

TERM OF REFERENCE

RESEARCH ON CHILD MARRIAGE SITUATION AND IMPACT IN VIETNAM

I. BACKGROUND

Every year, 12 million girls are married before the age of 18. The practice of child marriage – a formal or informal union where one or both parties are under 18 – impacts girls across countries, cultures, and religions.ⁱ Over one-fifth (21%) of young women (aged 20-24) around the world were married as children.ⁱⁱ However, COVID-19 and the measures taken to combat it are seriously threatening to reverse the progress achieved in reducing child marriage. At the onset of the pandemic, several projections were made placing an additional 10-20 million more girls at risk of child marriage in the next 15 years. The experience of World Vision shows that most of these marriages will happen within the first two years of the crisis. This places four million more girls at immediate risk of child marriage. In fact, this has already begun. Anecdotal information and data collected through various surveys with children and communities confirm these predictions. In just 12 months, World Vision received twice the number of reports of child marriage in the communities where we work compared to the same period last year.

Child marriage has serious consequences for young girls. For instance, it often results in motherhood before girls are physically or emotionally ready. For adolescent girls, there are greater risks of pre-term delivery, low birth weight, and infant and maternal mortality.ⁱⁱⁱ In addition, many girls never have the chance to continue or complete their education. Sometimes, this is a result of discriminatory school policies. More often, it is because they are expected to carry the load of housework. As new members of households, child brides often lack the decision-making power to negotiate safer-sex practices. This makes girls more vulnerable to sexually-transmitted infections or early pregnancy. They also experience high rates of intimate partner violence (IPV). Indeed, they are almost 50% more likely to have experienced physical or sexual violence from a partner than girls who married over the age of 18.

Child marriage in Vietnam has slightly increased nationwide. In 2021, 14.6% of women aged 20-24 were first married or in a union before the age of 18. That is a 4% increase on 2014, when the figure was 10.6%, according to the Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS). The situation is much worse in mountainous and ethnic minority areas. The MICS 2021 found that the percentage of women aged 20-49 who were first married or in a union before reaching 18 years old was 23.1% in northern midland and mountainous areas and 18.2% in the central highlands. Both these figures are higher than the national average of 11.2%. This rate is also high among ethnic minorities. For instance, 53.4% of H'Mong women and 26.1% of men were married before the age of 18. Similarly, 22.4% of Tay, Thai, Muong, and Nung women aged 20-24 were first married or in a union before reaching 18 years old. World Vision International in Vietnam (WVI-Vietnam) safeguarding incident report data also recorded around 100 child marriage cases per year in all Area Programmes (APs). The highest number of cases occurred in the Northern province of Dien Bien where the H'Mong people live.

Zones	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
North 1	78	152	76	80	386
North 2	1				1
North 3		3			3
Central	5	11	3	1	20
South	1	9	29	18	57
Total	85	175	108	99	467

In recent years, WVI-Vietnam and other organisations have been working together with girls, families, communities, governments, and other stakeholders to address and prevent child marriage. As a result, progress has been made in enhancing the capacity of children, parents, and communities; as well as in improving support services to education, healthcare, social protection, and livelihood opportunities. However, this progress has been uneven. Therefore, more needs to be done to address existing gaps and to respond to new challenges. These include social norms and practices, financial and educational opportunities, other structural issues, and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Preventing child marriage needs to remain an overarching priority for action. However, at the same time, interventions that support girls who are already married and their children also need to be accelerated. This is essential in order to address the negative consequences of child marriage on girls, their children, their families, and their communities. For this reason, WVI-Vietnam has chosen to assess the situation of girls/young women who married before the age of 18 and their children. The research will also shed more light on the social norms that affected their decision to get married as children, their experiences in accessing basic services, continuing their education, and dealing with domestic violence. The research will also contribute to the global picture of World Vision International on the issue of child marriage.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND AUDIENCES

Research objectives

The purpose of this research is to gain an in-depth perspective on child marriage in the current socio-economic context in Vietnam after COVID-19. It will explore the causes and consequences directly from ‘child brides’ – girls that married before the age of 18. Its key objectives are to:

- **Influence**
 - Inform WVI-Vietnam’s advocacy and programming on preventing child marriage and protecting children from domestic violence and abuse.
 - Inform WVI-Vietnam’s recommendations on the policies regarding preventing child marriage and social services for child marriage cases, especially girls.
- **Income**
 - Position WVI-Vietnam for available funding from the global UNFPA/UNICEF programme.

- Increase World Vision’s profile as an organisation addressing child marriage and violence against girls among policymakers, donors, UN agencies, and partners.

The report will be published on social media and our website. The report will also be shared with relevant media partners to educate them on this topic to better package their content. A detailed plan for publication and external engagement will be developed for the report based on upcoming communication opportunities.

Audiences for research

The main audiences are:

- **The general public:** We hope that quantitative and **qualitative data and stories** presented in the research report will draw public attention and encourage supporter action to raise public awareness and mobilise support for advocacy on preventing child marriage.
- **Policymakers and donors:** The intention is to create a sense of urgency among policy makers to enforce the implementation of Decision 498 on Reducing Child and in-breeding Marriage in Ethnic Minority Areas 2015-2025 and to inform further actions to address child marriage after 2025 given the changes in socio-economic context after COVID-19.
- The research also aims to accelerate actions and increase funding from donors and the Vietnamese government to end child marriage.
- **International and national organisations and partners, especially UNICEF/UNDP:** The report will also help to draw attention to World Vision’s work on addressing child marriage.

How this report or research will meet the objectives

This research report will provide new information on the realities of child brides, including during the global pandemic, which will grab the attention of policymakers, donors, and the general public. The report will help to highlight the contrasting lives of married and unmarried girls and make a clear argument to accelerate progress in ending child marriage.

III. KEY TENTATIVE RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND DESIGN

The research problem, questions, methodology, sampling, and publication will be reviewed and refined by an independent consultant who is a research expert. Meanwhile, key tentative ideas are proposed below for further discussion with the consultant.

The report will be based on primary quantitative and qualitative research with girls/women who married before the age of 18. Our main hypothesis is that marriage substantially changes the lives of underage girls, leads to their social marginalisation, affects their agency, and seriously impacts the realisation of their human and child rights. The research will seek to understand the root causes, real consequences, and impacts of child marriage. It will focus particularly on social norms and the ability of young brides to continue their education, if they have experienced any violence in their new household and if they were

able to access social protection services. It will also explore how their children's well being are ensured and if their children can access services. The research will also reflect possible changes in their status and ability to access services due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The research will compare the experiences of three groups of respondents who live in existing WVI-Vietnam programme areas: Unmarried girls (15-18), married adolescents (15-18), and women (20-24) who married as adolescents in the last five years.

Before the primary research, a literature review will be carried out to examine existing research on child brides and to provide background information on current efforts to support them, especially in countries selected for research.

Tentative research questions

1. What are the key drivers leading to child marriage, including norms, practices, peer pressure, etc.?
2. How have brides' lives changed upon their marriage? This high-level framing question will be answered through: a) qualitative research methods (focus-group discussions (FGDs)), and; b) a comparative analysis of responses from three groups of women - what are the changes in girls' agency and social marginalisation (relationships, stigma, etc.) resulting from early marriage?
3. Can child brides access social protection, legal and psychological support, and other services? What enables/restricts their access?
4. Are child brides able to continue their education in any form and what enables/restricts their access?
5. Do child brides experience any interpersonal violence in their new homes? Who are the perpetrators and victims? Are they able to access any support? What are their dreams and aspirations?
6. What would be most helpful to overcome the challenges they face?
7. What are the impacts on the well-being of children born to child marriage?
8. What are the priorities for action for policymakers and donors to ensure that child brides receive the support they need to lead healthy, happy, and productive lives?

Questions 1-2 and 7-10 can be answered using qualitative methods such as FGDs and key informant interviews (KIIs) as well as findings from the literature review. Questions 3-6 can be included in the quantitative survey and will be a basis for statistical analysis.

A more detailed methodology will be developed by the consultant to unpack the above questions and ensure that this is an empowering experience for the girls and women who participate.

Suggested methodology

This will be primary research. The main suggested research technique is a quantitative survey using a semi-structured questionnaire due to the ability to administer surveys through existing Child protection programmes. Besides, some of the research questions also require qualitative data collection methodologies such as FGDs and KIIs.

A detailed methodology will be developed in collaboration between CP and the Programme Effectiveness Unit (PEU) and the external consultant. Developing and administering

research and preparing a report will require the participation of relevant sectors, advocacy, and communications teams to administer research, prepare the report, and collect case studies and other information.

The research will be developed in three phases:

- **Preparation phase:** Literature review, agreement on research ToR, methodology, delivery mechanism, and sample APs.
- **Data collection phase:** Including available data from existing WVI-Vietnam APs.
- **Data analysis and report writing**

Tentative sampling

Sample group: Unmarried girls (15-18), adolescents (15-18) married in the last five years, and women (20-24) married as adolescents in the last five years.

- The group of children aged 12-18 who were first married or in a union.
- The group of people aged 19-25 who were first married or in a union before reaching 18 years old.

Sample location:

- Project location
- Consider areas and ethnicities with rates of child marriage considerably above the national average
- Tentatively select three zones that are representatives of regions/areas with two APs per zone.

Risks

It may be difficult to reach out to married girls. However, delivering the survey through existing programmes may provide a solution. We would also have to assess if there are already relationships of confidence with brides and how we can ensure that research happens in empowering and safe environments.

IV. INDEPENDENT CONSULTANT AND PROPOSAL

Role and responsibility

The independent consultant will be responsible for defining problems and research questions; designing the research with methodology and sampling tools; conducting analysis; and writing a research report. Eventually, he or she will take responsibility for publication, under the supervision and support of World Vision. This will include:

- Advising, reaching a consensus on, and developing research questions and design. This should indicate the methodologies to be applied (quantitative and qualitative methods), proposed sample size, data analysis method and plan, report outline, quality control methods, logistics, and other related issues upon discussion with

World Vision. A specific plan will be developed to address the specific objectives listed above.

- Conducting preparation activities for the research, including a literature review, developing tools, etc.
- Providing training for field data collectors, including ethical and gender aspects and covering protocols/guidelines to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of interviewees, and; supervising the data collection process in the field, applying relevant methods of quality control.
- Analysing quantitative and qualitative data, explicitly indicating the gender, ethnicity, and disability features.
- Participating in organising validation workshops, presenting reports, facilitating technical discussions, collecting and consolidating feedback, and confirming the draft report.
- Revising and completing the report versions based on input from World Vision and related partners.
- Securing the endorsement of World Vision on the research plan, research report outline, draft report, and final report.
- Following Vietnamese legal regulations on child protection and the Child and Adult Safeguarding Policy of World Vision.
- Responsibility for publication with support from World Vision.

Selection criteria

The successful consultant(s) should have the following qualifications to effectively carry out the research:

Essential:

- At least a post-graduate degree in social sciences, development, or related fields.
- At least five years of experience in conducting similar research in the role of research team leader.
- Strong experience and skills in using quantitative and qualitative methods, leading data collection, analysing qualitative and quantitative data, and using data analysis applications/software.
- Excellent report writing skills, including report writing for publication.
- Excellent capacity and profile in the publication of research products on social development, child protection (in the case of a consultant team, at least one team member must fulfil this criterion).

- Strong knowledge of and insights into Vietnamese law and policies on child protection and child marriage prevention, the political system, policy context, the issue of child marriage, and the rights of women and children.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills in English and Vietnamese (in the case of a consultant team, at least one team member must fulfil this criterion).
- A strong commitment to delivering timely and high-quality results.

Preferred:

- Experience undertaking research on social norms, policy impact on child marriage, violence against women and children, and gender.
- Have been published at the national level on child marriage or gender-based violence.
- Able to work with stakeholders at different levels.

Consultancy fee: negotiable base on financial proposal

Proposal:

- CV (include name, title, organisation, contact details, and two referees) and
- The research proposal, including the methodologies, tools and process they will undertake to deliver the assignment.
- Financial proposal

V. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF DIFFERENT FUNCTIONS AND WORK PLAN

Roles and responsibilities of different functions

To ensure that the success of the consultancy is monitored, the engagement of the following departments is required:

- The Child Protection team: Monitor the overall research planning and implementation of the hired consultant and provide child protection technical input for the research plan and report.
- The PEU team: Monitor and provide input on the research design and plan; review tools, methodologies, and data analysis; join with Child Protection to provide input for the report; support and monitor the consultant in research publication.
- The Communications team: Develop the communication plan based on the confirmed activities and events. Ensure that the hired consultant follows World Vision Vietnam brand guidelines and adhere to our standards.

Work plan

The timeline for the report is August 2022 to October 2022:

Task	Who	Support consultant	When
ToR approved	Child Protection team		31 July 2022
Advertising for and recruiting consultant	PnC, Child Protection, PEU		Week 1-2 August
Contract signed	PnC	Child Protection	Week 3 August
Research plan by consultant	Consultant	Child Protection and PEU	Week 4 August
Literature review exercise	Consultant	Child Protection and PEU	Week 5 August
Research phase	Consultant	Child Protection and PEU	Week 1 September
Data analysis	Consultant	PEU	Week 2 September
Draft report	Consultant	Child Protection and PEU	Week 3 September
Final report	Consultant	Child Protection and PEU	October 2022
Report publication	Consultant	PEU and Communications	December 2022

VI. BUDGET

Item	Amount
Maximum	10,000 USD

The maximum budget is 10,000 but cost effectiveness will be one of the selection criteria.

ⁱ World Vision. (2018). Child marriage: Facts, FAQs, and how to help end it. Available at: <https://www.worldvision.org/child-protection-news-stories/child-marriage-facts>

ⁱⁱ UNICEF. (2018, July). Child Marriage: Latest trends and future prospects. Available at: <https://data.unicef.org/resources/child-marriage-latest-trends-and-future-prospects/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Ganchimeg T, et al. Pregnancy and childbirth outcomes among adolescent mothers: A World Health Organisation multi-country study. *Bjog*. 2014;121(S Suppl 1): 40-8