



THE SCHEME

**THE MINIMIZATION OF CHILD MARRIAGE AND CONSANGUINEOUS MARRIAGE
IN ETHNIC MINORITY AREAS PERIOD 2015 - 2025**

Report | 2015-2020
A review of the 5-year

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Review report of the 5-year implementation of the Scheme “The minimization of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in ethnic minority areas - 2015-2025”

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEMA	Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs
EM	Ethnic minority
GSO	General Statistics Office
iSEE	Institute for Studies of Society, Economy and Environment
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals

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The report has been written by Ms. Nguyen Thi Bich Thuy - UN Women National Consultant under the overall coordination of Dr. Vu Phuong Ly - UN Women Programme Specialist. In the process of finalizing this report, we have received comments from various independent experts working in the sphere of ethnic minority affairs: Ms. Nguyen Thi Tu - Former Director of Department of Ethnic Minorities, Mr. Luu Xuan Thuy - Director of Department of Ethnic Minorities and representatives of the Provincial Department of Ethnic Minority Affairs of Ha Giang, Ca Mau and Son La provinces. The report was also subject to consultation in Hanoi with the active participation of 60 delegates from the Departments under CEMA and Provincial Department of Ethnic Minority Affairs of Hoa Binh, Son La, Bac Kan, Yen Bai, Thai Nguyen, Thanh Hoa, Tuyen Quang, Lao Cai, Cao Bang, Ninh Thuan, Lam Dong, Quang Ngai, Ha Giang, and the Department of General Affairs and other Departments of CEMA, including the Department of Ethnic Policies, the Coordinating Office of the Program 135, the Ethnic Academy, Information Center, Department of International Cooperation, Ethnic Minority Reviews, Ethnic Minority Development Newspaper and the Department of Propaganda. The feedback received on the report offered significant sources of information for the finalization of this independent report, thereby contributing independent perspectives on the outcomes, challenges and difficulties experienced during the five-year implementation of the Scheme 498 on the minimization of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in EM areas.

UN Women and CEMA would like to extend our sincere gratitude for the financial support received from the Government of Ireland which facilitated the development of this important report.



FOREWORD

The Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs (CEMA) is a ministerial-level agency of the Government, performing the State management function on ethnic minority (EM) affairs nationwide. In recent years, CEMA has advised both the Party and the State in the enactment of a large number of guidelines and policies to gradually develop all aspects of EM and mountainous areas. Policies and programs on poverty reduction and the development of EM areas have achieved a range of positive results. The lives of ethnic minorities have been gradually improved. The infrastructure system has become more and more synchronous and complete, contributing to enhancing EM people’s access to education and health services, including EM women. However, the findings of the Surveys on the Socio-Economic Situation among 53 Ethnic Minorities in Viet Nam conducted by the General Statistics Office (GSO) (the first one was conducted in 2015 and the second was in 2019) revealed a number of gender issues in EM areas that have been exacerbated, more so than broader gender issues in Viet Nam, thus they are in need of attention and resolution. The gender gaps among ethnic minorities and the gap between ethnic minorities and the Kinh-Hoa ethnicity remain significant and persistent, especially in the spheres of education-training, employment-income, health care and family.

In the ethnic minority communities, women and girls are often more disadvantaged in terms of the accessibility to opportunities and resources, because social norms have imposed a lower status on them, limited them to childbirth and household productive work. The intersection of various forms of discrimination based on sex and ethnicity exerts the most impact. Against the backdrop of Viet Nam’s commitment to the realization of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), embedded with the principle of “Leaving no one behind”, the issues of ethnic minorities and promoting gender equality, for the advancement of women in ethnic minority and mountainous areas thus requires special attention.¹

One of the persistent issues among EM peoples in Viet Nam is child marriage and consanguineous marriage.

A child/early marriage means being married when either or both spouses are under the age of marriage according to the provisions of the 2014 Marriage and Family Law (men who are under 20 years old and women who are under 18 years old)². Early marriage, pregnancy and childbirth among minors has a deleterious effect on maternal health, foetal and infant development³. This is the cause of the increase in the child malnutrition rate, a rise in mortality among children under 1 year and under 5 years old and an increase in maternal mortality⁴.

¹ UN Women and CEMA, 2018. Policy recommendations to promote gender equality among ethnic minorities in Viet Nam.

² Law on Marriage and Family (2015), Article 8, Clause 1, section a stipulates the conditions for getting married as the man is full 20 years or older, the woman is full 18 years or older.

³ Ngo Thi Van Phong, 2019. (Ethnic Education Department, Ministry of Education and Training). Child marriage and consanguineous marriage in ethnic minority areas.

⁴ GSO, 2019. Findings of the Survey on the socio-economic situation of 53 ethnic minorities in 2019 show that the infant mortality rate (IMR) among children under 1 year old in 53 ethnic minorities in 2019 was 22.13 ‰; of which, the rate for males was 24.82 ‰, 19.29‰ was for females. There was a big difference in IMRs among ethnic groups, IMR of La Hu ethnic group was the highest among ethnic minorities (66.23 ‰), which was 5.5 times higher than IMR of Hoa ethnic group (11.94 ‰).

A consanguineous marriage is one of the long-established practices among ethnic minorities in Viet Nam.⁵ The Law on Marriage and Family of Viet Nam⁶ stipulates the instances of prohibited marriage, including *“being married or cohabiting as husband and wife between people of the same direct bloodline, between people of the same family line within three generations”*. Science has shown that consanguineous marriage is the cause of racial degradation when a direct bloodline is shared, for example babies being born with a high risk of malformation/defects or genetic diseases such as colour blindness, albinism, ichthyosis (or “fish-scale” skin), especially Thalassemia (Thal).⁷

Over recent years, child marriage and consanguineous marriage have had a serious impact on the health of mothers and children; reducing the well-being of the population and affecting the quality of human resources while representing one of the incumbrances to the socio-economic development and sustainable development of EM areas. On 14 April 2015, the Prime Minister issued Decision No. 498/QD-TTg approving the Scheme “The minimization of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in EM areas period 2015-2025” (Scheme 498) with a view to raising awareness and perceptions about laws on marriage and family, contributing to addressing the situation of child marriage and consanguineous marriage, thus improving the quality of the population and human resources in EM areas.

This report reviews the implementation of the Scheme “The minimization of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in EM areas” from 2015 to present. The contents of the report will focus on reviewing the outcomes achieved in the period 2015-2020 in line with the key objectives and tasks; identifying advantages, difficulties and challenges in implementing the Scheme; drawing lessons learned and making recommendations to continue with effective implementation of the Scheme in the period 2021-2025.

⁵ Ngo Thi Van Phong, 2019. (Ethnic Education Department, Ministry of Education and Training). Child marriage and consanguineous marriage in ethnic minority areas.

⁶ Marriage and Family Law No. 52/2014/QH13, which took effect as from 01 January 2015.

⁷ Dr. Duong Ba Truc, Head of Clinical Haematology Department, National Hospital of Paediatrics, said: In fact, it has been proven in medicine that consanguineous marriage is the basis for similar pathological recessive genes in fathers and mothers that combine together. And as a result, even if they are healthy, they can still give birth to malformed children or children with genetic diseases such as colour blindness (irrespective of red and blue colour), albinism, ichthyosis, especially thalassemia that makes children face deformity in facial bones, bulging abdomen and exposure to high risks of death.



1. Objectives of the Review

- To review the results achieved in alignment with the key objectives and tasks during the period 2015-2025.
- To identify advantages, difficulties and challenges in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation (M&E);
- To consider mainstreaming the implementation of Scheme 498 into the process of formulating and implementing the policies and programs of CEMA from 2015 to present;
- To review the budget for the implementation of Scheme 498; to explore good practices in resource mobilization for the implementation of the Scheme;
- To put forward recommendations to continue with the effective implementation of Scheme 498 in the period of 2021-2025.



2. Methodology

The review report uses qualitative research methods to collect information and review documents, reports, and secondary data related to child marriage and consanguineous marriage among ethnic minorities in particular and the socio-economic issues in EM areas from 2015 to present. Specifically:

- **Desk review method:** is used to review and evaluate current legal normative documents and policies related to child marriage and consanguineous marriage among ethnic minority areas from 2015 to present.

The secondary source material used includes: legal normative documents in the field of ethnic minorities from 2015 to present; administrative reports on the implementation of Scheme 498 by central and local agencies from 2015 to present;⁸ statistics on child marriage and consanguineous marriage⁹; reports, information and data from studies, surveys, and thematic surveys on child marriage and consanguineous marriage.

⁸ See Annex 1: List of administrative reports on the implementation of Scheme 498 by central and local agencies.

⁹ GSO. Survey on the socio-economic situation of 53 Ethnic Minorities in 2015 and 2019; The 2019 Population and Housing Census; The Intercensal Population and Housing Census on 1 April 2014; Household Living Standards Surveys in 2014 and 2018.

- **Fieldwork method:** In-depth interviews, group discussions, and consultation workshops were used to collect information and feedback from experts, staff of CEMA and Ethnic Minority Committees of provinces/cities regarding the accuracy and authenticity of the review results. In addition, opinions and comments from experts were collated on the practical implementation of Scheme 498 in CEMA, the system of agencies on ethnic affairs as well as related agencies and organizations.

A number of key results from reviewing the implementation of Scheme 498 are as follows:



PART 1

IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS AND IMPLEMENTATION RESULTS OF THE SCHEME “THE MINIMIZATION OF CHILD MARRIAGE AND CONSANGUINEOUS MARRIAGE IN EM AREAS” PERIOD 2015-2020

I. GENERAL BACKGROUND ON THE SITUATION OF CHILD MARRIAGE AND CONSANGUINEOUS MARRIAGE IN ETHNIC MINORITY AND MOUNTAINOUS AREAS. PHASE I: 2015-2020

Viet Nam has 53 ethnic groups with over 14 million people (accounting for 14.7% of the country's population),¹⁰ residing in communities in 51 provinces, cities, 548 districts, 5266 communal administrative units, of which 382 are border communes (bordering China, Laos and Cambodia). In ethnic minority areas, there are 1,957 communes (Area III) and 20,139 villages and hamlets (outside the communes of Area III) which are classified as particularly challenging. The process of economic restructuring in ethnic minority and mountainous areas has been slow. Workers in the agricultural sector account for a high proportion (more than 80%) of the total. Technical infrastructure is still poor and has failed to meet the needs of socio-economic development.¹¹

Ethnic minorities have the lowest level of access to, and enjoyment of, basic social services compared to the national average. Ethnic minority and mountainous areas have been the “core of poverty country wide”. The average income per capita of ethnic minorities is only about 30% of the national average. The proportion of poor ethnic households account for 63.35% of the total poor households of the country¹². The poor and near poor EM households in 2018 was 3.5 times higher than the overall national poverty and near poverty rates. The Chut ethnic group has the highest proportion of poor and near-poor households (89.3% of the population) and the Hoa ethnic group has the lowest proportion of poor and near-poor households (2.9%) in this group. The proportion of poor and near-poor EM households in rural areas is approximately four times higher than that in urban areas (39.4% vis a vis 11.0%). The North Central Coast and South-Central Coast are the regions with the highest proportions of poor and near-poor EM households. Nearly half (48.2%) of EM households in EM communes also fall into this category. The two regions with the next highest proportions of poor and near poor households are the Northern Midlands and mountainous areas (39.1%) and the Central Highlands (35.5%).¹³

¹⁰ According to the results of the 2019 Population and Housing Census, as of 0 o'clock on 1 April 2019.

¹¹ Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, 2019. Draft Master Scheme for socio-economic development in ethnic minority and mountainous areas

¹² Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, 2019. Draft Master Scheme for socio-economic development in ethnic minority and mountainous areas

¹³ GSO. 2019. Findings of the Survey the socio-economic situation of 53 Ethnic Minorities in 2019.

Furthermore, child marriage and consanguineous marriage persist among ethnic minorities in Viet Nam, causing numerous health problems, affecting the quality of human resources and has been one of the impediments to socio-economic development, social progress and the sustainable development of EM areas.

1. Actual situation of child marriage in EM areas period 2015-2020

Box 1: Objectives of the Scheme 498 on the minimization of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in EM areas

Specific objective: To reduce an average of 2% - 3% per year the number of child marriage couples and 3% - 5% per year the number of consanguineous marriage couples for those areas and ethnic minorities that have high rates of child marriage and consanguineous marriage. By 2025, to strive to prevent and limit the incidence of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in EM areas.

Source: *Scheme “The minimization of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in ethnic minority areas period 2015-2025” under Decision No. 498/QĐ-TTg dated 14 April 2015 of the Prime Minister.*

The rate of child marriage in ethnic minority areas tends to decrease gradually. Specifically, the findings of the Survey on the socio-economic situation of 53 ethnic minorities show that the proportion of ethnic minorities involved in child marriage in 2018 was 21.9%, a decrease of 4.7 percentage points compared to 2014 (26.6%), corresponding to an average decrease of approximately 1 percentage point per year. However, if compared with the objective, under Scheme 498, of reducing 2 to 3 percentage points per year, the implementation results in the period 2015-2020 have not yet been fulfilled.

The average age of child marriage among ethnic minorities in 2018 was 17.5 years old for men and 15.8 years old for women. Child marriage among ethnic minorities was improved in 2018 when compared to 2014, but the rate of child marriage remained high in predominantly EM areas. Among the six socio-economic regions, the Central Highlands continued to present the highest rate of child marriage in 2018 of 27.5% (down by 2.1 percentage points compared to 2014); followed by the Northern Midlands and Mountains with 24.6% (down by 5.1 percentage points compared to 2014) and the North Central and Central Coast of 22.4% (down by 3.2 percentage points compared to 2014). The Red River Delta, where few ethnic minorities reside (3.3%), is the region with the lowest proportion of ethnic minorities involved in child marriage in 2018 (7.8%).¹⁴

By ethnic group, the highest rates of child marriage are among Mong (51.5%), Co Lao (47.8%), Mang (47.2%), Xinh Mun (44.8%), and Ma (39.2%).¹⁵

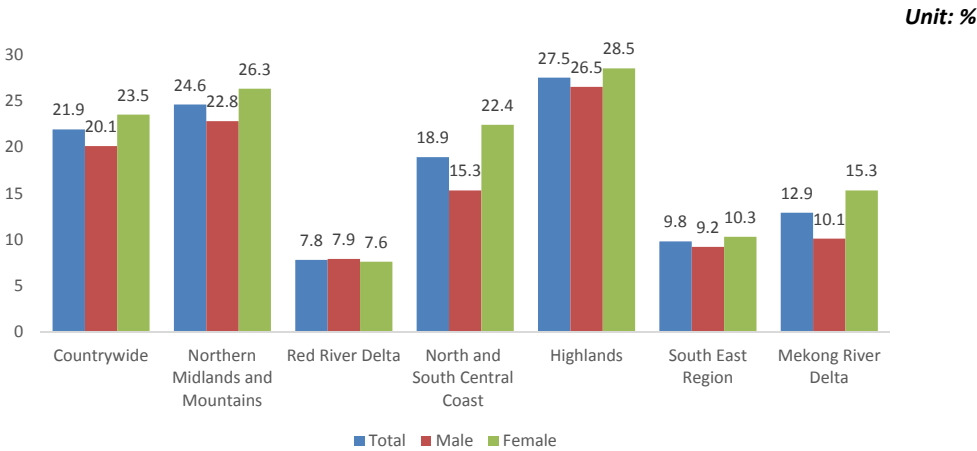
By gender, the rate of child marriage among ethnic minority women in 2018 was still higher than that among ethnic minority men (in 2018: the rate was 20.1% among men and 23.5% among women). Compared to 2014, the rate of child marriage among ethnic minority men decreased by 5.9 percentage points, which was 3.6 percentage points higher than the corresponding decrease among ethnic minority

¹⁴ GSO. Survey on the socio-economic situation of 53 Ethnic Minorities in 2019

¹⁵ GSO. Survey on the socio-economic situation of 53 Ethnic Minorities in 2019

women (2014: 26.0% among males and 27.1% among females). The rate of child marriage among EM women has always been higher than that of EM men in all regions, except in the Red River Delta.¹⁶

Figure 1: Rates of child marriage among ethnic minorities by gender and socio-economic region, 2018



Source: GSO, Survey of the socio-economic situation of 53 Ethnic Minorities in 2019.

Table 1: Rate of child marriage among ethnic minorities by socio-economic region, in 2018 and 2014

Unit: %

	2018	2014
Countrywide	21.90	26.60
Northern Midlands and Mountains	24.60	29.7
Red River Delta	7.80	14.6
North and South Central Coast	18.90	25.6
Highlands	27.50	29.6
South East Region	9.80	13.0
Mekong River Delta	12.90	14.2

Source: GSO, Survey of the socio-economic situation of 53 Ethnic Minorities in 2019 and 2015.

By technical and professional qualifications¹⁷, only 1.1% of ethnic minorities involved in child marriage had technical qualifications, while this proportion among non-child marriage people was nearly 18 times higher (18.8%). In 31 out of 53 ethnic minorities 100% of the early married people had no professional or technical qualifications¹⁸. Only 1.6% of men in child marriage had technical and professional qualifications, compared with 0.6% of women.

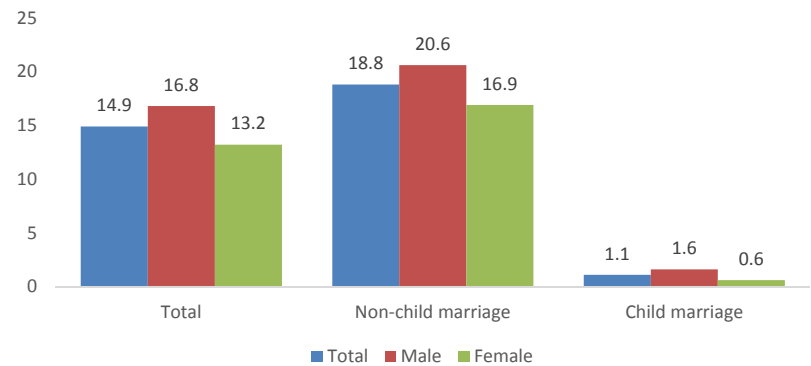
¹⁶ GSO. Survey on the socio-economic situation of 53 Ethnic Minorities in 2019

¹⁷ According to GSO, professional and technical qualifications include elementary, intermediate, college and university levels or higher. A person is considered to have an “Elementary” level, if his or her highest trained and certified professional and technical level is elementary or if he/she has received vocational training for less than 3 months. A person is considered to have an “Intermediate” level, if his or her highest trained and certified professional and technical level is professional intermediate or intermediate vocational training. A person is considered to have a “College” degree, if the highest professional and technical level that he has been trained on and granted with a diploma is college education or college vocational training. A person is considered to have a degree of “University or higher”, if the person has been trained and granted a bachelors, masters or doctoral degree.

¹⁸ GSO. Results of the Survey on the socio-economic situation of 53 Ethnic Minorities in 2019.

Figure 2: Proportion of ethnic minorities with professional and technical qualifications by child marriage status and gender, 2018

Unit: %



Source: GSO, Survey of the socio-economic situation of 53 Ethnic Minorities in 2019.

Early marriage, pregnancy and childbirth among adolescents, a period when the mother’s body is not fully developed, is associated with the lack of knowledge, experience and psychological readiness to conceive and give birth. This affects maternal health, the normal development of the foetus and newborn babies¹⁹. It has also led to an increase in the rate of malnutrition among ethnic minority children,²⁰ an increased mortality rate among ethnic minority children under 1 year and under 5 years old²¹, and an increased maternal mortality rate of EM mothers.²²

2. Situation of consanguineous marriage in EM areas in the period 2015-2020

The rates of consanguineous marriage in ethnic minority areas tend to decrease but not remarkably so. The findings of the Survey on the socio-economic situation of 53 ethnic minorities demonstrate that the proportion of ethnic minorities experiencing consanguineous marriage in 2018 was 5.6%, a decrease of 0.9 percentage points when compared to 2014 (6. 5%).

By gender, the rate of consanguineous marriage among EM men in 2018 was 5.29%, a decrease of 1.26 points per thousand compared to 6.55% in 2014; while the rate of consanguineous marriage among EM women in 2018 was 5.87%, a decrease of 0.5 points per thousand compared to 6.37% in 2014.

The highest rates of consanguineous marriage in 2018 included Mnong 37.7%, (40.57% among males and 35.38% among females), La Chi 30.8% (27.43% among males and 33.64% among

¹⁹ Ngo Thi Van Phong, 2019. (Ethnic Education Department, Ministry of Education and Training). Child marriage and consanguineous marriage in ethnic minority areas.

²⁰ World Bank and the National Institute of Nutrition, 2019. Report “Persistent malnutrition among EM communities in Viet Nam: Problems and Intervention Solutions”: One in 3 ethnic minority children is stunted; and 1 in 5 children is underweight.

²¹ General Statistics Office, 2019. Survey results to collect information on the socio-economic situation of 53 ethnic minorities in 2019 show that the infant mortality rate (IMR) of 53 ethnic minorities in 2019 is 22,13%; in which, for boys is 24.82%, for girls is 19.29%. There is a big difference in IMR among ethnic groups, IMR of La Hu ethnic group is highest among ethnic minorities (66.23%), 5.5 times higher than IMR of Hoa ethnic group (11.94%).

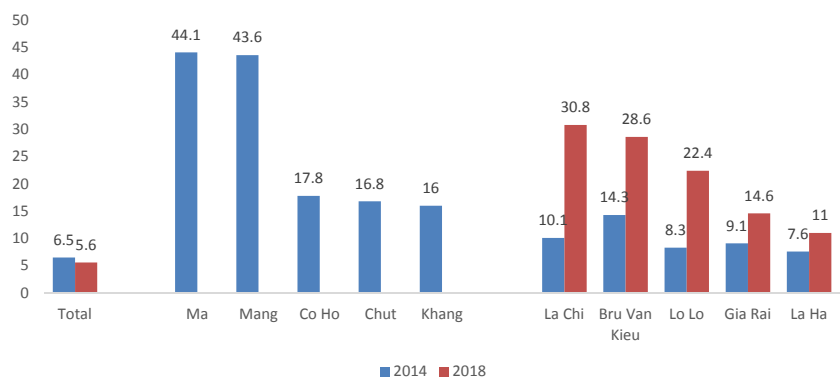
²² UN Women and CEMA (2015). Brief description of the situation of ethnic minority women and girls in Viet Nam. The maternal mortality rates in some ethnic groups (Mong, Thai, Ba Na, Tay, Dao, Nung), are still four times higher than that of Kinh-Hoa women.

females), Bru Van Kieu 28.6% (28.81% among males and 28.41% among females), Co Tu 28.0% (10.92% among males and 43.21% among females) and Lo Lo 22.4% (25.41% among males and 20.02% among females).²³

The situation of consanguineous marriage among ethnic minorities has decreased but is still increasing in some ethnic groups. Some ethnic minorities had high proportions of consanguineous marriage in 2014, and as of 2018 this situation no longer existed among EM groups such as Ma, Mang, Co Ho, Khang, Chut. However, the year 2018 also witnessed an increase in the rates of consanguineous marriage among some ethnic minorities such as: La Chi (increased from 10.1% in 2014 to 30.8% in 2018), Bru Van Kieu (increased from 14.3% in 2014 to 28.6% in 2018), Lo Lo (increased from 8.3% in 2014 to 22.4% in 2018), Gia Rai (increased from 9.1 % in 2014 to 14.6% in 2018) and La Ha (increased from 7.6% in 2014 to 11.0% in 2018).²⁴

Figure 3: The proportion of consanguineous marriage among a number of ethnic groups in 2018

Unit: %



Source: GSO, Findings of the Survey on the socio-economic situation of 53 ethnic minorities in 2019.

Table 2: Proportions of consanguineous marriage in a number of ethnic groups in 2014 and 2018

Unit: %

	2014		2018
Nationwide	6.5	Nationwide	5.6
Ma	44.1	Mnong	37.2
Mang	43.6	La Chi	30.1
Co Ho	17.8	Bru Van Kieu	28.6
Chut	16.8	Co Tu	28.4
Khang	16.0	Lo Lo	22.4
La Chi	10.1	Gia Rai	14.6
Bru Van Kieu	14.3	La Ha	11.3

²³ GSO, 2019. Findings of the Survey to collect information on the socio-economic situation of 53 ethnic minorities in 2019

²⁴ GSO, 2019. Findings of the Survey to collect information on the socio-economic situation of 53 ethnic minorities in 2019

	2014		2018
Lo Lo	8.3	Tho	9.2
Gia Rai	9.1	Xtieng	9.1
La Ha	7.6	Cham	9.0

Source: GSO, *Findings of the Survey on the socio-economic situation of 53 ethnic minorities in 2015 and 2019*.

Although the rates of consanguineous marriage were not as high as those of child marriage, the consequences were severe, seriously impairing the health and quality of the population, leading to common syndromes such as physical malformation and Thalassemia²⁵. These consequences have had a substantive effect on the happiness of family life and have been one of the causes of poverty among ethnic minorities.²⁶

3. Causes of the situation of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in EM areas

Child marriage and consanguineous marriage among ethnic minorities in Viet Nam is a contextual issue that depends both on historical context and changes in political, economic and social life. This is not purely a social issue but also associated with culture of ethnic minorities. In other words, ethnic minority culture has contributed to the rise in child marriage and consanguineous marriage.²⁷

A number of specific causes include:

First, economic difficulties have been an apparent factor leading to child marriage among ethnic minorities. In the context of unfavourable socio-economic conditions for livelihood and life development coupled with persistent poverty in ethnic minority and mountainous areas, child marriage has become a means to cope with social change and become a “strategy” for livelihood security.²⁸ Marriage is considered synonymous with bringing about economic security. After getting married, EM girls will become the principal workers in the husband’s family assuming most of the unpaid house and care work.²⁹

Activities in the lives of ethnic minorities are mostly for survival purposes. Living in the conditions that require the child to engage in contributing his/her energy and economy to the family, ethnic minority children are considered to become mature quite early in comparison to the age of

²⁵ Dr. Duong Ba Truc, Head of Clinical Haematology Department, National Hospital of Paediatrics, said: In fact, it has been proven in medicine that consanguineous marriage is the basis for similar pathological recessive genes in fathers and mothers that combine together. And as a result, even if they are healthy, they can still give birth to malformed children or children with genetic diseases such as colour blindness (irrespective of red and blue color), albinism, ichthyosis, especially thalassemia that makes children face deformity in facial bones, bulging abdomen, expose to high risks of death. Currently, no method for curing from those diseases has been invented, so the patients will have to undergo treatment for their whole life with very high costs.

²⁶ Ngo Thi Van Phong, 2019. (Ethnic Education Department, Ministry of Education and Training). Child marriage and consanguineous marriage in ethnic minority areas.

²⁷ UN Women and CEMA, 2018. Policy recommendations to promote gender equality among ethnic minorities in Viet Nam.

²⁸ ISEE Viet Nam, 2019. Child marriage in a number of ethnic minority communities in Viet Nam: An analysis from an anthropological perspective.

²⁹ Report of the National Workshop on Prevention and Ending of Early Marriage and Child Marriage: Lessons Learned from Practice, pages 8, 9. CEMA and UN Women, June 2017.

marriage as prescribed in the law. EM men and women reaching adulthood or coming of age are expected to focus on production labour. Schooling, if not meeting that goal, will become minor importance.

Source: iSEE Viet Nam, 2019. Child marriage in a number of ethnic minority communities in Viet Nam: An analysis from an anthropological perspective

Second, the influence of harmful perceptions, customs, practices, and habits among ethnic minorities have put pressure on the incidence of child marriage and consanguineous marriage among ethnic minorities. Social pressure can influence a girls’ decision on early marriage and is often related to the protection of the family’s honour. Under economic and honour related pressure, parents in ethnic minority households often agree with their children’s marriage decisions, even though the children have not reached the age for marriage as prescribed by law. Marriage can be seen as the expectation to fulfil gender roles. However, in many cases, children are the ones who make the decision on early marriage despite their parents’ objection. Girls often decide to marry early because they are concerned that it will be more difficult for them to get married when they get older.³⁰

.... The pressure to get married early is to preserve the face and honour for myself and my family. You would be considered a loser if you are not married till 18 years old, ... an unmarried 18-year-old Mong girl is considered to be “on the shelf”,...

... A variety of ethnic minorities perceive that if relatives or people connected by blood get married, wealth will be “rotated” within the family line, not being lost to outsiders....

Source: Report of the Ethnic Minority Committees of Lao Cai, Quang Ninh and Kon Tum provinces.

Third, the socio-economic life in ethnic minority and mountainous areas has been changing, towards modernization, which has also increased the risks of child marriage while increasing the risks and vulnerability of EM children. In recent years, in EM and mountainous regions, there has been strong investment in developing information technology and internet infrastructure. In addition, personal technology devices such as mobile phones, computers with internet connection and social networks, modern entertainment services have also become increasingly popular and proved significantly attractive to young ethnic minorities. EM children are exposed, early on, to harmful information from the internet and are affected by local social evils. The lack of socialisation and education on early marriage from parents and/or schools has merely reinforced the practice of child marriage.³¹

³⁰ UN Women and CEMA, 2018. Policy recommendations to promote gender equality among ethnic minorities in Viet Nam.

³¹ iSEE Viet Nam, 2019. Child marriage in a number of ethnic minority communities in Viet Nam: An analysis from an anthropological perspective.

Box 2: Child marriage is a multidimensional phenomenon that contains numerous paradoxes

Children are the subjects that are in a position to decide their own marriage. However, unequal social relationships based on patriarchal values, especially gender inequality in the society have resulted in limiting girls' opportunity to choose.

Social life has been increasingly changing in the face of modernization and globalization (via internet, Facebook) while child marriage is on the rise (deepened risks and vulnerability).

Facilitating the centralized education at boarding schools also increases the potential risk of falling in love and getting married among EM children. Therefore, the role of schools, especially boarding schools, in child marriage and consanguineous marriage related education is crucial.

Ethnic customs and habits are both a maintenance factor and a factor to minimize early marriage.

Source: iSEE Viet Nam, 2019. *Child marriage in a number of ethnic minority communities in Viet Nam: An analysis from an anthropological perspective.*

Fourth, the provision of laws aimed at the prevention of child marriage and consanguineous marriage through prohibition and punishment are not effective.³² Besides, awareness of the law in general and of the Marriage and Family Law, in particular, as well as the EM population's sense of conformity and compliance with the law remains limited.³³

It is difficult for local authorities in EM and mountainous areas to control the cohabitation of child and consanguineous marriage couples. The imposition of sanctions creates conflict between the local authorities, local EM communities and amongst community members³⁴. The responsibilities of the local authority in dealing with and intervening in child marriage and consanguineous marriage are not drastic or resolute. Grassroots law enforcement officers have not taken resolute action to handle this type of violation. Most of them apply administrative sanctions and do not permit marriage registration. When there were cases of a deliberate violation of the law on child marriage

³² Marriage and Family Law (2014), Article 10, Clause 3 stipulates that «When detecting an illegal marriage, other persons, agencies or organizations have the right to propose an agency or organization prescribed at Points b, c, or d, Clause 2 of this Article to request a court to annul such marriage.» Cases subjects to administrative sanctions: Article 47 of Decree No. 110/2013 /ND-CP stipulates acts of child marriage and organizing child marriage as follows: "A warning or a fine of from 500,000 VND to 1,000,000 VND shall be imposed for the acts of organizing a marriage for a person under the age of marriage; A fine ranging from VND 1,000,000 to VND 3,000,000 shall be imposed for deliberately maintaining illegal husband and wife relationship with a person under the age of marriage regardless of a decision of the People's Court to terminate that relationship". A supplement to Decree No. 82/2020/ND-CP: "A fine ranging from 1,000,000 VND to 3,000,000 VND shall be imposed for the organization of marriage for a person under the age of marriage; A fine of from 3,000,000 VND to 5,000,000 VND shall be imposed for the unlawful maintenance of a husband and wife relationship with a person under the age of marriage regardless of the legally effective court judgment or decision".

³³ CEMA, 2020. Preliminary Review Report on 5-year implementation of the Prime Minister's Decision No. 498/QĐ-TTg dated April 14, 2015 regarding the Scheme "Minimizing the situation of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in ethnic minority areas (period 2015-2020) and performing the tasks for the period of 2021-2025.

³⁴ UN Women and CEMA, 2018. Policy recommendations to promote gender equality among ethnic minorities in Viet Nam.

and consanguineous marriage, the local authorities appeared impassive, disorganised and failed to take radical action to resolve the situation.³⁵

... Local authority officers are also members of communities in EM and mountainous areas. These officers are likely to have to attend the weddings of child marriage and consanguineous marriage couples,....

Child marriage and consanguineous marriage are mainly agreed by two families and weddings are organized as per traditional customs without marriage registration or marriage registration can wait till the couples come of age (as prescribed by the law),...

IDI with a CEMA officer.

Fifth, a low educational level and the limited awareness of the consequences of child marriage and consanguineous marriage among a part of the EM population in extremely difficult areas remains problematic.³⁶

II. IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS AND IMPLEMENTATION OUTCOMES

1. Leadership and guidance over the implementation

Deliverables

Immediately after the Prime Minister issued Decision No. 498/QD-TTg dated April 14, 2015 approving the Scheme, CEMA issued Decision No. 439/QD-UBND dated August 13, 2015 of the Minister, Chairman of CEMA promulgating the Plan for implementation of the Scheme (phase I); and Document No. 834/UBND-DTTS dated August 13, 2015 to People’s Committees of provinces/cities on providing guidance to districts to formulate the plan for the Scheme implementation. At the same time, it requested that the People’s Committees of provinces/cities would assign the Provincial Ethnic Minority Committees to act as focal points to take the lead and coordinate with relevant dedicated agencies to formulate a plan for Implementation of the Scheme 498.

Every year, the CEMA formulates the implementation plan and issues a document directing, guiding, influencing and inspecting local agencies working on EM issues regarding the implementation of the Scheme 498.³⁷

Implementing Decision No. 239/QD-TTg dated February 5, 2016 of the Prime Minister on the allocation of funds for the implementation of the Scheme, CEMA in coordination with the Ministry of Finance advises districts on the use of the funds allocated to implement the Scheme 498.³⁸

CEMA issued Decision No. 484/QD-UBND dated July 18, 2019 on the Implementation plan for

³⁵ CEMA, 2020. Preliminary Review Report on 5-year implementation of the Prime Minister’s Decision No. 498/QD-TTg dated April 14, 2015 on the Scheme “Minimizing the situation of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in ethnic minority areas (period 2015-2020) and performing the tasks for the period of 2021-2025.

³⁶ CEMA, 2020. Preliminary Review Report on 5-year implementation of the Prime Minister’s Decision No. 498/QD-TTg dated April 14, 2015 on the Scheme “Minimizing the situation of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in ethnic minority areas (period 2015-2020) and performing the tasks for the period of 2021-2025.

³⁷ Official Dispatch No. 216 / UBND-DTTS dated March 17, 2016, Official Dispatch No. 677 / UBND-DTTS dated July 15, 2016, Official Dispatch No. 376 / UBND-DTTS dated July 8, 2016 on the implementation of Decision No. 498 / QD-TTg dated 14/4/2015 of the Prime Minister

³⁸ Document No. 12159 / BTC-NSNN dated September 1, 2015 of the Ministry of Finance on funding for the project implementation; Document No. 17793 / BTC-NSNN dated November 30, 2015; Document No. 138 / UBND-DTTS dated February 28, 2018, Guiding some localities to receive funding to implement the Scheme

the National Action Plan to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Goal 5.3. Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage).³⁹

The People's Committees of the provinces/cities directly advise state management agencies on ethnic affairs to develop a plan and implement the Scheme 498 locally. Some districts have promptly and actively expedited the Scheme 498.

Limitations and shortcomings

First, in the initial two years of implementing the Scheme 498 (2015-2016), a number of provincial/city People's Committees were still not interested in following instructions on the implementation of Scheme 498. A number of districts were slow in promulgating the plan and the guiding documents while other provinces/cities were two years behind the schedule. The reasons include: (i) Some local officers did not have sufficient knowledge, skills and experience to formulate a Scheme Implementation Plan and building a model framework suitable for the local situation; (ii) a lack of accurate information and data fully disaggregated by gender, age, geographical location, socio-economic circumstances, education level and other basic factors on child marriage and consanguineous marriage in the districts. No review and assessment has been done to provide scientific and practical evidence on the situation and causes of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in different communities, from which it is possible to propose appropriate interventions and responses and (iii) the lack of technical documents to guide the formulation of the Scheme implementation plan, including guidance for information collection, situation analysis and identification of objectives, targets, solutions and activities.⁴⁰

Second, as prescribed, funding for the Scheme 498 implementation is sourced from local budgets. However, most of the provinces/cities in the EM and mountainous areas experience socio-economic difficulties and as such there was no fund allocated to Scheme 498 sourced from the local budget.

⁴¹ Due to the need to rely on support from the central budget, the allocation of funds for the implementation of Scheme 498 in EM districts has been still insufficient, impassive and difficult. (See Appendix 2)

³⁹ Decision 622 / QĐ-TTg dated 10/5/2017 of the Prime Minister on the promulgation of the National Action Plan to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Objective 5.3: Limiting progress abolish procedures such as child marriage, early marriage and forced marriage (International target 5.3).

⁴⁰ CEMA, 2020. Preliminary Review Report on 5-year implementation of the Prime Minister's Decision No. 498/QĐ-TTg dated April 14, 2015 regarding the Scheme "Minimizing the situation of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in ethnic minority areas (period 2015-2020) and performing the tasks for the period of 2021-2025.

⁴¹ In the two years 2015 and 2016, only a few provinces received funds for the implementation of the Scheme 498 from Central level, including: Gia Lai (VND 200 million), Son La (VND 200 million), Lai Chau (VND 200 million), Tuyen Quang (200 million VND), Quang Nam (200 million VND), Hanoi (80 million VND), etc. With the constraint funding provided, districts had not been able to implement the Scheme 498 yet. In the following years (2017-2020), funding from the central government to districts has increased, despite meeting 50-70% of the planned needs only. Generally calculated in the period 2015-2020, the provinces receiving the most funding from the central government were Son La (2,169 million VND, equal to 100% of the total implementation fund), Dak Lak (1,718 million VND, equal to 86.5% of the total implementation fund), Yen Bai (1,600 million VND, equal to 84.2% of the total implementation fund), Dien Bien (1,460 million VND, equal to 88.6% of the total implementation fund), Lai Chau (1,460 million VND, equal to 94.8% of the total implementation fund), Hoa Binh (1,320 million VND, 77.3% of the total implementation fund), Lang Son (1,320 million VND, 100% of the total implementation fund), Kon Tum (560 million VND, equal to 86.2% of the total implementation fund), Gia Lai (760 million VND, 45.2% of the total implementation fund), Phu Tho (437 million VND, equal to 49.2% of the total implementation fund), etc. Some districts used 100% of their local budget to implement the Scheme 498 such as Soc Trang, An Giang, Long An, Ba Ria-Vung Tau, Quang Binh, Thanh Hoa, Quang Ninh, etc.



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2. Inspection, monitoring and reporting of the implementation outcomes of Scheme 498

Deliverables

Regarding the auditing process: Every year, CEMA conducts an assessment of the implementation of the Scheme 498 in the districts. As of the end of 2019, 10 inspection teams had been deployed in nine provinces/cities nationwide.⁴² The audit focused on activities, models, the situation of allocation, use of funds and coordination mechanisms in implementing the Scheme. The inspection teams were responsible for listening to opinions from districts about difficulties and problems in the implementation process and proposing solutions in accordance with the actual situation. In general, over the past 5 years, the assessment has been carried out as planned, met the requirements, was timely and effectively supported the implementation of the Scheme in the districts and nationwide.

Regarding reporting work: Every six months and annually, CEMA requires the districts to formulate a report on the implementation of Scheme 498. The content of these reports include the progress of performing the activities, pilot models and outcomes. In general, districts have seriously implemented and submitted their reports on schedule.

Limitations and shortcomings

First, due to limitations regarding time and resources, the results of auditing and supervision tasks have not specifically reflected the implementation of Scheme 498 locally, neither sufficiently

⁴² Provinces named Tuyen Quang, Lang Son, Dak Nong, Kon Tum, Quang Binh, Quang Tri (twice), Thua Thien Hue, Lam Dong, Thanh Hoa.

assessing the advantages and problems nor putting forwards remedial orientations and solutions.

Second, the way to conduct the review and report on the Scheme 498 implementation was still onerous in terms of the formality and the implementation process which has not focused on the key contents, performance quality and effectiveness. Specifically, the collection and consolidation of information and documents from districts and villages for preliminary review, final assessment and reporting have not been carried out in an organized and systematic manner. The evaluation of the implementation outcomes and effectiveness has remained general without the establishment of clear evaluation criteria. The identification of typical/exemplary villages and individuals, who made important contributions to the implementation of Scheme 498, have not been detected and complimented on yet while a premium has not been placed on proposing adjustments and solutions to improve performance efficiency. The quality of reports from various districts have not met expectations, the content of the reports were sketchy and there was a lack of specific information and data.

Third, the task of reviewing and reporting cases of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in the districts has many shortcomings but most especially they fail to truly reflect actual situations. Specifically, (i) districts only reported cases of child marriage and consanguineous marriage that had been handled in accordance with the law; (ii) some districts were concerned that reporting other incidents would affect the recognition of cultural villages and emulation titles of local party organizations and thus ‘avoiding’ the collection of information or reporting on child marriage and consanguineous marriage.



3. Outcomes of the Scheme implementation

3.1. Regarding communication work

Deliverables

At the Central level

During the period from 2015 to 2020, the CEMA has taken the lead and coordinated with mass media organizations to hold a large number of communication and dissemination activities on the implementation of Scheme 498; meanwhile it has also coordinated with districts to deliver training and provide information. Specifically, CEMA collaborated with Viet Nam Television and Radio and TV stations of 15 ethnic minority and mountainous areas with high rates of child marriage and consanguineous marriage: (i) to set up and broadcast communication and advocacy products; (ii) to conduct talk shows on radio and television; (iii) to develop thematic reporting and programs in 12 EM languages to broadcast on radio and television stations; (iii) to coordinate with the Ethnicity and Development Newspaper to build a special page/category and news, articles on the Ethnic and Development Newspaper (under CEMA) and the specialized media webpage on the Scheme “The minimization of the situation of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in ethnic minority areas” on the e-Portal of CEMA to communicate on child marriage and consanguineous marriage as well as activities for the implementation of the Scheme.

CEMA organized the compilation and printing of a number of communication materials on child marriage and consanguineous marriage in Viet Nameese and provided translation of these materials into EM languages to be disseminated to the Ethnic Minority Affairs Agencies of provinces, cities, local communes and schools to use as grassroots communication materials⁴³. Communication products came in a variety of forms such as handbooks, posters, leaflets/pamphlets, DVDs, CDs, printed newspapers, news articles, reportages and short films. The communication contents focused on: (i) the adverse effects of child marriage and consanguineous marriage on health, education and poverty; (ii) laws and policies pertinent to child marriage and consanguineous marriage such as the Marriage and Family Law (2014), Gender Equality Law (2006), Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control (2007), regulations on the penalties for cases of child marriage and consanguineous marriage; (iii) Scheme 498 activities and related projects and programs being implemented in the locality; (iv) introducing counselling and intervention services for cases of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in the locality. CEMA took the lead and coordinated with specialized agencies to develop two short plays depicting the consequences of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in the EM areas representing two regions (Northwest and Northeast) and delivered them to Ethnic Minority Affairs Agencies of provinces and cities for implementation.

International cooperation for the organization of communication activities on child marriage and consanguineous marriage and Scheme 498: (i) Coordinated with UN Women, with the financial support from Irish Aid to organize a wide range of consultation workshops on the formulation of a plan for implementation of Decision No. 498/QD-TTg; (ii) coordinated with UN Women, UNFPA, UNICEF and non-governmental organizations (World Vision, Plan International, Childfund, iSEE)

⁴³ Translated into Mong, Thai, Tay, Ba Na, Gia Rai, Khmer, Cham, La Ha, and Co Tu languages

to organize a number of international and national conferences and workshops on the topics of prevention and elimination of child marriage and consanguineous marriage. During these conferences, CEMA invited international consultants to share effective experience from various countries in preventing and ending child marriage and consanguineous marriage; At the same time, policy recommendations were also made for Viet Nam to solve these problems.

Box 3: Conducting communication activities at the Central level. Phase I: 2015-2020

Collaboration with Viet Nam Television

- To develop and broadcast three Clips/commercial clips to communicate on child marriage and consanguineous marriage on channels VTV1, VTV2, VTV5 of Viet Nam Television and Radio and Television stations of 15 ethnic minority and mountainous districts with high rates of child marriage and consanguineous marriage;
- To conduct three talk shows on VTV1, which were broadcast in a number of programs such as: Events & comments, Today's issues; two talk shows on television stations of Ha Giang and Gia Lai provinces (broadcast once per station); four reports on VTV1 (broadcast 01 time per reportage); five specialized reports on VTV2 (one broadcast per report). Selected three thematic reports that had been built and broadcast on VTV2 to continue broadcasting on 15 television stations in the districts with high rates of child marriage and consanguineous marriage (broadcast once per station); four specific reports on the ethnic minorities with high rates of child marriage were broadcast on 4 local television stations (Mong People in Ha Giang province; La Ha and Thai Peoples in Son La province; Raglay People in Ninh Thuan province; Co Tu People in Quang Nam province) (Two broadcasts per radio);
- To broadcast commercial clips on 15 stations of the districts with high rates of child marriage and consanguineous marriage (broadcast 16 times per station); Broadcast three commercial clips on channels: VTV1 (18 times per clip); VTV2 (14 times per clip); VTV5 (13 times per clip);
- To burn discs: three promotional clips, five reportages on VTV2, four reportages on VTV1. 60 discs were burnt for each reportage and promotional clips. Particularly, 10 discs per specific reportage were burnt to provide for the districts as communication materials.

Collaboration with VOV

- To develop and broadcast 13 programs on the News - Politics – General Affairs System of VOV1 and translated five articles into 12 EM languages (Mong, Dao, Thai, Ede, Gia-rai, Ba Na, Co ho, Cham, Khmer, Mnong, Xe Dang, Co tu) to be broadcast on Ethnic Voice Broadcasting System (VOV4).
- After being broadcast, the programs and articles translated into EM languages were posted to the online newspaper <http://vov.vn/> of the Voice of Viet Nam and burnt on discs for distribution to districts serving as communication documents.

Source: Draft Reports of CEMA and Ethnic Minority Committees of provinces and cities on the implementation of Scheme 498 in the period 2015-2020.

At the local levels

During the period 2015-2020, Ethnic Minority Affairs Agencies have actively carried out communication activities in the localities, including: (i) organized 7,245 training courses to foster legal knowledge and communication skills for 478,298 people in the communes where the pilot model has been implemented. Participants were members of the Commune Steering Committees; Secretaries of Party Cells, Heads of villages, Heads of the Fatherland Front Task Force, Secretaries of Youth Unions, Heads of the Women’s Unions, prestigious persons; (ii) conducted communication sessions on child marriage and consanguineous marriage at grassroots level: 120,774 sessions with 4,070,148 participants. Communication contents were on the consequences of child marriage and consanguineous marriage; (iii) Designed and distributed 2,704,757 communication products (hoardings, posters, leaflets/pamphlets, handbooks of Q&A on Laws) to 1,412,363 EM people in the communes with high rates of child marriage and consanguineous marriage; (iv) Broadcast communication programs, reportages and short films on the Provincial Radio and Television Stations.

General assessment: Communications, propagation, dissemination and education of laws on child marriage and consanguineous marriage have been carried out at central and local levels in diversified forms. Thus, awareness of all levels, sectors and people in EM areas on child marriage and consanguineous marriage has been gradually improved.

Limitations and shortcomings

Firstly, the implementation of communication activities in districts faced difficulties due to: (i) language barriers (a great number of EM people cannot speak Kinh language); (ii) low educational levels (illiterate, low education); and (iii) limited participation of youth and adolescents that were the main targeted audience of communications, so the communication effectiveness was not high.

Second, the process of developing plans, contents, methods, tools, communication documents was not based on the results/findings of the surveys, assessments, analysis of the actual situations and needs in an objective and scientific manner, and by target groups (males, females, educational backgrounds), by region and ethnic minority group.

Third, contents and presentation/layout methods of some training and communication materials were not suitable with educational backgrounds and the actual circumstances of ethnic minority officers and people. There were still documents that were not compiled in local EM languages.

Fourth, there was a shortage of staff with sufficient communication knowledge, skills and experience in the field of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in ethnic minority and mountainous areas; Local officers/staff had to concurrently assume multiple tasks at the same time, so it was difficult for them to allocate time to carry out the communication tasks under Scheme 498.

3.2. Delivery of the pilot model on Scheme 498 implementation

Deliverables

CEMA selected 15 provinces with high rates of child marriage and consanguineous marriage to build a pilot model including the provinces named Hoa Binh, Son La, Lai Chau, Dien Bien, Lao Cai,

Yen Bai, Cao Bang, Lang Son, Ha Giang, Tuyen Quang, Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, Ninh Thuan, Gia Lai, Kon Tum. In 2017, CEMA continued to select several provinces to implement the pilot model.

⁴⁴ After five years of implementation, some concrete results have been achieved as shown in the box below:

Box 4: Results of delivering the Pilot Intervention Model on child marriage and consanguineous marriage

(i) A Steering Committee for the pilot model implementation has been established in 27 provinces. 27/50 provinces have conducted surveys, collected information and data on the situation of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in the district, serving as a basis for proposing pilot Models.

(ii) Propose a number of pilot models such as: “Women’s Group whose children are not involved in early marriage”, “Pre-marriage club”; “The club saying no to child marriage and consanguineous marriage”, etc.

(iii) Set up, maintain and replicate pilot models: As of 2020, 2892 pilot models have been built and operated in 3,481 communes, villages, hamlets and villages.

(iv) Establishing counselling and intervention groups whose members are village officers with the support of provincial, district and commune officers, tasked to regularly communicate, provide counselling and support to households in the village, especially when circumstances arise that could lead to child marriage and consanguineous marriage (in Viet language and the local ethnic language).

(v) 211,805 counselling and communication sessions were conducted on child marriage and consanguineous marriage for 494,838 people in the communes where the pilot models were organised.

(vi) Organize the signing of commitments not to be involved in child marriage and consanguineous marriage for the residents in the communes where the pilot models are being implemented.

(vii) Organize conferences to review and evaluate the results of the pilot model implementation in the communes to timely draw lesson learned and replicate them in provinces/cities.

Source: Draft Reports of CEMA and Ethnic Minority Committees of provinces and cities on the implementation of Scheme 498 in the period 2015-2020.

⁴⁴ including: Bac Kan, Nghe An, Quang Binh, Thua Thien Hue, Phu Yen, Binh Phuoc, Dak Lak; 04 pilot models implemented in 04 provinces: Dien Bien, Ha Giang, Ninh Thuan and Gia Lai; In 2018, maintained the operation of 04 pilot models in 2017 and formed 08 new pilot models in 04 provinces: Dien Bien, Ha Giang, Ninh Thuan and Gia Lai; In 2019, the CEMA supported 02 provinces to maintain 05 pilot models in two provinces of Ninh Thuan and Gia Lai; In 2020, continue to support 03 pilot models in Ninh Thuan province.

Overall assessment

The establishment and implementation of the pilot models in the Northern mountainous region, Central Coast, and Central Highlands, where the rates of child marriage and consanguineous marriage are high, are crucial and should meet practical local requirements. Positive initial results have been identified. In particular, the establishment of the Counselling Group on child marriage and consanguineous marriage is a good initiative, concurrent with the characteristics of ethnic minority and mountainous areas and needs to be further replicated.

The good features of the Counselling Group are: (i) Members of the Counselling Group are village officers/staff, local EM people who are knowledgeable about customs and practices, familiar with local households, and who can communicate in Viet Nameese and local EM languages; (ii) Members of the Counselling Group are entitled to participate in training courses on necessary knowledge and skills. Provincial, district, and commune officers (who were trained on skills and knowledge related to prevention and response to child marriage and consanguineous marriage) are responsible for monitoring and supporting the Counselling Group when necessary. (iii) The Counselling Group is tasked to regularly communicate and advise households and high-risk people; and to provide prompt intervention and support in cases of or when there are risks of child marriage and consanguineous marriage.

Some pilot models have provided effective interventions in some cases of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in the area; helped to change awareness of young people and adolescents on the harmful effects of child marriage and consanguineous marriage and enabled them to have a better understanding of marriage and family. Results from the reports of the districts where the pilot models have been implemented showed that 100% of the communes with the pilot⁴⁵ models had initially reduced the number of cases of child marriage and consanguineous marriage, albeit that the reduction rate has not yet met the objective set under the Scheme 498.⁴⁶

Limitations and shortcomings

Although there were some positive initial results, the implementation of the pilot models in recent years has revealed some shortcomings and limitations as follows:

First, the pilot models on child marriage and consanguineous marriage were designed based on the results of a preliminary review, thus having not proved to be scientific and objective; the proposed intervention solutions were not strategic, sustainable or specific.

Before setting up the pilot models in localities: (i) a preliminary review was conducted but it was not sufficient to ensure the requisite scientific and practical characteristics while the situation, causes and the factors influencing child marriage and consanguineous marriage in a specific cultural context in each locality were not accurately identified to serve as a basis for proposing strategic and sustainable intervention and response models that are suitable to local cultural practice; (ii) Norms, cultures and practices of local ethnic minorities were not thoroughly studied that otherwise

⁴⁵ See Appendix 1: List of the cities/provinces with a 5-year preliminary review report on the implementation of the Scheme 498

⁴⁶ The Objective under Scheme 498 is to reduce on average 2% - 3% / year the number of child marriage couples and 3% - 5% / year the number of consanguineous marriage couples in EM areas and ethnic groups that have high rates of child marriage and consanguineous marriage

would, on the one hand, help to identify the factors that negatively affect/influence child marriage and consanguineous marriage while on the other helping to see clearly the factors that can have positive effects/influence on the prevention and control of child marriage and consanguineous marriage. Because of the lack of scientific reliable reviews and assessments, the counselling and intervention activities of the pilot models are still subjective and formal due to rigidly applying guidance from the central government or replicating practice between localities; failing to meet the needs and actual conditions of the target groups participating and benefiting from the models (for example, most of the interventions were generally or jointly implemented for various ethnic groups, genders, age groups, qualifications and economic circumstances at the same time), thus not yet ensuring sustainability.

Second, there has been a shortage of information and data that accurately and systematically reflects the current situation of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in localities. Information and data have not been fully disaggregated by gender, age, location, region/area, socio-economic situation, education level and other basic factors serving the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the pilot models. Therefore, it is difficult to accurately reflect the results and effectiveness of the interventions and changes in perception and behaviour on child marriage and consanguineous marriage among ethnic groups.

Third, the Steering Committees in some districts remained still slow and disorganised in implementing the pilot model in their localities. The reasons included: (i) the funds allocated for the implementation of the model in 2016 was one year behind schedule; (ii) The engagement and coordination of local agencies and organizations was neither timely nor effective; (iii) A lack of a technical guiding document on the development and implementation of the pilot model (documenting how to conduct surveys and collect information; how to analyse actual demands objectively and scientifically; how to propose appropriate solutions and intervention activities monitoring-evaluation).

Fourth, the implementation of the pilot models, the counselling and intervention activities at the districts still face numerous difficulties and have not yet been up to expectations. The reasons include: (i) language barriers and documents on the model were not fully translated into EM languages; (ii) EM people's educational background is low and the illiteracy rate is high; (iii) the target subjects at which communications were to be aimed are principally young people and adolescents; however, it has been very difficult to engage them in the activities of the pilot models, which limited their effectiveness.

Fifth, the shortage of EM staff with sufficient knowledge, skills and experience in counselling, providing interventions, and carrying out pilot models in the field of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in EM and mountainous areas.

Sixth, the budget for implementing the models has been limited and, in some districts, budget allocation was fixed and consequently a constraint.

3.3. Capacity building for grassroots level officers for implementation of Scheme 498

Deliverables

Box 5: Objective under Scheme 498 on capacity building training

Specific objective: More than 90% of the staff working on ethnic minority affairs at all levels, socio-cultural staff will be trained to improve their capacity, skills for advocacy, mobilization, counselling, and behaviour change communication on child marriage and consanguineous marriage in EM areas by 2025.

Source: Scheme “Minimizing the situation of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in ethnic minority areas 2015-2020” under Decision No. 498/QĐ-TTg dated April 14th, 2015 of the Prime Minister.

Every year, CEMA coordinates with the Provincial Ethnic Minority Committees to organize capacity building activities for grassroots staff participating in the implementation of Scheme 498. Specifically:

Forms of organization: Training, coaching, field visits to learn good models

Subjects include: (i) **District level:** Leaders and staff of the Ethnic Minority Offices; and leaders of specialized divisions at district level; (ii) **Commune level** includes members of the Scheme Steering Committee at all levels, specifically: Secretaries of Commune Party Cells, Vice Chairmen of Commune People’s Committees, officers, Head of Fatherland Front Affairs Committee, Secretaries of Youth Union Branches, Heads of Women’s Unions and the Heads of village Women’s Unions, village Heads, prestigious people among ethnic minorities.

Contents of training: (i) General knowledge on child marriage and consanguineous marriage; the consequences of child marriage and consanguineous marriage; (ii) dissemination and education of laws related to child marriage and consanguineous marriage such as Marriage and Family Law, Gender Equality Law; Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control, Law on Children; (iii) Information on Scheme 498; Guiding the skills of planning and implementing the activities of the Scheme; guiding the skills of collecting information and preparing reports on the implementation of the Scheme; (iv) Communication knowledge and skills on child marriage and consanguineous marriage for ethnic minorities.



Box 6: Capacity building activities for the staff engaged in the pilot models under Scheme 498

According to reports from 50 out of 53 provinces/cities, from 2015 to date, 7,245 training classes have been organized for 478,298 participants.

CEMA took the lead and coordinated with the Ethnic Minority Committees of provinces/cities to organize 20 training courses, expedited the Scheme and implemented pilot models for the provinces in the Northern mountainous regions, Central region, Central Highlands, and Southwest region. CEMA organized a pilot study tour to learn about the pilot models for the 15 provinces implementing the pilot models in 2016 in Hoa Binh Province.

Some provinces/cities have organized a variety of study tours to learn and exchange experiences in the successful implementation of pilot models such as Bac Kan, Cao Bang and Lang Son.

Source: Report of CEMA and Ethnic Minority Committees of provinces/cities on implementation situation of Scheme 498 during the period of 2015-2020.

Overall assessment: Through capacity building activities, government authority officers, officers of ethnic affairs agencies, officers of socio-political organizations and unions have had better knowledge of legislation in general and laws on gender equality, family and marriage in particular. They have possessed the necessary knowledge and skills to implement the activities under Scheme 498, especially communication, counselling, and intervention activities on child marriage and consanguineous marriage.

Limitations and shortcomings

First, in most localities, the Scheme 498 objective was not met, which is: More than 90% of the staff working on ethnic minority affairs at all levels, socio-cultural staff will be trained to improve their capacity, skills for advocacy, mobilization, counselling, and behaviour change communications on child marriage and consanguineous marriage in EM areas. In addition, the capacity building activities to implement Scheme 498 in recent years have been perfunctory and have not met the requisite needs in both quantity and quality. There has been a lack of post-training support activities to help ethnic minority staff to practise and apply their acquired knowledge and skills in their practical work; Thus, it may not be possible to bring into full play the effectiveness of training activities.

There is still a large number of grassroots staff or officers who do not have the required knowledge and skills to perform their assigned tasks under Scheme 498.

Second, CEMA have not had sufficient resources (human or financial) to develop technical documents, professional guidelines, training materials on prevention and response to child marriage and consanguineous marriage in line with the characteristics and practical conditions of grassroots staff in EM affairs agencies.

Third, some policies for participants in training and refresher training courses have not ensured gender sensitivity, have not fully taken into account the actual conditions and different needs

of female and male staff (for example, when formulating annual capacity building plans for the implementation of Scheme 498, there was no priority policy for female staff to be registered for participation in training and refresher training courses tailored to their personal preferences as well as their childbirth and nursing plans).

Fourth, technical and financial support from domestic and international organizations has not been mobilized in capacity building for the implementation of Scheme 498 for staff at all levels, especially at grassroots level.

III. OVERALL ASSESSMENT AND LESSONS LEARNED

1. Advantages and reasons for advantages

1.1. Advantages

Over the past 5-year implementation, Scheme 498 has step by step created positive changes in the situation of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in EM and mountainous areas.

CEMA has instructed various EM affair agencies nationwide to conduct communications, dissemination and implementation of Scheme 498 and communicate on child marriage and consanguineous marriage in ethnic minority and mountainous areas.

Communication activities for the implementation of pilot models, and capacity building activities implemented in recent years have contributed to changing the EM people’s perceptions about child marriage and consanguineous marriage; at the same time improving knowledge and skills on prevention and response of child marriage and consanguineous marriage for staff and civil servants of CEMA and EM affair agencies nationwide.

1.2. Shortcomings and limitations

Beside the obtained results or deliverables, several shortcomings and limitations still persist in the process of expediting Scheme 498 as follows:

Firstly, the leadership and guidance over the implementation of Scheme 498 at CEMA and EM affair agencies across the country has on occasion not been attentive, tardy, not up to date with practical requirements while inspection and supervision have not been performed on a regular basis. The preliminary review, final review and report on the implementation of Scheme 498 are still heavily imbued with formality, which has not fully and comprehensively reflected the results, effectiveness and impact of the Scheme on the perceptions and actions of staff and people in EM and mountainous areas on child marriage and consanguineous marriage.

Second, the results or outcomes of the Scheme 498 implementation are not uniform among regions/areas and localities. Achievements in prevention and the response of child marriage and consanguineous marriage are not yet stable and sustainable. In some regions, the rates of child marriage have decreased very slowly such as the “Central Highlands”, “Mekong River Delta”⁴⁷ The

⁴⁷ GSO (2014, 2018), Findings from the Survey on Socio-Economic Situation 53 Ethnic Minorities. The rate of child marriage among ethnic minorities in the “Central Highlands” in 2019 was 29.60% compared to the corresponding rate of 27.50% in 2014; the rate in the Mekong River Delta was 12.90% in 2018 and 14.20% in 2014

situation of consanguineous marriage in some ethnic minorities has still on the rise such as La Chi, Bru Van Kieu, Lo Lo, Gia Rai and La Ha ethnic groups.⁴⁸

Third, the communication and dissemination work on Scheme 498, child marriage and consanguineous marriage in some localities, units have been delivered slowly; the way of conducting activities is still heavy in formality; The results are not tangible. The formulation of communication plans, contents, methods, tools, and materials was not based on the findings of surveys, assessments and analyses of the current situation and needs in an objective and scientific manner, or by each target group (male, female, qualification, region and ethnic group). Some training and communication materials have content and layout that are not suitable for the actual qualifications and abilities of EM staff and people. Several materials have not been compiled in EM languages.

Fourth, the pilot models on child marriage and consanguineous marriage were not designed based on a holistic, multisectoral approach. Specifically, the review of the current situation, the causal analysis and assessment of the integrated effects of all factors on the conduct of child marriage and consanguineous marriage did not ensure objectivity and science. The proposal of solutions, counselling and intervention activities of the pilot models was still rigidly applied under the guidance of the central government or copied between localities; not based on the overall assessment of characteristics of culture, custom, practices and socio-economic conditions of EM people; there has been no measure introduced to ensure the sustainability of the models. The instructions and the coordination mechanism between agencies and organizations in the implementation of the pilot models were neither timely nor effective. There was a lack of technical guidance on developing and implementing the pilot models such as guidelines on how to conduct surveys, collating information, the assessment of need in an objective and scientific manner; lack of technical/professional guidance for performing intervention and monitoring-evaluation activities).

Fifth, there are still quite a few grassroots staff who have not had enough knowledge and skills to perform the assigned tasks within the framework of Scheme 498. In addition, the majority of the staff directly engaged in the implementation of the Scheme 498 have to concurrently hold many tasks, plus their working positions are often changed or rotated, which has caused difficulties for implementation as well as impacting on the effectiveness of Scheme 498.

Sixth, capacity building for the staff participating in the Scheme at both central and local levels remains limited and not based on the actual needs' assessment of beneficiary groups. For example, a set of technical and professional guiding documents and training and fresher training materials on prevention and response to child marriage and consanguineous marriage in EM and mountainous areas has not been formulated to serve a variety of target subjects and designed for different purposes. Specifically, there was a lack of training materials, technical and in-depth or specialized professional training on communications and intervention activities. Meanwhile, the materials have not been fully translated into EM languages. Most districts have not issued policies on gender-

⁴⁸ GSO (2014, 2018), Findings from the Survey on Socio-Economic Situation 53 Ethnic Minorities. La Chi (up from 10.1‰ in 2014 to 30.8‰ in 2018), Bru Van Kieu (up from 14.3‰ in 2014 to 28.6‰ in 2018), Lo Lo (up from 8.3‰ in 2014 to 22.4‰ in 2018), Gia Rai (up from 9.1‰ in 2014 to 14.6‰ in 2018) and La Ha (up from 7.6‰ year 2014 to 11.0‰ in 2018).

sensitive training and refresher training or not paid adequate attention to the actual conditions and needs of EM male and female staff.

Seventh, the database on child marriage and consanguineous marriage has not been sufficient or updated locally and nationwide. Most districts reflected that the quality of data collection did not ensure an accurate reflection of the situation of child marriage and consanguineous marriage; the data were not fully disaggregated by gender, age, location, area/region, socio-economic situation, education level and other basic factors to serve the development, implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation of Scheme 498 in particular and the prevention and response to child marriage and consanguineous marriage in general.

Eighth, funding for the implementation of Scheme 498 comes from local budgets. However, most of the provinces in the EM and mountainous regions still face difficulties, most of which were due to an inability to allocate budget for the Scheme implementation. Due to a dependence on the limited central budget, the implementation of the Scheme was passive and difficult.

Ninth, the mobilization of resources for the implementation of Scheme 498 has not achieved the expected results. A budget source to ensure a systematic and sustainable investment was not available. Most of the technical and financial support received from international and domestic agencies and organizations has been fragmented by activity or by year, the scale of support has not yet met the requirements of the task.

1.3. Causes

The causes of those shortcomings and limitations were:

First, a number of levels of Party committees and local authorities have neither properly attached importance to the task of prevention and response to child marriage and consanguineous marriage nor paid attention to giving instructions or adequately allocating a budget for the implementation of Scheme 498. The coordination between units and mass organizations and associations in the implementation of Scheme 498 has not been regular or concurrent.

Second, the contingent of civil servants and public employees of CEMA and the system of EM affairs agencies have not been fully equipped with the knowledge and skills to carry out a quality input to the tasks of prevention and the response to child marriage and consanguineous in general and implementation of Scheme 498 in particular. In addition, capacity building activities under the framework of Scheme 498 have been limited in implementation resources, thus failing to achieve the expected results.

Third, multidimensional, comprehensive and sustainable intervention strategies and solutions have not been able to be formulated on the prevention and ending of child marriage and consanguineous marriage at the central and local levels.

Fourth, the inspection, evaluation, supervision, and lessons learned from the implementation of Scheme 498 in some districts have not been given adequate attention.

Fifth, the funding for the implementation of Scheme 498 activities has been limited and slow; insufficient financial resources were allocated for the implementation of various activities.

Sixth, a not insignificant number of ethnic minority people are not fully conversant with the legal and social issues surrounding child marriage and consanguineous marriage. Some EM households in difficult economic circumstances often involve their children in work early and thus they get married earlier from the age of 10 years old, in order to reduce economic pressures on the household. These factors have created difficulties and hindered the implementation of Scheme 498. Changing the perceptions and actions of these households requires a system of integrated solutions for uniform and long-term socio-economic development in association with implementation methods that are commensurate with the customs and culture of each ethnic group.

2. Lessons learned

In view of the aforementioned outcomes and limitations, the following lessons can be learned:

First, *regarding leadership, instruction and accountability*: It is necessary to uphold the roles of leadership, especially that of leaders/heads regarding the importance and significance of the prevention and response to child marriage and consanguineous marriage. It is crucial to the successful realization of the objectives and targets of Scheme 498 at national and local levels. Commitment, positive attitudes and close attention and guidance of leaders are among the prerequisites for the success of this work. This is evidenced from the lessons of successful outcomes in a number of localities. The Heads must be responsible for allocating sufficient budget for the implementation of Scheme 498, appointing an adequate number of qualified staff to implement the activities ensuring accurate and honest data collection on child marriage and consanguineous marriage. In order to reinforce the accountability of each district, village and individual in performing and completing assigned tasks within the framework of Scheme 498. Moreover, there should be sanctions for those that fail to comply with regulations/requirements for implementation of Scheme 498.

Second, *regarding resource investment*: In an effort to ensure the achievement of results/outcomes and efficiency for Scheme 498, it is essential to focus on improving the capacity of key staff in the sector, districts, and the staff directly engaged in the Scheme's activities on the knowledge related to child marriage and consanguineous marriage; to build knowledge and skills in developing and performing communication activities, building pilot models, providing counselling and intervention activities on child marriage and consanguineous marriage in accordance with customs and practices of local ethnic minorities. Ensure sufficient resources for the implementation of Scheme 498 including human, financial and technical resources. Under limited resource conditions, it is necessary to pinpoint and focus resources to handle the most pressing issues of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in some areas, some ethnic groups.

Third, *regarding supervision, monitoring and evaluation; inspection and reporting*: It is necessary to establish and operate a system of tracking, monitoring and evaluation of Scheme 498 at the national and local levels, with specific indicators to fully and objectively reflect the results, effectiveness and impacts of Scheme 498. On that basis, promptly and timely adjust objectives, targets and intervention

solutions to suit the actual conditions of each locality, customs and practices of each ethnic group. It is necessary to allocate sufficient resources for conducting the tracking, monitoring and evaluation activities. Set up an independent monitoring and evaluation mechanism to be operated in parallel with the administrative reporting system to collect objective, reliable and factual information from different angles or dimensions

Fourth, regarding the intersectoral coordination and within the system of EM affair agencies: Set up an effective coordination mechanism among agencies and units within the sector and districts is extremely important, which has a decisive influence on the implementation and realization of the objectives and targets under Scheme 498. Effective coordination will save resources, replicate initiatives, successful lessons learned and experience.

Fifth, it is essential to recognize that child marriage and consanguineous marriage among ethnic minorities has long existed, a custom that is deeply ingrained in the lifestyles and concept of marriage of each individual and community. The elimination of child marriage is a very challenging task, requiring a comprehensive approach, a coordinated system of solutions and patience in implementation. Apart from interventions assisted by legal and administrative measures from the government, the use of “soft” solutions from the very good values of cultures, customs, practices and social management institutions of each ethnic group will bring about important sustainable effects such as mainstreaming the provisions of the Marriage and Family Law into village/hamlet conventions and rules; boosting the role of reputable people such as village patriarchs, village/hamlet leaders, heads of family line and religious dignitaries in the EM community).



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PART 2

TASKS AND SOLUTIONS TO EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT THE SCHEME

498. PHASE II: 2021-2025

I. TASKS AND SOLUTIONS

To ensure the realization of the overall objective under Scheme 498, which is “By 2025, strive to fundamentally prevent and repulse child marriage and consanguineous marriage in ethnic minority areas” and the specific objectives “To reduce an average of 2% - 3% per year the number of child marriage couples and 3% - 5% per year the number of consanguineous marriage couples for those areas and ethnic minorities that have high rates of child marriage and consanguineous marriage.”; “More than 90% of the staff working with ethnic minorities at all levels, socio-cultural staff will be trained to improve their capacity, skills for advocacy, mobilization, counselling, and behavioural change communications on child marriage and consanguineous marriage in EM areas by 2025”, it is necessary to focus on implementing a number of key tasks and solutions as follows:

1. Continue to reinforce the education and orientation of state management agencies on EM affairs at all levels. Intensify close coordination with ministries, sectors and districts in planning and implementing the Scheme 498 phase II. Ensure effective communication mainstreaming to minimize the situation of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in ethnic minority and mountainous areas.
2. Continue conducting more inclusive and insightful studies on the situation and causes of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in each community, ethnic group, and locality (doing research, mapping and evaluation), to serve as a basis for proposing appropriate strategies, intervention solutions and responses. It is crucial to combine qualitative and quantitative research methods to accurately identify the causes of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in different communities and localities.⁴⁹

Specific studies that need to be conducted include: (i) studies on sexual behaviour, reproductive health, sexual health; social norms pertaining to marriage, child marriage and consanguineous marriage in EM communities; (ii) studies on the less common cases of child marriage and consanguineous marriage, (for example, cases of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in urban areas, among Kinh people and among the well-educated groups), through which one can see a holistic picture of the situation of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in Viet Nam; (iii) Apart from studying the harmful norms and practices that have negatively influenced child marriage and consanguineous marriage, it is advisable to study the beneficial norms and practices

⁴⁹ For example, research using an anthropological approach conducted by iSEE in 2018.



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that help to engage the entire community in the suppression and elimination of child marriage and consanguineous marriage.

3. It is necessary to apply a multidimensional and comprehensive approach to develop an inclusive and sustainable intervention strategy for child marriage and consanguineous marriage in EM and mountainous areas. Specifically:

(i) Empower EM girls, placing EM girls at the centre of strategies and intervention solutions on child marriage and consanguineous marriage in EM and mountainous areas.

Increase access to information and education for children between the ages of 13 and 18 on reproductive health and marital awareness that suits cultural characteristics of different ethnic groups at schools and in the community. “Normalization” of the use of contraceptive methods in ethical conceptions of ethnic minorities.

Ensure that EM youth and adolescents (men and women) will have the accessibility to quality services on reproductive health care; psychological and sexual counselling services; shelters and other social services.

(ii) Increase the accessibility of EM children (males and females) to quality opportunities in the labour market and in community activities. Specifically, increase opportunities for EM children to participate in quality and age-appropriate vocational training courses; thereby creating opportunities to access quality jobs.

(iii) Increase the participation of EM children (males and females) in decision-making processes pertaining to children; provide capacity building so that EM children (males and females) can become confident, independent, and autonomous when participating in school and community activities.



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(iv) Step up the provision of counselling and intervention services for EM males and females under 18 years of age. Expand the age range to be wider than the legal provisions of Viet Nam on ages “a child is a person under 16 years”.⁵⁰

Augment technical support and guidance for officers of local socio-political agencies and organizations to diligently perform the task of reviewing and detecting potential cases of child marriage and consanguineous marriage; provide counselling and intervention services to timely and effectively prevent cases of child marriage and consanguineous marriage.

(v) The close coordination and timely sharing of information among relevant ministries, agencies and organizations are the fundamental conditions for the successful application of a multi-dimensional, comprehensive and sustainable approach in prevention and response to child marriage and consanguineous marriage.

(vi) It is important to ensure that the formulation of plans and the implementation of strategies and intervention solutions are culturally sensitive and gender sensitive. Boys and girls, their families and communities need to be equally and substantively engaged in the entire process of planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the prevention and response to child marriage and consanguineous marriage.

(vii) Step up the monitoring and evaluation of plan formulation and the enforcement of strategies and policies to ensure effectiveness and, the timely identification of vulnerable groups accessing, participating in and benefiting from the strategies and interventions with respect to the prevention of, and response to, child marriage and consanguineous marriage.

⁵⁰ Law on Children (2016), Article 1 “A child is a person under 16 years old”.

(viii) Accurately evaluate the funding needs for the prevention and control of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in various localities; thereby putting forward solutions to mobilize local resources and support from domestic and international agencies and organizations.

4. In the period of 2021-2025, it is necessary to put the issues of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in a broader and more multidimensional context. It is important to promote gender equality and empower women, to ensure women's leadership and participation in decision-making in the households and in the community. Specifically:

(i) Empower ethnic minority women through ensuring their legal rights to property ownership and accessibility to preferential credit sources/loans for sustainable livelihood development and reduce the burden of housework and unpaid care work for EM women.

(ii) Eliminate violence against EM women in the family and the community; Guarantee a victim's access to essential support services (health care, social services and legal aid).

(iii) Boost the activities to prevent and respond to all forms of violence against EM girls and boys, including child marriage.

(iv) Eliminate inequality in EM communities through prioritizing socio-economic development assistance in EM and mountainous areas to improve people's living standards.

(v) Share lessons learned and good practice with other countries in the implementation of the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Women (ASEAN RPA on EVAW), Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, Beijing Platform for Action, Sustainable Development Goals, Recommendations of CEDAW Committee, of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Universal Periodic Report on Human Rights.

5. Regarding communication work on child marriage and consanguineous marriage:

(i) Analyse the needs of male and female groups in the EM community before formulating plans, contents, methods, tools, training materials and communication on the progressive reduction of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in EM areas.

(ii) Compile communication materials in a simple, easy-to-understand way, with a focus on and compatible with the background knowledge of the EM staff and people. Documents should be compiled and translated into EM languages; Give priority to translation into the languages of the ethnic minorities, with high rates of child marriage and consanguineous marriage, with written scripts such as Mong, Khmer, Gia Rai, Ede, Ba Na, Cham, Co Ho, Co Tu, Bru Van Kieu, Xo Dang and Mhong.

(iii) The forms of communications must be tailored to specific groups of ethnic minorities, ethnic minority areas, associated with the situations arising in their daily life and be consistent with the customs and culture of EM peoples. Increase the application of information technology to communication work in the period 2021-2025.

(iv) Promote the role of local reporters/speakers, communicators and communication collaborators with a view to coordinating the dissemination and education in the Marriage and Family Law, Law on Children, Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control, Gender Equality Law, Population and Family Planning Law as well as other documents related to the implementation of Scheme 498.

Coordinate with border guards, associations, unions, village elders or patriarchs, reputable people, village heads, dignitaries in EM areas to combine communications on child marriage and consanguineous marriage with communications on population work and sex education.

6. Regarding capacity building for staff participating in Scheme 498: Ensure that the staff participating in Scheme 498 at all levels are equipped with the requisite knowledge in the field of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in EM and mountainous areas. Specifically:

(i) Conduct a training needs assessment, capacity building for the staff participating in Scheme 498 at central and local levels, as a basis for capacity building plans for the period 2021-2025.

(ii) Formulate a set of technical and professional guiding documents and training and refresher training materials on the prevention of and response to child marriage and consanguineous marriage in EM and mountainous areas to serve a diverse range of target groups and different purposes of use. Develop training materials, provide technical and in-depth professional training on communications and intervention activities; and the training materials in indigenous ethnic languages.

(iii) Coordinate with ministries, sectors and districts in organizing training, refresher training, fostering, building and improving the quality of the legal affair reporters and communicators, especially legal affair reporters who are knowledgeable about EM cultures, practices, psychology and have a good command of EM languages; have skills in communications and dissemination of laws on marriage, family, children and family planning.

Support the staff who participate in training courses to have opportunities to practice and apply knowledge in the practical work of prevention and control of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in the districts.

(iv) Ensure that training and refresher training policies are gender-sensitive and meet the actual needs and conditions of female and male staff. Specifically, it is necessary to have a priority policy for female staff who are eligible for registration in training courses in line with their personal aspirations, in accordance with their childbirth and child nursing plans.

7. Regarding the pilot models on child marriage and consanguineous marriage

(i) Conduct reviews to accurately identify the situation, causes and factors influencing the behaviours of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in the specific context of each ethnic group, each locality, serving as grounds for proposing strategic and sustainable intervention and response models, consistent with local practices.

(ii) Expedite a number of studies on norms, cultures and practices of local ethnic minorities, which, on the one hand, helps to identify the factors that negatively affect/influence child marriage and consanguineous marriage while helping to see clearly the factors that can have positive effects/influence on the prevention and control of child marriage and consanguineous marriage.

(iii) Deployment of the activities under the model on counselling and intervention which should be undertaken in the indigenous ethnic languages.

(iv) It is essential to take appropriate measures to encourage EM youth and teenagers to participate in the pilot model activities, especially the groups at high risk of child marriage and consanguineous marriage.

(v) Put a premium on deploying the replication of new pilot models and thematic models on “Interventions to minimize the situation of child marriage and consanguineous marriage” for EM pupils of lower and upper secondary schools, young people, adolescents who are single/unmarried, married, involved in child marriage and consanguineous marriage in EM areas. Deepen the mainstreaming of education in schools on the consequences and harms of child marriage and consanguineous marriage. Organize contests in the theatricalized or staged forms to explore the legal knowledge of child marriage and consanguineous marriage at lower secondary schools, upper secondary schools and boarding schools in the provinces.

8. Establish a database on child marriage and consanguineous marriage at central and district level; to guarantee data collection every 6 months and annually. Ensure that the data is disaggregated by gender, age, geographic location, socio-economic situation, education level and other basic factors. The guaranteed provision of accurate, current data will facilitate the tracking monitoring and evaluation of the actual situation while identifying those issues in the most marginalized and vulnerable situations.

9. Eliminate criterion on the reduction of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in the local community benchmarks to avoid achievement pressure, which may lead to the concealment, misleading reporting or underreporting on child marriage and consanguineous marriage in the localities.

Law enforcement agencies should intensify prosecution and deterrence against a number of subjects who seduce, have sexual intercourse, or marry underage children as prescribed in the Penal Code.

10. Accelerate the work of guiding, supporting, examining, reviewing, evaluating and drawing experience in the implementation of the Scheme, promoting the initiatives and creativity at grassroots level for the effective and fruitful performance of Scheme 498.

11. Further mobilize central and local funding sources, solicit technical assistance and funding from domestic and foreign agencies and organizations to implement the activities under Scheme 498 in Phase II (2021-2025).

II. PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Regarding the Government and the National Assembly

The government and the National Assembly have proposed to allocate sufficient budgets to implement current mechanisms, policies, programs and projects on the national objectives on socio-economic development in EM and mountainous areas, with priorities set on investment and the allocation of sufficient resources. There should be an equitable allocation of resources in the context of social and economic inequalities to support socio-economic growth, improve material and spiritual life in the areas where there are large gaps in the rates of child marriage and consanguineous marriage. This in turn will create the conditions to enable ethnic minority peoples to increase their accessibility, to expand trades and interaction with the community towards minimization of child marriage and consanguineous marriage.

2. With regards to CEMA leaders and provincial People’s Committees

- Strengthen the focus on leadership, instruction, management and enhance the responsibilities of authorities, mass organizations and associations in exercising the regulation of the existing laws on marriage and the family from central to local levels. Integrate the objectives and tasks on marriage and family, on the prevention and control of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in the resolutions of party committees at all levels, annual programs and work plans of local authorities and associations; Step up inspection to effect the timely detection, prevention and action on violations of the law on marriage and the family.
- Provincial EM affair agencies and local departments and sectors shall continue implementing Scheme 498 activities in conformity with the plan approved by the Chair of People’s Committees of provinces/cities Phase II (2021-2025) strictly as per plan and schedule; There should be a clear designation of responsibilities as well as an evaluation of performance outcomes and effectiveness annually.
- Promote the roles of the Fatherland Front, Youth Unions, Women’s Unions, village patriarchs, village chiefs and reputable people in EM areas to participate in communications and mobilization of EM people to abolish harmful customs and practices as well as to prevent and respond to child marriage and consanguineous marriage.
- CEMA leaders and the Provincial People’s Committees shall create favourable conditions in terms of human resources, allocate sufficient funds for the implementation of Scheme 498 at both the central and local levels.
- Pay attention to capacity building for staff in CEMA and EM affair agencies nationwide on a regular basis in knowledge and skills related to child marriage and consanguineous marriage; as well as the necessary knowledge and skills for deploying the Scheme 498
- Develop a database system on child marriage and consanguineous marriage and periodically collect information and data.

- Periodically carry out inspection, supervision, preliminary review, final review and evaluation of Scheme 498 implementation within CEMA and across the system of EM affair agencies. On that basis, review and add to the master plan and annual plans issues which suit the actual requirements of the situation.

3. Proposals and recommendations to international organizations

Further provide support to CEMA and the system of EM affair agencies in:

- Carry out studies and surveys with a view to proposing policy recommendations and solutions to boost the prevention and control of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in EM and mountainous areas. Studies that need to be conducted include: (i) Study on sexual behaviour, reproductive health, sexual health; social norms related to marriage, child marriage and consanguineous marriage in ethnic minority communities; (ii) Studies on the less common cases of child marriage and consanguineous marriage, (for example, cases of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in urban areas, among Kinh people, among the well-educated groups), through which one can obtain a holistic picture of the situation of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in Viet Nam; (iii) Apart from studying the harmful norms and practices that have negatively influenced child marriage and consanguineous marriage, it is advisable to study the beneficial norms and practices that help to engage the entire community in the suppression and elimination of child marriage and consanguineous marriage.
- Provide technical and financial assistance for the application of a comprehensive, multidimensional approach in formulating strategies and a system of holistic and sustainable intervention solutions under Scheme 498 Phase II (2021-2025).
- Provide technical and financial support for the formulation of technical guiding documents, training materials on knowledge and skills on prevention and response to child marriage and consanguineous marriage in EM and mountainous areas that are suitable to the specific characteristics of cultures, customs of each ethnic group and socio-economic conditions of each locality
- Provide technical and financial support for capacity building activities for the staff working on EM affairs and Scheme 498 implementation staff at CEMA as well as the system of EM affair agencies nationwide.
- Provide technical and financial support for the implementation of the pilot model activities on child marriage and consanguineous marriage in areas with high rates of child marriage and consanguineous marriage; or in areas that are slow to change.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1.

List of the districts with a 5-year preliminary review report (2015-2020) on the implementation of the Prime Minister’s Decision 498/QĐ-TTg, dated April 14, 2015 on the Scheme “Minimizing the situation of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in ethnic minority areas in the period 2015-2025”

PROVINCES/CITIES			
1	Gia Lai	16	Bac Lieu
2	Yen Bai	17	Ninh Binh
3	Kon Tum	18	Binh Dinh
4	An Giang	19	Lao Cai
5	Son La	20	Quang Tri
6	Thanh Hoa	21	Nghe An
7	Ba Ria-Vung Tau	22	Quang Ninh
8	Binh Dinh	23	Soc Trang
9	Ca Mau	24	Thua Thien-Hue
10	Dak Lak	25	Tuyen Quang
11	Dien Bien	26	Ha Noi
12	Hoa Binh	27	Lang Son
13	Khanh Hoa	28	Phu Tho
14	Lai Chau	29	Quang Binh
15	Long An	30	Quang Nam

Appendix 2.
Funding for implementation of the Prime Minister’s Decision
498/QĐ-TTg dated April 14, 2015 on the Scheme “Minimizing the
situation of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in ethnic
minority areas in the period : 2015-2025” and during Phase I: 2015-
2020 in a number of localities

Unit: VND 1000

	Total funding	Central budget	Local budget
Gia Lai	1683	760	923
Yen Bai	1900	1600	300
Kon Tum	650	560	90
An Giang	200	0	200
Son La	2169	2169	0
Thanh Hoa	5081	0	5081
Ba Ria-Vung Tau	1433	0	1433
Binh Dinh	3012	840	2172
Ca Mau	1270	635	635
Dak Lak	1988	1718	270
Dien Bien	1647	1460	187
Hoa Binh	1470	1320	150
Khanh Hoa	1112	0	1112
Lai Chau	1540	1460	80
Long An	420	0	420
Phu Tho	889	437	452
Quang Binh	1270	0	1270
Quang Nam	2482	1000	1482
Quang Ninh	188	0	188
Soc Trang	663	0	663
Hue	1400	560	840
Tuyen Quang	1708	1320	388
Hanoi	376	160	216
Lang Son	1320	1320	0

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