

# Inclusive community engagement changed attitudes about gender and child marriage in Malawi.

## Shifts in gender attitudes and self-efficacy related to child protection: insights from a community-based project to end child marriage in Malawi

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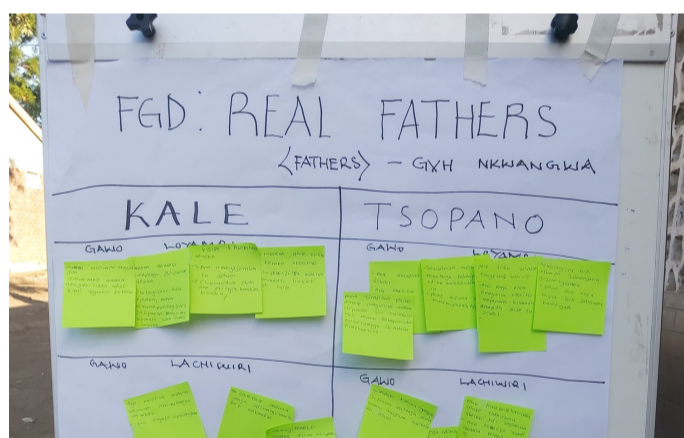
### BACKGROUND

- Malawi has the eleventh highest rate of child marriage in the world.
- Breakthrough ACTION CEFM project in Malawi was designed to change the mindset of community members and to spark a social movement to prevent and stop child, early and forced marriage (CEFM)
- Peer-led groups for girls, boys, caregivers and community action cycle for broader community

### METHODS

- Collected participatory qualitative data to understand mindset changes among girls, boys, caregivers, and community leaders
- Thematic analysis to assess changes in attitudes and intentions related to CEFM

Population	Year	Activity	#
AGYW	1	FGD	8
ABYM	1	FGD	8
Caregivers	2	FGD	16
Non-participants	2	FGD	4
Community Action Groups	2	FGD	8
Community Leaders	2	IDI	8
District leaders	2	IDI	6



### RESULTS

1. **Leaders believe a movement has been launched;** organized diffusion through community action groups, and hundreds of child marriages ended or prevented.
2. **Caregivers described substantial shifts in their value for girls' education** as well as their willingness to make financial and time investments in the education of their children.
3. **Girls/young women described an intention to delay marriage, finish school;** improved collective efficacy; reporting of violence against girls more acceptable.
4. **Boys/young men expressed more favorable gender attitudes;** improved self-efficacy to advocate for girls and women, prioritize their own education.

"[The work] will continue since Breakthrough ACTION gave us a net instead of fish. Therefore, we shall continue to pursue... **Even if the project goes, but the movement shall proceed.** You know we have two forms of CAG, the youth and the older. This means that even if we leave, but the youth will proceed with it."  
(CAG member, Machinga)

### DISCUSSION

- Positive outcomes from **specific curricula** tailored to girls, boys, and caregivers.
- Changing family dynamics, with men sharing more household responsibilities, having sons and daughters share duties more equitably, improved family vision and communication.
- **Substantial positive changes** within a short period of time due to the project's **strategic involvement of a variety of people:** parents, children (boys and girls), chiefs, faith leaders and other community members.



### HIGHLIGHTS

- "In the beginning, before Breakthrough ACTION, a lot of children were involved in underaged marriages. The coming in of this project, we have been conducting meetings with the people focusing on ending child marriages and the importance of school. A lot of us realize that children need to go to school and must not marry before the age of 18. **Through this organization parents now know that marrying off their children at a young age is wrong**" (CAG member, Chikwawa)
- Before: "That she should get educated and get married" After: "My daughter to be a nurse" (male caregiver, Machinga)
- "We did not know anything about advocacy. We were regarded as children and were sidelined in many activities in our communities. **We are now championing for girls' rights** by joining and... reaching out to girls in our communities on the dangers of child marriages." (AGYW)
- "Now I think it's good to defend girls if someone abuses or violates their rights. In addition to that, I think it's not good to hand in marriage a girl child in order to have enough resources to educate a boy child." (ABYM)



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