



GIRLS NOT BRIDES

The Global Partnership
to End Child Marriage



THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS IN ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE A TOOLKIT

2nd edition Revised July 2016

Acknowledgements

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FOREWORD

When a young girl becomes a bride, the consequences are lifelong – for the girl, for her children and for her nation. Every year some 15 million girls around the world are married as children. Over 700 million women alive today were married or entered into union before their 18th birthday. Child marriage cuts across countries, cultures, religions and ethnicities. If there is no reduction in the near future, the total number of women married as children will grow to 1.2 billion by 2050.

Child marriage is rooted in gender inequality and in the low value accorded to girls, and is exacerbated by poverty, insecurity and conflict. It denies girls their rights and undermines numerous development priorities. Ending child marriage will require long-term, sustainable action across many different sectors. A robust legal and policy framework for preventing child marriage and supporting married girls should be the cornerstone of government efforts to address the practice.

Parliamentarians are uniquely positioned to shape, advance and implement such a framework, within their countries and beyond. They can lead the development of relevant legislation and policies, set the political agenda as opinion leaders on ending child marriage, pass budgets, monitor implementation, and ensure accountability for both national and international commitments, including government accountability to target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals to end child marriage by 2030. They can guarantee the voices of citizens are heard, particularly the voice of the girl child, in order to mobilise political will and commitment to end child marriage.

Yet, parliamentarians are often overlooked as a group who can make change happen. This toolkit aims to provide concrete examples and recommendations on how interested parliamentarians can take action. It also promotes collaboration with vibrant civil society organisations working on the issue.

We encourage you to join the global movement to end child marriage and trust this revised toolkit will help you take action. We believe that by establishing a fruitful and long-term partnership with committed parliamentarians, we can work together towards a world where girls and women enjoy equal status with boys and men.

We wish you every success in your endeavours to end child marriage and to realise the rights of every girl.



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Interim Executive Director

Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage

July 2016



Annet aged 17 with her baby,
Uganda, December 2013
Rebecca Vassie / Girls Not Brides

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1 INTRODUCTION

Governments around the world have committed to protecting and realising girls' and children's rights. Establishment and implementation of a strong, coherent, and comprehensive legal and policy framework is one of the four strategies identified by *Girls Not Brides* to end the harmful practice of child marriage.¹

While often the focus of ending child marriage in a country is on ensuring the minimum legal age of marriage is 18 years old, a broader set of laws and policies is required to protect girls at risk of child marriage and support married girls, to ensure they fulfil their potential.

Parliamentarians are key players in ending child marriage, as they can lead the development of relevant legislation and policies, set the political agenda as opinion leaders on ending child marriage, pass budgets, monitor implementation, and ensure accountability for both national and international commitments, including government accountability

to target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals to end child marriage by 2030. They can guarantee the voices of citizens are heard, particularly the voices of girls, in order to mobilise political will and commitment to end child marriage.

This toolkit aims to provide parliamentarians with an overview of child marriage: its prevalence around the world, and causes and consequences. Specific focus is placed on existing legal instruments that prohibit the practice, as well as concrete recommendations for parliamentarians to take action, not only in Parliament, but in their constituencies, as well as nationally, regionally and internationally.

ABOUT *GIRLS NOT BRIDES*: THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP TO END CHILD MARRIAGE

***Girls Not Brides* is a global partnership of more than 600 civil society organisations from over 80 countries working to address child marriage. Members of *Girls Not Brides* are united by a commitment to end child marriage and enable girls to fulfil their potential.**

Together *Girls Not Brides* members are working to bring child marriage to attention at national, regional and international levels, to build an understanding of what it will take to end child marriage, and to call for the laws, policies and programmes needed to make a difference in the lives of millions of girls.

Find out more at www.GirlsNotBrides.org or contact info@GirlsNotBrides.org

2 ABOUT CHILD MARRIAGE: DEFINITIONS AND GLOBAL PREVALENCE

Definition: what is child marriage?

“*Child marriage*” is a formal marriage or an informal union in which at least one of the parties is a child. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as “every human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.” The Committee on the Rights of the Child, the body of independent experts that monitors implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, has called on State parties to review the age of majority if it is set below 18 years.

“*Early marriage*” is often used interchangeably with “*child marriage*” and refers to marriages involving a person aged below 18 in countries where the age of majority is attained earlier or upon marriage. Early marriage can also refer to marriages where both spouses are 18 or older but other factors make them unready to consent to marriage, such as their level of physical, emotional, sexual and psychosocial development, or a lack of information regarding the person’s life options.²

A “*forced marriage*” is any marriage that occurs without the full and free consent of one or both of the parties and/or where one or both of the parties is unable to end or leave the marriage, including as a result of duress or intense social or family pressure.

The “*legal age of marriage*” is the minimum age at which a person is allowed by law to marry.

The “*age of consent*” generally refers to the age limits for when a person can legally have sex.



CHILD MARRIAGE: A HARMFUL TRADITIONAL PRACTICE

Every community in the world has specific traditional practices, some of which are beneficial to all members, while others are harmful to a particular group. Child, early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation and cutting, bride price and dowry systems are examples of harmful traditional practices. Traditional practices harmful to women and girls inflict both immediate and long-term psychological and physical pain on their victims and have serious consequences for girls’ development.

In a joint statement, United Nations agencies noted that “[...] it is unacceptable that the international community remain passive in the name of a distorted vision of multiculturalism. Human behaviours and cultural values, however senseless or destructive they may appear from the personal and cultural standpoint of others, have meaning and fulfil a function for those who practise them. However, culture is not static but it is in constant flux, adapting and reforming. People will change their behaviour when they understand the hazards and indignity of harmful practices and when they realise that it is possible to give up harmful practices without giving up meaningful aspects of their culture.”



Prevalence: why is child marriage a global problem?

- Approximately 15 million girls are married every year before they reach 18 years.³ That is approximately 41,000 girls every day, or one in four girls globally.
- Child marriage occurs around the world, and cuts across countries, cultures, religions and ethnicities: 45% of girls under age 18 are married in South Asia;⁴ 39% in sub-Saharan Africa; 23% in Latin America and the Caribbean; 18% in the Middle East and North Africa; 15% in East Asia and the Pacific;⁵ and it occurs in some communities in Europe and North America too.⁶
- In the developing world, one in nine girls is married by age 15, some as young as eight or nine years of age.⁷
- Boys also marry as children, with 156 million men alive today married before the age of 18.⁸ However, girls are disproportionately affected by child marriage, and are almost seven times more likely to be affected by the practice.⁹
- While there has been some progress on ending child marriage, it is not happening fast enough and progress remains uneven across regions.
- We must double our efforts in order to mitigate population growth and see a reduction in the absolute number of women and girls married in childhood. Over 700 million women alive today were married or entered into union before their 18th birthday – this is equivalent to 10% of the world's population. If there is no reduction in the near future, the total number of women married as children will grow to 1.2 billion by 2050 – equivalent to the entire population of India.

CHILD MARRIAGE PREVALENCE IN MOST AFFECTED COUNTRIES*

| | |
|---------------|--|
| 70%+ | Niger |
| 69-60% | Central African Republic, Chad |
| 59-50% | Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, South Sudan |
| 49-45% | India, Malawi, Mozambique, Somalia |
| 44-40% | Eritrea, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Nigeria, Nicaragua, Uganda |
| 39-35% | Brazil, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Liberia, Nepal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania |
| 34-30% | Afghanistan, Benin, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Guatemala, Honduras, Mauritania, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sudan, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe |
| 29-25% | Belize, Bhutan, Cuba, El Salvador, Marshall Islands, Nauru |
| 24-20% | Bolivia, Burundi, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Iraq, Kenya, Kiribati, Mexico, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Thailand, Togo |

* Percentage of women 20-24 years old who were married or in union before they were 18 years old (UNICEF *State of the World's Children*, 2016).

10 COUNTRIES WITH THE HIGHEST BURDEN OF CHILD MARRIAGES*

1. **India** – 26,610,000
2. **Bangladesh** – 3,931,000
3. **Nigeria** – 3,306,000
4. **Brazil** – 2,928,000
5. **Ethiopia** – 1,974,000
6. **Pakistan** – 1,875,000
7. **Indonesia** – 1,408,000
8. **Mexico** – 1,282,000
9. **Democratic Republic of the Congo** – 1,274,000
10. **Tanzania** – 887,000

*Burden: Number of women 20-24 years old who were first married or in union before they were 18 years old. Based on population in 2015 (As prepared by UNICEF Data & Analytics Section / Division of Data, Research & Policy)

3 CAUSES AND IMPACT OF CHILD MARRIAGE

Causes: why does child marriage continue to happen?

Child marriage is rooted in gender inequality and in the low value accorded to girls. It is exacerbated by cultural and religious norms, values and traditions, poverty, concerns about security and protection of girls, lack of education, and weak legal and policy responses.

- Gender inequality and low value accorded to girls:** In many communities where child marriage is practiced, girls are not valued as much as boys – they are seen as a burden. The challenge will be to change parents' and families' attitudes and emphasise that girls who are not married early and stay in school will likely be able to make a greater contribution to their family and their community in the long term.
- Tradition:** Child marriage is a traditional practice that in many places occurs simply because it has been practiced for generations – and straying from tradition may be perceived as a risk of exclusion from the community. It is important to remember, however, that there are good traditions and harmful traditions, old traditions and new. Like culture, traditions are not static – they are always changing. Child marriage is a harmful traditional practice that must end.
- Poverty:** Where poverty is acute, giving a daughter in marriage allows parents to reduce family expenses by ensuring they have one less person to feed, clothe and educate. In communities where a dowry or bride price¹⁰ is paid, it is often welcome income for poor families; in those where the bride's family pay the groom a dowry, they often have to pay less money if the bride is young and uneducated.
- Security:** Many parents marry off their daughters young in the misguided belief it is in their best interests, often hoping to ensure their safety in situations where girls are at high risk of physical or sexual assault. Fear for a girl's security may increase during times of disaster and in humanitarian crises including conflict and fragile situations.¹¹
- Weak legal and policy responses:** The lack of adequate and enforceable legislation to prevent or address cases of child marriage perpetuates the practice.
 - While most countries legislate for a minimum legal age for marriage, this is often not effectively enforced.
 - There are inconsistencies between civil laws on marriage with customary laws that condone the practice.
 - Weak birth registration systems prevent girls from providing official proof that they are too young for marriage.
 - Attitudes of law enforcement authorities including the judiciary and police mean that authorities fail to take child marriage cases seriously or help victims of child marriage to seek legal remedies or support.

In addition to inadequate legislation, political commitment to strengthen policy frameworks and invest in programmes to prevent child marriage and support married girls is lacking in many countries.

Impact: why is it important to debate child marriage in parliaments?

Protecting girls and boys from child marriage is a moral imperative and responsibility of the State. Target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) commits all UN Member States to “*eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilations*” by 2030. Due to the multi-faceted nature of child marriage, target 5.3 not only provides parliamentarians with the means by which to monitor progress on reducing child marriage, but will also assist them in catalysing efforts towards achieving a number of other related SDGs on poverty, nutrition, economic growth and reduction of inequalities, particularly gender inequality.

Child marriage is linked to poverty and national economic progress

- Child marriage is most common in the world’s poorest countries and is often concentrated among the poorest households. It is closely linked with low levels of economic development and poverty.
- Girls from poor families are nearly twice as likely to marry before 18 as girls from wealthier families, as marriage is often seen as a way to provide for a daughter’s future.¹² However, girls who marry young are more likely to be poor and remain poor.¹³
- Girls who marry young do not receive the educational and economic opportunities that help lift them out of poverty and which are necessary to build a sustainable and prosperous future for their communities and countries.¹⁴
- Educated and healthy women are more productive thereby contributing to greater national productivity and higher GDP. They spend more money on food, housing, education and income-generating activities, all of which reduce poverty levels and promote sustainable development.¹⁵

Child marriage undermines progress towards education goals

- As both a driver and consequence of poor educational attainment, it is crucial to address child marriage to improve girls’ education.
- While global achievements made in girls’ education are unprecedented and more girls are being educated than ever before, progress continues to stall in a number of the world’s poorest countries. Out of the world’s 121 million out of school children, a vast proportion are girls living in regions where child marriage rates are the highest: sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.¹⁶
- Girls tend to drop out of school during the preparatory time before marriage or shortly afterwards when their marital and domestic demands increase. While child marriage is not always the reason for school dropout, once a girl has left school, she is more likely to be married and have children before she is ready. Girls who have no education are three times as likely to marry by 18 as those with secondary or higher education.¹⁷
- Married or pregnant girls who would like to continue schooling may be both practically and legally excluded from doing so.¹⁸
- Education is a key protective factor against child marriage. Being in school builds a girl’s knowledge and skills so she is better able to delay marriage and can help support the perception that girls are still children and are therefore not of marriageable age. It is vital therefore that education plans integrate the goal of ending child marriage.

Child marriage increases the risk of child mortality and impacts maternal health

- Child marriage often has devastating consequences on girls' health. It encourages the start of sexual activity at an age when girls' bodies are still developing and when they know little about their rights or their sexual and reproductive health.
- Child brides are under intense social pressure to prove their fertility. As a result they are more likely to experience early, unplanned and frequent pregnancies, leaving them particularly vulnerable to pregnancy-related injuries such as obstetric fistula.¹⁹
- Their young age and physical immaturity,²⁰ limited power in negotiating safe sex and frequency of unprotected sexual activity can also increase their exposure and risk to HIV.²¹
- Complications in pregnancy and childbirth are among the leading causes of death in girls aged 15-19 in low- and middle-income countries.²²
- Early childbearing increases the risks for both mothers and their newborns. In low- and middle-income countries, babies born to mothers under 20 years of age face a 50% higher risk of being still born or dying in the first few weeks versus those born to mothers aged 20-29. Newborns born to adolescent mothers are also more likely to have low birth weight, with the risk of long-term effects.²³



Child marriage increases the risk of sexual and gender-based violence for girls and women

- Child marriage puts girls and women at particular risk of sexual, physical and psychological violence throughout their lives. Girls who are married before 18 are more likely to experience domestic abuse than their unmarried peers and to report that their first sexual experience was forced.²⁴
- In areas where girls are at high risk of physical or sexual assault, some parents choose to marry off their daughters because they believe it will ensure their safety. These concerns are real but misguided, as child marriage does not provide a safe alternative.
- As minors, child brides are rarely able to assert their wishes to their much older husbands or negotiate safe and consensual sex. They are also more likely to believe that a man is sometimes justified in beating his wife compared to women who marry later.²⁵

Child marriage violates human rights and entrenches gender inequality

- Child brides have little say in if, when and whom they will marry. Child marriage triggers a continuum of rights violations that continue throughout girls' lives.
- Marriage often ends girls' educational and economic opportunities, isolates them from society, and denies girls decision-making roles in their communities. Eliminating gender inequalities and empowering young women requires the fulfilment of girls' basic needs and rights, including to education, sexual and reproductive health, nutrition, and protection from violence, which are all undermined by child marriage.

4 CHILD MARRIAGE AND THE LAW

What does international law say about child marriage?

Child marriage is a serious human rights violation affecting children's – particularly girls' and women's – rights to health, education, equality, non-discrimination and right to live free from violence and exploitation. These are rights enshrined in international human rights instruments such as: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as regional human rights instruments such as the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

Many international instruments call for a uniform age of marriage and emphasise the importance of free, full and informed consent to marriage as a means of protecting the rights of women and children worldwide.²⁶ The Committee for the Convention on the Rights of the Child recommends that the minimum age of marriage be 18 years, and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women obligates States to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent.

International legal instruments also go beyond age and consent in calling for political, economic, social, cultural and civil environments that protect women and girls, and supports them in the enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

WHERE DOES YOUR COUNTRY STAND REGARDING INTERNATIONAL LEGAL INSTRUMENTS?

| Legal Instrument (see Annex 1 for text) | Signed | Ratified | Reservations | Implemented |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery / Article 1 (c) and 2 (1956) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages / Articles 1,2, and 3 (1964) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights / Articles 3 and 23 (1966) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights / Article 10 (1976) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women / Articles 2 and 16 (1979) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

The ratification of international legal instruments helps to demonstrate a willingness to create an enabling environment for women's and girls' rights to be realised. They also provide a means of accountability: governments have to report to the committees that oversee them about progress regarding their implementation.

However, ratification alone is generally not enough; incorporation into national law and enforcement is key. In some legal systems the ratification of international instruments automatically results in its provisions being directly incorporated into domestic legislation. In others, international instruments have no legal force domestically until special enabling legislation is enacted, either through a constitutional amendment or through the passage of law.

THE SADC MODEL LAW: A BENCHMARK FOR COMPREHENSIVE LEGISLATION TO ADDRESS CHILD MARRIAGE

In June 2016 the Southern African Development Community-Parliamentary Forum (SADC-PF) adopted **the SADC Model Law**, to serve as guidance to legislators and policy makers in SADC Member States for strengthening their legal frameworks to address child marriage. It highlights what a comprehensive legal framework for addressing child marriage involves, and reaffirms the range of rights affected by child marriage.



What do national laws say about child marriage?

In many countries the legal status of child marriage is regulated through a complex interplay of legislation that includes civil law, criminal law, and family law. A strong legal framework for child marriage needs to be supported by laws and policies that support gender equality and girls' rights, and protect against discrimination against women and girls. This would include, for example, laws related to marriage and divorce, consent, harmful traditional practices (e.g. dowry, bride price and female genital mutilation/cutting), citizenship, property, inheritance, alimony, custody of children, sexual and gender-based violence (including marital rape), child labour, slavery, child trafficking and sex trafficking, among others.

In some contexts there are plural legal systems, where customary and religious laws exist in parallel with a country's formal laws, and may undermine child marriage laws, or are not in harmony with the national constitution, international and/or regional standards. It is vital that national law takes primacy over customary or religious laws which perpetuate child marriage and discrimination against women and girls. A review of laws related to child marriage can reveal any gaps, inconsistencies and loopholes in a legislative framework that undermine girls' ability to seek legal protection and remedy where child marriage persists.

Even where strong legal frameworks exist, their enforcement is often weak. The reasons for non-implementation of the law can vary from one context to another, and may include: lack of awareness and training among law enforcement officials and other relevant professionals to ensure that laws are understood, implemented and enforced; lack of birth and marriage registration; impunity for those who perpetuate child marriage; and widespread social acceptance of child marriage.

Why is it important to have 18 years as the minimum legal age of marriage?

Laws that set a minimum age of marriage are an important way to safeguard boys and girls from being married when they are not physically, psychologically or emotionally ready. Why allow children to marry at an age when, for example, they do not have the right to vote, or enter into other contracts recognised in law?

Different countries take different legal approaches to ensure that the minimum age of marriage is enforced: some criminalise child marriages; some ban or invalidate marriage below the legally prescribed minimum age; and others merely prescribe a minimum age of marriage without expressly criminalising or banning it.

Governments need to have clear and consistent legislation that establishes 18 as the minimum age of marriage. Adequate safeguards must be in place to ensure that parental consent, judicial consent or other exceptions are not used to force girls into marriage.

By supporting programmes which address child marriage, and ensuring implementation of legislation which establishes a minimum age of marriage, governments can address a widespread and systematic violation of the rule of law in their countries.

What are some of the barriers to the effective enforcement of laws related to child marriage?

There are different constraints and barriers that may prevent the effective implementation and enforcement of laws related to child marriage. Parliamentarians have a key role to play in breaking down those barriers and providing solutions to ensure effective enforcement of laws. Some constraints or barriers to enforcement include:

1. **Constraint:** Conflicting and contradictory legislation regulating the age of marriage and consent to marriage, and the legal definition of a child.
Solution: Legally define a child as an individual under the age of 18 years, with no exceptions, as per the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Fix the minimum legal age of marriage for both males and females at 18. Harmonise all legal systems (civil, criminal, family and customary laws) to that standard.
2. **Constraint:** Majority of marriages are conducted outside of formal legal structures.
Solution: Work with religious and traditional leaders both to raise awareness of the law and legal age of marriage as well as to increase awareness about risks of child marriage and alternatives for girls. Ensure that religious and traditional leaders seek and verify proof of age at marriage through the use of marriage certificates, and report cases of child marriage to the relevant authorities (e.g. law enforcement, government officials, etc.)

3. **Constraint:** Births and marriages are not registered and there is no effective civil registration system in place by which to register them.
Solution: Make birth and marriage registration mandatory and free/low-cost, and ensure an effective civil registration system is established at the national and sub-national levels that is sufficiently resourced with the necessary infrastructure and training of civil registration authorities provided.
4. **Constraint:** Misinterpretations of the position of different religions, traditions and cultures on child marriage.
Solution: Meet and create space for respectful dialogues with religious and traditional leaders. Promote alternative interpretations of religious texts to demonstrate that no religion promotes marriage of girls under 18 years, and make religious and traditional leaders aware of the negative impacts of child marriage on girls, children, families and communities.
5. **Constraint:** Child marriage is predominantly in rural areas where there are inadequate means of enforcing the law.
Solution: Create / strengthen child protection systems and support legal aid systems and services.
6. **Constraint:** Victims of child marriage are minors under the law; they are incapable of pursuing any case in court on their own, generally due to lack of resources, being taken seriously by local authorities, or lack of knowledge of the legal system.
Solution: Train local law enforcement authorities to be responsive to child marriage cases and gender-based violence, and strengthen access of victims of child marriage to free legal services.



5 THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS IN ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE

Most national parliaments are responsible for legislation, policy oversight and budget approval, and are thus crucial in ensuring an enabling legal and policy environment that is conducive to ending child marriage. In this way, parliamentarians have a major role to play by placing child marriage on top of the political agenda and calling on their government to adopt a multisectoral approach to accelerate change and end the harmful practice. Some of the ways parliamentarians can act to end child marriage include:

i. Advocate for the adoption, strengthening and implementation of laws and policies on child marriage

Parliamentarians are uniquely positioned to exercise a leadership role in establishing and implementing a robust legal and policy framework for preventing child marriage and supporting married girls, and ensuring it is effectively enforced by relevant actors and institutions.

Parliamentarians can work to:

- **Advocate for a high-level review of national laws relating to marriage and gender equality** (including laws on gender-based violence, property, inheritance, dowry, divorce, etc.) to identify gaps, inconsistencies, and inadequate penalties that expose girls to the risks of child marriage and its consequences, and to identify contradictions and/or inconsistencies between national laws and customary, traditional or religious laws, in line with international and regional human rights standards.
- **Strengthen and enforce national laws that prevent and prohibit child marriage** in line with international and regional human rights standards, including by establishing a consistent legal minimum age of marriage of 18 for girls and boys, with no exceptions (including judicial consent, parental consent, or otherwise).
- **Advocate for the amendment of existing laws to remove legal obstacles** faced by girls who seek enforcement of national child marriage legislation and legal remedies.
- **Ensure that legislation related to child marriage is accompanied by proper training** of the judiciary, police, civil registration and child protection officials, and any other actors responsible for the implementation and enforcement of the law, to ensure that complaints filed by girls who are at risk of child marriage or have been married underage, are taken seriously by local officials and that necessary legal action is taken.
- **Advocate for the strengthening of civil registration systems** for birth and marriage throughout the country and resources (technical and financial) and infrastructure to support this.
- **Advocate for a national plan of action to address child marriage**, whether that is by developing a new targeted strategy, or by integrating child marriage prevention and response measures across different sectors of government.²⁷



WHERE DOES YOUR COUNTRY STAND REGARDING NATIONAL LAWS AND POLICIES?

You may find this an interesting exercise in identifying some of your country's own laws and policies related to child marriage.

| Laws and policies | Yes | No |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Does your country have a minimum age of marriage of 18 for girls and boys? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Does the law prohibit child, early and forced marriage? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Are customary, religious and/or traditional laws for marriage aligned with civil law? (i.e. that the minimum age of marriage is 18 for girls and boys) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Does legislation require the free and full consent for marriage of both female and male parties? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Does your country have an effective registration system for births and marriages? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Are law enforcement officials effectively implementing and enforcing legal frameworks to prevent child marriage and protect married girls? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Does your country have legislation ensuring gender equality for girls and women in all aspects of life, including in marriage and divorce? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Does your country have effective legislation to support girls who have experienced gender-based violence? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Does your country have legislation and public policy pertaining to quality primary and secondary education of girls, including married girls? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Does your country have legislation and public policy pertaining to the sexual and reproductive health of girls, including married girls? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Does your country have a national action plan or strategy to end child marriage, OR a clear plan for integrating child marriage prevention and response measures across different sectors of government?* | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Does adequate financial resourcing exist to support laws and policies preventing child marriage and supporting married girls? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

* For more information please refer to *Girls Not Brides* "A Checklist for National Strategies to End Child Marriage" available from <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/resource-centre/check-list-national-strategies/> or briefs on "Taking action to address child marriage: the role of different sectors" available from <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/resource-centre/child-marriage-brief-role-of-sectors/>

ii. Support implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals including target 5.3 to end child marriage by 2030

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – the successor of the Millennium Development Goals – will determine national and international development priorities until 2030. With 17 goals and 169 targets across social, economic and environmental areas of sustainable development, the 2030 Agenda is an important political consensus document whose goals and targets will shape international development priorities for the next 15 years.

Target 5.3 of the SDGs commits governments to “*eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilations*” by 2030. At the UN General Assembly on 25 September 2015, all UN Member States pledged their public support towards achieving target 5.3 to end child marriage as part of the wider SDGs.

Target 5.3 is a powerful advocacy tool for parliamentarians to call for increased action and resources within a clearly defined timeframe and ensure government accountability. The target provides an entry point for dialogue at the national level on how to strengthen existing initiatives to tackle child marriage and accelerate progress to end the practice by 2030.

Due to the multi-faceted nature of child marriage, target 5.3 not only provides parliamentarians with the means by which to monitor progress on reducing child marriage, but will also assist them in catalysing efforts towards achieving a number of other related SDGs on poverty, nutrition, economic growth and reduction of inequalities, particularly gender inequality.

By engaging with the implementation of the SDGs, parliamentarians can both serve their constituents’ interests and bring about wider social and economic change. Parliamentarians can work to practically implement the SDGs and target 5.3 through a number of actions including by:

- **Encouraging your government to support implementation of the SDGs**, by developing a clear strategy and implementation plan, with clear milestones and timelines to report progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda.
- Knowing that social change takes time, **building consensus on common indicators of progress**, assess current data and indicators, and advocate for government to reach out to its national statistics office to plan how to measure progress against target 5.3 and the 2030 Agenda, and ensure that sub-national and national monitoring mechanisms are in place to do so.
- **Participating in the development of national development plans to implement the SDGs**, particularly for achieving target 5.3 on child marriage.
- **Asking parliamentary questions to relevant government ministries** to clarify their involvement in and priorities for implementation of target 5.3 of the SDGs in their respective sectors.
- **Organising an event or public meeting on child marriage in Parliament** and inviting relevant UN experts, civil society representatives, youth, donor government representatives, private foundations, researchers, academics, journalists, etc. to attend.

iii. Budget for ending child marriage

Parliamentarians have a critical role to play in ensuring there is adequate budget allocated each financial year towards laws and policies for preventing and mitigating the effects of child marriage. Parliamentarians can work to finance child marriage initiatives by:

- **Advocating to your country's lead ministry on child marriage to engage with other ministries** (Health, Education, Justice, Employment, Transport, Agriculture, etc.) to take action on child marriage within their own sectors.²⁸
- **Meeting the Ministry of Finance to educate them on the economic costs of inaction**²⁹ to ensure they are aware of the importance of financing child marriage initiatives in the government budget each financial year.
- **Ensuring government initiatives to tackle child marriage (e.g. national action plans or strategies) are costed and budgeted for**, and domestic resources (both technical and financial) are mobilised (e.g. a percentage of the budgets of the lead Ministry, and related line Ministries such as Health, Education, Justice, etc., are allocated to initiatives which seek to end child marriage).
- **Advocating, collecting evidence and monitoring progress** towards ending child marriage so as to make the case to bilateral and multilateral donors for predictable, consistent and long-term funding to address child marriage.
- **Working within your constituency to ensure funding for child marriage reaches sub-national and local levels**, and that your constituents and/or local government officials know how to access local funding for addressing child marriage.

iv. Be accountable and demand accountability

Parliamentarians have a critical role to play in demanding accountability to existing national, regional and international commitments made by government towards addressing child marriage. Parliamentarians can work to promote government accountability on child marriage by:

- **Identifying accountability mechanisms** that can be used to review the progress of national initiatives to end child marriage or efforts to integrate child marriage interventions across sectors, such as through parliamentary committees on child marriage, national human rights institutions or similar.
- **Staying connected with civil society** and involving them in parliamentary discussions to hear their views on progress and gaps. For example, you might offer to organise a briefing, roundtable event, dialogue, etc. on child marriage, to get their views on how effective government efforts to address child marriage are.
- **Calling for regular, transparent and publicly available reporting** on progress to end child marriage, including through international human rights instruments like the CRC, CEDAW, Universal Periodic Reviews and of the SDGs, for example by ensuring that:
 - Periodic reports include information on child marriage trends and progress
 - Parliament is involved in the preparation of the reports by providing information on child marriage, or by remaining informed about its contents
 - The concluding observations of each Committee are presented to and debated by Parliament

- **Supporting the biannual UN General Assembly and Human Rights Council Resolutions** on child, early and forced marriage (next UN General Assembly resolution will be in September 2016 and the Human Rights Council resolution in 2017), by encouraging your government to co-sponsor and work for strong and comprehensive resolutions.
- **Pro-actively identifying global and regional opportunities for accountability** by governments.
- **Calling for implementation of regional and international commitments** to address child marriage.

SOUTH ASIA'S REGIONAL ACTION PLAN TO END CHILD MARRIAGE

The eight member countries of the **South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC)** – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka – have developed a **Regional Action Plan to End Child Marriage in South Asia (2015-2018)**. This action plan sets out clear regional and national strategic actions to address child marriage, with suggested activities and indicators outlined on how to achieve the plan's outcomes.



A health worker in Korali slum, Bangladesh, February 2015
Ricci Coughlan / DFID

v. Collaborate with others and be opinion leaders

Child marriage is a complex issue; effective strategies to address it require commitment and action by many stakeholders and partnership between them to maximise impact. Through your networks nationally, regionally and internationally and relationships within your constituencies, parliamentarians can play a key role in collaborating with others by:

- **Working with relevant ministries and encouraging multisectoral collaboration** on child marriage, including at the sub-national, national, regional and international levels.
- **Participating actively in parliamentary organisations and networks**, such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union and Parliamentarians for Global Action among others, throughout your region and globally, to exchange best practices to address child marriage, and to foster political will.
- **Sharing lessons learned from your country with other parliamentarians regionally and globally**, and, if appropriate, promoting your country as an international champion on child marriage.
- **Supporting and acting as an opinion leader** for local, national, regional and global campaigns to end child marriage by, for example, attending events, delivering speeches, giving media interviews, hosting roundtables on child marriage, etc.
- **Inviting child marriage experts and civil society representatives** to be guest speakers at parliamentary hearings.
- **Joining civil society organisations in field visits** to see examples of “what works” to address child marriage at the community level.
- **Using relevant international days to generate awareness** about child marriage (i.e. International Women’s Day – 8 March, International Day of the Girl Child – 11 October, or 16 Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women in November).
- **Working within local constituencies with key stakeholders** – girls, boys, parents, teachers, traditional and religious leaders, service providers and other community stakeholders – to raise awareness about the negative impacts of child marriage, existing legislation on child marriage and gender equality, and government plans and policies for addressing the practice.
- **Working with the media** on debating and raising awareness on child marriage issues and promoting ethical reporting on child marriage.



CASE STUDY FROM ZIMBABWE: SHARING STRATEGIES AMONG MPS FROM DIFFERENT COUNTRIES INSPIRES ACTION AT HOME

“Women in Africa are vocal – we are raising our voices and we are not letting age-old [practices] stand in the way. We have found ways to rediscover the value of women in our traditional cultures and societies, emphasising the dignity of each person. The future of African women is going to be very exciting; let’s work together to end child, early and forced marriage, and ensure that our girls attain their highest potential.”

Hon. Jessie Majome, Member of Parliament in Zimbabwe and member of Parliamentarians for Global Action

In Zimbabwe, 34% of girls are married before they reach 18 years and 4% of girls are married before 15. Conscious of the crucial role that parliamentarians play as leaders and policy-makers in their communities, the Hon. Jessie Majome, an MP in Zimbabwe, has used her role as a parliamentarian to increase political will to effectively address the harmful practice.

Concerned about the high prevalence of child marriage in Zimbabwe, the Hon. Majome participated in two parliamentary seminars organised by Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) in Accra, Ghana in March 2014 and March 2016, where she shared best practices, opportunities and challenges in addressing child marriage with other African parliamentarians. The information and strategies she learned at these seminars, combined with her pledge to take action on her return to Zimbabwe (Statement of Commitment 2014 on Combatting Child, Early and Forced Marriage), prompted the Hon. Majome to meet with Hon. Emmerson Mnangagwa, Minister of Justice and Vice-President of Zimbabwe, to elicit his commitment to eliminate the inconsistencies between statutory and customary provisions and the constitutional ban on child marriage in Zimbabwe.

Despite many challenges, her action has led to a number of positive outcomes in building a movement to end child marriage in Zimbabwe and increasing political will in Parliament and the Cabinet to address child marriage in Zimbabwe.



Hon. Jessie Majome, Member of Parliament in Zimbabwe and member of Parliamentarians for Global Action.

- Hon. Majome was invited to submit draft amendments fostering collaboration with civil society partners to prepare a draft bill on the Elimination of Child Marriages from the Zimbabwean statute books. **She will soon present the draft bill to the Vice-President and then to Parliament.**
- Hon. Majome established a PGA National Group in the Parliament of Zimbabwe with a Subcommittee on Gender and Population, and has so far mobilised 21 Zimbabwean MPs to sign PGA's Parliamentary Declaration to End Child Marriage, among the highest in Africa committing to the Declaration. **This has helped to build parliamentary support for ending child marriage and to influence her government to design a national strategy.**
- On International Women's Day in 2016, the Vice-Secretary of PGA's National Group, Hon. Priscilla Misihairabwi-Mushonga, MP moved a motion seconded by Hon. Majome on the Unlawful Practice of Child Marriage to celebrate the landmark judgment of the Constitutional Court banning child marriage in January 2016. This motion successfully mobilised 70 Zimbabwean male MPs to sign a petition personally disavowing child marriage. **Her action led to the Vice-President and Minister of Justice of Zimbabwe committing to amend all marriage laws to reflect the constitutional position.**

6 ANNEXES

I. INTERNATIONAL LEGAL INSTRUMENTS RELEVANT TO CHILD MARRIAGE

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

Article 16:

- (1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.
- (2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
- (3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery (1956)

Article 1: Each of the States Parties to this Convention shall take all practicable and necessary legislative and other measures to bring about progressively and as soon as possible the complete abolition or abandonment of the following institutions and practices, where they still exist and whether or not they are covered by the definition of slavery contained in article 1 of the Slavery Convention signed at Geneva on 25 September 1926:

- (c) Any institution or practice whereby:
 - (i) A woman, without the right to refuse, is promised or given in marriage on payment of a consideration in money or in kind to her parents, guardian, family or any other person or group; or
 - (ii) The husband of a woman, his family, or his clan, has the right to transfer her to another person for value received or otherwise; or
 - (iii) A woman on the death of her husband is liable to be inherited by another person.

Article 2: With a view to bringing to an end the institutions and practices mentioned in article 1(c) of this Convention, the States Parties undertake to prescribe, where appropriate, suitable minimum ages of marriage, to encourage the use of facilities whereby the consent of both parties to a marriage may be freely expressed in the presence of a competent civil or religious authority, and to encourage the registration of marriages.

Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages (1964)

Article 1

- (1) No marriage shall be legally entered into without the full and free consent of both parties, such consent to be expressed by them in person after due publicity and in the presence of the authority competent to solemnize the marriage and of witnesses, as prescribed by law.
- (2) Notwithstanding anything in paragraph 1 above, it shall not be necessary for one of the parties to be present when the competent authority is satisfied that the circumstances are exceptional and that the party has, before a competent authority and in such manner as may be prescribed by law, expressed and not withdrawn consent.

Article 2: States Parties to the present Convention shall take legislative action to specify a minimum age for marriage. No marriage shall be legally entered into by any person under this age, except where a competent authority has granted a dispensation as to age, for serious reasons, in the interest of the intending spouses.

Article 3: All marriages shall be registered in an appropriate official register by the competent authority.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1966

Article 23(2): The right of men and women of marriageable age to marry and to found a family shall be recognised.

Article 23(3): No marriage shall be entered into without the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

Article 23(4): States Parties to the present Covenant shall take appropriate steps to ensure equality of rights and responsibilities of spouses as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976)

Article 10: The States Parties to the present Covenant recognise that:

- (1) The widest possible protection and assistance should be accorded to the family, which is the natural and fundamental group unit of society, particularly for its establishment and while it is responsible for the care and education of dependent children. Marriage must be entered into with the free consent of the intending spouses.

Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979)

Article 2: States Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women and, to this end, undertake:

Article 16

- (1): States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations and in particular shall ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:
 - (a) The same right to enter into marriage;
 - (b) The same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent
- (2): The betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

Article 1: A child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

Article 2: Freedom from discrimination on any grounds, including sex, religion, ethnic or social origin, birth or other status.

Article 3: In all actions concerning children...the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

Article 6: Maximum support for survival and development

Article 12: The right to express his or her views freely in all matters affecting the child in accordance with age and maturity

Article 19: The right to protection from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parents, guardian or any other person

Article 24: The right to health and to access to health services; and to be protected from harmful traditional practices

Articles 28 and 29: The right to education on the basis of equal opportunity

Article 34: The right to protection from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse

Article 35: The right to protection from abduction, sale or trafficking

Article 36: The right to protection from all forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspect of the child's welfare

Human Rights Council Resolution on Child, Early and Forced Marriage (2013 and 2015)

In September 2013 the first-ever resolution on child, early and forced marriage was adopted at the Human Rights Council, co-sponsored by a cross-regional group of over 100 countries. The resolution stressed the need to include child, early and forced marriage in the post-2015 international development agenda and urged consensus building for addressing child marriage in international fora. More information available from: <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/HRC-resolution-on-child-early-and-forced-marriage-ENG.pdf>

In July 2015 the biannual resolution was co-sponsored by over 85 States in order to strengthen efforts to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriage, and recognised child marriage as a violation of human rights, as well as a barrier to sustainable development that helps to perpetuate the cycle of poverty. More information available from: <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/press-release-human-rights-council-adopts-resolution-to-end-child-early-and-forced-marriage/>

UN General Assembly Resolution on Child, Early and Forced Marriage (2014)

The UN General Assembly Resolution on Child, Early and Forced Marriage was adopted on 21 November 2014 with the broad-based, cross-regional co-sponsorship of 116 countries. It was introduced by the Governments of Canada and Zambia, and built on previous resolutions of the General Assembly and Human Rights Council, which were procedural resolutions calling for reports and further consideration of the issue. More information available from: <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/girls-brides-statement-un-general-assembly-resolution-child-early-forced-marriage/>

II. SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK TO MINISTERS AND OTHER KEY DECISION-MAKERS

Request the Prime Minister or lead government Ministry to respond to the following questions:

- Is there a mandate from the top of government to address child marriage?
- How will the Government implement the Sustainable Development Goals, including target 5.3 to end child marriage by 2030?
- Will the Government develop a dedicated national strategy or action plan to address child marriage?
- How will the Government ensure sufficient budget is allocated towards child marriage in the coming financial year?
- How will the Government implement initiatives to address child marriage?
- How are you working with other ministries (e.g. health, education, justice, employment, agriculture, etc.) and institutions (e.g. national human rights institutions) to address child marriage holistically?
- How will you monitor and report overall progress on child marriage each year?

Request the lead government Ministry or national statistics office to provide information on the state of child marriage in your country by answering the following questions:

- What is the national prevalence rate of child marriage?
- What is the national absolute number of girls under 18 years who experience child marriage?
- Are girls in specific regions or communities more at risk? If yes, where?
- Do you plan to conduct any research on child marriage, so as to understand what works best to address it at scale?
- How do national rates of child marriage compare to other countries in the region?
- What is the status of child marriage compared to 10 years ago? Is it on the increase or decline?
- How do you monitor progress on child marriage at sub-national levels?
- How do you ensure civil registration systems for birth and marriage registration are being implemented?

Request the Minister of Education to respond to the following questions:

- What is the level of girls' access to quality primary and secondary education, as well as informal educational opportunities?
- How are you ensuring that education provisions address factors threatening the confidence or ability of families to keep their children in school, such as safety concerns for girls travelling to school, safety at school, safe spaces, sanitation facilities and gender-based violence?
- How are you ensuring that married girls and/or pregnant girls are not practically or legally excluded from receiving a quality education?
- How are you addressing financial barriers to girls continuing their education?

- How are you supporting comprehensive sexual education programmes in schools and communities, to help to challenge and transform gender inequalities, norms and stereotypes and enable girls to understand their bodies and rights and avoid unintended pregnancies?
- Are teachers and other authorities being trained to identify, manage, and report cases of child marriage?

Request the Minister of Justice to respond to the following questions:

- How are you ensuring that law enforcement bodies apply existing laws on the age of marriage?
- What kind of training do law enforcement officials receive regarding child marriage?
- How are you harmonising customary and statutory laws to circumvent loopholes and inconsistencies?
- How many cases of child marriage have been reported in the last year?

Request the Minister of Health to respond to the following questions:

- What sexual and reproductive health services are available for girls?
- Does the Ministry provide adolescent-friendly health services for girls?
- What health services exist for married girls? How accessible are these services to them?
- What is the awareness level of the harmful health consequences of child marriage amongst the population and amongst health professionals?
- What is the national adolescent pregnancy rate?
- What is the national maternal mortality rate for adolescent girls?
- How will you support other sectors to deliver comprehensive sexual education programmes in schools and communities, to help to challenge and transform gender inequalities, norms and stereotypes and enable girls to understand their bodies and rights, and avoid unintended pregnancies?

III. SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGES

To help raise awareness, such as on key international days like International Women's Day or International Day of the Girl Child, you might wish to post messages on Twitter, Facebook, Google+ and other social media. A sample of key messages you may like to share on these days are listed below. You could also use these when there is national activity on gender issues; just tailor some of these messages to your own country or region by finding relevant national statistics and data (for example, a good starting point may be finding your country's key statistics on child marriage and adolescent girls in UNICEF's *State of the World's Children 2016*, available at www.unicef.org/sowc2016)

Ending child marriage matters:

- Each year, 15 million girls are married before the age of 18. 28 girls every minute. 1 every 2 seconds <http://bit.ly/ijkERO>
- Globally, 700 million women alive today were married before 18, or nearly 10% of world's population. We can't ignore them. [#endchildmarriage](#)
- [#Childmarriage](#) is not an isolated issue. It affects our efforts to end poverty, violence & to improve health, education for all. [#EndChildMarriage](#)
- Ending [#childmarriage](#) will help us to achieve at least 8 of the [#SDGs](#). What are we waiting for? <http://bit.ly/1WNUzAO>
- How can countries prosper if ½ of the population is left behind? [#Endchildmarriage](#) is key to a prosperous & equal future <http://bit.ly/ijkERO>

What is the impact of child marriage?

- Here's what [#childmarriage](#) means to the 15 million girls married every year. Together we can [#endchildmarriage](#)!
- [#Childmarriage](#) traps girls, their families & communities in a cycle of inter-generational poverty <http://bit.ly/14dPnoU>

- Complications in pregnancy & childbirth are among leading causes of death for girls aged 15-19 in developing countries <http://bit.ly/1amlgoj>
- #Childmarriage usually marks the end of a girl's education & opportunities in life. <http://bit.ly/1hpBWMW> #endchildmarriage
- Girls who marry before 18 are more likely to experience violence in marriage than girls who marry later.
- #Childbrides experience higher rates of anaemia and malnutrition than girls who marry later in life. <http://bit.ly/1amlgoj>

Why does child marriage happen?

- Reasons behind #childmarriage are complex: poverty, traditions, and gender inequality, often heightened by conflict <http://bit.ly/15dT54Y>
- #Childmarriage has happened in some communities for generations, but harmful traditions can be changed <http://bit.ly/15dT54Y>
- #Childmarriage happens to girls because they are girls. We won't achieve #genderequality without ending #childmarriage.

What will it take to end child marriage?

- Ending #childmarriage is everyone's responsibility: civil society, govts, traditional leaders, youth, media <http://bit.ly/1ijkERO>
- Effective strategies to #endchildmarriage require long-term, comprehensive & coordinated approaches. <http://bit.ly/1U93myN>
- We need comprehensive, well-funded & multi-sectoral national strategies to #endchildmarriage & support married girls <http://bit.ly/255Tg5g>
- Laws aren't enough to #endchildmarriage. We need to invest in policies, services & programmes that offer alternatives to girls.
- Change will ultimately happen in communities, but we also need support at global, regional & national levels to #endchildmarriage

IV. USEFUL RESOURCES

Whether you are looking for reports about child marriage, information about child marriage globally and how it links to other issues, or even what progress has been made, the *Girls Not Brides* website will be a useful resource for you.

Our [Reports and Publications](#) page is updated regularly with relevant reports, academic papers and information sheets on child marriage and our [Resource Centre](#) contains many useful tools and resources for addressing child marriage.

For example, you will find:

- **Strategies and case studies to address child marriage** at <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage-theory-of-change/>
- **Indicators which help to show progress towards addressing child marriage** at <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/resource-centre/child-marriage-indicators/>
- **Check-lists for assessing progress of national strategies to end child marriage** at <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/resource-centre/check-list-national-strategies/>
- **Guidance on advocating on the role of other sectors in addressing child marriage** at <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/resource-centre/child-marriage-brief-role-of-sectors/>

Or on other useful websites

- **Commitments made by parliamentarians on child marriage** – see Parliamentarians for Global Action's Global Parliamentary Declaration to End Child, Early and Forced Marriage at: <http://www.pgaction.org/campaigns/cefm/declaration-to-end-child-early-and-forced-marriage.html>
- **Global and national data and indicators on child marriage** and related issues see UNICEF State of the World's Children at: <http://www.unicef.org/sowc2016/>

Can't find what you're looking for? Contact us at info@GirlsNotBrides.org

V. REPORTS ON CHILD MARRIAGE AND THE LAW

This section highlights a selection of reports which demonstrate the links between child marriage and the law and can be found on the *Girls Not Brides* website. Know of any others? Let us know at info@GirlsNotBrides.org

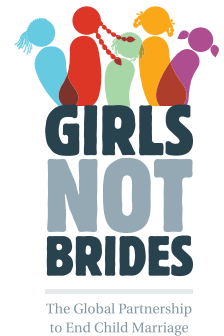
- **Center of Reproductive Rights, *Child Marriage in South Asia: International and Constitutional Legal Standards and Jurisprudence for Promoting Accountability and Change, 2013***: This report focuses on violations of women's and girls' reproductive rights and right to be free from sexual violence arising from child marriage in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. It is intended to serve as a resource for those interested in establishing government accountability for child marriage through human rights advocacy and litigation, and government officials, to strengthen their role in enforcing existing laws and policies and bringing about necessary legal reform. Available from: <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/reports-and-publications/child-marriage-in-south-asia-international-and-constitutional-legal-standards-and-jurisprudence-for-promoting-accountability-and-change/>
- **Equality Now, *Protecting the girl child: Using the law to end child, early and forced marriage and related human rights violations, 2014***: This report focuses on the importance of implementation of a strong legal framework at the national level based on human rights standards alongside a broad effort to transform gender relations in order to address child, early and forced marriage, as well as related human rights violations which affect girls and women throughout their lives. Available from: <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Equality-Now-Protecting-the-Girl-Child-JAN-2014.pdf>
- **Maswikwa, B., Richter, L., Kaufman, J. & Nandi, *Minimum marriage age laws and the prevalence of child marriage and adolescent birth: Evidence from sub-Saharan Africa, 2015***: This study highlights the challenges of curbing child marriage in Sub-Saharan Africa, a continent where pluralistic legal systems are common. Using data from Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) and the MacGill MACHEquity Child Marriage Database, the study looks at whether countries with consistent laws against child marriage, that is, where girls are required to be 18 or over to marry, to marry with parental consent and to consent to sex, have lower rates of child marriage and early child bearing. The results suggest that such laws can have a positive impact on the prevalence of both child marriage and early child bearing. Available from: <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/reports-and-publications/minimum-marriage-age-laws-and-the-prevalence-of-child-marriage-and-adolescent-birth-evidence-from-sub-saharan-africa/>

- **Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *Preventing and eliminating child, early and forced marriage, 2014*:** The OHCHR released its first-ever report in 2014 on preventing and eliminating child, early and forced marriage, and looks at achievements and best practices, as well as outstanding challenges and gaps in implementation. The report is useful in that it provides a definition of child, early and forced marriage, sets out the international norms and standards related to child marriage, and the human rights impact of the practice on women and girls. It also makes recommendations to prevent and eliminate the practice. Available in English, French, Spanish and Arabic. Available from: <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/new-ohchr-report-child-early-forced-marriage/>
- **UNICEF, *Child Marriage and the Law, 2007*:** This is a useful paper that explores how child, early and forced marriage is a violation of fundamental human rights and that both state and non-state actors must be held accountable under international treaty obligations to combat early child marriage. This paper is useful for decision-makers when looking at a legal system as a whole in order to propose a set of holistic legal and policy reform on child marriage. By reviewing the landscape of laws that impact on women and children, this paper is able to come up with a broader range of policy alternatives and a more sophisticated understanding of how the multiple strands of law and innovative legal strategies can converge to prevent child marriage. Available from: http://www.unicef.org/french/files/Child_Marriage_and_the_Law.pdf
- ***Child Protection - A Handbook for Parliamentarians, 2004*:** This handbook from the Inter-Parliamentary Union and UNICEF looks at the role of parliamentarians in contributing towards child protection, including how they can legislate, oversee government activity, allocate financial resources and, as leaders within their nations and communities, raise awareness of issues and provide advocacy. It examines the role of parliamentarians in relation to ten specific child protection issues: birth registration and the right to identity; protection of children in armed conflict; sexual exploitation of children; trafficking and sale of children; harmful traditional practices; violence and neglect; alternative care; juvenile justice; child labour; and the rights of child victims. Available from: http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/childprotection_en.pdf

VI. END NOTES

1. The other three strategies are found in the *Girls Not Brides* "Theory of Change on Child Marriage" and include: Empowering Girls, Mobilisation of Families and Communities, and the Provision of Services. Available from: <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage-theory-of-change/>
2. Rangita de Silva de Alwis, *Child marriage and the law*, Legislative Reform Initiative Paper Series, UNICEF, 2008, p. 37.
3. UNICEF, *Ending Child Marriage: Progress and prospects*, 2014.
4. UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children*, 2016.
5. Excluding China.
6. UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children*, 2016.
7. UNICEF, *Ending Child Marriage: Progress and prospects*, 2014.
8. Ibid.
9. For more information see *Girls Not Brides* information sheet on "Understanding the scale of child marriage" available from: <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/GNB-factsheet-on-child-marriage-numbers-Oct-2014.pdf>
10. The term "bride price", refers to money, property, or other form of wealth paid by a groom or his family to the parents of the woman he has just married or is about to marry.
11. For more information see *Girls Not Brides* "Child Marriage in Humanitarian Crises" brief available at: <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/reports-and-publications/child-marriage-in-humanitarian-crises/>
12. International Center for Research on Women, *How to End Child Marriage: Action Strategies for Prevention and Protection*, 2007.
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PARLIAMENTARIANS ARE UNIQUELY POSITIONED TO TAKE ACTION TO END CHILD MARRIAGE – THEY CAN WORK TO ENSURE THE VOICES OF GIRLS ARE HEARD, AND CAN MOBILISE THE POLITICAL WILL AND COMMITMENT NEEDED TO END CHILD MARRIAGE.



THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS IN ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE A TOOLKIT

Every year 15 million girls around the world are married as children. When a young girl becomes a bride, the consequences are lifelong – for the girl, for her children and for her nation. Ending child marriage will require long-term, sustainable action across many different sectors.

Parliamentarians can shape, advance and implement a strong legal and policy framework to address child marriage, within their countries and beyond. They can lead the development of legislation and policies, inform the political agenda, pass budgets, monitor implementation, and ensure accountability for national, regional and international commitments, including to target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals to end child marriage by 2030.

We hope this toolkit will help raise awareness about child marriage among parliamentarians, why it is an issue, and practical ways they can take action to end the practice – in Parliament, regionally, internationally, and most importantly, in their own constituencies.

Girls Not Brides is a global partnership of more than 600 civil society organisations committed to ending child marriage and enabling girls to fulfil their potential.

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