



ELIMINATING SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Canada recognizes that sexual and gender-based violence as well as harmful practices must be prevented and eliminated. Doing so allows women and girls to equally participate in economic, social and political spheres.

The Government of Canada has worked with Plan International Canada on a \$3-million project to end child, early and forced marriage. This project contributed to the adoption of a Southern African Development Community Model Law on ending child marriage and protecting girls already married. The model law has provisions for imprisonment and enables child marriages to be annulled at the discretion of the child. This law also addresses the lack of birth registration, which makes determining age difficult when it comes to enforcing child marriage laws.

The project with Plan International Canada has convened stakeholder meetings at the national level in Zimbabwe, including with government officials and civil society organizations. At these meetings, project proponents shared the provisions of the model law and lobbied for its enactment into law. As a result, a marriage bill currently in development will incorporate the provisions of the model law.

The Government of Canada has also partnered with CARE Canada on a \$3-million project to prevent child, early and forced marriage in Mali and Benin. This has resulted in positive behavioural changes regarding certain socio-cultural norms related to child, early and forced marriage in eight of Benin's ethno-cultural communities. As a result, fewer community elders now defend the practice of child, early and forced marriage. The percentage of traditional authorities, locally elected officials and religious leaders who defended the practice has decreased from 41.7% to 15.5%.

In 2016-2017, Oxfam Canada undertook a baseline study on violence against women and girls and child, early and forced marriage. This study, part of a new empowerment and protection initiative, focused on Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan and the Philippines. Among other achievements, the study created 109 youth groups and 17 community groups in three countries to raise awareness of women's and girls' rights. In Bangladesh and Pakistan, mass media campaigns were launched on International Women's Day. These campaigns shared information about violence against women and the role of community members in stopping it.

In El Salvador and Nicaragua, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is supporting a project that aims to prevent violence against women, children and youth. The project focuses on encouraging young men to adopt non-violent attitudes and practices, rejecting the belief that it is natural for males to be violent. The project also focuses on the conditions under which these beliefs can emerge. The 2015-2017 project is examining how better approaches to promoting non-violence among young men can prevent and reduce violence in public and private spheres. The project is also producing findings to feed policy debates and improve policy interventions.

