



## **Advocacy and Influencing co-creation Strategy document**

*Strengthening the Capacities of Civil Society Organizations to  
Contribute Effectively to Ending Child Marriage in Uganda  
(August 2025 to June 2027)*

**July 2025**

*Project Design Document*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction and context:

Girls Not Brides –Uganda (GNBU): The Ugandan Partnership to End Child Marriage in collaboration with *Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage* is leading efforts aimed at accelerating efforts towards addressing gender inequalities, which are the root cause of child marriage and teenage pregnancy. This contribution aims to address negative social norms and practices that deny the human rights of girls and women. It also aims to contribute to policy advocacy on ending child marriage. Additionally, it seeks to empower girls and women by improving their well-being and giving them a voice to influence gender-transformative social change, leading to gender equality and self-reliance in society.

The Government of Uganda (GoU) has so far domesticated the various regional and international treaties and conventions such as the UNCRC, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child against the involvement of Children in armed Conflict; Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography; 1999 ILO C182, Article 3 (a); the 2000 Palermo Protocol; and the 2004 Commission on Human Rights Decision 2004/110 among others.

This Advocacy and influencing strategy document outlines the GNBU's intent in responding to the need to strengthen coordination among GNBU CSO network members and GPECM partners to contribute effectively towards realizing the goal of ending child marriage in Uganda. The estimated budget for the two-year project is 168,300 GBP.

According to the 2024 Uganda census report, the prevalence of child marriage of children aged 10-17 years was 533,379<sup>1</sup>, males being at 5.6% and females at 7.7%, which is a worrying status requiring action if the trend is to drop. The UNICEF 2024 Annual Report<sup>2</sup> stated that 50% of girls aged 15–19 and 64% of women aged 20–24 experienced sexual abuse as children, often linked to early marriage. As a consequence, Girls aged 15-19 years are twice as likely to die during childbirth as women 20 years and above. Coupled with HIV, complications during pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death for young women aged 15-19 years<sup>3</sup>.

In Uganda, 34% and 7% of girls are married before their 18th and 15th birthdays, respectively, while 6% of boys are married before their 18th birthday. Child brides are also at significant risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. The risk of maternal death is about 28% higher for mothers aged 15 to 19 than for mothers aged 20 to 24<sup>4</sup>. The COVID-19 pandemic led to the closure of schools for 2 years, which spiked child marriage cases. The UNESCO 2021 projections showed that school closure increased the risk of child marriage by 25 per cent per annum.

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<sup>1</sup>

[https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/oped/commentary/opendi-s-marriage-bill-women-are-still-captives-4966568?utm\\_source](https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/oped/commentary/opendi-s-marriage-bill-women-are-still-captives-4966568?utm_source)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.unicef.org/documents/GPECM-2024-ARR?utm\\_source](https://www.unicef.org/documents/GPECM-2024-ARR?utm_source)

<sup>3</sup> [UNFPA ESARO | Adolescent pregnancy](https://www.unfpa.org/en/topics/adolescent-pregnancy)

<sup>4</sup> UNFPA, 2020: [https://esaro.unfpa.org/en/topics/adolescent-pregnancy?utm\\_source](https://esaro.unfpa.org/en/topics/adolescent-pregnancy?utm_source)

The decision for a child to marry is determined by several factors that may include social pressures, gender norms, dowry and bride-price practices, household economics, sexual violence, harassment and intimidation, and pregnancy or fear of pregnancy (Spencer, 2015; Avogo and Somefun, 2019; McLeod et al., 2019). Lack of access to resources is a key driving factor for child marriage, with girls whose families' incomes fall in the lowest quintile more than twice as likely to marry before the age of 18 than those whose families' incomes are in the highest quintile (UNFPA, 2012). In contrast, education is protective; girls with a primary education are twice as likely to experience child marriage as those with a secondary or higher education (UNFPA, 2012). Uganda's National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) notes that environmental crises leading to famine can increase child marriages as bride price incentivizes families with few resources to encourage their daughters' marriage (GoU, 2007)

Education is widely understood to be protective to child marriage. Environmental crises disrupt education both directly (e.g. destruction of school infrastructure and roads to schools) and indirectly (e.g. worsening poverty, displacement of families and lack of educational provision in temporary shelters), with consequent effects on child marriage.

To contribute to the GPECM's priorities and strengthen social movements and partnerships, with CSO's particularly women-led, youth-led, and Women's rights organizations' to address child marriage, GNBU has proposed evidence-based strategies under this intervention.

Girls Not Brides Uganda's **Vision** is an empowered society where Child Marriage and Teenage pregnancy are eradicated and girls enjoy equal opportunities with boys to realize their full potential;

**Mission:** To contribute to the national efforts towards ending CM and TP in Uganda through advocacy, community-based interventions and building institutional capacity aimed at amplifying voices of girls at risk of CM and promoting a secure environment that enables girls to fulfill their potential.

### **Priority Interventions:**

The proposed strategy will prioritize interventions that leverage on Policy Advocacy, Social Norms and Institutional Capacity through continuous learning, reflection, and adaptation to contribute effectively towards addressing child marriage in Uganda.

1. **Policy and Legal Frameworks:** Policy advocacy efforts will be geared at strengthening the enabling environment to prevent and respond to child marriage through improved laws, policies, and enforcement.

**Priority Interventions will include:** Strengthening the coordination and collaboration between GNBU NP members and civil society, GPECM Partners, development partners, line ministries (of Health, Education, Justice, gender) and District local governments to develop joint strategies, enhance resourcing to ECM in Uganda; Facilitating the roll-out, implementation, and evaluation of the national strategy to ECM in Uganda; Tracking the progress and gaps in policy implementation and financing; Influencing for the domestic financing for child marriage-related interventions and the evaluation of the National ECM Strategy 2022/23 – 2026/2027.

2. **Social and Gender Norms:** Efforts aim to shift harmful social and gender norms that perpetuate child marriage, and promote positive norms that advance gender equality, the rights and agency of girls.

**Priority Interventions will include:** Engagements with religious and traditional leaders, parents, boys, and men to challenge harmful practices and beliefs. Others would include: Social Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC), Empowerment platforms that promote adolescent girls' leadership and voice through safe spaces, forum theatre, local radio talks/jingles, and mentorship programmes; Positive role modeling and other social media campaigns.

3. **Institutional Capacity Strengthening through shared knowledge and learning :** This is aimed at enhancing the capabilities of systems, service providers, and community actors to prevent and respond to child marriage.

**Priority Interventions will include:** Support GNBU Members (local CSOs and youth-led /Women-led and Women Rights' community based organizations) and GPECM partners to enhance their capacity to deliver interventions, advocate, and monitor outcomes. Support data systems management to inform programming and policy; and Institutional capacity strengthening of GNBU NP to work with ministries and district-level authorities to embed child marriage into routine planning and budgeting. And, Budget tracking and Budget Advocacy skilling of members to track budgetary allocations viz-a-viz spending to ECM in Uganda.

The above interventions will contribute towards GNBU NPs' goal ***"To contribute towards ending child marriage in Uganda"***.

#### **The Proposed Theory of Change:**

**IF** members of the GNB Uganda National Partnership (particularly women-led, youth-led, and women's rights organizations) receive targeted technical and institutional support to lead coordinated, evidence-based policy advocacy in partnership with GPECM,

**AND IF** they are equipped with tailored capacity strengthening and leadership development that directly responds to their jointly identified needs,

**AND IF** their efforts are grounded in shared learning, and informed by documented best practices and innovations from Uganda's ECM ecosystem,

**AND IF** these actions include deliberate advocacy to shift harmful social norms that perpetuate child marriage,

**THEN** will be better equipped, more coordinated, and increasingly effective in influencing policy implementation, transforming social norms, and sustaining collective action to end child marriage.

**RESULTING IN:**

Stronger public and political commitment, including increased domestic financing for the implementation of Uganda's National Strategy to End Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy; A more enabling environment for girls, supported by improved laws, policies and community attitudes; Girls and young women who are more aware of their rights, actively using their voices, and accessing opportunities to thrive; And ultimately contributing to an overall reduction in child marriage prevalence in Uganda

This will be operationalized by focusing on two external change objectives and one internal partnership objective.

**External Change Objectives:**

- **Policy Advocacy:** Influence increased domestic resource allocation through implementation of domestic policies at local and central government level, and strengthened implementation of the National ECM Strategy by 2027 through coordinated policy advocacy and strategic CSO engagement.
- This would be achieved through partnering with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Ministries of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, UNFPA, UNICEF, as well as other GPECM CSO partners to influence increased domestic resource allocation and strengthened implementation of the National Strategy to End Child Marriage (ECM) by 2027 through coordinated policy advocacy and strategic CSO engagement.
- **Social Norms:** Promote positive social and cultural norms at the individual and systemic levels (with girls/youth, family, community, and in wider society) that promote gender equality and agency of girls; and address child marriage and teenage pregnancy in Uganda.

**Internal Partnership Objective:**

- **Institutional Capacity:** Strengthen the institutional capacity of Girls Not Brides Uganda (GNBU) to effectively deliver on its mandate and strategic objective

GNBU's collective interventions will focus on achieving change at the systemic level on wider social norms and attitudes in society on child marriage and the underlying drivers that are reinforcing negative attitudes to children's and girls' rights. GNBU will also engage with power holders and duty-bearers on their responsibilities to support and implement policies and provide adequate funding and focus through their budgeting processes at local and national levels. These interventions will complement the existing work of national partners who will also be working at the individual and informal level to empower girls and youth and engage families and local influencers to change attitudes and engage with local authorities and institutions. (The focus of these interventions has been informed by the Gender at Work Framework outlined in Annex 1 which highlights the 4 different areas, or domains, that need to be addressed at both the individual and systemic level when seeking sustainable and long-term change on gender equality issues).

**As such, the expected outcomes will include:**

1. Social and cultural norms increasingly promote gender equality and discourage child marriage and teenage pregnancy among key audiences in target districts, with growing influence at regional and national levels.
2. Increased domestic resource allocation for the implementation and dissemination of the National Strategy to end child marriage at sub-national and national levels.

3. Strengthened collective capacity of GNBU members and GPECM partners to influence resource allocation for the implementation, and dissemination of the National Strategy to end child marriage at individual, sub national and national levels.
4. Increased awareness and agency among girls and young people for their rights and entitlements related to child marriage.
5. Enhanced coordination, communication, and participation of GNBU members and GPECM partners in joint advocacy efforts to address child marriage Uganda

## **Opportunities for Collaboration**

This strategy presents several strategic opportunities for collaboration in ECM in Uganda. These collaborations are key to scaling impact, ensuring sustainability, and reinforcing government and civil society efforts in ending child marriage, as well as the GNB Global Strategy and the UNFPA-UNICEF GPECM phase III Objectives through a gender-transformative and ecosystems-based approach.

- ✓ **Policy & Legal Reform;** The strategy will provide opportunities for multi-stakeholder advocacy coalitions to push for full implementation of the National Strategy to End Child Marriage (2022/2023 - 2026/27), The Revised Guidelines for Prevention and Management of Teenage Pregnancy in School Settings in Uganda (2020), as well as the National Sexuality Education Framework of 2018. It will also provide opportunities for implementation tracking, mid-term reviews and end-term evaluation. Key partners will include: UNICEF, UNFPA, GPECM Partners and GNB, The Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development, Ministry of Finance (MoFPED), as well as Parliament of Uganda.
- ✓ **Systems Strengthening (Health, Education, Child Protection);** The strategy further provides a collaboration opportunity for the integration of child marriage prevention into health, education, and child protection systems. Working with MDAs, District Local Governments, Uganda Police and Education Institutions, the key Government policies such as the Government Education Loan Scheme and the Scholarship programs, as well as re-entry policies for young mothers will be an opportunity.
- ✓ **Community Engagement & Cultural institutions/structures ;** Working with key platforms like Cultural Institutions, Religious Councils, and Youth Advocacy Networks will be another opportunity vital in shifting social-cultural norms. GNBU will also promote dialogue through Regional and National Girl Summits, a key networking and policy influencing platform. It will also promote and support Youth-led and women-led initiatives and debates, empowering girls to speak out and shape solutions in their own communities.
- ✓ **Evidence Gathering & Monitoring;** There will be an opportunity to collaborate on gender-transformative research to inform policy and evidence-based campaigns. Key areas of focus would include: The cost of child marriage to Uganda's development; Effectiveness of community norm-change models; Voices of adolescent girls and Policy Implementation progress.

- ✓ **Girls Not Brides Uganda strategic Plan 2024 to 2028:** This intervention will also present a framework for collective action and strategic partnerships, creating opportunities for multi-stakeholder collaboration to advance the priorities of the GNBU Strategic Plan 2024-2028.

## **Section One: Introduction and Background**

### **1.1 About Girls Not Brides Global Partnership and Girls Not Brides Uganda**

[Girls Not Brides](#): The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage (GNB) is a global partnership of more than 1,400 civil society organizations from over 100 countries committed to ending child marriage and enabling girls to fulfill their potential. Members are based throughout Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. *Girls Not Brides* shares the conviction that every girl has the right to live the life that she chooses and that, by ending child marriage, we can achieve a meaningful future for all. Our members bring child marriage to global attention, build an understanding of what it will take to ECM and call for policies and programs that will make a difference in the lives of millions of girls.

[Girls Not Brides Uganda](#) (GNBU): The Ugandan Partnership to End Child Marriage is an alliance of 145 member organizations working to end child marriage in Uganda. GNBU was founded in 2013 and is a member of *Girls Not Brides*. GNBU members bring child marriage to local, sub-national, national, and global attention, building an understanding of what it will take to end child marriage through advocacy for progressive laws, policies, and programs, including community-based interventions and institutional capacity strengthening.

### **1.2 The Global and National Child Marriage Context**

Over 650 million women alive today were married as children<sup>5</sup>; 12 million girls are married each year before the age of 18. That's one every 2–3 seconds. In fragile states, the rate is even higher: a girl marries every 30 seconds<sup>6</sup>, with 32 million adolescent girls living in these high-risk zones. Whereas the global prevalence of child marriage has fallen from 23 % to 19 % in the last 10 years<sup>7</sup>, especially in South Asia, little progress has been seen in many other parts of the world. Sub-Saharan Africa is a region of considerable concern. Girls now experience the highest risk of child marriage in the world, with one in three marrying before age 18.

In Uganda, 34% of girls are married before their 18th birthday<sup>8</sup>, and 7% are married before age 15. That means nearly 1 in 3 young women in Uganda were married in childhood, ranking Uganda 14<sup>th</sup> worldwide in the absolute number of child brides, with over 723,000 girls affected. The practice is

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<sup>5</sup>UNICEF (May 2023 press release):

[https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/global-polycrisis-creating-uphill-battle-end-child-marriage-unicef?utm\\_source](https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/global-polycrisis-creating-uphill-battle-end-child-marriage-unicef?utm_source)

<sup>6</sup> Save the Children (Global Girlhood Report 2024: Fragile Futures):

[https://www.savethechildren.net/news/girl-marries-every-30-seconds-countries-ranked-fragile-and-child-marriage-hotspot-s-new-report?utm\\_source](https://www.savethechildren.net/news/girl-marries-every-30-seconds-countries-ranked-fragile-and-child-marriage-hotspot-s-new-report?utm_source)

<sup>7</sup> UNICEF: 25 million child marriages prevented in last decade due to accelerated progress: [UNICEF press centre | 25 million child marriages prevented in last decade due to accelerated progress, according to new UNICEF estimates | UNICEF Europe and Central Asia](#)

<sup>8</sup> GNBU: [The impacts of COVID-19 make it more critical than ever to address child marriage in Uganda - Girls Not Brides](#)

more prevalent in rural areas, among poorer households, and among girls with limited educational opportunities. Despite laws setting the minimum marriage age at 18, customary and informal unions continue to drive early marriages.

Uganda has been taking a proactive approach towards legal and policy reforms to address child marriage for over a decade. The government has established policy frameworks that aim to put an end to child marriage and teenage pregnancy. These policies include the National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy 2021/22 – 2025/26, the National Gender Policy of 2007, the Prohibition of FGM/C Act of 2010, the Employment Act of 2006, and the National Sexuality Education Framework of 2018, among other key legislations. Uganda is committed to international agreements such as CEDAW, SDG 5.3, and the Universal Periodic Review and is actively working towards ending child marriage at both regional and global levels.

### **1.3 Strategic Drivers of Child Marriage in Uganda**

In Uganda, a complex and interrelated set of drivers exposes girls to a risk of child marriage and teenage pregnancy. These drivers are cross-cutting and deeply rooted in traditions, culture, poverty, and religious beliefs that condone the practice, as well as gaps in the legal and policy frameworks and the civil registration system. The drivers of child marriage and teenage pregnancy are intricately linked and operate at family, household, community, and societal levels.

**Family and household-level drivers:** Many poor families cannot afford to keep their girls in school. Teen pregnancy, poverty, or distance from school has also been found to lead to dropout, after which marriage is seen as the natural next step. Statistics indicate that Women with no education begin childbearing 5.6 years earlier than women with more than secondary education (19.2 years versus 24.8 years), UDHS, 2022 report. In some poor families, marrying off a daughter is believed to reduce the number of dependents at home and is sometimes seen as a way to secure her economic future. While in other communities, the bride's family receives assets upon marriage, creating a direct financial incentive. In extreme cases, marriage arrangements are used to settle debts. Moreover, some communities have preference for male children – where girls may be considered an economic burden, leading to prioritizing their marriage over education.

**Social and cultural norms:** Social-cultural norms, practices, religious beliefs, myths, and misconceptions around contraception are key drivers of child marriage. This is primarily due to the cultural perception that the transition from childhood to adulthood is defined and constructed around marriage and reproduction. Marriage and motherhood are core expectations and are perceived as key markers of womanhood; consequently, marriage and pregnancy are not only desired and expected, but are also culturally accepted and enforced (UNFPA, 2020).

**Community/Societal level drivers:** Modernization in the communities and peer influence continue to perpetuate the practice of child marriage. The socio-economic transformation within communities characterized by common destructive behaviors associated with the growth of

townships, for example, gambling, alcohol and/or drug abuse, unregulated entertainment spaces for young girls and boys, increases girls' vulnerability to child marriage. This is linked to adolescents and community misconstrued ideas of children's rights as well as the adoption of some western cultures/practices<sup>9</sup>, which have negatively influenced adolescents' behaviors, resulting in moral decay and children's resistance to parental guidance (UNICEF 2015).

#### **1.4 Rationale for the advocacy and influencing strategy**

This strategy is designed to provide a clear roadmap for the collective work of GNBU and selected partners of the GPECM. It recognizes the new threats and opportunities that have emerged over time within Uganda's development context and the need to improve efficiency of its collective work.

This document outlines the operationalization of the Gender at Work Framework (refer to Annex 1) and its importance in promoting gender equality. The framework emphasizes the relationship between gender equality, organizational change, and power dynamics within communities. GNBU and community change agents will utilize the Gender at Work Framework to identify opportunities and obstacles to gender equality, map out a strategy for change, and guide evaluative efforts to mark progress. This approach will help visualize the dimensions of gender equality and the extent of the shift in gendered power relations, in line with national priorities. Additionally, an ecosystems approach to address child marriage will be adopted and scaled up. This will entail working collectively at the global, national, and sub-national levels with [Girls Not Brides](#), UNICEF GPECM, GNBU NP, government, cultural, and religious institutions, girls and communities. The strategy will further promote cross-learning by adopting good practices.

#### **1.5 The Project Development Process**

GNBU adopted an extensive consultation process with its stakeholders while developing this strategy document. This was done to consider the changes in the socio-political, economic, technological, and legal environments, and how they influence the dynamics of ending child marriage and teenage pregnancy response. To ensure that the project design process was evidence-based, an elaborate reflection and learning process was also adopted, and it included utilizing learning and evidence generated at the global, regional, and national levels on what works to ECM.

An evaluation of the previous GNBU strategy (including projects implemented within this period such as the accelerator project) was additionally conducted to draw insights further and inform the design of this new project. The approach further sought to generate buy-in from different stakeholders for the joint ownership and implementation of the project by inviting representatives from the National Government, the [Girls Not Brides](#) Global Secretariat, and key regional institutions (the AU) to the workshop as keynote speakers. This approach not only ensured a collaborative

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<sup>9</sup> <https://journals.co.za/doi/full/10.29063/ajrh2024/v28i12.16>

project design process but also helped provide additional insights and evidence on what works to end child marriage at the global, regional, and national levels.

### **Rationale for the co-creation advocacy and influencing strategy**

This strategy leverages on the potential of the over 140 GNBU NP membership spread countrywide, and the additional UNICEF GPECM partners in Uganda, providing additional technical supports to meaningfully contribute to ECM efforts in the country. Further, the strategy aligns well with the GNB Global priorities, and the UNFPA-UNICEF GPECM Phase III Objectives and GNBU strategic Plan (2024-2028). Moreover, it creates a linkage with the National Strategy to End Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy 2021/22 – 2025/26, the Children’s Act (Amendment Act, 2016) as well as other supportive instruments including: Third National Development Plan (NDPIII), National Child Policy (2020), National Policy on the Elimination of Gender-Based Violence (2016) and related action plans (2016–2021), National Adolescent Reproductive Health Policy (2004), Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development Strategic Plan (2020/21 – 2024/25), Gender in Education Policy (2009), and the National Sexuality Education Framework (2018), among others. Therefore, the multi-sectoral coordination approach will minimize duplication of efforts and allow for a more coordinated approach that ultimately achieves greater impact. Additionally, this strategy will promote cross-learning by adopting good practices, developing uniform standards, and ensuring continuity of interventions throughout the country.

This document further outlines the operationalization of the Gender at Work Framework (refer to Annex 1) and its importance in promoting gender equality. The framework emphasizes the relationship between gender equality, organizational change, and power dynamics within communities. The Gender at Work Framework will be utilized by GNBU NP and community change agents to identify opportunities and obstacles to gender equality, map out a strategy for change, and guide evaluative efforts to mark progress. This approach will help visualize the dimensions of gender equality and the extent of the shift in gendered power relations, in line with national priorities. Additionally, the Approach, which identifies an ecosystems-wide approach to address child marriage, will be adopted and scaled up.

## **Section Two: Priority Interventions, Project Theory of Change, Objectives, Results Framework**

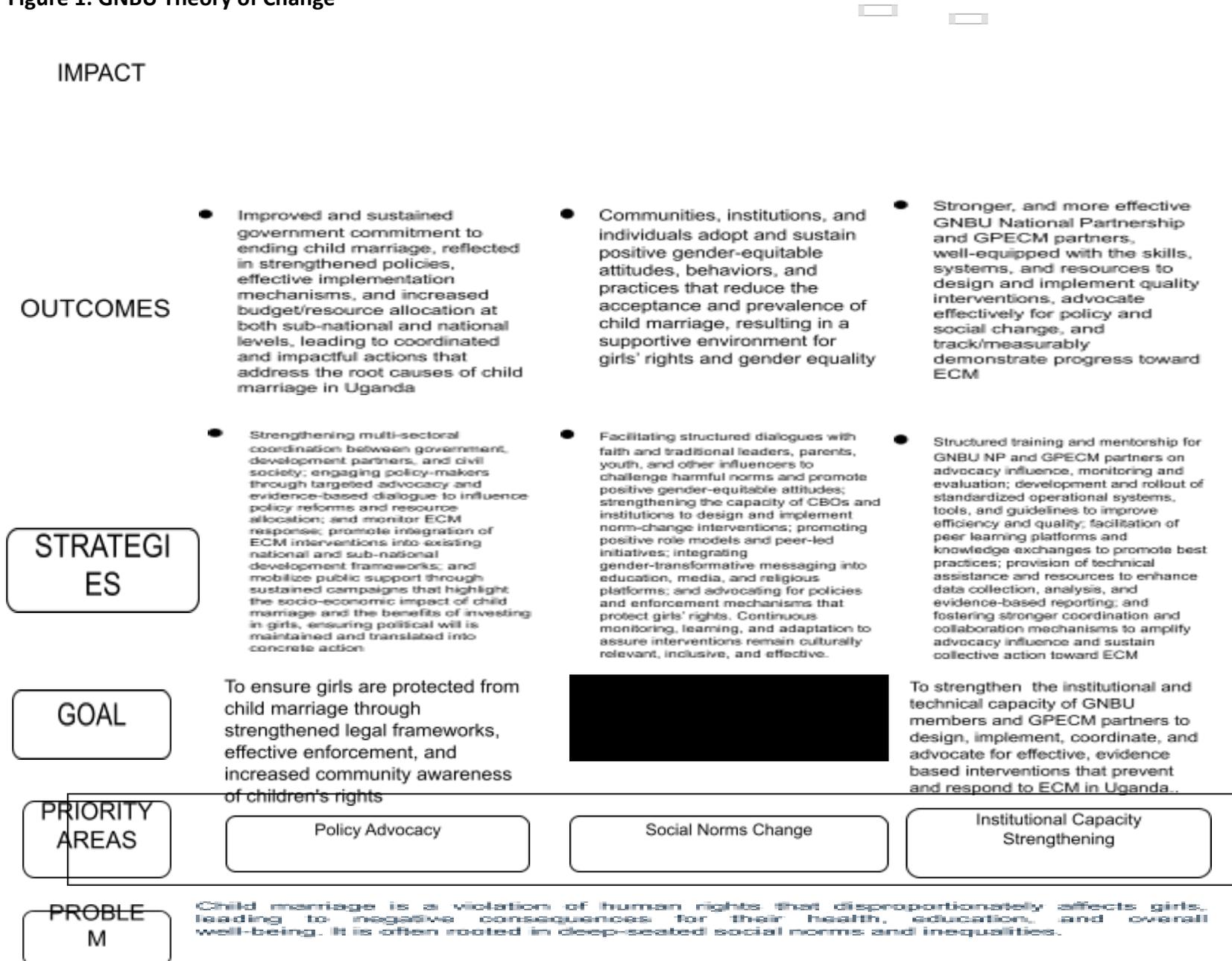
### **2.1 Priority Interventions Overview**

GNB-U’s priority collective interventions under this project have been constructed around three key objectives namely, 1) positive social and cultural norms that promote and advance gender equality and the rights of women and girls, and discourage child marriage and teenage pregnancy in Uganda; 2) Advocating for effective implementation of existing policies and laws on ending child marriage and teenage pregnancy; and 3) Strengthening the institutional capacity of GNBU NP to deliver on its mandate through continuous learning, reflection, and adaptation.. All these will contribute towards

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*Girls Not Brides Global Strategy, GNBU Strategic Plan 2024 to 2028 and UNICEF GPECM phase III objectives; effectively contributing to the ECM efforts in Uganda.*

Figure 1: GNBU Theory of Change



### 2.3 Priority Objectives, Interventions, Activities and Expected Results

The project priority interventions were informed by the analysis of the strategic drivers that underpin child marriage and teenage pregnancy in Uganda as outlined in section one.

The objectives and their priority interventions and strategies incorporate a gender transformative approach designed to: support the transforming of negative social and gender norms and advancement of positive social norms; support girls' agency to end child marriage and for girls to feel and be able to claim their rights. It recognizes that effective public services budgeting and implementation at all levels is required along with joined up strategies to address gendered poverty and inequality and the equal access to gender equitable services. Moreover, the ToC emphasizes the significance of Movement Building and Coalition Building among GNBU member organizations and CSOs particularly Women-led, Youth –led, and Women's rights Organizations, who are leading change against child marriage in Uganda, as a critical way of creating viable and meaningful partnerships to end child marriage in Uganda.

Therefore, the proposed three objectives address the need for systemic change and as such have been informed by both the Gender at Work Framework and ecosystems-wide approach. (Annex 1)

***Objective 1 Collectively advocate for and influence policy review, implementation, and budget/resource allocation at both sub-national and national levels, with the aim of advancing strategic actions to end child marriage in Uganda.***

#### Priority Interventions and Strategies

Together with the GPECM partners, GNBU will strengthen multi-sectoral coordination between government, development partners, and civil society; engaging policy-makers and key decision makers through targeted advocacy and evidence-based dialogue, to influence policy reforms and resource allocation and monitor ECM response. This will be purposed to promote the integration of ECM interventions into existing national and sub-national development frameworks. Further, the project will mobilize public support through sustained campaigns that would highlight the socio-economic costs of child marriage while highlighting the positive impacts of prevention strategies on girls' lives and national development and the benefits of investing in girls, ensuring political will is maintained and translated into concrete action.

The project will target key stakeholders from different sectors including the Ministries of Finance, Health, Education, Justice and Law (JLOS), Gender, religious leaders, traditional leaders, political leaders and community based organizations to reflect, plan and act on ECM in the country. The project team shall lobby members of parliament from the Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Children (UPFC) to champion legislation and budget allocations to address ECM and mobilize communities/public through regional and national summits to participate in and support ECM

efforts. The project will also utilize media platforms including radio, television, and social media to highlight the harmful effects of child marriage in the country.

## Key activities

### **Activity 1.1. Hold annual high level multi-stakeholder engagements to advocate for resource allocation towards implementation of ECM strategy.**

GNBU will collaborate with the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) to co-convene an annual engagement attended by at least 34 key stakeholders drawn from MGLSD, Ministry of Education & Sports (MoES), Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Local Government (MoLG), Justice/Law & Order sectors (JLOS), Uganda Police Service (UPS), Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) and other relevant MDAs. UNICEF, UNFPA, other Development partners, civil society, religious/cultural leaders, academic institutions and private sector representatives are anticipated to attend. This annual convening will provide a national-level multi-sectoral opportunity to review progress in the implementation of Strategic Actions in the roll-out of ECM programs at national and sub-national levels, and harmonize strategies to address gaps, thus presenting a rare opportunity to influence increased domestic resource allocation for the implementation, dissemination and end-line evaluation of the National Strategy to End Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy (2022/23–2026/27) by 2027.

#### Expected Results:

<b>Enhanced Coordination and Collaboration</b> among line ministries (Gender, Health, Education, Local Government), JLOS and development partners (UN agencies, CSOs) to fast-track the implementation of Strategic Actions for the roll-out of ECM programs including the evaluation of the National Strategy (2022/2023–2026/2027)
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<b>Strengthened Policy and Program Alignment</b> with state and non-state actors (Harmonization of policies and programs) to ensure they are mutually reinforcing and aligned with the National Strategy to End Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy (2022/23–2026/27).
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<b>Enhanced domestic resource mobilization</b> , with commitment to allocate or reallocate budgets to priority interventions addressing child marriage
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### **Activity 1.2. Hold National and Regional Girl Summits (One National, 5 sub -regional, each year) aimed at promoting girls' voice, agency and rights.**

Aimed at promoting girls and young people's voice, agency and rights, regional and national Summits will be utilized as platforms for girls to take the lead and challenge the negative social and cultural norms and hold leaders accountable to implement effective laws and policies for ending child marriage. During these summits, GNBU will partner with girls to translate talking communities<sup>10</sup> or message posts with catchphrases aimed at creating awareness and sparking off

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<sup>10</sup> A talking community is a group or forum (or safe space) within a community deliberately created or facilitated to encourage open dialogue and discussion about specific issues—like child marriage, health, gender norms, or social

conversations about ECM<sup>11</sup>. Social media campaigns will be designed and implemented with girls and youth to influence wider social norms and attitudes on ending child marriage.

The GNBU 8th and 9th Girl summits will feature topics around the cultural, economic, faith, climatic, and social drivers associated with child marriage. Through these (1 National and 5 Regional – Central, Northern, Mid-Western, Western, Eastern) summits advocacy platforms will be supported across the country each year, calling to action an end to child marriage and holding duty bearers to account. These summits will convene high level government officials, survivors of child marriage, ministry departments, cultural/traditional leaders, and faith leaders, INGOs, NGOs CSOs, media fraternity, children themselves and other relevant stakeholders. Evidence collected from the regional Girl Summits will inform the development of an Issue brief to be presented at the national summit, aimed at generating policy commitments and actionable steps within the CEFMU ecosystem. At least 1500 participants are targeted, including children –boys and girls in two years.

### Expected Results

<b>Increased government and district funding</b> for interventions to end child marriage
<b>Enhanced communication, engagement and participation</b> of GNBU members and GPECM partners in efforts to ECM in Uganda.
<b>Effective implementation of existing and new laws, policies and frameworks</b> to end child marriage and teenage pregnancy

### **Activity 1.3. Review the current state of implementation and financing of the National ECM Strategy to generate evidence on bottlenecks and underfunded areas:**

The project will engage a consultant with expertise in program evaluation and financing to conduct a comprehensive review of the current implementation status and funding landscape of the National Strategy to End Child Marriage (ECM). This will involve a detailed assessment of existing activities across sectors, mapping of financial resources allocated by government and development partners, and identification of gaps and bottlenecks hindering effective execution. The consultant will collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data through stakeholder interviews, document reviews, and financial analysis to generate evidence-based insights. The findings will highlight underfunded areas and systemic challenges, providing actionable recommendations to optimize resource allocation and strengthen strategy implementation.

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change. An example of a “talking community” on ECM might gather parents, adolescents, and elders to discuss the harms of child marriage and benefits of education.

<sup>11</sup> **Message posts** are specific communication units—such as posters, radio spots, social media posts, flyers, or text messages—designed to convey key messages clearly and persuasively to a target audience; purposed to raise awareness, influence attitudes, or promote behavior change by delivering concise, memorable, and culturally appropriate information. An example of a message post on ECM might be a billboard, or poster with the slogan “Keep Girls in School, End Child Marriage” placed in village squares.

## Expected Results

<b>Improved Understanding of the financing landscape</b> and implementation challenges affecting the National ECM Strategy.
<b>Enhanced Strategic Planning</b> enabling MGLSD and partners to prioritize and address critical gaps.
<b>Increased Resource Mobilization</b> by highlighting underfunded areas and making a strong case to government budget planners.
<b>Strengthened Coordination and Accountability</b> through clearer roles, responsibilities, and monitoring informed by evidence.
<b>Accelerated Progress toward ECM</b> due to more targeted and adequately funded interventions.

**Objective 2:** *To promote positive social and cultural norm change that supports gender equality and discourages child marriage through the application of gender transformative approaches at individual, community, and systemic levels.*

## Priority Interventions and Strategies

To achieve this objective, the project will implement priority interventions grounded in gender-transformative approaches at multiple levels. Strategies will include: facilitating structured dialogues with faith and traditional leaders, parents, youth, and other influencers to challenge harmful norms and promote positive gender-equitable attitudes; strengthening the capacity of Youth-led, Women-led and Women Rights CBOs and institutions to design and implement norm-change interventions.

At the individual level, activities will focus on strengthening empowerment platforms that promote adolescent girls' leadership and voice through safe spaces and mentorship; Social Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) to build their skills, gain knowledge and confidence to promoting positive role models and peer-led initiatives; integrating gender-transformative messaging into media, and religious platforms; and advocating for policies and enforcement mechanisms that challenge harmful norms and advocate for their rights. Moreover, at the community level, the project will engage parents, traditional leaders, religious figures, youth leaders and other influencers through dialogue, and community-led campaigns to shift attitudes and behaviors around harmful gender norms and child marriage.

Systemically, the project will work with institutions and policy-makers to strengthen gender-responsive policies, improve enforcement mechanisms, and promote inclusive decision-making processes. Through these integrated strategies, the project aims to dismantle the root causes of gender inequality and create an enabling environment that fosters the abandonment of child marriage practices.

Continuous monitoring, learning, and adaptation to assure interventions remain culturally relevant, inclusive, and effective.

## Key Activities

**Activity 2.1. Support and equip faith and traditional leaders to disseminate gender-transformative messages on ending child marriage, through the facilitation of structured community dialogues on girls' rights and harmful social norms, with a focus on identifying and addressing community-level drivers of child marriage and fostering collective action for norm change.**

This activity will be implemented by the 10 trained faith and cultural leaders, and the 6 youth leaders from 5 targeted high-prevalence districts. Using participatory dialogue methodologies, the trained leaders will convene structured community meetings in collaboration with local stakeholders, focusing on unpacking the social and cultural drivers of child marriage, addressing myths and misconceptions, and encouraging reflection on equitable gender roles. The dialogues will culminate in the development of community-led action plans, fostering collective commitment to norm change, while creating safe spaces for adolescent girls' voices to be heard and influencing broader community attitudes toward child marriage. Each Master trainer is expected to convene at least one dialogue each year, of 24-30 participants. In total, 32 dialogues will be convened in the two years, impacting 960 other faith, cultural and youth leaders in the 5 GNBU regions.

## Expected Results

<b>Increased Awareness and Shift in Community Attitudes:</b> Faith and traditional leaders effectively communicate gender-transformative messages, leading to greater community awareness of girls' rights and the harmful effects of child marriage, fostering more positive attitudes toward gender equality and delayed marriage.
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<b>Identification and Reduction of Harmful Social Norms:</b> Structured community dialogues will create safe spaces for open discussion, enabling communities to identify specific social and cultural norms that perpetuate child marriage and collectively develop locally relevant strategies to challenge and change these norms at community level.
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<b>Strengthened Community Commitment and Collective Action:</b> Through facilitated dialogue and leadership by trusted community figures, communities will mobilize around action plans and initiatives that will promote protective environments for girls, leading to increased community ownership and sustained efforts to prevent child marriage.
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**Objective 3: To strengthen the institutional capacity of GNBU NP and the GPECM partners to deliver interventions, advocate, and monitor outcomes while fostering a culture of continuous learning, reflection, and adaptation..**

## Priority Interventions and Strategies

The project will conduct structured training and mentorship for GNBU NP and GPECM partners on advocacy influence, monitoring and evaluation; development and rollout of standardized operational systems, tools, and guidelines to improve efficiency and quality. The project will facilitate peer learning platforms and knowledge exchanges to promote best practices. Further, technical assistance and resources will be provided to enhance data collection, analysis, and evidence-based reporting; and fostering stronger coordination and collaboration mechanisms to amplify advocacy influence and sustain collective action toward ECM.

The ability to achieve the project goals will be enhanced, progress of project implementation against its planned activities measured and potential issues/bottlenecks, documented to inform learning. This will be done through project site visits, regular feedback sessions by engaging with stakeholders involved. Lessons shall be disseminated for accountability to internal, external and strategic stakeholders.

### **Key activities**

#### ***Activity 3.1 Conduct a Residential Training of Trainers(ToT) for 30 GNBU members and GPECM partners in GTA-responsive tools, knowledge, and systems.***

GNBU will identify and train 30 TOTs targeting 10 GNBU members, 5 religious and 5 cultural leaders (ensuring representation across different denominations and cultural groups) and, 10 youths central to efforts on ECM- to undertake a 3-day facilitated workshop on gender-transformative approaches (GTA), equipping them with tailored messages and facilitation skills to challenge harmful social norms and promote the rights of girls.

The training will involve interactive exercises, guided reflection, and collaborative action planning around GTA. Each GNBU region will be represented by 6 participants. Participants will develop action plans during the training, and return to their constituencies to cascade the learning. The training will cover: Key elements of Gender transformative programming domains, The Gender Equality Continuum, Self-Assessment & Planning Tool, The Participatory Workshop Model, Evidence and Learning Integration, and the Multi-Level Approach, among other topics.

CSO Participants from each region will be expected to adapt and contextualize the GTA toolkit<sup>12</sup> developed by UNFPA and UNICEF under the GPECM Phase II and the GNB Gender Transformative Collective Action, a CSO 7-Step Guide<sup>13</sup>, to their particular regions, due to cultural differences. To sustain capacity gains from the training and foster a culture of learning amongst participants, the project would facilitate peer clusters learning forums, exchange visits, and knowledge-sharing linking more experienced and emerging GNBU members.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/media/113101/file/GTA-facilitator-guide-2021.pdf>

<sup>13</sup>GNB [Gender-transformative collective action 7-step guide.pdf](#)

## Expected Results

<b>Enhanced Technical Capacity in Gender-Transformative Approaches (GTA):</b> 30 GNBU members, GPECM partners, and youth peer acquire in-depth knowledge, practical skills, and confidence to design, implement, and monitor programmes using GTA-responsive tools and systems.
<b>Creation of a Skilled Pool of GTA Trainers and Mentors:</b> A network of trained facilitators is established, capable of cascading GTA training and mentoring within their organizations, communities, and target districts, ensuring consistent quality and sustainability of capacity building.
<b>Strengthened Institutional and Membership Ability to Drive Norm Change:</b> Improved ability of GNBU members and GPECM partners to integrate GTA principles into their programming, policies, and advocacy, leading to more effective interventions that address harmful gender norms and advance girls' rights at individual and systemic level

**Activity 3.2: Deliver tailored budget advocacy training for 30 Champions/ budget advocates amongst GNBU members and GPECM partners to influence public resource allocation at both national and sub-national levels in at least 4 high-prevalence CEFMU districts. :**

The project will organize a tailored budget advocacy training targeting 30 selected Champions and budget advocates drawn from GNBU members and GPECM partner organizations. This training will be designed to equip participants with skills and knowledge to effectively analyze Local Government budgets, engage policymakers and elected representatives at LG level, and advocate for increased and sustained resource allocation towards ECM. The training curriculum will cover Local Government Budgeting Cycle and the processes, advocacy strategies, data use for evidence-based lobbying, and communication techniques. Implementation will involve interactive workshops conducted in-person with practical exercises focused on influencing budget decisions at national and sub-national levels. Special emphasis will be placed on advocacy in at least four high-prevalence districts, where participants will be supported to develop localized advocacy plans, engage local government officials, and monitor budget commitments to ensure that resources reach priority interventions addressing child marriage. This approach ensures that budget advocates are empowered to drive policy and financing changes tailored to the specific needs and contexts of high-burden districts

## Expected Results

<b>Enhanced Capacity of Advocates:</b> The 30 trained champions will gain in-depth knowledge and practical skills on budget processes, public finance management, and advocacy strategies specific to child marriage and adolescent girls' empowerment. They will be equipped to analyze government budgets, identify gaps, and develop evidence-based advocacy plans targeting resource allocation.
<b>Strengthened Advocacy Networks and Collaboration:</b> Training will foster stronger collaboration among GNBU members and GPECM partners, creating a coordinated network of budget advocates working cohesively at national and sub-national levels. This will also improve

information sharing, joint advocacy campaigns, and collective influence on policy and budget decisions.

**Increased Influence on Public Resource Allocation:** Trained advocates will actively engage government officials and decision-makers in at least 4 high-prevalence CEFMU districts, effectively influencing the prioritization and increased allocation of public resources towards interventions that end child marriage and support adolescent girls. This will also contribute to more responsive and adequately funded local and national budgets addressing child marriage and related issues.

**Activity 3.3** *Hold quarterly in-person and Virtual coordination meetings of the GNBU Steering Committee for coordination and monitoring of project progress*

Each quarter, the GNBU Secretariat (project team) will prepare an agenda and share relevant progress reports, data, and discussion points with the steering committee members in advance to ensure productive engagement. In-person meetings will be hosted at a designated central venue to facilitate face-to-face dialogue, relationship building, and collaborative problem-solving, while virtual sessions will be held via secure online platforms to enhance participation for members unable to attend physically. These meetings will serve as a structured platform for reviewing project achievements against planned targets, identifying challenges, sharing lessons learned, and agreeing on actionable next steps. Documentation of discussions and decisions will be compiled in meeting minutes, which will be circulated to all members to ensure accountability and follow-up on agreed actions.

**Expected Results**

**Improved Coordination and Decision-Making** – The Steering Committee will meet quarterly to exchange updates, address challenges encountered along project implementation, and align strategies, leading to more timely and informed project decisions.

**Enhanced Monitoring and Accountability** – Quarterly reviews will provide structured opportunities for GNBU leadership and GPECM partners to assess progress against targets, identify gaps, and recommend corrective actions for better project performance.

**Strengthened Stakeholder Engagement and Commitment** – Regular in-person and virtual interactions will foster stronger relationships among GNBU and GPECM partners, increase ownership of project outcomes, and maintain momentum toward shared goals

**Activity 3.4.** *Develop and disseminate learning products such as policy briefs, case studies, and success stories in addressing harmful gender norms and practices.*

Information, Education, and Communication materials will be produced to aid in promoting behavioral change aimed at enhancing public knowledge outcomes on ECM, and empowering communities to become agents of change in the fight against CM and TP. Media engagements will also promote positive messaging on the rights of girls and benefits of addressing child marriage; and positive masculinity and peer mentorship, including male gender advocates or male against ECM advocates mentoring other men. The IEC/SBCC materials to be produced will include posters, fliers, information packs, spot messages, stickers, T-shirts, brochures.

**Expected Results**

<b>Improved policy and program influence</b> through the use of targeted policy briefs that provide actionable recommendations
<b>Strengthened advocacy efforts</b> with practical examples and success stories that can be used to engage cultural, religious, and political leaders
<b>Replication and scaling of successful gender transformative interventions</b> informed by documented best practices and lessons learned.

**Activity 3.5** *Facilitate quarterly Regional reflection and coordination Meetings involving GNBU, UNICEF and GPECM Partners, to enhance collaboration, influence policy and shared response to ECM.*

Virtual convening will be facilitated, and attended by GNBU steering committee members, together with other key partners including UNICEF, GPECM partners, LG representatives and MoGLSD project focal person. These meetings will mainly focus on sharing reflective insights, and fostering a culture of collective learning and adaptability. Such meetings are hoped to enhance team cohesion and collaborative problem-solving. They are also intended to ensure that everyone knows exactly what they are supposed to be doing and how to perform their particular tasks towards ECM. These meetings are anticipated to be attended by an average of 40 participants in each region (average of 156 participants per year).

**Expected Results**

<b>Strengthened learning</b> and sharing of progress, challenges, and emerging good practices to inform adaptive programming
<b>Strengthened accountability</b> , with tracking and follow-up mechanisms for commitments and actions agreed upon during reflection meetings
<b>Greater stakeholder participation</b> , with the inclusion of key stakeholders such as local governments, cultural/religious leaders, youth, and media in coordinated efforts to end child marriage at national and sub national level.

**Activity 3.6:** *Conduct two virtual learning exchanges with Girls Not Brides Malawi on advocacy best practices and key learnings in ECM efforts*

The project will facilitate a series of virtual learning exchanges between GNBU member organizations in Uganda and Girls Not Brides Malawi to share advocacy best practices, lessons learned, and innovative approaches in ending child marriage (ECM). These sessions will provide a platform for peer-to-peer learning on effective policy engagement, working with traditional and religious leaders, youth-led advocacy, and GTA advocacy strategies. The exchanges will also promote cross-country collaboration and inform the adaptation of successful interventions within the Ugandan context.

The learning sessions are anticipated to attract up to 102 participants, each year. Two annual learning exchanges will be conducted.

**Expected Results**

<b>Documented best practices and lessons learned</b> from Malawi’s ECM advocacy efforts, with relevance and adaptability to the Ugandan context
<b>Increased capacity and confidence of GNBU members</b> to apply innovative and context-sensitive advocacy tools and messaging in their ECM campaigns
<b>Improved cross-country collaboration and peer learning</b> between Girls Not Brides Uganda and Malawi, fostering solidarity and shared strategies in the regional ECM movement.
<b>Enhanced knowledge and skills among GNBU member organizations</b> on effective advocacy strategies and approaches for ending child marriage, drawn from the Malawi experience

**Activity 3.7. Facilitate a virtual learning circle to share insights, challenges, and innovations drawn from project implementation—to strengthen gender-transformative strategies and amplify collective advocacy.**

GNBU leadership (secretariat) will leverage online presence as a learning tool. A user-friendly website for its members and stakeholders will be maintained by easing its navigation and improved page speed. Maintaining the GNBU website will also provide a central, easily accessible platform for disseminating learning briefs, evidence, and other knowledge products generated during project implementation. By regularly updating the website with well-organized resources, case studies, research findings, and multimedia content, GNBU will ensure that stakeholders—including policymakers, partners, community leaders, and the public—have timely access to credible and actionable information. This digital presence will also enhance transparency, facilitate knowledge sharing across districts and sectors, and amplify advocacy messages, allowing evidence and success stories to reach a wider audience beyond physical project locations. Additionally, the website will serve as a repository for best practices, enabling continued reference and use long after specific project activities have ended; and shall optimize the site for mobile phone users as well. GNBU will pick lessons from the National Coalition on Ending Child Marriage in Nigeria, which has successfully used media to advance the cause to ECM.

**Expected Results**

<b>Increased visibility and engagement</b> across GNBU social media platforms, with consistent and targeted content that amplifies advocacy messages, campaign milestones, and member activities.
<b>Enhanced stakeholder communication and public outreach</b> through interactive features such as feedback forms, media galleries, and embedded multimedia content.
<b>Improved digital capacity of GNBU secretariat and member organizations</b> to manage and sustain online platforms effectively.

**ANNEXES**

- Annex 1 - Gender at Work Framework plus Ecosystems-wide approach
- Annex 2 – Power Analysis Grid
- Annex 3- Two-year Implementation Plan
- Annex 4- Safeguarding Risk Assessment template
- Annex 5 - Management and Staffing Plan

Appendix 4a - MEL Plan & MEL Log Frame

Appendix 4- Application template

Appendix 5 - Detailed Budget template