



Intervention: Girls' Collectives

Inspiring Married Adolescent Girls to Imagine New Empowered Futures (IMAGINE)

ABOUT IMAGINE

With support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, CARE is **testing a package of interventions that hold promise for delaying the timing of first birth among married adolescents in Niger and Bangladesh**. IMAGINE takes a holistic approach to build married girls' capacity and agency to make decisions about their life courses, to address social and structural barriers that prevent delaying, and to present alternative economic opportunities for girls so that early motherhood is not their only option. We aim to **document and share learning** from this initiative to build evidence around the issue of adolescent childbearing globally.

Girls' Collectives

In both Niger and Bangladesh, Girls' Collectives underpin the implementation of the IMAGINE project. Led by trained female facilitators from the region, these important platforms **ensure married and unmarried adolescent girls' social support and access to information**. Each group is made up of approximately 15-25 girls aged 15-19 from a single village.

Girls follow a 25-session (Bangladesh) and 26-session (Niger) participatory curriculum designed to enhance their knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy related to **sexual and reproductive health, relationships, and financial literacy**. Sessions address puberty and other reproductive health topics, decision-making, communication skills, and gender and social norms, and a range of other issues. The sessions also serve as a platform to connect girls with community health workers and women role models, such as entrepreneurs.

Girls' Collectives also function as a platform for **instruction on financial literacy and entrepreneurship** and as an **entry point for training on vocations and income-generating activities**. In Niger, Girls' Collective participants also have the option to participate in **Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) groups, supervised by field facilitators and trained adult VSLA mentors**, to grow their savings and receive loans for important income generation activities.

Following the full implementation of the curricula in 2019, **peer leaders were selected and trained to deliver Girls' Collective sessions**. Starting in 2020, Girls' Collectives transitioned to a peer-led model where peer leaders facilitate and manage the Collectives with ongoing support and mentorship from the previous facilitator. By engaging peer leaders, the project aims to facilitate sustainability of the groups while providing opportunities for girls to build their leadership skills.

Key **Girls' Collective materials** include:

- Girls' Collective Field Facilitator Curriculum
- Girls' Collective Peer Leader Curriculum
- Girls' Collective Peer Leader Mentorship Packet
- Girls' Collective Peer Leader Gender-Based Violence Training Package

Upon finalization, all project tools will be accessible at:

<https://www.care.org/our-work/health/adolescent-health/Imagine/>



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Implementation timeframe: January 2019 – May 2021

Donors: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Participants: The project will reach married and unmarried adolescent girls ages 15-19, their husbands, families and communities, as well as health workers in Kurigram District, Bangladesh and Zinder Region, Niger.



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Girls' Collective by the numbers:

- 1,430 girls in Bangladesh across 60 groups
- 1,318 girls in Niger across 55 groups

Key project Components:

- Girls' Collectives
- Health Worker Transformation
- Livelihoods Training
- Fada Groups (Niger only)
- Community reflective dialogue (Niger only)
- Couples Counseling and Couples Events (Bangladesh only)

For more information, contact Carolyn Grant, IMAGINE Project Director, at Carolyn.Grant@care.org



Intervention: Livelihoods Training Inspiring Married Adolescent Girls to Imagine New Empowered Futures (IMAGINE)

ABOUT IMAGINE

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Livelihoods Training

With delayed first birth comes the potential for alternative futures to early motherhood. The IMAGINE project posits that girls' access to earning opportunities is one possible pathway for contributing to self-realization as well as family and community support for delaying. In order to build their resiliency, support their financial and personal goals, and build the local economy, selected Girls' Collective participants in both Bangladesh and Niger have the opportunity to engage in **income generation activities**. Girls' Collectives function as a platform for **instruction on financial literacy and entrepreneurship**, including 10 sessions on topics like budgeting and financial planning, market research, and creating a business plan.

These sessions provide girls with a basis on which to build technical vocational and income-generation skills. After completing a **rigorous market analysis** to identify sectors offering transformational, accessible, and profitable opportunities for married adolescent girls, CARE worked with private sector and government partners to establish partnerships and training support in key sectors. In Niger, this includes training in cowpea processing and refinement, habbanaye (goat rearing), and feed/fodder input services. In Bangladesh, opportunities include IT entrepreneurship, jute and cotton diversified products, and telecom retailing and mobile phone repair. After the training, CARE and its partners are working to create market linkage opportunities for girls through internship and job opportunities, craft fairs and product promotion, professional associations, and ongoing mentorship. Finally, in Niger, 1170 Girls' Collective participants are participating in **Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) groups** to grow their savings and receive loans for income generation activities.

Key **livelihood activity materials** include:

- Youth Savings and Loan Association Manual and associated trainings (French)
- Financial literacy and entrepreneurship sessions (included in the Girls' Collective curriculum)

Upon finalization, all project tools will be accessible at:

<https://www.care.org/our-work/health/adolescent-health/ imagine/>



Josh Estey, 2020

Implementation timeframe: January 2019 – May 2021

Donors: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Participants: The project will reach married and unmarried adolescent girls ages 15-19, their husbands, families and communities, as well as health workers in Kurigram District, Bangladesh and Zinder Region, Niger.



Josh Estey, 2020

Livelihoods Training by the numbers:

- 991 girls in Niger
- 600 girls in Bangladesh

Key project Components:

- Girls' Collectives
- Health Worker Transformation
- Livelihoods Training
- Fada Groups (Niger only)
- Community SAA (Niger only)
- Couples Counseling and Couples Events (Bangladesh only)

For more information, contact Carolyn Grant, IMAGINE Project Director, at Carolyn.Grant@care.org



Intervention: Health Worker Transformation

IMAGINE: Inspiring Married Adolescent Girls to Imagine New Empowered Futures

ABOUT IMAGINE

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Health Worker Transformation

In order to support married adolescents' access to family planning services, it is imperative that providers are able and willing to offer non-judgmental, rights-based sexual and reproductive healthcare to adolescents. Drawing on CARE's Social Analysis and Action (SAA) approach and other reflective dialogue practices, trained facilitators led health workers through a process of critical self-reflection and action planning to transform provider attitudes and biases around providing family planning counseling and services to married adolescent girls without children.

Health workers will follow a ten-session, participatory curriculum that blends reflective dialogues for examining, challenging and shifting social norms with skill-building in family planning counseling and adolescent and youth friendly services. Sessions will support providers to assess the ways that their beliefs and biases enable or impede their ability to offer high-quality, rights-based family planning services to adolescents. Providers also create individual and facility-level action plans to improve health services for adolescent clients. This intervention aims to complement broader health system strengthening efforts by partners in the region, to ensure adapted, responsive care for adolescent clients.

The use of peer facilitators throughout the implementation of this component and transition to full health worker leadership in 2020 in Bangladesh aims to support sustainability and ownership while providing opportunities for leadership skill development for health workers. In Niger, we will continue to work closely with health workers, district health officials, and other partners to pursue opportunities for scale up and sustainability.

Key health worker transformation materials in both French, English, and Bangla include:

- Health Worker Transformation Curriculum

Upon finalization, all project tools will be accessible at:

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Implementation timeframe: January 2019 – May 2021

Donors: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Participants: The project will reach married and unmarried adolescent girls ages 15-19, their husbands, families and communities, as well as health workers in Kurigram District, Bangladesh and Zinder Region, Niger.



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Key project Components:

- Girls' Collectives
- Health Worker Transformation
- Livelihoods Training
- Fada Groups (Niger only)
- Community Reflective Dialogues (Niger only)
- Couples Counseling and Couples Events (Bangladesh only)

For more information, contact Carolyn Grant, IMAGINE Project Director, at Carolyn.Grant@care.org



Intervention: Couples Counseling & Couples Events

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Couples Counseling and Couples Events

A couple's need for accurate information, skills, and access to health services that allow them to delay first birth begins at the moment of their marriage. In order to address this need, in Bangladesh, **Couples Counseling** provides private, personalized counseling to newly married girls and their husbands. Trained facilitators deliver a nine-session, interactive curriculum in the couple's home over a three-month period. Sessions combine financial planning with sexual and reproductive health and rights topics, including social norms reflection, to empower couples with the ability to set a joint vision for their family. Some sessions also include extended family members, such as the mother-in-law, in order to reduce potential backlash and engage them in the couple's journey.

As part of counseling, frontline health workers periodically visit newlyweds in their home to provide additional information on family planning and strengthen the couple's link to the formal health system. In addition, couples also receive a **Newlywed Kit** that includes family planning information, condoms, and activities to support couples' communication and joint decision-making.

As the counselling sessions progress, couples are invited to participate in **Couples' Events**, community-based activities such as performances and cooking competitions to promote supportive social norms around gender equality and timing of first birth. Through these activities, the project aims to build community-level buy-in for delayed first birth as well as to build a social support system amongst couples considering delaying.

Key **couples counseling materials** in both English and Bangla include:

- Couples Counseling flipbook + Visioning board activity
- Prosperous futures game

Upon finalization, all project tools will be accessible at:

<https://www.care.org/our-work/health/adolescent-health/imagine/>



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Implementation timeframe: January 2019 – October 2020

Donors: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Participants: The project will reach married and unmarried adolescent girls ages 15-19, their husbands, families and communities, as well as health workers in Kurigram District, Bangladesh and Zinder Region, Niger.

Couples Counseling by the numbers:

- More than 344 couples will participate in couples counseling sessions
- 35 couples' events throughout the duration of the project

Key project Components:

- Girls' Collectives
- Health Worker Transformation
- Livelihoods Training
- Fada Groups (Niger only)
- Community Reflective Dialogues (Niger only)
- Couples Counseling and Couples Events (Bangladesh only)

For more information, contact Carolyn Grant, IMAGINE Project Director, at Carolyn.Grant@care.org



Intervention: Fada Groups

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Fada Groups

Formative research demonstrated the importance of husbands as key decision-makers with the ability to influence both family planning use and fertility intention within partnerships. As a result, **the IMAGINE project seeks to engage young men and husbands as allies in delaying childbearing**. Led by trained, male facilitators from the region, **Fada Groups** leverage existing men's social clubs through an interactive curriculum meant to provide men with the tools, knowledge, and self-efficacy to champion delayed first birth. Each group is made up of approximately 15-25 members, with a prioritization of Fada groups with younger membership.

Fada participants follow a 15-session curriculum designed to enhance their knowledge related to **sexual and reproductive health, relationships, and financial literacy**. Sessions address the health and economic benefits of delayed first birth, communication skills, and gender and social norm transformation, among other topics. As part of the Fada process, IMAGINE also supports men's leadership potential by **providing them with the skills and tools they need to carry out awareness-raising activities** and by **supporting them to develop community action plans**. Fada groups work in partnership with community and Girls' Collective groups to create an enabling environment for delayed first birth through community-developed initiatives, including village-level discussions on the timing of first pregnancy, contraception, and gender norms.

Following the full implementation of the curriculum in 2019, **each fada group nominated one married and one unmarried co-leader, who were trained in facilitation**. Peer leaders then began facilitating Fada sessions with mentorship from previous Fada facilitators. By engaging peer leaders, the project aims to facilitate sustainability and ownership of the groups while providing opportunities for men to build their leadership skills.

Key **Fada group materials** available in French and English include:

- Fada Field Facilitator and Peer Leader Curricula
- Fada Peer Leadership Mentorship Packet

Upon finalization, all project tools will be accessible at:

<https://www.care.org/our-work/health/adolescent-health/imagine/>



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Implementation timeframe: January 2019 – May 2021

Donors: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Participants: The project will reach married and unmarried adolescent girls ages 15-19, their husbands, families and communities, as well as health workers in Kurigram District, Bangladesh and Zinder Region, Niger.



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Fada groups by the numbers:

- 1,079 men in Niger through 50 groups

Key project Components:

- Girls' Collectives
- Health Worker Transformation
- Livelihoods Training
- Fada Groups (Niger only)
- Community reflective dialogues (Niger only)
- Couples Counseling and Couples Events (Bangladesh only)

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Intervention: Community Reflective Dialogues Inspiring Married Adolescent Girls to Imagine New Empowered Futures (IMAGINE)

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Community Reflective Dialogues

In Niger, using our Social Analysis and Action (SAA) approach, CARE leads community stakeholders through a process of critical self-reflection and action planning to **challenge social norms that encourage early birth** and to **build norms encouraging nulliparous married adolescents' access to essential health services, including family planning and pursuit of alternative pathways**. These mixed-gender groups are comprised of key community stakeholders from a single village who impact couples' ability to delay first birth, such as community leaders, mothers-in-law, religious leaders, and health care workers.

Participants follow **an eight-session, participatory curriculum** facilitated by trained local facilitators with support from elected male and female co-leaders. Sessions, which are adapted from CARE's standard SAA curriculum, explore beliefs around gender roles, reproductive health, and other topics that underpin early childbearing. As part of Community Management Committees, SAA groups also work in partnership with the local Fadas (men's groups) and Girls' Collectives to create an enabling environment for first birth through **action plan development and implementation**. Key action plans to date have included awareness raising activities around the timing of first pregnancy and marriage, use of family planning, and budgeting.

Upon completion of the sessions, groups will transition towards a community co-leadership model of facilitation. By engaging peer leaders, the project aims to facilitate sustainability and ownership of the groups while providing opportunities for community members to build their leadership skills.

Key **social analysis and action materials** include:

- Community SAA curriculum (French only)
- Management Committee Orientation Package

Upon finalization, all project tools will be accessible at:

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Implementation timeframe: January 2019
– May 2021

Donors: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Participants: The project will reach married and unmarried adolescent girls ages 15-19, their husbands, families and communities, as well as health workers in Kurigram District, Bangladesh and Zinder Region, Niger.

Community groups by the numbers:

- 1256 community members across 41 groups in Niger

Key project Components:

- Girls' Collectives
- Health Worker Transformation
- Livelihoods Training
- Fada Groups (Niger only)
- Community reflective dialogues (Niger only)
- Couples Counseling and Couples Events (Bangladesh only)

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