entailing the need to reduce poverty, promote social inclusion and good governance, ensure that state institutions are effective, and combat societal and legal discrimination. Children must have access to information, for instance through school-based and out-of-school sex education, and they must be given a good quality education, especially secondary schooling. German development cooperation also promotes employment opportunities for women and works to enhance the position of low-income families and single parents by putting in place properly functioning social welfare systems and expanding existing health services. This includes providing information to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights, encompassing family planning and the ability to decide independently when to start a family. The rising number of child marriages in the context of migration and refugee movements from Middle Eastern countries gives grounds for concern. UNICEF reports an increase in the number of child marriages among Syrian refugees living in Jordan from 12% in 2011 to 32% in the first quarter of 2014 of all marriages registered (cf. UNICEF ‘A study on early marriage in Jordan’, 2014)[[1]](#footnote-1).

1. **Reference documents of official German development cooperation**

The position of German development cooperation on the protection and promotion of human rights, in particular the rights of children, youth and women, and the strategies adopted to this end, are laid out in a number of BMZ strategy papers. Special mention should be made of *Human Rights in Germany Development Policy* (2011), *Young people in German development policy – a contribution to the implementation of the rights of children and youth* (2011), *Gender Equality in German Development Policy* (2014) and *Female genital mutilation: The contribution made by German development policy towards ending this violation of the human rights of girls and women*) (2015). The position paper *Population Dynamics in German Development Cooperation* (2013) specifically looks at child marriage. The BMZ’s 2014 *Charter for the Future* also highlights the importance of gender equality and the rights of children and young people for sustainable development.

In an internal publication, the Germany´s official development cooperation (GIZ) has compiled information on the background, entry points and successful measures undertaken by official German development cooperation to end the practice of child marriage (2015).

1. **Ending child, early and forced marriage in high-prevalence countries – practical examples from the work of Germany’s official development cooperation**

Germany’s official development cooperation helps achieve sustainable improvement in the situation of children and young people in partner countries through its human-rights-based and children’s-rights-based approach. Support takes the form of both global initiatives and strategies and specific measures within the framework of projects and programmes.

The German Government actively advocates the integration of children’s rights, gender equality, and sexual and reproductive health and rights in international processes. This includes the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and its indicator framework as well as the international follow-on process to the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development held by the United Nations in 1994 (ICPD +20). Within the framework of ICPD +20, the High Level Task Force for ICPD (HLTF) is an important partner and is receiving financial and human resources support from Germany. As well as promoting sexual and reproductive rights, the HLTF’s policy recommendations focus on gender equality and on the imperative of taking into account the needs of young people. Within the scope of bilateral cooperation, Germany’s development policy aims for the coherent integration of results-oriented measures in a number of different priority areas including health, education and good governance. The measures comprise political dialogue, dialogue at target group level, the involvement of religious and local authorities and other opinion leaders, and the promotion of efficient state structures.

German government supports the development of local and national structures for the protection of children from violence, child labour and child, early and forced marriage in selected countries. In Burkina Faso and Guinea, current bilateral projects of German cooperation address the issue of child marriage.

With regard to sharing experiences and good practices, activities in three partner countries are described in more detail below.

**3.1 Promoting health education and health services in Malawi**

In Malawi, which has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world, measures to successfully address this issue are part of the German-Malawi priority areas ‘health’ and ‘education’. Statistically, half of all girls in Malawi are married before the age of 18; some are married even before they reach the age of nine or ten. 35% of all pregnant women are teenagers; the maternal mortality and infant mortality rates are high, as is the school dropout rate among girls.

Official German development cooperation addresses this challenge in schools and through local health services. Together with UNICEF, Malawi’s Ministry of Health and local non-governmental organisations, sex education campaigns are conducted inside and outside schools, and modern contraceptives are made available. Mobile health services reach girls and women even in extremely isolated areas. In this way young people and their parents are informed about the risks involved in early pregnancy. Local communities are guided to look in depth at the cultural, social and economic aspects of these issues. These measures have already helped reduce by half the rate of unplanned pregnancies and child marriages. The percentage of young people with access to family planning services has risen tangibly and the number of youth-friendly health services has increased.

Germany also supported the development and institutionalization of an accelerated learning program, Complementary Basic Education (CBE) for out-of-school children. One of CBE’s key curriculum areas is ‘healthy living’ which addresses issues such as comprehensive sexuality education and parenting likely to have an impact on age of marriage. In addition, the acquisition of basic literacy, numeracy and life skills by girls in the age range 9 to 17 equips them, to some degree, to resist child marriage.

In the development phase of CBE, Germany with additional financial support from UNICEF and DFID reached 357 communities in six districts of Malawi. 77% of the second cohort passed the exams and were then admitted to Standard 6. 49% of them were female. 57% of those who started the course in 2009 returned to school; 45% of those were female.

During the institutionalization phase of CBE, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology committed to financing CBE through its annual programs of work. An additional 1,140 learning centers were started in 30% of Malawi’s education districts during that period involving 39,172 out-of-school children of whom 52% were female.

* 1. **Promoting political and societal dialogue in Indonesia**

Although the rate of child marriage has declined in recent decades in Indonesia, the practice of marrying girls before their eighteenth birthday is still very widespread. As a result, the rate of maternal mortality and infant mortality remains extremely high, as does the prevalence of domestic violence.

The GIZ project Strengthening Women’s Rights has been working on behalf of BMZ since 2010 to support the Indonesian Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection (MOWECP) in its efforts to reverse these trends. Through intensive political dialogue and on the basis of a jointly produced policy paper, MOWECP is actively campaigning at national level for the minimum age for marriage to be raised. In 2014 the ministry launched a campaign jointly with the Indonesian Ulema Council, to raise awareness of the risks involved in and consequences of child marriage among school children and in religious communities.

In the West Nusa Tenggara region, fighting the practice of early marriage has been a priority of the provincial government since 2013. With the support of the GIZ and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, a seminar was held attended by representatives from the entire province including religious leaders, state civil servants, and representatives of civil society. More than 30 girls and boys were given the opportunity to voice their opinions publicly and to give their own recommendations. As a result, the practice of marrying l minors was officially condemned by the governor and state institutions, and government representatives at all levels were called on to make every effort to end the practice of child marriage for good.

* 1. **Promoting education for girls in Guinea**

In Guinea the issue of child marriage was addressed by Germany’s official development cooperation in the education sector. One reason for the low school enrolment rate of girls in Guinea is forced marriage. Although banned by law, the practice is widespread in many regions of the country, often involving girls as young as 14, and is often followed by early pregnancies.

Within the scope of a project to promote basic education, the FIERE (Filles Eduquées Réussissent – Educated Girls Succeed) approach was devised to support socially disadvantaged girls. Schoolgirls doing poorly in grades 5 and 6 were given additional coaching in mathematics and French. FIERE uses small classes and active learning methods, including group work and speaking freely in front of the class. It utilises teaching material that encourages students to approach learning as though it were a game. 72% of students in the FIERE classes have successfully passed their exams – well above the national average of 41%.

The interactive learning methods have proved particularly helpful in addressing the sensitive matter of sex education. Schoolgirls use poems and sketches they have written themselves to present the health consequences of female genital mutilation (FGM), as well as sexual harassment and HIV/AIDS.

FIERE classes are open to girls only and are taught by women teachers who have been specially sensitised to the situation of the girls and given additional training. Since they were first launched, FIERE classes have helped about 8,000 girls in difficult situations.

To try to encourage girls to stay at school, their mothers are also given special training. 192 women tutors have provided training courses for about 5,000 mothers, with units on education, unequal treatment of women and men, genital mutilation and forced marriage

1. <http://www.unicef.org/jordan/UNICEFJordan_EarlyMarriageStudy2014-E_COPY_.pdf>; <http://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/girls-not-brides-increase-child-marriages-among-syrians-stranded-inside-and-outside> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)