

# GENDERED SOCIAL NORMS AND ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE

Save the Children's gender transformative approaches to ending Child, Early, Forced Marriage and Unions (CEFMU) in Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Sierra Leone: working through the social-ecological spectrum

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Creating Exits for Very Young Adolescents  
by Shifting Gender Norms  
January 2018

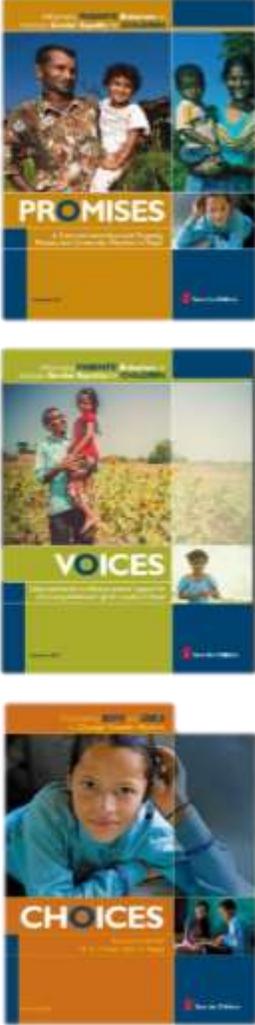
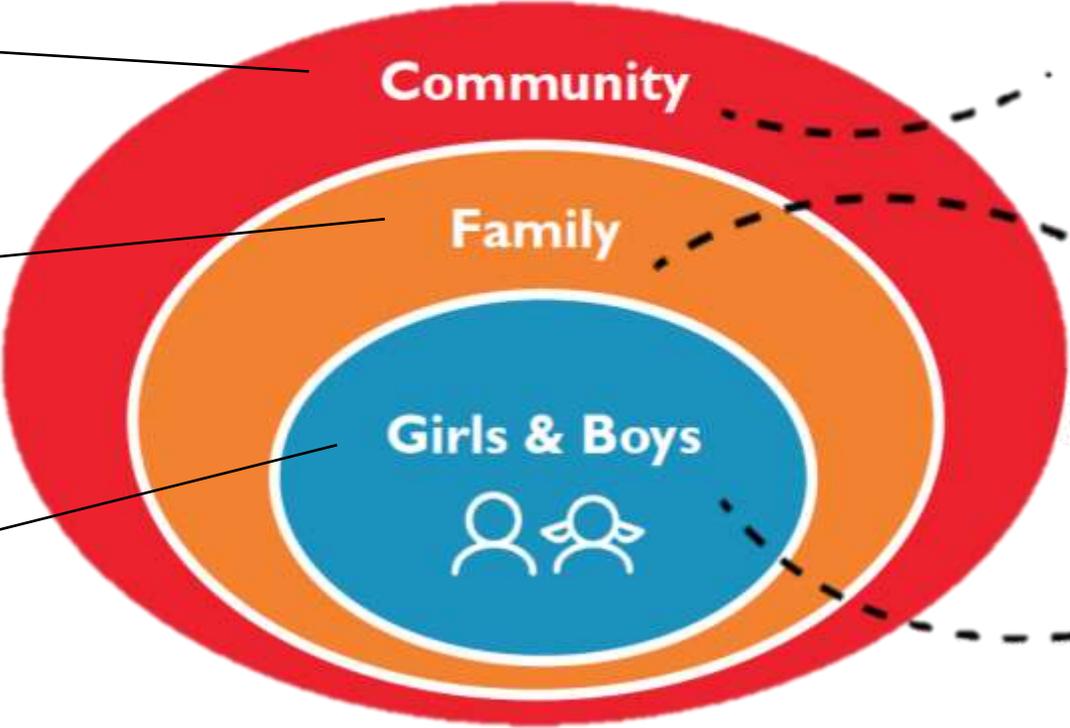
# CHOICES, VOICES, PROMISES: Three Pillars – One Approach

## Fostering Gender Equity Among Early Adolescents

**COMMUNITY**  
Shift gender norms within communities to create environments where education for girls is valued more highly than early marriage and girls and boys are valued equally, *through series of 6 posters placed in community and facilitated dialogue by community influencers*

**PARENTS**  
Increase dialogue between parents and VYA that diminishes inter-generational transfer of inequitable gender norms and improve quality in the household, *through facilitated group dialogue following 6 trigger videos*

**VYA**  
Challenge VYA girls' & boys' views on restrictive gender norms and promote gender equity by exploring alternative views on masculinities and femininities, *through 8 age appropriate interactive sessions*



## Theory of Change (TOC)



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<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/collection/choices-voices-promises-program/>

# CEFMU: West & Central Africa

Nigeria: Gombe, Katsina, Zamfara LGAs (2018 → 2021)

Burkina Faso: Cascades, Hauts-Bassins (2020 → 2023)

Sierra Leone: W. Rural District, Kailahun (2020 → 2023)

## - Base/end lines: quantitative/qualitative data tools

- **Formative Assessment** → identifies key attitudes and behaviours seek to change
- Unmarried adolescent survey 10-14/15-18 yrs
- Married adolescent and partner survey 13-18yrs
- Caregiver survey - linked to unmarried survey
- Health facility assessment
- Social norms exploration on behaviours including practices around CEFMU



CEFM world rankings: BF: 7<sup>th</sup>, NI: 11<sup>th</sup>, SL: 20<sup>th</sup>. GNB Atlas

# Nigeria main achievements

The Reaching and Empowering Adolescents to make Informed Choices for their Health (REACH) project has been empowering adolescents in northern Nigeria to make the best and informed decisions about their SRHR, achieving outstanding results for youth and community members.

By the end of the project:

- ❖ **Early marriage dropped from 54% to 41%**
- ❖ **64%** of married adolescent girls and their partners reported higher rates of shared decision making over SRHR and household decisions compared to **35%** before the project
- ❖ **94%** of married adolescents (girls/boys) believed that couples should decide together when to have children and how many to have, compared to **64%** before the project
- ❖ **84%** of health facilities had healthcare staff trained on gender responsive healthcare

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Sierra Leone



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**NIGERIA  
SIERRA LEONE  
BURKINA FASO**

MY BODY.

MY DECISION.

MY RIGHTS.



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# Challenges, Adaptations, Lessons

- ☒ **Implementation impacted by security, food/inflation crises (BF)**
  - ✓ During lean and rainy season decrease/stagger sessions to allow for children to support families
  - ✓ Ensure diverse alternatives to VSLA including agricultural initiatives
  - ✓ Address wider contextual security issues: integrate security awareness sessions and support to establish community protection mechanisms and monitoring and work through a variety of safe spaces
- ☒ **Religious and traditional leaders who officiated child marriage were against the intervention at the start (NI)**
  - ✓ Continuous direct engagement through training, community dialogue and support for community actions led to RTLs developing **bye-laws as an accountability mechanisms** against child marriage
  - ✓ RTLs have stated they will **not conduct child marriages without age certification** through birth certificates
- ☒ **Service providers attitudes were not adolescent friendly (SL)**
  - ✓ **Adapted and focused trainings on gender transformative attitudes** → leading to improved access to SRHR services, an increase of GBV case reporting and more responsive and accommodating services
  - ✓ Increased reporting by adolescents has informed and led to **advocating for national level SRH policies** to specifically include a focus on adolescents
  - ✓ **Increased engagement of Police Family Support Units** to lead and engage the community and build confidence in reporting
- ☒ **Monetizing participation** by community is increasing due to economic situations (SL, BF)
  - ✓ Very clear information to participants and adapted to step down training for those that may not want to continue



- ✓ Contextualization of approach and tools are pivotal
- ✓ Building strong partnerships with local organisations, community members and adolescents must take place from the start. Adapted strategy to **specifically include women-led organisations** with experience working in CEFMU (BF, SL)
- ✓ Challenge our own assumptions: concerns over working with religious and conservative communities (NI)
- ✓ Adapted TOC to include **more direct initiatives with VYA and older adolescents** (OA) including life skills, foundational financial literacy and VSLA for OA
- ✓ Strengthened **community led initiatives** and support for community groups and gender champions to develop their own actions based on the behaviour change they want to see
- ✓ Increased **engagement with boys** as gender equality advocates to promote more respectful relationships especially in marriage situations

**Thank you!**  
**Na Gode!**  
**Merci!**  
**Tenki!**



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