

Toolkit: Context analysis on child marriage in crises and forced displacement settings

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Acronyms

ACASI	audio computer–assisted self–interview
AOR	Area of responsibility
CASI	computer–assisted self–interview
CEFMU	child, early and forced marriage and union(s)
CP	child protection
CPiE	child protection in emergencies
FGD	focus group discussion
FPAR	Feminist Participatory Action Research
FSL	food security and livelihoods
GBV	gender–based violence
IDP	internally displaced person(s) / people
IRB	institutional review board
KII	key informant interview
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MHPSS	mental health and psychosocial support
MOU	memorandum of understanding
OCHA	(United Nations) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PSEA	protection from sexual exploitation and abuse
SRHR	sexual and reproductive health and rights
TOR	terms of reference
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
WHO	World Health Organization
WRC	Women’s Refugee Commission
WWNK–CM	What We Need to Know – Child Marriage

Section A: About this toolkit

This toolkit provides options and guidance for conducting a context analysis to understand more deeply the practice of child marriage and the capacity of current staffing and programmes to respond to it in humanitarian settings. The key purpose of conducting a context analysis on child marriage is to inform existing programming and service delivery, as well as to define future prevention and response work that is grounded in the operational reality. Context analyses also help to fulfil advocacy purposes to ensure appropriate prioritisation among actors and donors based on the scale and impact of child marriage.

As child marriage is a form of gender-based violence (GBV) and a practice often associated to traditional, cultural, religious and/or ancestral practices, attempts to discuss the practice, behaviours or attitudes can often be highly sensitive. As such, it was felt necessary to create additional guidance for staff to navigate these nuances in a safe and ethical way.

Designed to be applied in different humanitarian contexts, the toolkit offers a tiered approach to conducting a context analysis depending on the capacities, resources and existing evidence base in your setting.

There is a special focus on the unique factors associated with refugee and displacement settings. The toolkit is intended to complement existing guidance and standards on how to conduct quality and ethical data collection, literature reviews, needs assessments or gender analyses
(See key reference documents)

The contents of the toolkit can be taken and applied in a number of ways for various assessments or studies for example, the approach, and tools can be used as part of Inter-Agency situational analyses or humanitarian needs overviews (HNOs). Alternatively it can be taken to conduct stand-alone context analysis on child marriage.

The toolkit is arranged in sections:

Section A

Provides background information on conducting a child marriage context analysis.

Section B

Details the process for conducting the context analysis.

Section C

Lists available tools and resources to be used in the process.

Overview

The toolkit leverages a conceptual framework of four **Guiding Principles** – Intersectionality, Girl-responsiveness, Do No Harm, Socio-ecological model. These principles inform the way we approach the context analysis and how we interact with the data.

There is also the **What We Need to Know About Child Marriage Tool** which informs and structures the information we may need to gather. This tool looks at all aspects surrounding the practice of child marriage across socio-ecological domains as well as unique factors related to the particular crisis and humanitarian response. It also directs you to key sources of information.

Child marriage is a complex practice – and a form of gender-based violence. It is driven by a range of push and pull factors. These factors may change depending on different population sub-groups, across geographic locations of the same population groups, or at different moments during a crisis.

The goal of conducting a context analysis is to take a snapshot of the risk and protective factors that are influencing families' and girls' decision making around child marriage. The analysis can also be adapted to assess the capacity of current programming and services as well as the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of staff. The analysis will change over time and should be regularly updated in order to remain accurate and reliable as an evidence base for strategic decisions.

Who should use this toolkit

This toolkit is for humanitarian actors working in all types of humanitarian crises, with special attention paid to the unique factors found in refugee and displacement contexts. It is for staff who want to understand the practice of child marriage within their specific setting and how to begin or improve service delivery for girls and their families affected by child marriage.

The toolkit has been developed with child protection and gender-based violence (GBV) actors in mind, but it has wider applicability, for example for education, health or food security and livelihoods (FSL) sectors.

Once completed, the findings of the context analyses should be used to inform future targeted prevention and response work, as well as to integrate key mitigation measures into humanitarian action.

Navigating the toolkit

This toolkit includes lots of tools and templates for you to use and adapt to conduct your context analysis. In **Section B**, the relevant tools for each step of the context analysis process are listed for ease. You can find a full list of all tools and templates in **Section C**.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

Adolescent participation in UNICEF monitoring and evaluation, UNICEF, 2019, [available here](#)

Standards for enhancing meaningful engagement of youth in evaluation, UNFPA, EvalYouth Global Network and Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation, 2023, [available here](#)

There are links throughout the toolkit to further reading or additional guidance. These can be found in boxes outlined in blue.

You will also find checklists and tips scattered throughout Section B.



Wherever you find **pink text**, this tells you that there is a hyperlink or tool imbedded that you can click on it to access it.

You can also find the steps listed on the right side of the page in Section B to help to keep track of where you are in the context analysis process.

STEP 1
STEP 2
STEP 3
STEP 4
STEP 5

Guiding principles underpinning the toolkit

When conducting context analysis on child marriage, we want staff to draw on four Guiding Principles below which draw on key areas of consideration. These Guiding Principles are based on programmatic work and the Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) framework. You can read more about how to leverage the FPAR framework in your work [here](#).

Intersectionality

Intersectional feminist theory emphasises gender as a critical power differential that structures social interactions, relations and institutions in every community and country. It enables an examination of how various systems of oppression overlap and interact with sexism and shape people's life choices, access to resources and opportunities. This means that when we take into consideration the power dynamics and hierarchies that are embedded within all social and gender-based norms, we can see how they intersect with child marriage and decision making. By expanding our view from only looking at gender inequality, we give space to understand how gender intersects with other factors such as caste, age, race, ethnicity, disability and sexuality to marginalise further certain groups of girls and increase their vulnerability to child marriage. Taking an intersectional approach allows for a deeper understanding of the drivers of child marriage and a contextualised approach to identifying ways forward. Grounding our work through a lens of intersectionality and valuing the knowledge and capacity of communities, we can centre in on the solutions that girls and their communities want. We can help in the process of identifying, designing and implementing but we must allow and provide the safe space for communities to take ownership to shift harmful norms.

An aim of the context analysis is that it should seek as an outcome to reconstruct discriminatory power imbalances

(such as biases and power imbalances within the team involved) both in the process used and in the expected results and recommended actions. In this way, we challenge and shift gendered sources of personal, political and structural power. Recommendations should apply an intersectional lens to ensure that the complex and overlapping forms of discrimination have been well considered and do not reproduce inequality, and that they speak to the different forms and types of intersectional discrimination.

Girl-responsiveness

All around the world, adolescent girls face unequal power dynamics that affect their everyday lives. This impacts on their capacity to get the support they need, and to make their own decisions about various aspects of their lives. These structural inequalities shape their ability to claim their rights, such as the right to be listened to; to access quality education and information, support services and community spaces; to make decisions about their own bodies; or to live free from violence. In times of crisis or displacement these inequalities get exacerbated. Girls are too often on the front lines of crises. Yet their voices are discounted or unheard, their safety, economic security, education, health and wellbeing are under threat, and they have little access to protection systems and safety nets [1–5].

If we fail to involve girls in the design and delivery of programmes and services that are intended for them, we risk ending up with ineffective projects and poorly spent resources. Failure to involve girls can also lead to the implementation of unsafe activities or actions that may reinforce harmful norms and attitudes that perpetuate, encourage and condone child marriage. Ultimately this makes girls more vulnerable. By not using the opportunity to shift the power to girls we also risk being in conflict with our own guiding principles, minimum standards, accountability to affected populations and ultimately, our actions risk *doing more harm*.



When we engage girls, we have a better chance of developing impactful and valued projects that can bring about change. It is an approach that, as much as is possible and feasible, actively includes girls in figuring out the “what”, “where”, “when”, “why” and “how” of that support. Involving girls from the very beginning offers them an opportunity to be part of the positive changes taking place in their communities – they can act as agents of change in their own lives. Youth engagement also contributes to girls’ personal development and can contribute to increasing their skills, empowerment and motivation to stand up for their rights and speak out.

Do No Harm

The “do no harm” principle means ensuring that any action does not negatively impact on access to and protection of any persons of concern. When conducting a context analysis on child marriage, particular attention should be paid to the impact of any activity on all adolescent girls, as well as reviewing possible knock-on effects from their supportive environment such as siblings, parents and caregivers, family members or men and boys in the community, as well as current programmes, staff and the organisation.

Furthermore, the Do No Harm principle entails critically assessing if interactions and activities planned with the

community are meaningful, necessary and participatory. It also involves drawing from existing community practices and knowledge and, where available, enhancing local capacity and greater downward accountability. In practical terms, this means being sure that primary data collection is necessary and the data collection process will not put girls, their families or staff at risk of potential harm or backlash. When publishing or sharing findings, it requires that all participants remain unidentifiable.

Socio-ecological model

A socio-ecological approach involves designing an integrated process which considers the complex interplay between individuals, relationships (family and peers), community, societal and crisis-level factors. These levels are nested within each other to show their interrelatedness, but in reality, these levels are sometimes not quite so easy to define due to their interrelatedness. Because we are focused on child marriage in humanitarian crisis settings, we will also consider the broader humanitarian environment as a level. This will accordingly account for the impact that the humanitarian response has on risks of child marriage or on protective factors against it. The use of a socio-ecological approach helps to identify factors and interconnections that influence child development and wellbeing. It enables more holistic systems-thinking to be applied to a particular issue [6].

The socio-ecological model acknowledges that:

- adolescents actively participate in the protection and wellbeing of themselves and their peers;
- adolescents are mostly raised in families, but sometimes this layer includes other close relations;
- families are nested in communities;
- communities form the wider societies;
- the presence of humanitarian actors adds new risks and protective factors for the community.

We use this approach because it helps to centre in on the individual who is experiencing child marriage. It looks at all the different challenges, possible mitigations and solutions to support and protect her. It also encourages us to coordinate and integrate multi-layered actions with other sectors by holistically identifying a range of diverse influences on child marriage decision making.

Research and years of work in preventing and responding to child marriage have built an evidence base for multi-sectoral and multi-level approaches [7–10]. In a recent analysis of available programme evaluations, it was found that working across the individual, community, service provision and policy levels can be effective in delaying marriage and reducing adolescent pregnancy, even among the girls who have been most marginalised [8].

There is no single solution for ending child marriage. However, the application of multi-sectoral and holistic

strategies can bring tangible results in ending the practice. The rights violations of child marriage should not be addressed in isolation, but within a broader framework of changing laws and policies, providing and strengthening accessible services, mobilising families and communities, and supporting girls' empowerment [8–11]. Using this approach in our context analyses can help to build more evidence on the gaps and challenges so we can then work to address them in humanitarian programming, even if there are limitations compared with longer-term programming.

What We Need to Know about Child Marriage: Summary

The **What We Need to Know about Child Marriage (WWNK-CM)** tool helps you to think through the different information you may want to gather to inform your context analysis. Some of it you may already have – for example, from situational or gender analyses, while other information you may need to collect from other sectors or through targeted primary data collection.

This tool is structured using an adapted socio-ecological model and is intended to inform and structure the information we may need to gather. The tool maps out various risk and protective factors at the individual, family, societal and humanitarian response levels, so as to capture the circumstances surrounding child marriage. It also supports you to unpack harmful socio-cultural and gender

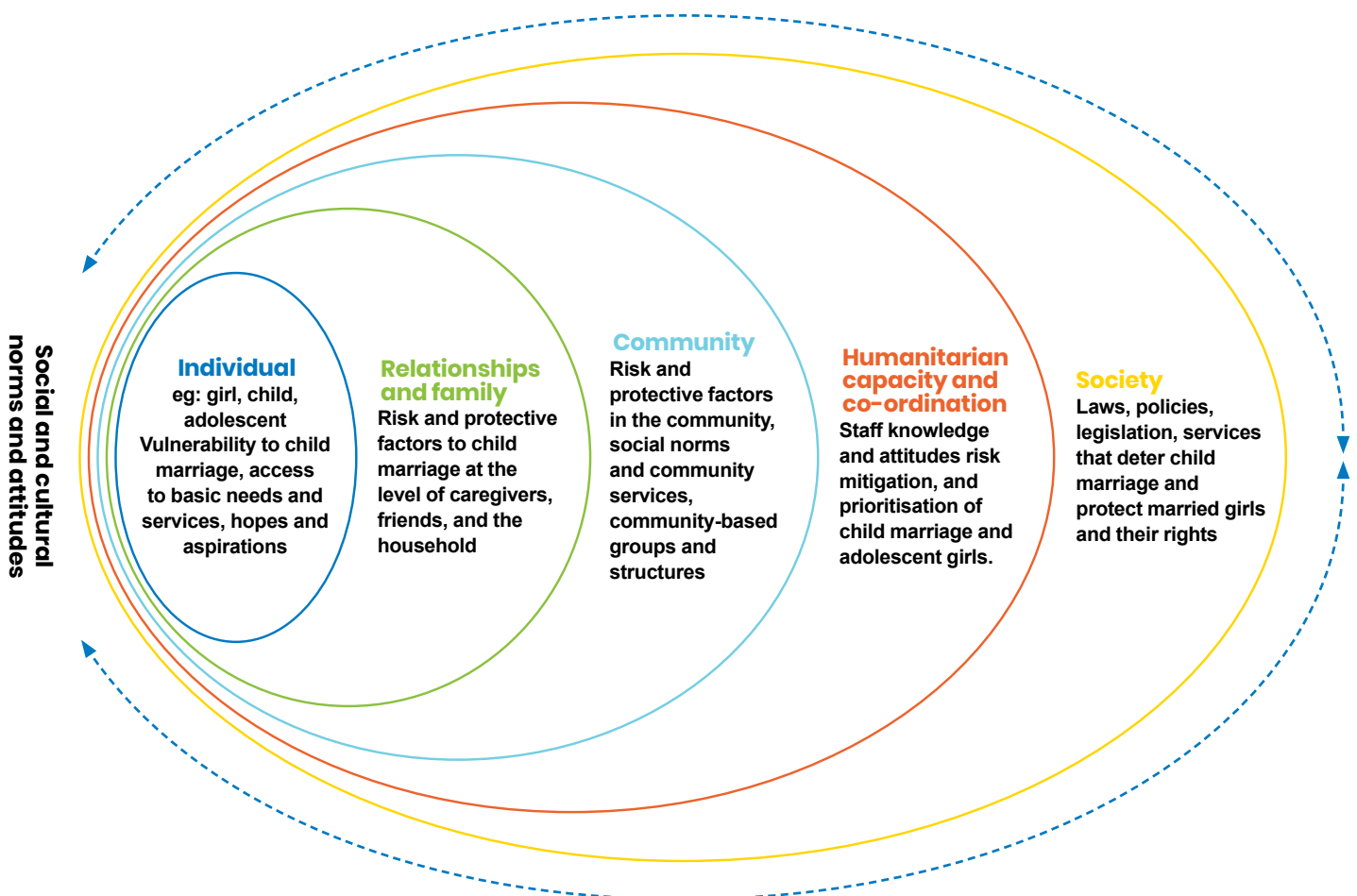


Table: Summary version of the WWNK-CM tool

Level	What We Need to Know about Child Marriage
<p>Individual e.g. girl / child</p> <p>Vulnerability to child marriage, access to basic needs and services, hopes and aspirations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerability profile of children and adolescents and their family vis-à-vis child marriage • What protection concerns are girls facing? Is this different for boys? • Who is at risk of child marriage and why? • Who is already married or has experienced marriage (i.e. “ever-married”)? Why did they get married? Was the marriage self-initiated or forced by others? What capacities or barriers do ever-married girls face in accessing services and support? • Impacts of child marriage on girls (and/or boys), early pregnancy and/or motherhood, education and access to rights and registration. • Participation and decision-making power of adolescents, especially girls.
<p>Relationships and family</p> <p>Risk and protective factors at the level of caregivers and the family</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are girls married to (spouse profile)? • What factors push parents/caregivers to practise child marriage? For example, household access to food security and livelihoods to meet basic needs including income-generating opportunities for parents/caregivers or spouse. • Safety of the home environment. • Social and gender norms: Expectations and values placed on girl children versus boy children, including caregivers’ attitudes to education, employment, marriage and relationships. • Influences of peers on decision making in favour of or against child marriage, such as idealising marriage, peer group engaging in marriage practices or not.
<p>Community</p> <p>Risk and protective factors in the community environment, social norms and community services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to information on the benefits of delaying marriage and availability of alternatives to marriage for girls. • Perspectives and rewards for community leadership (community, administrative, religious leaders) to engage in or deter child marriage. • Community capacities and attitudes to protect girls from child marriage – e.g. support structures. • Capacities and attitudes of community-level services to support at-risk and ever-married girls and their families. • Social and gender norms and cultural practices that influence the acceptability of child marriage, such as practices that may be associated with puberty, menstruation or other markers of adolescence and/or transition to adulthood.
<p>Humanitarian capacity and coordination</p> <p>Staff knowledge and attitudes risk mitigation, and prioritisation of child marriage and adolescent girls.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shifts in trends of child marriage practices and decision making, now vs before the crisis. • Capacity of the humanitarian response and coordination to identify and address risks associated with the delivery of aid and child marriage and include girls who are married, pregnant and/or young mothers. • Programme and practitioner attitudes and knowledge to support all adolescent girls. • What barriers do ever-married girls face in accessing services and support? • Status of refugee protection processes with cases of child marriage. • Prioritisation and visibility of tackling child marriage as a major protection concern across the sectors and among donors and government.
<p>Society</p> <p>Laws, policies, legislation, services and enabling environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child marriage policy and legislation at national and regional level including legal age of marriage and exemptions, legal age of consent to sex, married and pregnant girls’ access to education. • Legal framework and enforcement of laws and rights for refugee and/or displaced communities. • Identification of national organisations and action plans to tackle child marriage and their capacity to do so. • Formal and informal marriage registration and ceremony processes, main strengths and gaps. • Status of (child) marriage and birth registration and information management systems.

Hoodo, 38, is unable to feed her six children most days



norms, as well as to identify new risks and opportunities arising as a result of the crisis and response. This guides the user to look holistically at the practice of child marriage. It should help you to identify unique factors and direct you to missing information.

You do not need to structure your report findings according to this framework – i.e. per domain – but in analysing the information this way it will help to tease out strategies and interventions for programming based on target groups.

Above is a summary version of the WWNK-CM tool – **the full tool can be found here**. You **do not need to collect all the information** listed in the WWNK-CM tool. Not everything will be relevant for your setting or at that given time. It is intended as a guide to help in your planning. You can focus on a few areas of interest or specific gaps or known concerns – for example, education and livelihoods or staff training and transformation or boys affected by child marriage.

Equally, you may want to look at all areas in depth if you have the resources for a more comprehensive context analysis. It is intended as a guide and to help in your planning.

You can find a blank version of the grid as a guide to help you map out the key information you are missing. Use this tool to think through with your team your main objective, the key areas of investigation, what information you already have, and what is missing.

Some helpful considerations when using the WWNK-CM tool are:

- Social norms and gender-based norms run through all the domains of the socio-ecological model. They cannot be separated into one domain. Consider how you want to structure this in your process.
- Can you identify changes in the patterns of decision making or the scale of child marriage prior to the crisis compared to now?
- What are the push and pull factors that drive child marriage decision-making practices and/or other practices or norms connected with marriage, such as practices that may be associated with puberty, menstruation and other markers of initiation into adulthood? Have these changed since the crisis began?
- Think about gendered roles and responsibilities, decision-making power and access to services such as education for girls and boys.
- What capacity, knowledge, resources and interest do the various sectors – child protection (CP), gender-based violence (GBV) and other sectors – have to prevent and respond to child marriage? Are there any barriers to the uptake of tackling child marriage from within the sector?
- Compounding forms of child protection and GBV risks such as the linkages between child marriage and children associated with armed forces and groups (CAAFAG), or related to family separation

Remember! Adolescents are not an homogenous group. Always use an intersectional lens and ask, *How does group X compare to...?* For example:

- Girls compared to boys
- People with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities
- Younger girls (10-14) and older adolescent girls (15-19)
- Younger boys (10-14) and older adolescent boys (15-19)
- Ever-married girls (e.g. girls who have been married, divorced, or widowed) or young mothers compared to girls who are not married or mothers
- Refugee, migrant, displaced, compared with host communities
- Children and adolescents with different types of disabilities.

Key reference documents

This toolkit was pilot testing in three different country locations and the lessons learned have led to an updated version. Below is a list of key reference documents that were used to inform this toolkit. Additional resources have been compiled in Section C that may further support the design and analysis of your context analysis.

Plan International	The Adolescent Programming Toolkit Link here
WRC, UNFPA and UNICEF	A Practitioner's Guide to the Ethical Conduct of Research on Child Marriage in Humanitarian Settings Link here
Save the Children	The Gender and Power Analysis Toolkit (GAP) Link here



Clarita, 14; Sonia, 20, and Shirley, 17, are leadership school members

Section B: Conducting the context analysis

A context analysis is a form of research. It is a study that can either be done quickly and with limited resources, or it can be scaled up to be more comprehensive and involve a high number of research participants. This step-by-step guide takes you through some key considerations for doing a context analysis to explore how child marriage is being practised and impacted by a given crisis or displacement setting.

You may decide to conduct only a literature review, or you may identify a gap in the information and have available resources and capacity to complement the literature review with primary data collection among adolescents, community stakeholders or practitioners.

This section presents simple steps to conduct a context analysis on child marriage. It will help you plan, collect and analyse information in order to take more informed decisions regarding programming, service delivery, advocacy or capacity building for staff to tackle child marriage in your context. This guide will take you through the following five steps. Note that Step 3 is only relevant if you plan to conduct primary data collection.

- **Step 1** – Decide the scope of your context analysis
- **Step 2** – Conduct literature review
- **Step 3** – Collect primary data *OPTIONAL*
- **Step 4** – Analyse and validate data
- **Step 5** – Publish and disseminate context analysis

Although this guidance is presented as a step-by-step linear process, the design and implementation of a context analysis in practice often happens in a non-linear way. You will need to think about each aspect listed here but not necessarily in this exact order. Or you may need to revisit some steps as your process moves forward and the availability of data and information becomes clearer.

Step 1: Decide the scope of your context analysis

Your context analysis will depend on the resources and capacity you have available. You can conduct a rapid context analysis or an in-depth analysis with primary data collection. In this section you will find tools to help decide on the approach that best fits your requirements.

Below is an overview of possible ways to deepen the investigation of your context analysis depending on various factors or limitations. The four tiers shown will be explained in more detail in the subsequent steps. The first tier to conduct a literature review is mandatory unless a literature review on child marriage was conducted in your context within the past 12 months and no major changes in the crisis or context dynamics have occurred.

Available tools and templates under this step:



- **Tool 1. What We Need to Know Framework**
- **Tool 2. Example research questions**
- **Tool 3. Budget considerations**
- **Template 1. Terms of Reference**
- **Template 2. Workplan**
- **Template 3. Budget**
- **Template 4. Identifying the core team**

1.1 Decision framework

In order to decide which add-ons are right for you, the following table gives an overview of some factors to consider. Note that, if you are considering collecting primary data from young and/or vulnerable groups, keep in mind that ethical clearance, logistics and other special considerations are likely to be resource and time intensive and thus must be included in the decision on whether or not to collect primary data. More information on ethical clearance can be found in

Step 3

Clementine, 19, Malawi



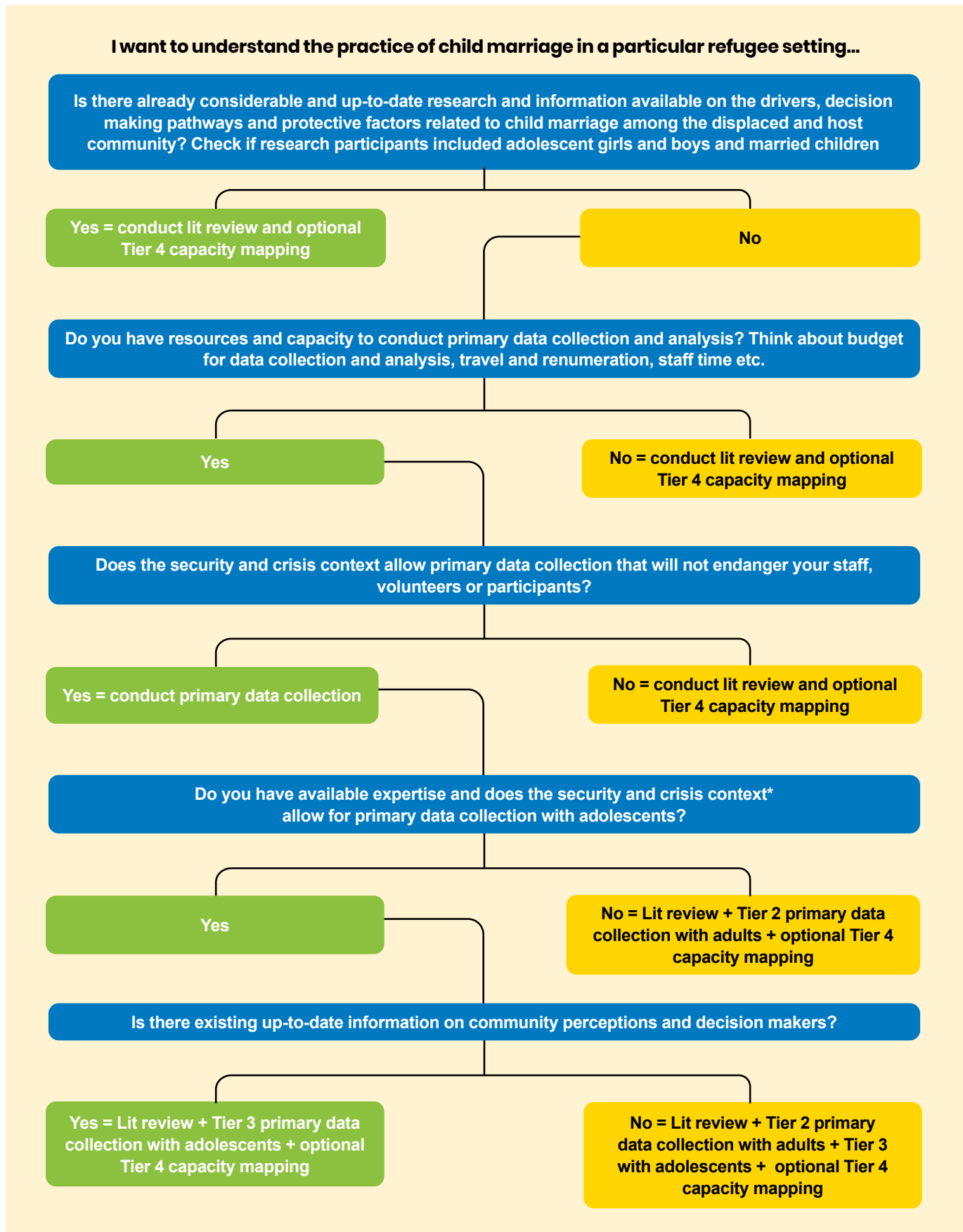
Table: Overview and characteristics of context analysis methods

Tier#/Method	Tier 1: Literature review	Tier 2: Primary data collection with adults	Tier 3: Primary data collection with adolescents	Tier 4: CP and GBV capacity mapping
Importance	Essential	Add-on	Add-on	Add-on
Use	Forms the basis of all context analysis and uses the least resources.	You can gather information to fill gaps from influential people around girls who may be decision makers on child marriage. In acute or highly sensitive settings you may consider speaking to young women aged 19 to 25 who were married as children, as a proxy where access to adolescents is restricted or unsafe.	In settings where little secondary data is available from participatory data collection with adolescents, it is advisable to speak directly with adolescents about their perspectives and solutions to the problems they are facing. Requires resources and strong safeguarding and risk mitigation processes.	In order to ground the context analysis in the reality of the response capacity, undertaking a capacity assessment among key sectors is advisable. This will also help when developing recommendations and follow-up actions for staff development and advocacy efforts.
Phase of crisis	Any phase or time	Minimum basic lifesaving services are in place*	Minimum basic lifesaving services are in place that may or may not be adolescent-focused / friendly*	Minimum basic lifesaving services are in place and services have been operating for at least six months
Financial resources requirements	Low Limited resources required: mainly staff time	Medium Moderate resources and skills available to support primary data collection; technical staff time for in-depth analysis; and for community validation workshop / feedback	Medium Moderate resources and skills available to support primary data collection with children and adolescents; technical staff time for in-depth analysis; and for community validation workshop / feedback	High Resources and skills available to support primary data collection with staff and peers – includes technical staff time for in-depth analysis; and for stakeholder validation workshop
Capacity: human resources and skills	Medium Technical support for data analysis	Medium Focal point with primary data collection and analysis experience Technical support for data analysis	High Focal point with experience in primary data collection and analysis with adolescents Technical support for data analysis	High Technical focal point with experience in primary data collection and analysis among peers and with a strong understanding of the requirements for child marriage programming
Level of information available	Can be done with limited or extensive sources of information	Some existing information but no comprehensive up-to-date analysis	Existing information on child marriage has limited or no consultations with adolescents or may be out of date	Out-of-date or limited capacity or programme mappings available

*Consultations are not recommended in settings where lifesaving services are not yet in place in case of a disclosure that requires a clinical management of rape within 72 hours of disclosure. Be sure to be able to refer participants before starting data collection.

1.2 Scope decision tree

If you are still unsure about which add-ons would best suit your needs, especially regarding the collection of primary data, this decision tree may help.



1.3 Define objectives and research questions

You should consider carefully the meaning of every term you use in your context analysis objective and research questions. If necessary, define these somewhere in your documentation such as in the Terms of Reference.

1.3.1 Objectives

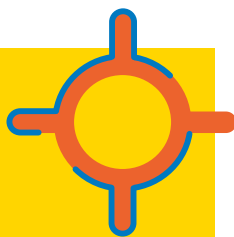
Your research objective(s) should state what the context analysis is aiming to achieve and make clear why you are doing this piece of work. It is recommended that you establish one or two clear, focused and realistic objectives, which state the main aims of your research. Depending on the size and scope of the context analysis, you could also develop between two and four detailed sub-objectives which should follow from the main one(s).

Keep these narrow and cover only those areas you really want to know about. It is common here to try to cover too many topics or to keep one topic too broad, which can reduce the quality of the research. More questions mean more data will need to be collected so try to be succinct in what you want to achieve.

Clear, focused and realistic objectives are one of the most important aspects in producing good quality research. You may want to use the following questions to help guide you during these stages:

- What is the purpose of the context analysis?
- Do you have a theory that you need to test?
- Will you look into what is going on (descriptive research)? Or are you more focused on why is it going on (explanatory research)?
- What kind(s) of information will you need in order to complete this research successfully? Will you be able to gather this information based on your resources?

Examples of different context analysis objective(s)



This context analysis ...

- aims to find out how the conflict in northeast Nigeria has affected decision making around child marriage, and if delivering cash-based interventions will better enable girls and their families to avoid resorting to child marriage practices;
- aims to develop an evidence-based capacity-building plan to improve the response to child marriage in Tigray, Ethiopia, with special attention to supporting girls already married and young mothers;
- aims to unpack the protective factors and risks to child marriage that face adolescents in the Rohingya Refugee Response in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, to better inform and tailor programming.



Parmin*, 13, was nearly married when she was 12 years old.

STEP 1

STEP 2

STEP 3

STEP 4

STEP 5

1.3.2 Research questions

Developing research questions is an important part of a successful research initiative. Research questions should precisely define the scope of the project. There cannot be good research without focused, clear and appropriate questions which should also indicate what you would like to know more about by the end of the research project. You will want to return to your research questions at the end of the research in order to answer them in your conclusion.

Research questions help to narrow down your topic. Without questions the research is likely to be unfocused and can lead to unnecessary and unhelpful data collection. The scope of a research project is determined by time, resources and staff constraints, so keep this in mind when you develop your research questions. Research questions will also define what data you need to collect and which methods you will use to analyse the data. Therefore, developing your research questions goes hand-in-hand with developing your methodology and data collection tools.

It is better to answer fewer questions robustly than to answer more questions but only briefly. We recommend that you try to limit your research to around three to five questions.

Your research questions should flow from the research objective(s) and inform the literature review. You may also want to amend your research questions following the literature review, depending on what information is available.

Depending on the purposes of your project, questions might begin with “what”, “why”, “which” or “how”. There are three types of questions to consider. Your context analysis may have a core set of questions that address all three types of question.

Table: Question types and example objectives

Question type	Description	Example
Descriptive	What is going on or what exists	A context analysis looking at the prevalence and impact of child marriage on adolescent boys among refugee populations in Mali.
Relational	The relationships between two or more variables	A context analysis that looks at the experiences of married adolescent girls living in displacement camps in Niger and among the host community. This is looking at the relationship between age, gender, displacement and marital status.
Causal	Whether one or more variables causes or affects one or more outcome variables	A context analysis that looks at whether cyclone X affected decision making around child marriage among communities living in the Nampula region of Mozambique. The cyclone is the cause and the study would look at whether it changed the rates of child marriage as a result.

Example objective and questions

Objective	The proposed research will help to understand the needs and priorities of adolescent girls in selected communities in Chiredzi District, Zimbabwe, an area affected by extreme food insecurity. The overall goal is to develop a tailored girl-led, community-grounded approach to child marriage prevention and response that transforms the role of girls, women and their communities from being beneficiaries of programmes to becoming engaged and empowered leaders. To contribute to this goal, the proposed research includes a mixed-methods participatory research study design.
Research questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the needs and priorities of adolescent girls living in selected communities in Chiredzi District? • What are the key drivers of child marriage in these communities? • What assets and adaptive capacities within adolescents and their families promote risk mitigation and alternatives to child marriage? • How do existing programmes and services in Chiredzi District respond to the needs of adolescent girls? • What are the barriers preventing adolescent girls from accessing and utilising existing adolescent programming?

You can also run your research questions through the checklist below.

1.4 Develop your terms of reference

The terms of reference (TOR) captures the agreed concepts and approach. It helps to identify the right roles and responsibilities for everyone who needs to be involved, the objective of the task, the methodology, ethics, deliverables or outcomes and the timeline among other things like dissemination plans for final reports. The TOR should clarify the process as much as possible for everyone involved and manage expectations to stay on track from the start.

Use Step 1 to help define the TOR – you can use the Template 1. Terms of Reference to help guide you. You may also find that thinking through all of the steps in the process first will help you to fully outline the process in the TOR to arrive at your final plan.

TORs must be individually tailored to each project and the information needs of each context analysis, so two TORs will never look the same. You should develop a TOR even if you do not intend to hire an external consultant or partner. You should consider it as your roadmap or key planning document to keep you organised and to maintain clarity.

Research question checklist:

Is your question clear and focused?

Is the research question researchable?
Consider the available timeframe and the required resources.

Is the methodology that is required to answer the research question feasible?

Is the methodology that is required to answer the research question ethical and can you ensure safeguarding policies?

Is the research question too broad or too narrow?

Finally, does your research question pass the “so what?” test? You should be able to answer why the question matters. If you can’t do this then the question may need to be rephrased.

1.5 Form the core team

You should identify a focal point to coordinate and manage the context analysis process within the team. No matter which data collection methods you choose, you should also consider engaging the following colleagues, as required and available in your setting.

Table: Core team roles

ESSENTIAL One person should act as focal point	Specific technical staff	If conducting primary data collection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GBV specialist ● CP specialist ● Gender specialist ● Safeguarding / PSEA specialist ● M&E specialist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Relevant technical specialists – e.g. education, SRHR, MHPSS, FSL, based on the focus of the research questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Data collectors: consider their age / sex / linguistics / ethnicity / cultural background ● Translators / cultural mediators: consider their sex / age / cultural background / professional experience compared to a community translator ● Note takers: consider their sex / cultural background
At least two of the above staff should be directly involved in or be leading the context analysis. Others would add additional support to the analysis.		Community translators are likely less bound by professional discretion and may not be as trusted as non-community member translators. You may need to adjust your lines of inquiry in these cases.

Make sure that you plan and budget for adequate staff time to be part of the context analysis process – including data collectors, note takers, facilitators and community volunteers involved in the process. This is particularly relevant when designing tools and analysing the data, which can often be more time-consuming than expected. You will need additional time and capacity if the context analysis is taking place in collaboration with external agencies or organisations.

1.5.1 Identifying the data collection team

UNICEF, UNFPA, Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) and Johns Hopkins University note a few considerations when seeking out the data collection team, based on large-scale studies that they conducted across the world on child marriage in humanitarian settings [12].

Participants who are going to discuss a sensitive topic such as child marriage should feel as comfortable as possible with the person doing the data collection, as well as any note taker or translator who may be present. The best way to ensure this is by **recruiting data collectors who share similar demographics and identifiers with the study population**. These characteristics may include language, age, gender, place of origin, ethnicity or religion.

Child marriage is a form of GBV given that the root cause is gender inequality and unequal power in relationships based on a person's sex. As such, when researching child marriage, the data collection team's sex, gender, age is particularly important for building trust, a feeling of safety and establishing a rapport with respondents. This is especially true if you plan to collect data from children, adolescents or young people. Often a child or young person will find it easier to speak to another younger person than someone who is much older. It is **strongly recommended that the lead and ideally the whole data collection team is, at a**

minimum the same gender as the respondent(s). Most ethics review boards or institutional review boards (IRBs) would not approve data on sensitive topics such as child marriage being collected from girls or young women by a male data collector ([see more on IRBs here](#)). You should always consider the power and gendered dimensions between the researcher and the participant, and be mindful of how best to create a safe space with limited biases. In some settings you should also consider the religion, ethnicity and other identity factors that may be relevant in the context to ensure the participants feel safe and comfortable with the data collection team. You can read more on this in [Step 3](#) on Ethical Considerations and be sure to check [Tool 4: Ethical considerations for primary data collection](#)

In some settings, where levels of education among women and girls may be low, it may be difficult to find data collectors with sufficient levels of literacy and numeracy to carry out more complicated surveys, methods and note taking. Women with a high school education or higher, particularly those with some data collection or facilitation experience, may be in high demand in humanitarian settings given the typically low-resource setting. It is always important to **check with local or national universities and other educational institutes to engage them as partners**. Universities can also be a good resource to **identity younger team members who may be more suitable for data collection with younger people**.

Another approach is **partnering with women's associations or organisations** who may not have the right research skills but could be partnered with, given their understanding of power and gender inequality. This approach would then encompass capacity building which leverages the intersectional approach that this toolkit is aspiring towards!

Be sure to adequately compensate all members of the data collection team. If there are restrictions in your setting to hiring local community members as data collectors, for example among refugee groups, be sure to budget and plan for alternative ways to compensate for their time and skills. This could be mobile data cards, travel expenses, food coupons or other acceptable means.

1.5.2 Involve young people

Involving young people as co-researchers can have many advantages for your work and impact, but also importantly for younger research participants it may increase their sense of wellbeing and ease. Other benefits include:

- improved data quality and access to young participants;
- reduced power differentials between researchers and participants;
- empowering young people as they gain new skills and experience;
- encouraging intergenerational discussions and collaboration.

Young people can be involved in all stages of the research process, including research design and planning, data analysis, report writing, management, logistics, finances and disseminating results. But it is important to ensure that participation is thoughtful and beneficial to young people and not just the research. For example, make sure that at planning stage you include adequate training, mentoring and support for young people to feel valued and prepared to participate, without creating undue stress or other negative consequences. Involving young people should advance their professional development.

While we strongly recommend this approach, bear in mind that it is more resource intensive, in both time and financial cost – than hiring professional and experienced adult data collectors. You will need to factor this into your budgeting and preparation. For example, experienced members of the team will need to train, mentor and supervise younger team members, especially if this is the first time they have been engaged in such work. Regardless of their experience, young people must be properly recompensed for their time and contributions.

If you will pursue engaging young people in either primary data collection or more broadly in your context analysis process, we recommend that you seek guidance from your Safeguarding Focal Point and the Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist. In addition, check out this resource for more information, and the new standards that were developed by UNHCR and partners including with young people to increase the uptake of young people in monitoring and evaluation:

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

Adolescent participation in UNICEF monitoring and evaluation, UNICEF, 2019, [available here](#)

Standards for enhancing meaningful engagement of youth in evaluation, UNFPA, EvalYouth Global Network and Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation, 2023, [available here](#)

1.5.3 When data collectors cannot be easily found

If the availability of data collectors is limited due to low levels of literacy or other factors, **computer-assisted interviewing methods might be used to support data collection.**

However, this requires other kinds of resources (financial, technological and human) to be used effectively. If a quality team cannot be assembled, that may also call into question if this is the right time to conduct primary data collection.

Examples of computer-assisted methods

Computer-assisted self-interview (CASI)
A method where participants complete an online survey without directed assistance from an interviewer.
Audio computer-assisted self-interview (ACASI)
A method of data collection where participants listen to pre-recorded questions and respond to the questions using a touch screen device such as a tablet.
Computer-assisted telephone interview
A method where by the interviewer walks a participant through a pre-set list of questions and records their answers via a phone call.

In some cases, it may be necessary to recruit data collectors with less experience or more limited interviewing skills. In these cases, additional training, supervision and/or adapting or amending the chosen methodology will be necessary. **As a general rule, limit the number of data collectors in order to maximise high quality and rigour in data collection.**

1.6 Budget and workplan

Budgeting and planning is an iterative process. You should plan and budget in as much detail as you can during the project design stage, based on the information you have. Since we know that plans change and project scopes evolve, the workplan and budget needs to be revisited and monitored regularly once the project has started and if the scope of activities or intended results are refined. Do not forget that the analysis process is likely to demand time



Rouguy, 14, and her friends on their way home from the child friendly space

from a number of technical staff for review, discussion and writing. You may need to include cost recovery for staff to ensure that they prioritise and dedicate the necessary time to the process.

You can find more guidance and templates on budgeting and workplans in [Template 2. Workplan](#) [Template 3: Budget](#) and [Tool 3. Budget considerations](#) .

1.7 Inception workshop

An inception workshop happens once you have finalised the essential decision making. By this stage, you should have done the following:

- decided on your research questions;
- drafted your terms of reference;
- developed your workplan and budget;
- identified the team – you may have hired consultants by this stage;
- decided whether to collect primary data;
- decided on the structure of your analysis.

An inception workshop is useful to discuss the steps of the context analysis process with everyone who will be involved at the start of the project. It is an opportunity for everyone to meet and to clarify any questions. It can also set priorities for various technical supports needed. You may want to cover the following topics in your inception workshop:

- Introductions
- Introduction to Plan International, UNHCR or other relevant partner(s)
- Research questions and objectives
- Suggested methods
- Ethics, safeguarding and data privacy
- Roles and responsibilities of staff as well as various offices involved – for example, between global, regional and country offices. You may want to consider a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to clarify expectations from the start.
- Ways of working
- Deliverables
- Timeline and next steps
- Q&A

Strong coordination and leadership will help to get the context analysis finalised on time.



Zainab, was forced into marriage when she was 17 while still at school. Her husband left her when she resumed her studies.

Step 2: Conduct a literature review on child marriage

Reviewing existing literature can help to identify useful theories, terminologies or concepts, and methods, thereby playing an important role in defining your context analysis. Reviewing the literature allows you to check that your context analysis fills a gap in the existing evidence. If there is already a wide body of evidence on a topic, especially in a population or context that is similar to yours, it is probably not necessary to conduct a new study. You can then scope out what information may not be well captured, and which perspectives are not already investigated – for example, while child marriage may have been researched in a specific community and crisis, were the voices of girls who have experienced marriage sufficiently represented? Is it clear what the impact is for girls who are divorced or were married as children?

Available tools and templates under this step:



- [Template 5: Literature review search terms](#)
- [Template 6: Literature review tracker](#)

You can use a literature review as a way to identify gaps in the literature that primary data collection could complement, or the review can be an end in itself. However, it may be necessary first to carry out a broader scoping, then following the first analysis you may want to refine your research questions and drill down into specific elements (or gauge the gaps) related to child marriage.

Depending on the scope of your context analysis, you will need to decide what type of literature review to conduct. Narrative reviews are most commonly chosen but depending on your resource availability you may want to select another methodology.

Table: Types of literature review

Description	Strengths and weaknesses	Example
Narrative review		
A narrative review (also known more generally as a literature review) reviews, summarises and critiques the body of literature around a subject or question. It also draws conclusions about the topic and identifies gaps or inconsistencies in a body of knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Summarising the literature, including identifying gaps. ✔ Scope – can be adapted based on what literature is found. ✘ Open to bias, since reviewers are free to make judgements on what to include and exclude. ✘ Does not seek to be fully comprehensive in identifying and analysing the existing evidence base 	See Chapter 9 of the <i>Handbook of eHealth Evaluation: An Evidence-based Approach 1th</i> [13]
Systematic review		
A systematic review is a review conducted according to a pre-defined and standardised methodology – the review question, inclusion and exclusion criteria for papers, populations, interventions and outcomes to be assessed and information to be gathered are all pre-determined. The reviewer follows the methodology strictly to collect, report and analyse the data available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Methodological robustness, including transparency, replicability and minimising bias. ✔ Seeks to capture the entire body of literature relevant to the question and parameters of the review. ✘ Resource-intensive 	See <i>Cochrane Collaboration Handbook</i> , available here
Annotated bibliography		
An annotated bibliography is a list of citations to books, articles and documents. Each citation is followed by a brief summary of the paper (normally 100 – 200 words), including the key findings and implications for the question under review. Normally, they will at a minimum contain information on the purpose of the work, a summary of its content, its relevance to the topic, any special or unique features about the study, and a reflection on the strengths, weaknesses or biases of the paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Allows reader to see the findings of multiple individual papers or studies in a summarised and digestible way. ✘ Open to bias, since reviewers are free to make judgements on what to include and exclude. ✘ Limited in terms of broader synthesis and aggregation of available knowledge 	Multiple websites exist providing guidance and examples of annotated bibliographies, for example this one here from Columbia University.
Scoping review		
A scoping review is a form of rapid literature review, which seeks primarily to assess the potential size and scope of the body of literature, characterising its quantity and quality. It can be used as a precursor to define the focus of a more comprehensive literature review, or may also be used to identify gaps in research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Resource-light method to identify the amount of literature available. ✘ Does not focus on the findings of the papers, but rather on what research has been conducted or is ongoing. Thus, it cannot be used to inform policy or practice recommendations. ⓪ Can be good for literature reviews to inform research and strategy initiatives. 	See resources from the Cochrane Collaboration, available here

2.1 Establish the scope of the review

Prior to beginning a literature review, staff should establish **inclusion and exclusion criteria** for resources. Drafting the criteria prior to researching will help to guide the process and contain searches within the scope as relevant to the literature review to prevent it becoming derailed. The criteria should consider the following:

- **Geographical focus:** such as a country or a region, for example, Bangladesh or West Africa.
- **Population:** consider if you want to limit your publications to a specific population or not.
- **Date range:** the general date range for a literature review is ten years, however resources from the previous five years should be prioritised. Depending on your setting, there may be a benchmark date that makes sense – for example, the onset of a crisis that changed the community dynamics thereby somewhat invalidating previous studies and information.
- **Thematic:** for instance, gender, age, health, relationships, community, society, and crisis context and response.
- **Type of publication:** for example, grey literature or academic journals – in our case (i.e. a literature review on child marriage in a humanitarian setting) grey literature will likely be the most useful, such as INGO reports.
- **Source:** specific organisations that you know publish on the topic – for example, OCHA, UNHCR, UNFPA, Plan International, Girls Not Brides, CARE, Save the Children, etc.
- **Language:** always try to include language versions, especially the majority language in the context. You may want to consider identifying staff with relevant language skills or hire a short-term consultant to support additional language searches. Additionally, online applications such as DeepL or Google Translate may support key document translation such as National Action Plans.

The exclusion criteria should encompass:

- **Thematic areas that are not relevant:** like documents on geographical locations outside the literature review's focus – although these can sometimes be helpful to draw from.
- **Type of publication:** such as opinion pieces or unverified sources.

2.2 Search for literature

Conduct a **key term search**. This can be done through Google, Google Scholar, through organisation websites (e.g. UNICEF), other websites like ReliefWeb, databases (e.g. SAGE, PubMed) or academic journals (such as *Disasters*, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, etc.).

Search terms should be focused and concise, utilising key words to find relevant literature. For example, rather than searching long and complicated sentences such as “child marriage among refugees in crisis settings”, try to limit the search to just key terms: “child marriage AND refugees”. See **Template 5: Literature review search terms** for more search terms and platforms.



Using search syntax can be helpful in locating sources – for example, using quotation marks to search a specific phrase, such as “child marriage”. The use of AND, OR, and NOT can also be useful in expanding or controlling searches, “child AND marriage”, “early OR child marriage”. It is also useful to use an asterisk where variations may apply – for instance, searching “child*” will search both “child” and “children”.

Additional considerations and tips on how to identify literature:

- Use the **snowball method** to source additional documents by searching resources referenced in resources you have already found to be relevant and useful.
- Conduct **manual searches** to fill any knowledge gaps identified and to include resources already known that fall within the research question scope.
- **Engaging with networks** that are working in the region or addressing child marriage – they may know of resources or may be open to a formal or informal interview to fill any potential knowledge gaps and provide additional resources.
- **Reach out to working groups and sub-clusters/ clusters** at country, sub-national and regional levels such as the coordinator of the GBV or CP sub-cluster to share any recent and relevant documentation. Not everything may be published online.

Be sure to name the literature resources clearly to avoid duplications and for ease of finding them.

2.3 Document tracking, inclusion and review

Review resources and begin mapping evidence into a resource tracking document. This can be done manually by adding information from identified resources during the search process into an Excel spreadsheet or Word document. See **Template 6: Literature review tracker** to support tracking and inclusion of literature. This can also be done through software tools, such as Covidence, where multiple people are working on the review and depending on the number of documents. Your table may look like the following simplified version or you may want to add more parameters for your review:

Citation	Target population	Study location & date	Intervention	Study design/ methodology	Findings	Quotes	Quality assessment

Poonam was married at 13. While she was excelling at school she was pressured by her husband's family to drop out. Plan supported her to continue her studies and now at 21 years old, she is becoming a teacher to help other girls.



Screen the evidence captured in the document tracker to ensure that all resources fall within the inclusion criteria, omitting any resources that are not relevant. Keep track of what you have excluded and if necessary why.

Throughout this step, staff should also reflect on the study methodology, highlighting the strengths and limitations of the study so far.

2.4 Literature review with or without primary data collection

You may want to first conduct the literature review based on the research questions, and then decide if you *need* to conduct primary data collection based on the findings. Or, you can plan from the start to conduct primary data collection.

Whichever option you choose, you should use the literature review findings to refine your primary data collection research questions and lines of inquiry based on the available data and information.

You may already have a good idea about how much information is already available on child marriage in your context (regarding the population(s) and the current crisis context). This may help to better inform you from the start of the planning process about whether you need to conduct primary data collection.

You need to check whether primary data collection was previously conducted in your context and whether that data is available. We do not want to duplicate data collection as this risks creating participant fatigue in engaging in future processes and is an ineffective use of everyone's time and resources.



Once you have completed the first draft of the literature review, think about what information is still missing.

Consider:

- Whose voices are over-/under-represented in the information already available and gathered? Are married girls' voices clear?
- Does the available information capture different perspectives and risks? Who is missing?
- Who should you speak to in order to confirm, complement or add to the findings?
- Prioritise gaps in the desk review findings. What do we need to know now?

Typically, adolescents are often not well consulted in research or needs assessments, even on issues that concern them like child marriage. Make sure when you are reviewing the literature to check the methods of previously conducted primary data collection to see how much involvement adolescents have had.

Check if the following were included:

- Older and/or young adolescents?
- Boys or girls?
- Was intersectionality considered, such as disability, sexual orientation or different ethnic groups?
- Girls who have experienced marriage or are young mothers?

There are other factors that you may want to consider when assessing any available data, such as:

- if married girls' spouses or parents' perspectives and voices are represented in the data;
- if the research methods were participatory or not as this may have affected the type and depth of information the researchers were able to collect;
- how much you know about the humanitarian response capacity to meet any gaps and if there is data and information you can collect to better understand current programming, priorities and capacity to meet adolescent girls' and their family's needs to prevent and respond to child marriage.

All of these factors will help you to assess if there are gaps and limitations to the existing literature and to pinpoint where primary data collection can contribute to filling in these gaps.

You can use the **What We Need to Know Tool** as a guide as well as to help think through the gaps and unpack where you have a lot of information.

You may find it helpful to map out the key findings from the literature review and identify where there are inconsistencies or gaps in the information. You can then use this to prioritise what information to focus on for your primary data collection.

Table: An example mapping of findings and gaps

Overall findings from the desk review	What needs more investigation? What are the gaps?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The main drivers of child marriage are... 2. There was conflicting information on who are the marriage decision makers... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No existing literature captures data directly from married adolescent girls. • There is inconsistent information around the perspectives of religious leaders in the marriage ceremony and initiation rites. • There is little to no information available on child marriage.

If you decide to conduct primary data collection, you will need to complete a research protocol that captures all the relevant information and considerations when undertaking data collection. You can find a **sample research protocol** using the **Template 7: Research protocol**. This section (**Step 3**) will guide you through key considerations and planning for completing your research protocol to collect primary data on child marriage.

Step 3: Collect primary data

If you are not doing primary data collection skip straight to Step 4: Analyse and Validate Data

Available tools and templates under this step:



- **Tool 4: Ethical considerations for primary data collection**
- **Tool 5: Participatory data gathering and analysis methods overview**
- **Tool 6: Example participants for data collection**
- **Tool 7. Top Tips for Adolescent Consultations**
- **Template 7: Research protocol**
- **Template 8: Safeguarding and risk assessment for data collection**
- **Template 9: Data collection plan**

It is good practice to read all of this section and then begin to populate your research protocol after discussion with the team on these key areas for safe and ethical data collection and what is feasible within your timeline, budget and capacity. Use the tool “Research protocol template” which corresponds to this Step. It guides you through the essential planning, key considerations and information necessary to plan for safe and ethical primary data collection.

3.1 Ethical considerations

It is our responsibility as service providers and practitioners to be sure that in conducting primary research, we are not doing more harm by accidentally forcing disclosure, revisiting trauma with little to no benefit for the participants, or even worse, putting them or our data collection teams at risk. Most crisis settings are low-resource settings. It is therefore essential that there are services in place to support and care for any participant should they disclose GBV or abuse or request additional support. It is our responsibility to ensure that the study benefits exceed any identifiable risks. This also means that the implementation of research does not impose burdens on the local organisations or aid agencies that are providing essential and lifesaving services. In low-resource settings, engaging with either the national and/or humanitarian CP and GBV service providers ahead of time is essential to have a clear understanding of referral pathways and available services to inform your decision making about the ethics of conducting research.

We know that it is likely many ever married girls will have experienced some form of sexual abuse associated to their experience of marriage. **Data collection with ever married girls should only ever be led by specially trained female staff from either CP or GBV.** Data collection should never request the participant to share details on abuses they may have experienced. Instead, frame questions around their needs, challenges and priorities. You may consider asking

them about what information or support they wished they had known or had access to prior to their marriage.

The World Health Organization (WHO) outlines eight ethical and safety recommendations for researching, documenting and monitoring sexual violence in crisis settings. While child marriage is not necessarily always sexual violence, it is a form of GBV that often does strongly correlate with sexual violence.

- 1 Analyse the risks and benefits:** “The benefits to respondents or communities of documenting sexual violence must be greater than the risks to respondents and communities.”
- 2 Methodology:** “Information gathering and documentation must be done in a manner that presents the least risk to respondents, is methodologically sound, and builds on current experience and good practice.”
- 3 Referral services:** “Basic care and support for survivors/victims must be available locally before commencing any activity that may involve individuals disclosing information about their experiences of sexual violence.”
- 4 Safety:** “The safety and security of all those involved in information gathering about sexual violence is of paramount concern and in emergency settings in particular should be continuously monitored.”
- 5 Confidentiality:** “The confidentiality of individuals who provide information about sexual violence must be protected at all times.”
- 6 Informed consent:** “Anyone providing information about sexual violence must give informed consent before participating in the data gathering activity.”
- 7 Information-gathering team:** “All members of the data collection team must be carefully selected and receive relevant and sufficient specialized training and ongoing support.”
- 8 Children:** “Additional safeguards must be put into place if children (i.e. those under 18 years) are to be the subject of information gathering.”[14]

- **For more information on the ethical considerations when collecting data on child marriage and other forms of GBV, see WHO’s guidelines and the WRC’s A Practitioners guide to Ethical Conduct of Research on Child Marriage in Humanitarian Settings. You should also regularly consult Tool 4 on Ethical considerations for primary data collection for planning and implementation support.**

3.1.1 Privacy and mandatory reporting

Given that child marriage may in some places be illegal or there may be mandatory reporting for child abuse or for some types of GBV, there are two key considerations you should reflect on while planning your primary data collection to avoid unintended harm or risks for participants [12].

1 Privacy

In many countries around the world, laws to prevent and deter child marriage and their enforcement are inconsistent and often ambiguous. These gaps are among some of the key structural challenges that leave space for the practice to proliferate with impunity. Further complications can arise in humanitarian settings, and especially in refugee settings where the application of the law to refugee or displaced groups may not be applied as stringently as among populations unaffected by crisis. Legal ambiguity regarding child marriage contrasts with sometimes openly negative views of child marriage within communities, despite widespread normative practice of it. Such complex social views mean that adolescents in child marriages may be stigmatised, experience shame and other negative impacts. For example, child marriage may be used to cover social shame from pre-marital sexual relationships, or sexual violence and rape, or early pregnancy, or because children disrespected their parents.

Actions and recommendations for data collection teams:

- **Laws and regulations** on child marriage should be investigated and any implications well understood and explained for all study populations, be they refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) or host communities, prior to any data collection.
- **The recruitment of qualitative interviews** should be done via word-of-mouth through community contacts and local service providers rather than by posting public notices or flyers.
- **In quantitative surveys** that may require random selection of households, we recommend selecting several interviewers who know the local communities, their customs and practices. Use snowball sampling based on information gathered from these trusted members of the community to identify girls and families affected by child marriage. *Random selection or going door to door would not be appropriate for the subject matter.*
- **Any conversations with ever-married girls or young mothers** involving recruitment, consent or data collection should take place in a private location, where they cannot be seen or overheard by neighbours or even other family members.
- **In highly restricted or challenging contexts where child marriage is a highly sensitive subject**, data collection teams should consider if data collection is better conducted one-to-one so as to protect participants.
- **For focus group discussions**, the questions should focus on eliciting opinions from participants about community perspectives rather than individual experiences.

2 Mandatory reporting

This relates to a number of aspects in the research process, including data management, storage and use. But it also relates to the possible need to breach confidentiality should an interviewer hear a participant share or disclose an instance of child abuse that, under local laws and regulations, must be reported to the authorities (mandatory reporting). In all contexts, you need to review your responsibility under the law to report child abuse if it is observed or otherwise documented.

Actions and recommendations for data collection teams:

- **Confirm researcher obligations to breach confidentiality** of the interview to report any child abuse to the authorities. In contexts where this is relevant, you should start all consent processes by declaring something like: “we need to tell you that should we observe any child abuse or if you tell us about any child abuse in the household, we must report this to the authorities”, and clarify what that may entail as needed.

3.2 Risk assessment and ethics review boards

3.2.1 Safeguarding

Child marriage is a highly sensitive topic and often results in traumatic experiences for the children and adolescents involved. From the perspective of our work at Plan International, it is unethical to engage children, adolescents and young people in consultations around these deeply sensitive topics without knowing what services are available for follow-up and ongoing support. Further, consultations with any likely GBV survivor or with people who have experienced any form of abuse must be approached with caution. They must only be undertaken with specialised staff and with an explicit justification that the intended information cannot be obtained elsewhere through non-traumatising means. See **Tool 4 on Ethical considerations** for primary data collection for more guidance.

Primary data collection with children, adolescents or known survivors of child marriage or any form of GBV must involve an ethical review to ensure the safety and best interests of participants are comprehensively considered. This may be available internally through your organisation, or you may be required to submit to an external institutional review board (IRB). For example, Plan International has an internal Ethical Review Board and is a registered IRB. Note that this service is only available to Plan International and direct partners.

On the other hand, not engaging children and adolescents in conversations around child marriage risks neglecting their voices and sidelining their perspectives from issues that affect them, and can reinforce the harmful norms that reduce their agency and participation in decision making. Additional ethical consideration may require more time, resources and technical capacity. However, speaking directly with children and adolescents affected by child

Institutional review boards

Depending on your setting, your in-house capacity and the type of primary data collection you are doing, you may be required to submit your research protocol to an **institutional review board (IRB)** for approval. You should follow the advice in your location for what is required and use this guide to help pull the necessary information together. It may be that you require more or less than what we suggest for the research protocol, or they may request additional details. For more guidance on IRBs see Chapter 6 Institutional Review Boards in *A Practitioner's Guide to Ethical Conduct of Research on Child Marriage in Humanitarian Settings*[12]. If you are not required to submit to an IRB, we strongly recommend you submit your plan to an internal ethical review if available (e.g. Plan International Ethical Review Team). Alternatively, you can create a small group of technical specialists to review and approve your approach and tools prior to data collection or submit to an independent IRB to maintain high-quality research and to safeguard against any intended consequences.

marriage in contexts where very little from them has been captured, may further strengthen and validate your context analysis – more so than speaking only with adult proxies. In settings where it is not possible to speak to adolescents, it is strongly recommended to speak with young women (now aged 18 to 25 years) who were married as children.

A few other considerations:

- You should conduct **safeguarding refresher training** with all members of the data collection team.
- **Safeguarding protocols including referral pathways** for abuse, disclosure and immediate support should be developed and shared with the team and participants.
- **Facilitators and note takers will match the sex of the participants.** Where a sample group is mixed-sex, we recommend female staff to lead the data collection activities (for example, they should lead on asking the questions) unless there are significant reasons for them to be male. In cases where male staff are preferred, you should also consider the safety and appropriateness of mixed-sex data collection groups and avoid reinvoicing the harmful social and gender-based norms that may perpetuate gender inequality.
- Prior to finalising your data collection, **review all technical, sensitive, biological or legal words with national staff and ideally with a small sample group from the community.** This is to ensure that the translation retains the same meaning and words will not cause offence but will facilitate the data collection process and ensure acceptability, appropriateness and clarity.
- See **Template 18: Terminology to discuss with data collectors**

3.2.2 Security and logistics

Safety and security considerations for staff and partners during the data collection period should focus on ensuring that there is a safe and secure environment for movement and the conduct of operations in and around the community involved.

- **Establish protocols to monitor researchers' safety.** Detailed risk assessments should be conducted of routes to all the data collection venues, as well as risks associated with the venues and surrounding areas for the data collection team and participants. It is also recommended to develop a strategy for staff to call for help discreetly and initiate exit strategies.
- **Ensure that there is a planned briefing before travel** and that staff and partners are alerted in case of changes to the security situation.
- **Data collection teams should not travel to communities in groups of fewer than three people** to ensure their own safety and that of children and community members.
- **Never be alone with a child or adolescent** and never enter a research participant's home alone.

Data collection process

- **Set up and follow data security and protection protocols at all times.** Information gathered should not be traceable to individual children or adults.
- Pay attention to where your notes are kept and if they are visible to others.
- **It is likely advisable to have single-sex groups** to ensure safe and equitable participation given the taboos and sensitivities surrounding child marriage.

Referral and disclosure

- **Prepare data collectors for GBV disclosures or other abuse and violence** through safeguarding and training in referral pathways and psychological first aid.
- **Establish feedback mechanisms** that are accessible, gender sensitive, child-friendly and that guarantee anonymity.

Locations and venues

- **Select accessible and safe locations** by consulting with each target group. Take special care to ensure that locations are safe and appropriate for younger participants, girls and women and that venues do not create possible stigma for participants when arriving/leaving. Consider how child care needs for married girls, or work schedules may create potential barriers to participation.
- **Find locations that offer privacy for activities.** This can be difficult in areas where research does not take place in a building and the novelty of "outsiders" can draw unwanted crowds and attention. Additional staff may be needed to buffer the onlookers by holding a separate discussion with onlookers in a different location. Prepare data collectors for disclosures of harm or violence through

training in psychological first aid as well as by establishing referral protocols. Though data collectors should never take on the role of counsellors, they must inform children in advance of their duty to protect them should harm be disclosed by informing appropriate adults.

3.3 Selecting and developing data collection tools

Based on your identified priority areas for investigation, think about who would be best placed to speak to, and what would be the best methodology to approach the topics in the safest and most ethical way.

Remember the Four Guiding Principles: Intersectionality, Girl-responsiveness, Do no harm and the Socio-ecological model to help guide your thinking. Your resources and capacity will help to define how big or small your sample will be. You may want to share the gaps with a wider group such as a coordination group or cluster in case others can contribute to the context analysis either now or in the future.

REMEMBER – more participants mean more data, which means more time needed to analyse and process. More data does not necessarily mean a more rigorous context analysis or better results.

As a basic overview, the table below summarises the types of methods and examples of data collection tools. You can also find a more extensive list of participatory research tools and methodologies from FPAR in **Tool 5 on participatory data gathering and analysis research methods**.

Table: Data collection methods

Intended use	Example of specific method
Quantitative methods	
Determine levels or trends associated with a topic from diverse data sources. Demonstrated in quantities or amounts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys • Quantitative observation
Qualitative methods	
Explore a topic in depth from diverse perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Focus group discussions • Participatory methods

To help guide your lines of inquiry and the development of tools, we have also developed a comprehensive list of questions relevant to child marriage organised by type of respondent – for example, community leader, father and so on.



Rahimat, 18, works on campaign with the adolescent girls' network

3.3.1 TOP TIPS for data collection tools development

TIP Don't forget that gender and power inequalities constantly influence the data collection and analysis process. Always be mindful of intersectionality. Redistribute power and champion inclusivity instead of reinforcing the harmful status quo that perpetuates exclusion and marginalisation. This includes (but is not limited to) considering:

- who participates in data collection activities (respondents);
- how consent is obtained and from whom;
- what data collection methods are used;
- when and where data is collected;
- who collects data (the enumerators and translators etc.);
- who analyses the data.

TIP Participatory methods are often the most effective and ethical for data collection around child marriage. This is because instead of trying to figure out the perfect questions for an interview, you can create a more open and comfortable space by working through tasks with an individual or a small group that eases people into sensitive topics. It also helps to unpack social norms and gender-based norms more than in question-response methods.

TIP Make sure that your tools do not pressure respondents to tell you about their own personal child marriage or other GBV-related experiences. We do not want anyone, especially not survivors of any form of GBV or abuse, to feel like they have to tell us about their personal experiences.

- Do not ask: "Were any of you married as children? Tell me about your experiences". Instead ask: "What is a typical age for girls to be married in this community?" "Who makes decisions about marriage?" "Can you tell me about what it is like for young people in the community to be married?"
- **Do use a vignette approach**, i.e. share a contextualised fictional story that captures the challenges in the context. Then ask participants to reflect and comment on it, reminding them that they do not need to give personal examples. You will get rich information, including on socio-cultural and gender-based norms while avoiding forcing disclosure.

TIP Do spend time working with national staff, and if feasible with community members, to develop, contextualise and test the tools (questions, language and planning). This is to make sure that the questions and style of data collection is in line with Do No Harm and is appropriate for the kind of information you want to learn.

TIP Less is more – do not ask respondents many questions on a wide range of topics. Try to be selective about what you want to know from a particular group and be as specific as possible. This will help to have a more meaningful conversation about specific issues and will avoid collecting a lot of surface-level information.

TIP Have pre-data collection meetings with respondents where possible. It can be helpful ahead of time to go through the data collection process and expectations from the organisation(s) doing the data collection and the respondents. For respondents who are typically more marginalised and unaccustomed to giving feedback or information (e.g. younger married girls or adult women), this stage can really help to make them feel more at ease during data collection and can reduce concerns, thereby improving the data outcomes.

You will always need to develop unique tools for data collection on child marriage that reflects the cultural and contextual factors around discussing child marriage among certain groups. For example, during data collection on child marriage with internally displaced communities in the Philippines, it was identified that asking directly about child marriage would deter respondents from engaging in discussion about it. However, by reframing the questions around issues of concern for adolescents and giving examples and using participatory methods, we were able to get deeper insights in a way that was comfortable and ethical for both the respondents and the data collection team.

To help you think through possible questions, we have developed a question matrix that links to the What We Need to Know about Child Marriage framework. This list is not exhaustive, nor does it factor in what may or may not be relevant and appropriate for your setting. We have also not gone into too much detail about the methodology you should use as this will depend on the skills and capacity of your team.

All your tools should be developed and reviewed by CP, GBV and/or gender specialists, as well as by specialists from Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), along with any experts from other sectors you want to investigate. Review from a safeguarding and PSEA perspective is also advisable; however, this can also be covered through the ethical review or IRB.

3.3.2 Consent forms and information sheets

In addition to the data collection tools, you will also need to pull together consent forms for different groups of participants and information sheets on the study. You will also need to consider if you will need to create these in both literary and pictorial formats. You can find templates for consent and assent forms here with integrated information sheets:

- **Templates 17-21: Sample consent/assent forms for children, parents, adults (including staff) and online.**
 - › **Template 17 Information Sheet and Consent Form for Children and Adolescents**
 - › **Template 18 Information Sheet and Consent Form for Parents of children under 18**
 - › **Template 19 Information sheet and Consent Form for adults (over 18)**
 - › **Template 20 Online consent form and info sheet adults**
 - › **Template 21 Consent form for media use**

Make sure that the linguistic and literacy levels of the population are considered in your contextualisation and try to keep the information straightforward without complex language.

Develop tailored and specific consent forms based on the groups in your sample. You will need different forms for informed assent from children, as well as exceptions where children have the maturity to consent, such as married children. You may need specific forms for parents or caregivers and the male spouses of the married girl. See the table below for more guidance.

- The forms will need to be explained (including the right to withdraw their information and responses at any stage of the research) and be signed with all participants.
- Names and sensitive personal information¹ that are identifying markers of community members should not be documented. Typically, only personal information essential for the research should be collected, for example, age range, sex and marital status. For the collection of sensitive personal data, you must analyse the context and ask yourself what is safe and necessary to collect in this context.
- Be sure to have a clear data protection protocol in place.

Table: Consent process for children and exemptions

Consent process for children (under 18 years)	Exceptions to obtaining the parent's or guardian's consent for children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● You must first seek the appropriate consent of the child's parent or guardian. ● Assent is then gained from the child participant. ● Both the parent or guardian's consent AND the child's assent are required. Data collection cannot commence without both. For example, if the parent or guardian provides consent, but the child does not provide assent, then they cannot be involved in the data collection, and vice versa. ● Note that there might be exceptions to this rule due to the local context or the context of the young person. 	<p>This is not a comprehensive list of exceptions so please consult with local teams/partners and your ethical review board.</p> <p>Married children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Where a child is married and lives with their spouse. it is generally not advisable to gain consent from a married girl's husband. ● If the child is in case management services, and the child expresses that she wants to participate, the case worker could work with her to identify another trusted adult in her life to provide the consent. ● However, given the dynamics and sensitivities involved in child marriage, it may be necessary in some cases for the husband to be informed about the data collection activity to mitigate backlash and ensure participation. A comprehensive risk assessment should be carried out that involves the girl in order to identify possible risks to her safety, to the data collection team, the community and the organisation, to be sure the benefit to participation outweigh the risks, and that all measures are taken to mitigate risks. <p>Other exemptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Where minors are living separately from their parents/guardians. ● Where the legal age of majority is below 18.

¹ **Personal information:** full name, address, date of birth, sex, email address, IP address, photographs, identification number. **Sensitive personal information:** biometric data, passport numbers, health information, religious beliefs, racial/ethnic origin, sexual orientation, political opinions, trade union memberships.

3.4 Sampling

Sampling is a process whereby researchers decide on a restricted set of people, items or objects to study according to pre-defined criteria. You should review the **Tool 4 Ethical considerations for primary data collection** as part of your decision making.

Don't forget to use an intersectional approach to your sampling and consider all the risks and vulnerabilities that compound and intersect for different groups in the society. There may be very different risk and protective factors to child marriage among the community.

Consider the following criteria (this is a non-exhaustive list):

- **Age** – Younger (10–14 years) and older adolescents (15–19 years) are the age brackets as defined by the UN, but you may want to review the age brackets that adolescents feel comfortable to be in. Further, the framing of questions and methodologies used will need to be adapted based on the age of the participants in order to be the most appropriate. Remember that, research with younger adolescents and children, especially those younger than eight years, can be ethically challenging especially given the topic of child marriage.
- **Gender and sexuality** – It is advisable to include persons who are gender non-conforming or who identify as LGBTIQ+. Pay attention to how you identify or ask about people their gender and/or sexuality identity. Seek local experts to guide you as in some contexts there may be legal constraints that could affect the safety of participants if they openly identify as LGBTIQ+. In such contexts, you may not be able to ask about this at all.
- **Marital status or experience** – Given the topic on child marriage, you should pay attention to the marital status or experience of your participants. Think about girls and boys who are currently married, or have been married such as divorced, separated, widowed or whose partner has left them. You may also want to consider including girls with children regardless of whether they have experienced marriage, given the similarity in experiences and vulnerabilities.
- **Persons living with a disability** – In some settings disability status may increase or decrease the risk of child marriage. Accessing and identifying persons with disabilities, especially among sub-groups such as married girls, should carefully be weighed to make sure respondents do not face stigma or harm as a result of participation. You should also think through how you would sample for different disabilities noting that not all disabilities are visible. See the **Washington short set of questions** on disability inclusion to guide you.
- **Minority** – Think about the different minority groups present in your context and try to capture diverse perspectives as relevant. Consider including participants from across diverse minority groups – be they related to health, religion, ethnicity or political beliefs. Pay attention to any political sensitivities about explicitly asking or recruiting certain groups in data collection due to safety and security concerns.

- **Socio-economic and/or social status** – If feasible, consider including participants with different household incomes, available household resources and education levels. You may also want to consider different social status between families whose members hold power compared to those who do not.
- **Geographical location** – You can sample a geographically defined area to identify responses that are representative of this area or sample across diverse areas to identify differences in responses (for example, urban vs rural areas; refugee vs host community; camp vs living in the host community refugee groups).

3.4.1 Sample size

When defining the size of your primary data collection sample, it will depend on the scale of your process and the capacity of the team to handle large or small amounts of primary data and the subsequent analysis. As a general benchmark guide, for a standard-sized context analysis, try to aim for around 12 data points. A data point is one source of information, such as one key informant interview (KII) or one focus group discussion (FGD) or the results of one survey. So, 12 data points could equal: 5 KIIs and 6 FGDs and a survey. Depending on the geographical factors of your context, you may spread these data points across several villages if the population demographics are similar or amend the sampling approach if there are diverse factors to consider.

The number of data points you need will also depend on the gaps in the data and how many sources of accurate and relevant information are available and how many people are willing to participate. In addition, it will also be based on what is feasible in the context given the sensitivities and taboos around discussing child marriage in some settings. Remember that your sample does not need to be representative of the population, rather data collected should provide insight, and validate or rebuff assumptions in the existing literature. For example, you may decide to complement your literature review with FGDs with 25 diverse adolescent girls and boys, which would add additional value to your findings and thereby contribute to improving programming.

3.4.2 Planning data collection points

Map out how many activities you will conduct per day based on the time you have available, your sample size as well as the wellbeing of your staff. Consider aspects such as breaks needed, lunch, travel and the overall emotional toll of the research. You should have no more than six to eight participants per group activity. More than eight and the data collection team will struggle to capture the perspectives from all participants which will make their presence less impactful. Larger groups will also require stronger skills within the data collection team to handle any competing personalities and to ensure that all participants have equal space to participate and not feel excluded. Any data collection activity should last no longer than 45 to 60 minutes and should take place in a safe and comfortable environment.

You should also ensure remuneration for all participants in accordance with the local context. Such as travel costs, refreshments and food. If you plan to engage participants for longer than an hour, for example to participate in a full day workshop, you should ensure that budget is allocated to compensate their time or adjust your methodology. In some cases, and depending on your sampling method to identify participants and the time allocated to data collection, you may want to collect consent in advance of the data collection. This can be advantageous to reduce the administrative time on the day of data collection and give participants time to reflect on the research and to ask questions without being under pressure. You can also use this pre-discussion to help participants to understand the data collection process and expectations in order to begin to create a safe and comfortable space between participant and data collector. This may not be appropriate in all settings due to issues of privacy and confidentiality.

For further support, see [Tool 6: Example participants for data collection](#) and [Template 9: Data collection plan](#).

3.5 Train the data collection team

Available tools and templates under this step:



- [Template 10: Data collection training agenda – Facilitator](#)
- [Template 11: Data collection training agenda – Participant](#)
- [Template 12: Data collection training handout on “being specific”](#)
- [Template 13: Terminology to discuss with data collectors](#)
- [Template 14: PowerPoint presentation on Data Collection Training Outline.](#)

It is essential that you set aside enough time to work with the data collection team ahead of data collection. Depending on the skill set and experience of your team (see [Step 1.5](#) and [Template 4: Identifying the core team](#)), you may be able to do this in one day, or you may need to take several days.

The training is intended to:

1. **Train the team on safeguarding, handling disclosure, mandatory reporting requirements, and (if applicable) consent processes.**
2. **Refresh facilitation skills** and tips for handling sensitive topics on child marriage.
3. **Clarify the data collection objectives, research questions and expected outcomes** – for example, to design an integrated project to prevent and respond to child marriage.
4. **Review the data collection plan** and get input from staff and volunteers who are familiar with the community and the context – for example, logistics and timing,

expectations from participants etc.

5. **Review the tools to check language** and terminology translations to local languages.
6. **Check the acceptability of the methods** selected and make any final changes or adaptations as needed.
7. **Review how and what data to record.**
8. **Clarify the daily research protocol**, roles and responsibilities.
9. **Check and test any technology** you are using such as smart phones, tablets etc.

3.5.1 Developing the training

There are tools and templates attached to support you in adapting the training to meet the needs of your data collection team. For example, are you working with a research institute that may need a reminder about safeguarding but already has skills in data collection and recording? Or are you working with a partner who may need more in-depth training on a range of subjects?

You should consider what skills need strengthening within the team and based on their strengths and weaknesses, you may want to amend your methodology. For example, if you are using focus group discussions, and the data collection team is not familiar or confident with group facilitation or if the team is using a translator (or even two layers of translation e.g. English to Portuguese to local language), consider smaller groups of three to four people compared to larger groups of six to eight.

Topics to be covered in your training include:

Introduction to the research

What we know about child marriage and the crisis (findings from the literature review)

Research objective

Research questions

Roles and responsibility

Data collection methods and skills

Sampling framework

Data collection tools (go through each tool one by one)

Consent forms and information sheets

Facilitation skills

Note taker skills

Language and translation

Data collection process and logistics

Daily data recording protocol

Supervision and support

Safeguarding, ethics and referrals

Post data collection next steps: data analysis

Data validation workshops

Overview of analysis process

Pilot testing the tools and approach

Suggested materials to give to the data collection team may include:

- notebooks
- tablets or other devices if collecting electronic data (including charging equipment, batteries and where to charge them etc.)
- daily field plan and data recording protocol (outlining sampling design for local sites, target number of interviews, tools and methods etc.)
- contact information for supervisors
- contact information for referral services
- printed copies of study instruments (study information briefs, recruitment scripts, consent forms, questionnaires, interview guides, etc.) – these should be available as a back-up even if electronic devices are used to collect data
- maps of the area
- identification (ID card or introduction letter) from lead and partner organisation(s)

At the start of this section you will find a suite of tools and templates to support the development of your training including draft agendas, PowerPoint training slides and handouts.

3.5.2 Pilot testing the tools and logistics

Pilot testing is normally conducted with people with the same or similar demographics or characteristics to the target population so that they would interpret the questions and methods in similar ways. Participants involved in pilot testing should be adequately informed of the pilot status and that no data will be used in the data analysis or research.

However, given the sensitivities surrounding child marriage, pilot testing may not be ethical or possible in all settings. If this is too sensitive or unethical, you could consider pilot testing with members of local organisations such as community-based organisations, women's associations, or NGO staff members.

Pilot testing should cover the full data collection process from consent procedures before starting interviews through to note taking and documentation. No data should be stored or used for analysis from the piloting. This is purely a process-driven exercise to examine the approach and practicality of all aspects of the data collection.

3.5.3 Support for the data collection team

The support for the data collection team does not end after the training. It is an ongoing process and should be well considered in your planning and staffing allocation. This is especially pertinent in settings with active conflict and insecurity. Some of the support required will be technical, such as the routine (perhaps daily) monitoring of data as it comes in (whether uploaded from electronic devices or reviewed from hard copies of surveys and interview notes). Other support may be more practical, raised by the team members regarding logistics and security and materials. Problems should be identified and addressed as soon as

possible. You may need to amend your approach, conduct additional training, or even stop using certain tools.

As data is monitored and the team is supervised, it is also important to assess whether there have been any ethical concerns or questions raised by participants or reported by the team. This is particularly important in the early days of the study when participants or other community members might raise concerns about the research topics, the recruitment methodologies or the privacy of interview sites. Protocols for handling unanticipated problems and adverse impacts should be part of the training and outlined through communication and information flows. Regular and close supervision and follow-up is critical to ensure that any of these kinds of events are being reported and addressed immediately. You can use a daily data recording protocol to outline key steps or information for easy reference by the team (see **Tool 8** for a sample daily Data Recording Protocol).

As a guide, these are a few key questions to reflect on prior to starting any data collection and to inform your protocols and planning:

- What are the capacities of the data collection team?
- What are the training capacities of the technical team?
- What mechanisms need to be put in place for data collector selection, training and support?
- What is the level of security in the study area? What risks does this pose to study participants and to the study team?
- What is the sensitivity and acceptability of child marriage in the study area? Are adjustments needed – for instance, reframe questions from child marriage to more general topics on adolescent girls' health, wellbeing and future aspirations?
- Which partners and stakeholders need to be involved in assessing risk and security? Has a protocol been developed on what to do if the security situation changes?



Khadra, 13, worries that she may soon be forced into marriage



Girls take part in She Leads project meeting in Freetown, Sierra Leone

3.6 Collect the data

Available tools and templates under this step:



- **Template 15: Primary data reporting Form**
- **Template 16 Note taker guide sheets**
- **Tool 8: Sample daily data recording protocol**
- **Templates 17-21**
 - › **Template 17 Information Sheet and Consent Form for Children and Adolescents**
 - › **Template 18 Information Sheet and Consent Form for Parents of children under 18**
 - › **Template 19 Information sheet and Consent Form for adults (over 18)**
 - › **Template 20 Online consent form and info sheet adults**
 - › **Template 21 Consent form for media use**

Primary data collection should fill in gaps in the current evidence and information. It should enrich and provide deeper meaning around decision-making pathways, socio-cultural practices and any contradictions in the literature review findings.

However, collecting primary data poses a number of challenges in humanitarian and displacement settings. As such, it must be carefully and methodically thought through during the entire process to stay in line with our guiding principles: Intersectionality; Girl-responsiveness; Do no harm; and the Socio-ecological Model.

This step provides some key tools and advice for the period of primary data collection.

3.6.1 Develop a data recording protocol

Be sure to define the full process of data recording in your protocol so that there are no surprises. Good practice is to have debriefings during data collection at the start and end of each day. These will ensure support and problem solving during the process not only for the tools, but also other factors such as security, logistics and wellbeing. These briefings can also help data collection to be improved throughout the process in real time. See **Tool 8: Sample daily data recording protocol with briefing questions**.

In the data recording protocol, you may want to write down for clarity:

- Who will record the data, when and how – for example, will there be a designated note taker? Will notes be compiled by hand on paper and then typed up at the end of the day? Will notes be taken verbatim or summarised? Will additional observations be recorded from other members of the team in the room?
- Who will clean the data and how?
- Does the data recorded need translating? Who will do this and when? For example, within one week.
- What is the data analysis process? Will this start during the data collection or afterwards? Define timelines and expectations. It is strongly encouraged that you develop a separate detailed workplan for the analysis.
- Is there budget for everything? What about transport to and from venues? Refreshments and food for participants? Mobile data cards for the research team?
- Is everyone clear on their roles? You could clarify in bullet points who is doing what.
- Is the flow of information clear? What information should be documented and shared, and how should this be done?
- You could include reminders about what to do if someone discloses GBV or other forms of abuse.

Step 4: Analyse and validate data**Available tools and templates under this step:**

- **Template 22: Sample analysis framework based on socio-ecological domains**
- **Tool 9: Top tips for Validation workshops and reflective analysis**

Analysis frameworks are often only thought about at the end of the research process, which may mean that unnecessary data is collected and time and money spent. It is helpful to have an analysis framework already defined before you collect data.

4.1 Structuring your findings

The type of analysis you do will depend on the data you have collected and should follow normal approaches to analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. For example, for qualitative data and findings, you should do thematic analysis – exploring key themes and issues arising from the literature. For quantitative data, you should think about how to summarise the data on the core outcomes you are looking at – for example, through use of descriptive statistics. In more complicated methodologies, you may want to think about using inferential statistical analysis to test more complex hypotheses.

You may consider using the socio-ecological domains to organise information, or you may find it more appropriate to do this thematically or by research question, or by other groupings such as sectors or key issues identified. You may also want to use more than one way to unpack the information. When developing your analysis framework, you may also want to use a specific lens or secondary analysis to help tease out some of the complexities of child marriage, or to highlight the intersectional dimensions such as identity, refugee or migrant status, disability, age, gender and so on.

To help decide which framework would best suit your needs, review the options with the core team. You may also want to ask yourselves:

- What kind of themes or variables are instrumental to answering your research questions?
- How can you best use an intersectional analysis? What do you want to look at – for example, gender, LGBTIQ+ identity, age, urban/rural locations, race and ethnicity, disability status?
- What modes of data presentation will be most useful? Will you use tables or graphs?
- What is likely to be most accessible to your target audience?
- Are quotes from participants important?
- How you will present the data, what products will you produce and how you will disseminate these?

Examples of ways to structure data**Socio-ecological domains**

This will help you in identifying recommendations for activities and encourage a more multi-sectoral approach. However, it can also create duplication in information due to the interlinkages between the domains and the influence of social and gender-based norms.

Thematically

This involves organising your findings around the key themes or drivers of child marriage that arise from the data, such as decision making; girls' sexuality; livelihoods and opportunities.

Intervention area or sector

Organising by type of intervention entails summarising the evidence on each – including common findings and divergent results. This may help to showcase what each sector can do.

Key issues

This may include topical discussion based on the key issues, such as child marriage and displacement; child marriage abduction and recruitment to armed groups; child-headed households; married girls. This can be helpful especially for context analysis whose goal is to raise awareness and develop advocacy strategies.

Research questions

Systematically answering the research questions may also be a practical way to document the findings succinctly. This is especially useful when the questions have been defined by policy makers or other influential decision makers.

Make your own analysis framework!

Based on your areas of interest you may want to make your own analysis framework and use it alongside the socio-ecological model. For example, it may be linked to a programme theory of change or strategy.

4.2 Validation workshops and reflective analysis

Once you have drafted your initial findings, it is useful to review these with groups who know the context very well. This may be the community members themselves and/or practitioners and services providers who are working as part of a response. Holding a workshop (or a series of workshops) to validate or reflect on the findings can give even deeper meaning and explanation for some of the findings. It can also be an opportunity for you to ask questions and refine analysis with stakeholders. You can also use these workshops to tease out recommendations and identify solutions to some of the challenges in tackling child marriage in the context. Alternatively, you can hold a workshop simply to validate (or not) your findings and conclusions. You can define how much weight the stakeholders will have on the analysis process or identifying solutions. We recommend you use these workshops to ensure findings are grounded and solutions come from those who are most affected or connected to the response.

The workshop(s) do not need to be overly formal (which could be intimidating especially for community members). You can keep them light and focus on what you did and what you learned so far. This will give space for final conclusions to be drawn, in case the findings may prompt difficult reflections or questions, especially with the community groups.

For community workshops, as with data collection, you should consider the risks that participation may pose for different groups. Holding smaller workshops with sex, age and other differentially segregated groups may be most appropriate to encourage feedback.

For the community groups, you may want to limit what you present, so as not to overwhelm people with information, but rather to focus on a few key areas of high interest to those community members. This is particularly likely to centre on getting input for recommendations for tackling challenges at the individual, family and community levels of the socio-ecological model. Remember to use accessible language and not technical research terminology. Check any specific or technical terms beforehand.

Key objectives of the workshops could be:

- Do the findings reflect the participants' reality and experience?
- Is there a difference of agreement based on intersectionality such as gender, age, socio-economic status, refugee or host community etc.?
- Is anything contentious or inaccurate? Can the facilitator explore why this is inaccurate? Do some findings apply to certain people and not others?
- Is there anything missing or surprising? Why?

You can find additional guidance in **Tool 9: Top tips for Validation workshops and reflective analysis**, to think through your workshop agenda.

Step 5: Publish and disseminate

Available tools and templates under this step:



- **Template 23: Final context analysis report outline**

Following the validation of the initial findings the context analysis report can be finalised and signed off. You should outline a workplan that captures review periods, copy-editing, design and translation as required. You may also want to think about developing a short brief for easy circulation and/or a PowerPoint as part of your dissemination package and based on the intended use of the findings.

It is advisable to share the report and associated products with the coordination mechanisms in your settings so that others can benefit from the findings and to encourage better take-up of the recommendations and actions in programming and advocacy.

As part of our sector's ongoing accountability to affected populations, **the final findings should be socialised with the communities who participated if safe to do so**. This need not be in the form of a long report, but in a way that is accessible for them, such as through discussion and dialogue with the community.

There are several positives about sharing with the community – for instance,

- findings could raise awareness of population vulnerability and the need for more effective interventions;
- sharing results could lead to increased resources for interventions and prioritisation among programme and policy makers;
- findings may be useful to community organisations so they can raise awareness of their own work and could provide an evidence base for advocacy, coalition-building and fundraising.

However, publicly sharing study results can also bring risks, particularly to marginalised groups such as refugees, IDPs, undocumented migrants, and racial, ethnic or religious minorities. The findings could single out a particular refugee or displaced community for practising a behaviour that may be illegal in local contexts or may be stigmatising as an example of "harmful cultural practices".

In other words, the concerns and priorities of local communities are not necessarily aligned to those of the researchers and sponsors. These issues must be discussed with community leadership, civil society organisations and community representatives when the time comes to share the results.

Section C: Tools and templates

There are two types of attachments to support your child marriage context analysis. These are in two categories

Tools

These provide additional guidance, considerations or support to conduct the context analysis. For example, checklists or deeper information on a specific step or sub-step.

Templates

Ready-to-use documents that you may want to further refine or use as an example to guide you. For example, blank tables or templates ready to adapt.

Step 1 – Decide on the scope

- **Tool 1:** What We Need to Know Framework
- **Tool 2:** Example research questions
- **Tool 3:** Budget considerations
- **Template 1:** Terms of Reference
- **Template 2:** Workplan
- **Template 3:** Budget
- **Template 4:** Identifying the core team

Step 2 – Conduct literature review

- **Template 5:** Literature review search terms
- **Template 6:** Literature review tracker

Step 3 – Collect primary data

- **Tool 4:** Ethical considerations for primary data collection
- **Tool 5:** Participatory data gathering and analysis methods overview
- **Tool 6:** Example participants for data collection
- **Tool 7:** Top Tips for Adolescent Consultations
- **Template 7:** Research protocol
- **Template 8:** Safeguarding and risk assessment for data collection
- **Template 9:** Data collection plan

3.5 Train and support data collection team

- **Template 10:** Data collection training agenda – Facilitator
- **Template 11:** Data collection training agenda – Participant
- **Template 12:** Data collection training handout on “being specific”
- **Template 13:** Terminology to discuss with data collectors
- **Template 14:** PowerPoint presentation on Data Collection Training Outline.

3.6 Collect the data

- **Template 15:** Primary data reporting Form
- **Template 16:** Note taker guide sheets
- **Tool 8:** Sample daily data recording protocol
- **Templates 17-21:** Sample consent/assent forms for children, parents, adults (including staff) and online.
 - › **Template 17** Info sheet and Consent form_children and ado
 - › **Template 18** Info sheet and Consent form_parents of children under 18
 - › **Template 19** Info sheet and Consent adult over 18
 - › **Template 20** Online consent form and info sheet adults
 - › **Template 21** Consent form for media use

Step 4 – Analyse and validate data

- **Template 22:** Sample analysis framework based on socio-ecological domains
- **Tool 9:** Top tips for Validation workshops and reflective analysis

Step 5 – Publish and disseminate

- **Template 23:** Final context analysis report outline

Further guidance and resources

The following list captures key and further resources and guides to support your context analysis.

Publisher	Resource and link
Specific to child marriage	
WRC, UNFPA, UNICEF and Johns Hopskin	A Practitioner's Guide to the Ethical Conduct of Research on Child Marriage in Humanitarian Settings
UNFPA and UNICEF	Addressing Child Marriage in Humanitarian Settings: Technical guide from the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage
Save the Children	Addressing Data Gaps on Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Humanitarian Settings
World Vision	A Guide to Addressing Child Marriage
Girls not Brides	Girls' sexuality and child, early, and forced marriages and unions: A conceptual framework
More than Brides	A Child Marriage Practitioners' Guide to Understanding New Findings on Girls' Agency and Decision-Making
GBV AoR Helpdesk	A summary of good practice approaches in addressing child marriage in emergency contexts, as well as an annotation of programme resources and tools
UNFPA and UNICEF	Fighting the Odds, Catalyzing Change: A Strategic Approach to Ending the Global Problem of Child Marriage
Not specific to child marriage	
Plan International	The Adolescent Programming Toolkit
Save the Children	The Gender and Power Analysis Toolkit (GAP)
Plan International	Guidelines: children and young people with disabilities
CARE International	Rapid Gender Analysis
Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development	Feminist Participatory Action Research: Our Journey from Personal Change to Structural Change (2014)

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5. Plan International (2020). Adolescent Girls in crisis: Voices from the Sahel
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Glossary

Child, early and forced marriage and unions [15]

- **Child marriage** is a formal marriage or informal union in which at least one of the parties is under the age of 18 and therefore lacks full consent. The vast majority of child marriages are considered to be forced, as the child has limited power of consent due to age and other determining factors.
- **Early marriage**, often used interchangeably with “child marriage”, refers to marriages or unions involving a person under the age of 18 in countries where the age of majority (i.e. the age at which a person is considered an adult) is reached before the age of 18 or at the time of marriage. Early marriage can also refer to marriages where both spouses are 18 years of age or older, but where other factors make them unfit or unable to consent to the marriage, such as their level of physical, emotional, sexual and psychosocial development, or a lack of information about the person’s life options.
- **Forced marriage** occurs when one or both partners, regardless of age, have not given, or have not been able to give, their full and free consent to the marriage or union and are unable to leave the marriage, including as a result of severe social or family coercion or pressure. Forced marriage can involve physical, psychological or financial coercion, and can occur in a variety of circumstances, such as human trafficking or arranged marriages and child marriages. Both adults and children can be victims of forced marriage.
- **Unions** are informal marriages or free unions that are for all intents and purposes equivalent to formal marriage, although they do not have the legal status of marriage. These unions are often not formalised by the state or religious authorities, making it difficult to count them and to collect sufficient data on the issue. A number of different terms are used to name and describe these unions, including consensual or self-determined union, **early union and cohabitation**.
- **“Ever married”** refers to girls or boys who have already experienced marriage, including informal marriages or unions. This may include girls or boys who are currently married and also those who are widowed, divorced or separated.

For the purposes of this toolkit, the term **“child marriage”** will be used to refer to any marriage, formal or informal union, or cohabitation, where at least one of the parties is under the age of 18. The vast majority of child marriages are considered to be forced due to power dynamics or a lack of alternative options.

Adolescence [1, 16]

- Adolescence marks the transition from childhood to adulthood, when a young person undergoes a number of radical changes in their body, mind and way of looking at the world.
- Adolescents begin to form stronger bonds with their peers, while seeking greater independence from their parents and families. While some gender norms are shaped from early childhood, adolescence is a critical period for further influencing young people’s roles and expectations. While the changes experienced by adolescents are universal, the understanding and definition of adolescence varies across cultural contexts.





About Plan International

Plan International is an independent development and humanitarian organisation that advances children's rights and equality for girls. We believe in the power and potential of every child but know this is often suppressed by poverty, violence, exclusion and discrimination. And it is girls who are most affected.

Working together with children, young people, supporters and partners, we strive for a just world, tackling the root causes of the challenges girls and vulnerable children face. We support children's rights from birth until they reach adulthood and we enable children to prepare for and respond to crises and adversity. We drive changes in practice and policy at local, national and global levels using our reach, experience and knowledge.

For over 85 years, we have rallied other determined optimists to transform the lives of all children in more than 80 countries.

We won't stop until we are all equal.

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- linkedin.com/company/plan-international
- youtube.com/user/planinternationaltv

Plan International
International Headquarters
Dukes Court, Duke Street, Woking,
Surrey GU21 5BH, United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0) 1483 755155
Fax: +44 (0) 1483 756505
E-mail: info@plan-international.org
plan-international.org

About UNHCR

What we want to achieve

A world where every stateless person and every person forced to flee can build a better future.

Who we are

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is a global organisation dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people.

What we do

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, leads international action to protect people forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution. We deliver life-saving assistance like shelter, food and water, help safeguard fundamental human rights, and develop solutions that ensure people have a safe place to call home where they can build a better future. We also work to ensure that stateless people are granted a nationality.

Why we matter

Every year, millions of men, women and children are forced to flee their homes to escape conflict and persecution. We are the world's leading organisation dedicated to supporting people forced to flee and those deprived of a nationality. We are in the field in over 130 countries, using our expertise to protect and care for forcibly displaced and stateless people, who number 114 million as of September 2023.

Contact us

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- linkedin.com/company/unhcr/

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Case Postale 2500, CH-1211 Genève 2 Dépôt, Suisse
Phone: +41 22 739 8111 (automatic switchboard)

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