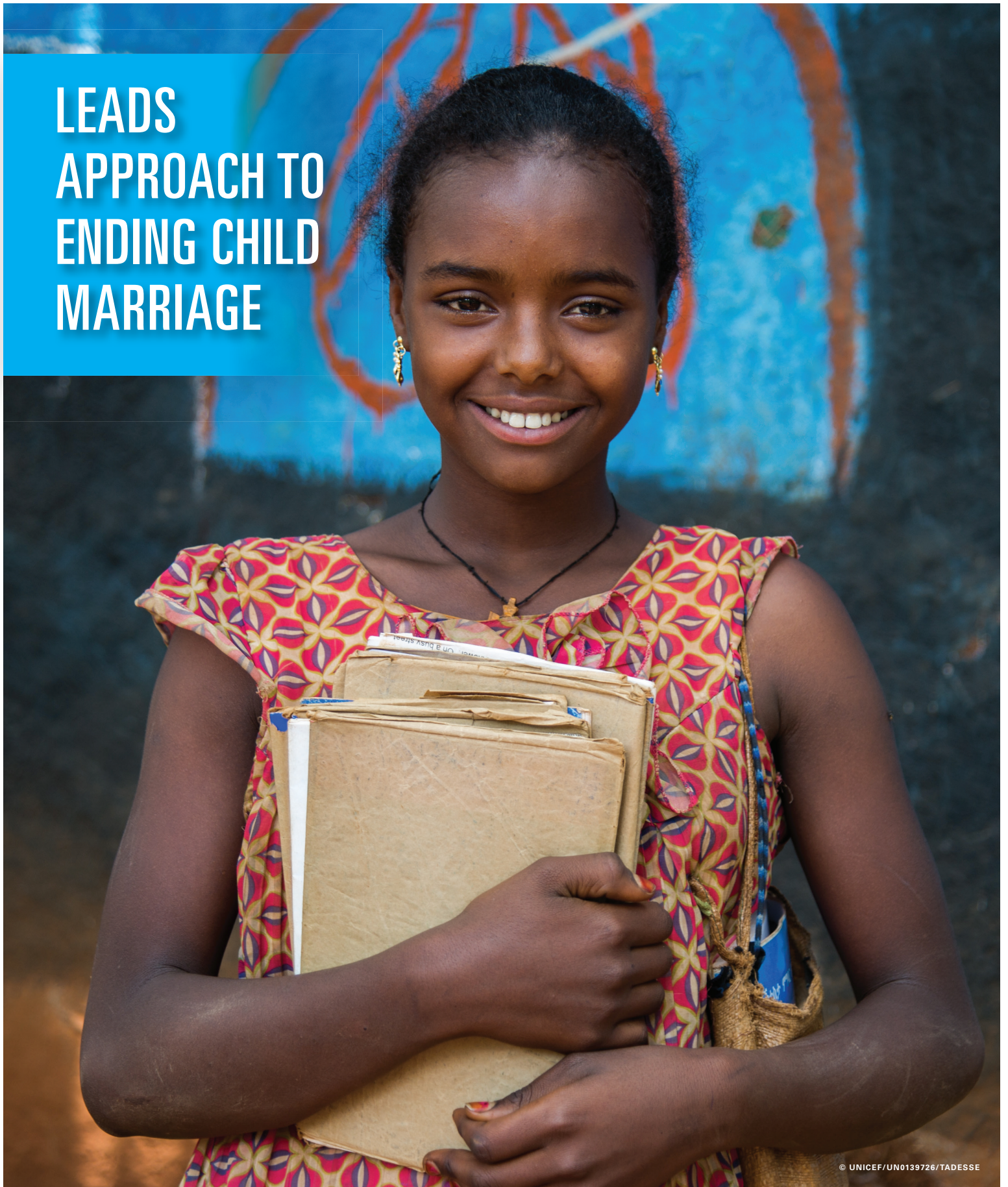


LEADS APPROACH TO ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE



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L **EGISLATION:**
Develop and implement national laws that protect girls from harmful practices

Governments can protect girls from harmful practices by strengthening legal provisions, harmonizing statutory and customary law, and effectively enforcing laws. National strategies and plans are an opportunity to address harmful practices, including but not limited to child marriage.

E **NGAGEMENT:**
Engage families, communities and leaders to protect girls from harmful practices

Parents and community members, including men, are often authorized as the primary decision-makers on the fate of the girl to enter into union as a child. Bringing about behavioral change among these stakeholders through awareness raising discussions about the value of educating girls and the negative consequences of child marriage can change social norms that promote child marriage.

A **DOLESCENTS:**
Empower adolescent girls at risk of child marriage, or already married, to express their views and exercise their choices

Girls must be fully informed about the consequences of child marriage and learn to assert their own interests. Providing fundamental life skills education and access to sexual and reproductive health and rights will be girls' greatest tools in building support networks while remaining in school. This will promote their learning capabilities and raise their self-value and self-esteem. This in turn will lead them to make informed decisions and negotiate how they live on their own terms.

D **ATA:**
Generate and use robust data and evidence to inform programmes and policies relating to adolescent girls and harmful practices

Investing in data, and generating and disseminating evidence on what works to prevent child marriage is essential to developing smart, effective policies and programmes that can lead to large-scale change.

S **ERVICES:**
Strengthen the availability, accessibility, quality and responsiveness of services for adolescent girls

Improved access to quality education and health (including but not limited to sexual and reproductive health), child protection and social protection services leads to better outcomes for adolescent girls. These services can support girls in preventing adolescent pregnancy, continuing their education, and building their own future.

Across Africa, 125 million girls and women alive today were married before their 18th birthday. Over one in three young women in Africa are married during their childhood, and one in ten before reaching their 15th birthday. Today, Africa below the Saharan desert is known globally for its highest prevalence of child marriage. Over the past decade Africa has only been able to attain modest declines of this harmful practice. This is further due to an increasing population which affected the number of child marriages.

New data points to the possibility of tangible progress in Africa. In Ethiopia – once among the top five highest prevalence countries for child marriage on the continent – child marriage prevalence has dropped by a third in the last ten years. Progress has also been observed in Algeria, Guinea-Bissau, Rwanda, Tunisia and Zambia.¹

However, in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 5.3, Agenda 2063 'The Africa We Want' and the African Union Child Marriage Campaign targets, accelerated progress is needed. Meeting these targets would provide millions of girls the opportunity for a better life and the realization of their full potential. It would also avert significant economic costs related to fertility, health, nutrition, education and earnings – not only for the girl brides, but also for their families and the countries where the practice prevails.²

1 United Nations Children's Fund, *Accelerating Efforts to Eliminate Child Marriage in Africa*, New York: UNICEF, 2018

2 Wodon, et al., *Economic Impacts of Child Marriage: Global Synthesis Report*, Washington D.C.: The World Bank and International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), 2017

